

CONTENTS

In the Bag by T W Francis	P 3
The Selans' Encounter With the Enterprise by Joanna Deen	P 11
Grandpappy's Patent Hydrovaacumatic Flag-waggler by Margaret Draper	P 21
Puzzle compiled by Steven Hatton	P 24
Home is the Hunted by Veronica Wallace	P 25
The Cleansing Fire by Valerie Piacentini	P 32
Caveat Scriptor! by Caroline Nixon	P 42
Report by Alison Glover	P 43
The Dream of Shanda-Kor by Simone Mason	P 45

Illustrations

Sandie Sapatka	Front cover
Michael Cleaver	P 2
Martin Bradley	P 4, 10, 23, 34, 38

A STAG publication.

Log Entries 9, price 80p inside the U.K., is put out by the
STAR TREK Action Group and is available from

Beth Hallam

Flat 3

36 Clapham Rd.

Bedford

England

Foreign rate - Write to Beth, enclosing IRC, for details.

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

Hello again, and welcome to Log Entries 9.

It seems no time at all since I did the last editorial - trying to maintain a two-monthly publication is rather like running on a treadmill - you never seem to stop, yet you never seem to be getting anywhere... But I can only keep up a two-monthly production if people send me submissions. Which is why, although we have been putting out Log Entries regularly, we still say 'Log Entries is an irregular publication'.

Since the present STAG committee took over some eighteen months ago, we have managed to hold zine prices steady. Variations in price have been due ~~to~~ different lengths, and we have absorbed at least one rise in the price of paper. However, the club can't afford to do that every time costs go up, and we have reluctantly decided that we must raise the price. Paper, stencils, ink, envelopes, all have gone up in price again recently, and in June, we will be faced with an increase in postage costs. The combination of all these rises is just too much. We'll hold the new price steady as long as we can, but we are very much at the mercy of external forces about which we can do nothing.

We'll be putting out a zine in July, but haven't yet decided on whether it will be Log Entries 10 or a one-off, single story. In any case, we hope to have at least four new zines in time for the convention in September.

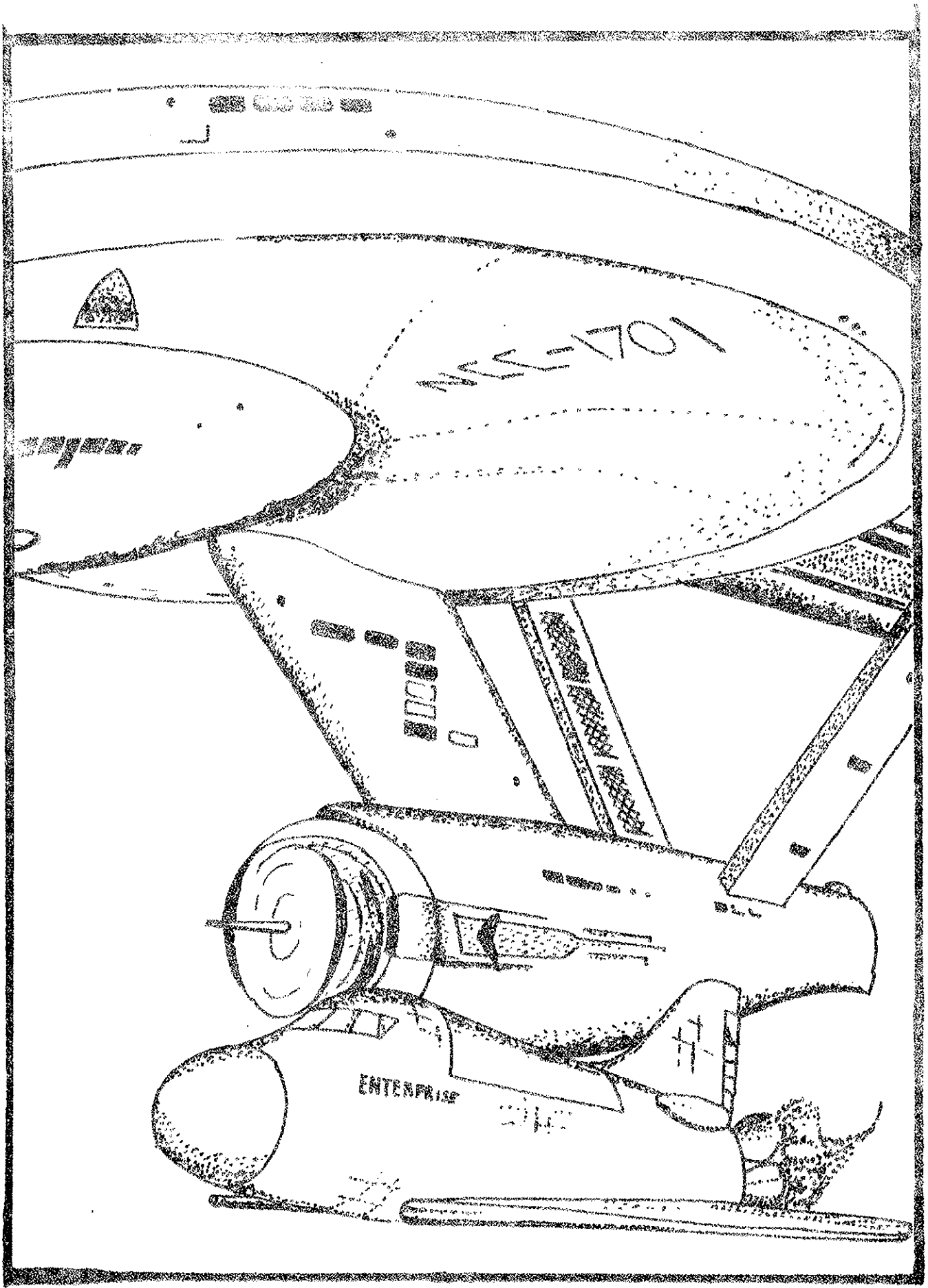
Writers lined up for LE 10 include Valerie Piacentini and myself - I've finally got the story finished that was begun in Newsletter 19. There's an excellent story by Christine Hall and one by Margaret Draper. There won't be a STAG story competition winner this time, since the most recent competition was for poetry, but the winning poem will be included.

Non-members of STAG can obtain information on new zines by sending an SAE or addressed envelope and International Reply Coupon to
 Sheila Clark
 6 Craigmill Cottages
 Strathmartine
 by Dundee
 Scotland.

Finally, many thanks to my eyestrained mother, who did the proof-reading, and to Peter Grant and Brian Topping who have been visiting me regularly and spending their evenings collating...collating...collating...and then for a change doing some collating...

Sheila

May 1977



IN THE BAG by T.W. Francis

CAPTAIN'S LOG - STARDATE 5846.2:

Rumours of Romulan activity between Colony Outpost 8 and Tholia have been filtering back to Starfleet and must be investigated.

At present passing through Dana Iotia System.

Kirk switched off and left his cabin. The corridor outside was quiet. This was officer country. He did catch a glimpse of two female yeomen just before he entered the turbo-elevator and smiled absently to himself as he thought, very pretty. The elevator doors closed with a gentle hiss and he said "Bridge."

The elevator car moved off and in a few seconds the doors parted to let him step out on to the bridge. He was greeted by the hum of efficient activity, a clear sign that all was well.

As he sank into the command chair, Kirk mused to himself, "For once, it looks like being a quiet trip."

"Did you speak, Captain?"

"I was just thinking, Mr. Spock, that this looks like being a quiet patrol. I don't think the Romulans will try anything else so soon - for once, I believe we may get back to base without any trouble."

"Yes, Captain," Spock replied as he returned to his sensors. His head snapped up almost immediately, but before he could speak, Sulu cried out,

"Automatic defence screens just snapped on, Captain."

Kirk turned to Spock, who raised an eyebrow as he said, "You were saying, Captain?"

"Whatever I was saying, it appears I was mistaken, Mr. Spock."

"Indeed." Again Spock turned to his scanner, co-ordinating the incoming sensor reports. The flashing light of the Alert was almost hypnotic.

Kirk joined Spock at his console. "Well, Spock? What's happening? What do your sensors say?"

"It would appear, Captain, that we are the target for a missile attack." He paused, then " - twenty missiles at least, with a second wave now at the edge of sensor range. Estimated time of arrival, twenty seconds, with the second wave ten seconds thereafter."

"Mr. Sulu, prepare forward phasers." Kirk spoke even as he returned to his command chair.

Sulu's hands whipped across his board. Within seconds, affirmation came from the forward phaser room.

"Phasers locked on, Captain," Sulu reported.

Kirk hit the intercom button on his chair-arm, and said, "This is a Red Alert. Assume battle stations. This is no drill. Battle stations."

"Captain, ten seconds to first wave impact," Spock said calmly.

"Thank you, Mr. Spock."

On the screen an array of bright blue dots became apparent, visibly increasing in size.

Kirk watched for a moment before he gave the order. "Mr. Sulu, fire phasers one and two."

"Phasers one and two firing, sir," Sulu's voice called above the hubbub of

activity on the bridge, as his hand moved deliberately and the thump! thump! of two liberated phaser banks vibrated the ship's structure.

"Detonation," Spock's calm voice called.

The screen flashed white then dimmed automatically.

"Second wave impact, due in ten seconds," said Spock, as deliberately as ever.

"Mr. Sulu, lock phasers three and four on secondary target, and fire."

"Locked on and firing, sir."

Thump! thump!

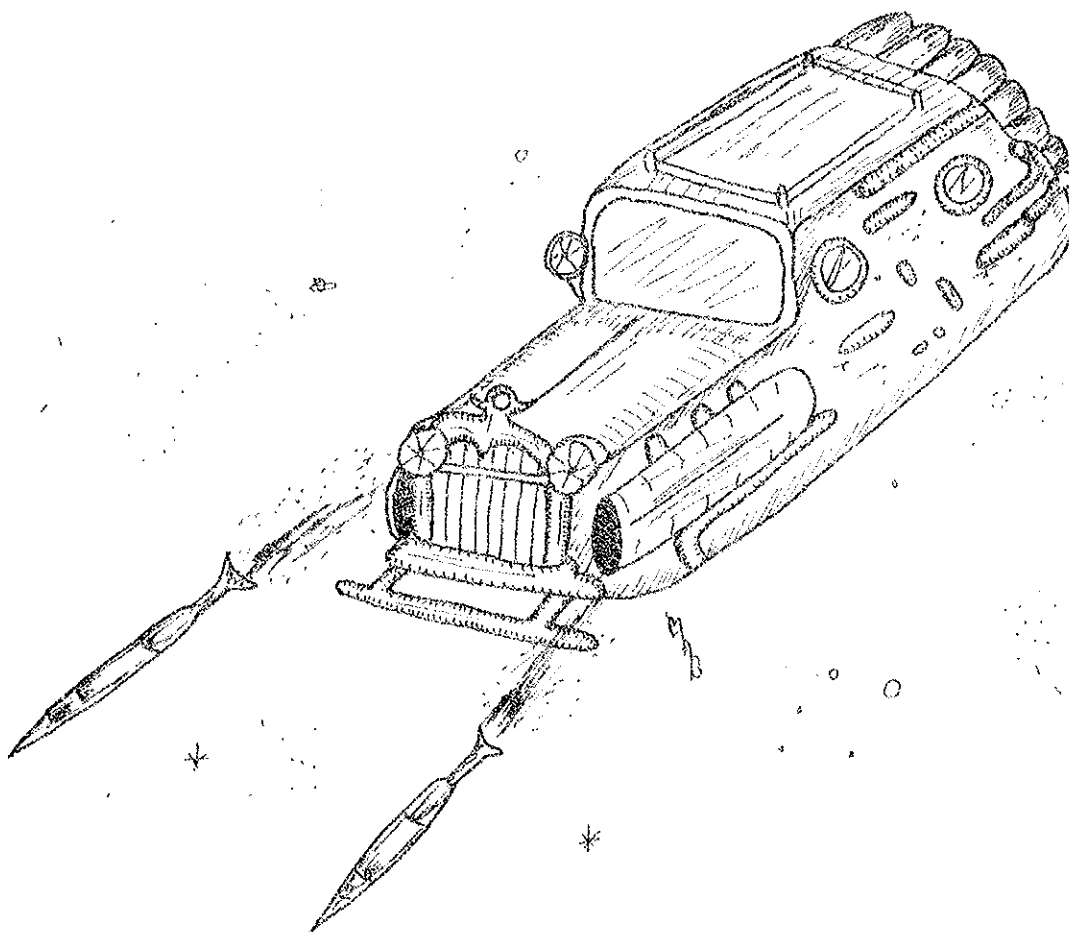
"Detonation," Spock said again. He continued to bend over his scanner, anticipating Kirk's next question.

"Any data on the missiles' point of origin, Mr. Spock?" Kirk swivelled in his chair to face his First Officer.

"Coming into sensor range now, Captain. A large, slow-moving vessel, configuration unknown. There is no record in the computer banks of a ship of this type. It is completely unknown. Fascinating." Spock's face was a study as he contemplated the problem.

A smile touched Kirk's lips as he continued his swing. "Lt. Uhura, do we have anything on communications?"

"No, sir," she replied. "All bands are clear." Then, as Kirk was about to turn back to the screen, she grasped her ear receiver, and said, "Sir, there's something coming in on audio, channel two. Strange, Captain - that's one of our communicator channels."



"Very good, Lieutenant, put it over the main speaker." Kirk turned back to the main screen. Elbow on chair arm, thumb and forefinger pursing his lips, he pondered, then said, "Extreme magnification, Mr. Sulu."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The unknown vessel grew proportionately. It was a bulky, cumbersome structure. A row of menacing orifices still emitted vapour, guilty evidence of its hostile actions. The bridge speaker crackled with static, then a voice, both demanding and insolent, permeated the air.

"This is a Hit. You guys is in the bag. Open up and pay yer percentages."

Kirk turned automatically to Spock, and noted that his First Officer had also recognised the heavy slang and colloquial expressions prevalent in the voice.

"I believe, Mr. Spock, that we have re-encountered some of our friends from Dana Iotia Two."

"It would appear so, Captain," Spock said, a slight hint of regret in his voice, "but I find it difficult to reconcile their apparent space-going capability with the rather backward and criminally-orientated culture that we discovered there three point eight six standard years ago."

"Yes, Mr. Spock, an anomaly. But we can investigate that later. First of all... Lt. Uhura, open ship to ship communication." His voice was rather grim.

She flipped one of her console switches. "Channel open, sir."

Hitting the communicator stud on the arm of his chair, Kirk said, "This is Captain James T. Kirk of the Starship Enterprise, representing the Federation of Planets. Your 'Hit' has had no effect on us. May I ask why you fired on us in the first place?"

The next sound that came over the bridge speaker could not be mistaken. It was that of a man choking - followed by a paroxysm of coughs and wheezes, then a prolonged silence. Finally, a rather squeaky voice asked,

"You guys is Feds?"

"Yeah," Kirk drawled, "and we've come for our cut. So, I repeat - why'd you hit us?" By this time, only Spock was not staring at him in open amazement. Spock's expression was rather that of a tolerant adult humouring a child.

Over the speaker, a different voice said, "We ain't got no beef with the Feds, Charlie." The speaker had clearly forgotten he would be heard.

"Quiet, meat-head, I'll do the talking," the first voice replied. There was another pause, then, "Hey, you Feds. Give us a break, eh? We got no beef with you - we thought you was the Tri-ties trying to pull a fast one. So we hit first to make sure they paid their percentage. We had no idea you was Feds."

"O.K. So you made a mistake," Kirk conceded. "What ship are you?"

"Bela's Baby," came the reply. "Top liquidator of the Syndicate of Bosses. This is Charlie Tepo in charge."

"Very well," Kirk said. "You'll return to Dana Iotia Two with us. I think it's time I had a talk with Bela Oxmyx."

"Where? Oh, yeah. Homeworld. O.K., Fed, after you."

"No way," Kirk said. "We'll follow you."

"O.K., O.K., you Feds is boss. I think Bela will want a word with you, too."

The Iotian ship began a slow, ponderous turn and Kirk tried to refrain from smiling. It looked for all the world like a great, wheel-less, black hearse.

"O.K., Chekov baby, set course for Dana Iotia Two. Sulu baby, standard orbit on arrival."

Kirk turned to Spock. "Well, Spocko, what..." He stopped, cleared his throat and continued. "What did you make of that, Mr. Spock?"

Spock's eyebrows had been in the course of rising, but at the request for information he said, "Captain, I have been co-relating some data while you were holding your discussion with the Iotians, and have ascertained that the construction of the missiles used against us by the Iotians is of an antiquated Orion design. Trace elements within the dispersing gas ball that was left after our phasers struck the missiles can only be found in Orion space."

"Hmm. Spock, can we say for sure that these people are Iotians?"

"I believe so, Captain, your recent dialogue and their colloquial expressions, combined with the shape of their vessel - it has a marked resemblance to an Earth-type hearse of circa 1930..."

"You noticed that too?"

"...and if you will recall, Captain, on our last visit to Dana Iotia Two we did have occasion to meet a boss named Tepo...the person claiming to be 'in charge' of that vessel."

"Yes, I think you are correct, Mr. Spock. We can therefore conclude that the Iotians have gained the capacity for space travel. But how? They were nowhere near this level of technology on our previous visit. That was...what? Three and a half years ago?"

"Three point eight six years ago, Captain."

"And in that short time they have come this far? Then there are those missiles ...Orion construction. Mr. Spock, I am beginning to smell a rat."

"Sir?"

"We just recently had a run-in with some Orions on our way to Babel... I wonder if there is any connection."

"The Dana Iotia System is not renowned for its deposits of dilithium crystals, Captain, and that is the only commodity an Orion would come this far from home to obtain. It would be most uncharacteristic for an Orion to venture upon an unprofitable and expensive voyage. And as we found to our cost, dealing with the Iotians is by no means easy."

"Agreed, Mr. Spock. But Dana Iotia is close to the Romulan Neutral Zone. Perhaps the Romulans have something to do with it."

"Sir, I fail to see how you arrive at that conclusion."

"A hunch, Mr. Spock - and a very sensitive nose," Kirk smiled.

"Coming up on the planet now, Captain," Chekov reported.

Ahead, on the main view-screen, the Iotian ship was slowly moving into orbit around the sky-blue orb of Dana Iotia Two.

"Communications from the surface, Captain," Uhura said. "Mr. Oxmyx - on audio only."

"Very good, Lieutenant, put it over the main speaker."

"Aye, aye sir."

"This is Bela Oxmyx, Chief Boss of the Syndicate of Bosses. You Feds is early this year. Need yer percentage, huh?"

"Captain," Spock interjected, "the U.S.S. Potempkin is due here in twenty five standard days to collect the Federation 'percentage'."

Kirk nodded and hit his communication button. "Bela, baby, this is your old buddy Kirk aboard the Enterprise. We was passing through your system when some of your boys made a hit on us," Kirk said plaintively.

"My boys did what!" Oxmyx bellowed, then continued. "Look, Kirk, I'm sorry. When I get my hands on them, I'll send them down a river with cement overshoes."

"No need for that, Bela, no harm done," Kirk conceded.

"We was trying not to let the Feds know yet, but... you've unearthed our little secret, Kirk, so I'd like you to come down here for a little chin-wag."

"I've got a great deal I want to say to you, Bela, but I feel safer up here."

"Look, Kirk, I'll come to the point," Oxmyx said. "We've been having some trouble with the Tri-ties, and what I have to say... well, I don't want to risk them hearing."

"Tri-ties?" Kirk asked, glancing at Spock, who merely shook his head, then said in a low voice,

"They did make mention of Tri-ties before, Captain, but I have insufficient data to co-relate a hypothesis."

Oxmyx was still talking. "...been giving us a lot of trouble, but if you come on down, I'll fill you in."

"I hope not," Kirk muttered to himself, then went on. "All right, Bela, I'll be in your office in ten minutes. Kirk out."

"Captain, you may walk into a trap. Mr. Oxmyx is not a person I should readily trust, to judge from my previous dealings with him." Even as he spoke, the Vulcan stood, preparing to join Kirk.

"I know, Spock," Kirk said as he stood up. "That is why I'm going alone to Bela's office."

Spock opened his mouth to object strongly, but Kirk held his hand up and added, "However, Mr. Chekov will lead a full security detachment and beam down simultaneously into the corridor just outside the office. If I am to be put 'in the bag', then I want to make sure that I come out of it as quickly as possible."

"Your strategy cannot be faulted, Captain."

"Thank you. Mr. Spock. You have the con." He moved towards the elevator, saying as he went, "Come along, Mr. Chekov - you are about to meet a 'Boss!'."

Chekov's "Yes, Captain," was not enthusiastic.

The beamdown proved quite uneventful, and Kirk reported in almost immediately.

"Kirk to Enterprise."

"Enterprise. Spock here, Captain."

"Transported without incident, Mr. Spock. It seems that our mistrust of Bela Oxmyx was unfounded - they really do need our help. So much so that now we are here, Bela is calling a full Syndicate Council meeting. He wants to give me the full picture, and I personally, am determined to obtain it. However, this may take some time. Don't worry if Mr. Chekov or I are unable to answer communicator signals. I'm using him as an aide - and the security team to keep the council members in order. They're a vociferous lot! I'll call in as soon as we are ready to beam up. Kirk out."

Several hours passed in active silence. Duties changed. Spock was relieved of the con by Scott, and the First Officer retired to the officers' rec room to continue a chess game he was playing with the ship's computer. He knew that should the Captain contact the ship, Scott would instantly inform him; he could therefore devote his full attention to the chess problem. But even so, he could not help himself from glancing occasionally at the wall intercom.

Eventually, when even Spock had begun to feel some apprehension, it whistled

for attention. "Scott to Mr. Spock."

Spock crossed to it. He depressed the switch. "Spock here."

"Mr. Spock, we've just received word from the Captain. He's beaming up."

"Acknowledged, Mr. Scott. I will meet him in the transporter room. Spock out."

As Spock entered the transporter room, Chekov was just leaving, but two of the security team were still waiting. McCoy was waiting too, standing by the side of the transporter console.

"The Captain is still not on board, Spock," McCoy said, somewhat anxiously.

"Patience, Doctor," Spock replied, and turned to the transporter chief. "Is the Captain ready to transport, Mr. Kyle?"

Kyle finished adjusting a lever. "Yes, sir." He pulled the levers on the console down evenly, then slowly slid them up again. A sparkling began to form above two of the transporter pads, and in a few seconds, Kirk and another being took form. The guards watched steadily, phasers ready.

Kirk also had his phaser levelled at the being's back. He prodded the other with it, and urged him down the steps.

"Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy, allow me to introduce you to De Ector, an Orion. By occupation, a trader."

"Indeed," was Spock's only comment.

"I don't understand, Jim," McCoy said.

"You will, sawbones." Kirk relapsed into Iotian. "Spocko, take this guy to the brig then join Doc and me in the briefing room on deck four."

"Acknowledged, Captain."

Spock deposited De Ector and his retinue of guards with the chief security officer on watch, then made his way to the briefing room. Entering, he sat down at the library computer reader. McCoy and Kirk were already there, talking in low voices as they awaited his arrival.

"Well," Kirk began as Spock sat. "I suppose you're both pretty anxious to know what's been happening. I must admit that after sitting through almost eight hours of an Iotian Bosses Syndicate meeting, I'm feeling somewhat fatigued. However, I've decided to give you a preliminary report - you'll both be called on later to give evidence on the culture we found on Dana Iotia Two on our last visit - yes, I know our report then is in the records, but it'll all have to be gone into again. You have no idea..."

Spock, Bones. It's changed down there, really changed. Spock, you mentioned back then that they were a very imitative people. You were right. They imitate all right. For example, in a year or two, their communications network is going to be almost as good as ours. I'm sorry to say it, Bones, but that will be your fault."

McCoy looked flustered. "Mine, Jim? How? I can't see..."

"If you will recall our last visit, Doctor," Spock interrupted, "you will remember that you left your communicator behind."

"Oh yes. But..."

"Spock's right, Bones. Your communicator has a lot to answer for. But there is more - much more, and this is even worse. That fellow I brought up - he is the main cause of the changes. They still adhere to the 'Book' left by the Horizon all those years ago, but when De Ector crash landed, the trade goods he carried on board his ship stirred up a hornet's nest of activity among the Iotians. They copied everything from a geodesic dome to a jacouzzi unit. Mono rails to lasers. You know, Bela Oxmyx walks around dressed up like a Romulan Praetor."

"That I can believe," McCoy said caustically.

"Yes. De Ector had been trading in Romulan space - apparently the Romulans have trade agreements with individual Orion traders. They supply the traders with dilithium crystals and the traders undertake to sell high technology goods to backward worlds, usually ones on the edge of the Neutral Zone. Sometimes they have been known to stray over into Federation space; if caught they claim navigation error, or try to. But I suspect they are sent by the Romulans on purpose, to disrupt the Federation's policy of allowing planets to develop of their own accord. De Ector's presence in this quadrant seems to prove it."

"Of course," Spock interjected, "being Orion and neutral, they can pass through the Neutral Zone without contravening the Romulan-Federation peace treaty."

"Exactly, Spock," Kirk continued. "But De Ector had had no intention of trading with the Iotians. He had only been passing through the system. As he did so, however, he came across a strange pyramid-shaped vessel in the system's asteroid belt. It appeared to be mining some of the smaller rocks. When it was discovered, the vessel opened fire with high energy plasma weapons."

"Possibly something similar to phasers, Captain?" Spock suggested.

"More than like.y, Spock. Anyway, De Ector's ship was damaged. He ran for it, and crash landed on Dana Iotia Two just after we left, three and a half years ago."

"Three point eight six years, Captain."

Kirk threw his First Officer a disgusted look. "To continue. De Ector persuaded the Iotians that if they helped him repair his ship, he would in turn help them to build a space fleet - about a dozen ships of the type that fired on us as we were passing through the system. Of course, they're armed only with missiles because he didn't want the Iotians to be able to stop him leaving once his ship was repaired. He was handicapped, though - he had to work surreptitiously, because every year a Starship kept coming round to survey the planet and collect the Federation's percentage, offer help where needed to the Iotians and generally keep an eye on them. I imagine their reports will indicate surprise at the speed with which the Iotians were developing. The change, of course, was due, not to the Starship's yearly visits but to the presence of De Ector.

The Iotians knew they were on to a good thing - they were very careful to keep De Ector out of sight when the survey teams showed up, never guessing how much that suited him, too. Then, when the Iotians had built their space ships, they began to explore their own system. It was during this exploration that they found that their territory was being poached by unwelcome and aggressive visitors."

"Tholians, Captain?"

"Very perceptive of you, Spock. Yes. The Tholians - or Tri-ties, as the Iotians call them."

"Tholians... Yes, of course, Jim," McCoy exclaimed. "Dana Iotia's planets have large deposits of the trace elements necessary for the production of theragen. If you remember, that was the drug that enabled us to overcome the debilitating effects of that space. I drew up several personal conclusions at the time - one of which was that the Tholians needed theragen or some derivative of it just as we did."

"Federation scientists believe that the Tholians have theragen in their atmosphere as we have nitrogen, Doctor."

"Now he tells me!" McCoy muttered.

"There was no occasion to mention it before, Doctor - and you would have been deprived of the pleasure of formulating your own conclusions."

Kirk cut in before McCoy could say anything more. "The weapons of the Tholians proved too powerful for the Iotians to overcome in straight head-on battles. So now they hit first and ask questions after - the only effective action open to them. Hence their attack on us."

"I fail to see how they could mistake a Federation Starship for a Tholian vessel, Captain."

"That brings us back to De Ector again, Spock. He only gave the Iotians a warp space movement indicator. In normal space they can identify the distinctive Tholian vessels' pyramid shape, but anything travelling in warp space got the missile treatment, just in case. We were early for a Starship to be around, so they hit us, thinking we were Tholians. But even with this tactic they're losing.

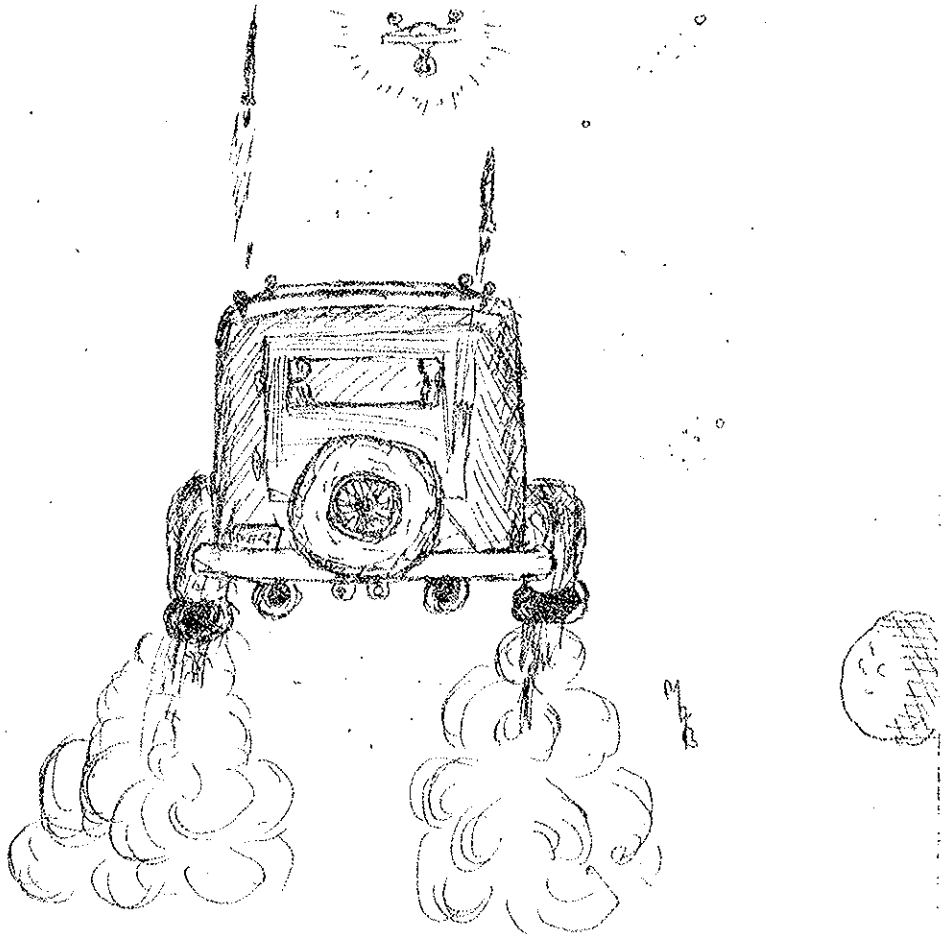
So when Bela heard who it was that had arrived, he was overjoyed. You see, the Federation survey teams had let it slip that if a Race has the capacity of inter-stellar flight, it can apply to the Federation for membership. So... they've impounded De Ector's ship, which is now repaired. They'd conned him into staying on until the Potempkin had come and gone, meaning to hand him over then, but since we're here first, we got the honour... and with De Ector's ship, they now have the capacity for interstellar travel. In fact, I have received from the Syndicate of Bosses an official request for membership of the Federation of Planets."

"And as prospective members of the Federation, they come under the aegis of Starfleet and can claim protection against aggressors."

"Quite correct, Dr. McCoy. It would seem we are committed to protecting a government based on a 'moral inversion'."

"Not only that, Spock - the Iotians will be entitled to a Starship of their own."

There was a pause as Kirk allowed the information to sink in, then finally he added, "You know, Spock, Bones, I was right before. The Iotians are now demanding a 'piece of our action'."



THE SELANS' ENCOUNTER WITH THE ENTERPRISE by Joanna J Deen

Captain Kirk was rendered totally speechless; he stared at the transporter pad onto which the aliens had materialised; he had been taken aback by the stunning resemblance they bore to Vulcans - and the clothes they wore were absolutely gorgeous; red, blue and gold glossy velvets. The alien in the foreground bowed low to Kirk.

"Good day to you, Earthling, we welcome you to Epsilon Aquarii 18."

"Do you live here?" asked Kirk.

"Indedd no, Earthling, we are Selans from the planet Selanis." The man spoke in slightly broken English.

"My name is Captain James T. Kirk, and this is my ship, the U.S.S. Enterprise - I represent the United Federation of Planets."

"How very interesting!" said the Selan, not sounding the least bit impressed, and raising an eyebrow in such a way that Captain James T. Kirk of the U.S.S. Enterprise began to get a little irritated.

"I see that you have women aboard this vessel," the Selan added.

"That's right," said Kirk, a little surprised.

"Do they belong to you?"

Kirk exchanged glances with McCoy and Scotty. "No, they belong to no-one, they are all free."

A look almost of despair came to the alien's face, and he let out a wistful sigh. "Would yo u not consider selling some of them?" he asked.

"I beg your pardon?" expostulated Kirk, taken aback.

"Would you not sell just a few of them?" he pleaded. "My companions and I will pay any price you name for them."

Scotty's jaw dropped open. "I hardly think so," said Kirk. "We all belong to Starfleet; I need my crew, I cannot give them to you!"

"If you will not sell them, then we must borrow them." He pulled out a phaser-like weapon from his belt. "Do not try to warn your crew, Captain, or I shall kill you."

At that moment, Spock called down from the bridge, "Captain, there is an alien vessel on our starboard bow; it does not seem to be pursuing, merely observing us."

Unseen, Dr. McCoy had pressed the button that opened communications between the transporter room and the bridge. Kirk did not answer his First Officer. Instead, he snapped, "Is that your ship?"

"Yes," said the Selan. "But they do not know we are here. We simply want a little pleasure. We have not been home for more than twenty of your Earth months; you must try to understand, Captain."

Unfortunately, at that moment Yeoman Janice Rand entered. All six pairs of Selan eyes fixed themselves on her as she walked towards Captain Kirk.

"Of all the galaxies and the three thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven million asteroids!" exclaimed one of the Selans.

"That is enough, Laren," snapped the Selan who seemed to be in command. "We will take this one."

Yeoman Rand was astonished. "Captain Kirk, what's happening? Who are they?"

"They're Selans," answered Kirk.

"That is correct, Captain; if you value the lives of your crew, you will please..." He got no further. At that moment eight more figures materialised

on the transporter pad. Seven were clad in red and gold shirts with black trousers and polished boots, and the eighth man wore blue and gold with a red sash belt.

"Drop your weapons!" he commanded.

"We have already given up our weapons," said Kirk.

"I was not addressing you, Earthling," said the man, and repeated his former command. The six Selans began dropping their weapons - McCoy looked at Kirk in relief. The Selan with the blue shirt radioed his ship and all the Selans save himself beamed over to the Selan vessel.

He then went to where the rather bemused Kirk, Scott and McCoy stood, putting away the weapon as he did so. He bowed and raised his hand in salute.

"I am Kothan, Commander of the Selan ship Arriasta."

Kirk introduced himself. "I am pleased to meet you, Captain Kothan," he said.

"Just 'Kothan', please, we do not use your Earth form of address." He paused for a moment. "Allow me to apologise for the behaviour of my crew. Tell me, what did they want of you?"

"You mean that you didn't know?" said Kirk.

"Hardly, Captain Kirk, I am not a mindreader," he said. McCoy grunted in slight disbelief.

"They seemed to want to borrow six of my female personnel!"

Kothan began to laugh; Captain Kirk was getting even more irritated than he had been with the other Selans. "Forgive me, I did not mean to laugh... but we on the Arriasta have not been home for twentyone of your Earth months... however, it is out of the question to borrow some of your crew, it would be unthinkable - anyway," he added as an afterthought " - I do not think that they would be willing. The men of course will be punished severely for attempting such a thing..." His voice died away as he suddenly caught sight of Yeoman Rand.

Kirk broke the silence. "Allow me to introduce Yeoman Janice Rand, Kothan."

He bowed and took her hand, kissing it; McCoy coughed. Quickly, he released it. "I must return to my ship," he muttered.

At that moment an orderly came in and announced that there were ten more casualties of the unknown fever that had devastatingly hit the Enterprise crew in deep space.

"This is serious, Jim, these men will die if we don't get help soon, and we're eight days from a Starbase."

"Can nothing be done, Bones?" demanded Kirk.

"How can I do anything, Jim, we don't have sophisticated enough facilities to determine this virus."

"May I see one of these men, Captain?" requested Kothan. "There is a fever local to this part of space that affects our pet animals. We have a cure, very painful - "

"Anything, I'll try anything," said McCoy.

Men and women were collapsing all over the ship; in desperation, Captain Kirk, who had himself succumbed to the disease, asked Kothan if some of his crew would man the ship while the cure was being effected - unfortunately, this proved to be a lengthy process.

Before the Selan crew boarded the Enterprise, Mr. Spock opened communications with the whole Enterprise crew and spoke to them about the dangers of the Selan crew, warning the women in particular to avoid these men as much as possible.

The Selan second-in-command, Karlen, had also spoken to his men, warning them that they were here merely to help these aliens. "Anyone who does otherwise will answer to me!" he had stated in no uncertain terms. The trouble was that Kothan's men had other ideas!

The Selan First Officer Karlen swanked onto the bridge of the Enterprise, followed by seven other officers in dress uniform, this being their first official visit to the Enterprise; he surveyed his surroundings with a pained expression on his face, muttering in Selanian, "No taste, these Earthlings, no taste whatsoever..!"

He smiled patronisingly down at Sulu. "How do you do, sir," said Sulu.

"I am well," answered the Selan second in command. "I believe you are Humans, Earthmen, yes?" he asked.

"Yes," he answered. "And you are Vulcans?"

"No, we are Selan, what made you think that we were Vulcans?" he asked, exchanging a look with his second officer, Horek. McCoy thought to himself, 'Oh, it's only a little matter of pointed ears, Mr. Karlen', but for once he refrained from speaking.

Karlen continued, "Your ship is most...er, how shall I express it? most demure." While he spoke, the other Selans wandered round the control panels, passing comments in Selanian with disapproving faces. At this point, Commander Spock entered; Scotty introduced him to Karlen, who bowed to him, making a curious salute and speaking in Selanian. Spock returned the salute and answered him; to the surprise of the bridge personnel, it seemed that Spock could speak the language.

Chief Engineer Scott was about to introduce Mr. Spock to the rest of the Selans except that they seemed preoccupied with the communications panel - but when Scotty looked again, it was not the panel they were scrutinising, interesting though it may have been, but Lt. Uhura, who, needless to say, became not a little embarrassed and was rather relieved when Yeoman Rand entered and said, "Mr. Spock, sir, will you sign this for me?"

All eyes turned and settled on her; she felt even more uncomfortable than the first time this had happened to her!

"Is anything wrong?" asked Scotty, aware of the strained silence.

"Indeed there is nothing wrong," answered one of Karlen's officers, and decided to pay his compliments to Yeoman Rand - and compliments they were indeed!

"I am Laten, and enchanted to meet you, fair goddess of the three million six hundred and thirty-nine thousand galaxies..." he took her hand in greeting and kissed it. "And seven million nine hundred constellations..." He kissed it again. "And fifteen thousand eight hundred and twelve spiral stars..." He kissed her hand yet again. Yeoman Rand was too taken aback to make any objections, she just stared at him. "The eight moons of Kalesta, the fifteen moons of Antares - " kiss " - the five orbits of Selanis and her six seasons - " kiss...

McCoy coughed. He was feeling quite sick! Chekov nudged Sulu who was on the point of having a fit, and whispered, "He certainly knows his astronomy!" Sulu nodded in assent, for he could not trust himself to speak. Finally Laten stopped.

"Forgive me, fair maiden, for occupying your hand for so long, but I was carried away."

"That's quite all right, sir," stammered Janice Rand, who had blushed bright pink, much to her indignation! The other Selans began introducing themselves to her in what seemed their customary form of address, as each kissed her hand politely.

"But surely, Mr. Scott, these ladies must belong to someone?"

Before Scotty had had a chance to speak, Mr. Spock replied, "Indeed, these

two ladies belong to me, they are part of my harem."

McCoy's jaw dropped open; Chekov swung round in his chair; Sulu stared at Spock; Yeoman Rand looked at him gratefully.

"Come, gentlemen," McCoy said, rapidly changing the subject, "I'll show you round the rest of the ship."

"One moment, Doctor," said Karlen. He went to Lt. Uhura and produced a lace handkerchief from his sleeve and handed it to her. "A token of friendship," he said.

Chekov, who could scarcely contain himself any longer, burst out laughing at the sight of the lace handkerchief. Karlen turned and rounded on him. "You are insolent, young man," he addressed Chekov. "You would soon laugh on the other side of your face if you were in my charge." This sent an icy chill through the ensign... A moment later, they left the bridge.

Scott went up to the First Officer. "Mr. Spock," he said, "where did you learn to lie like that?"

"Merely a white lie, Mr. Scott, it was necessary to do it, so I did."

"That bit about the harem was quite ingenious, ye know, ye'll have tae keep up wi' the pretense until the Selans leave, laddie!" he said, grinning.

"I am aware of the consequences, thank you, Engineer!" answered the Enterprise's second in command, folding his arms and raising an eyebrow.

It had been decided that Karlen should help the bridge personnel and share the acting command with Spock while Captain Kirk was ill. So Karlen and his officers beamed back to the Enterprise for duty. Spock and McCoy waited for them in the transporter room. This time, McCoy got an even greater shock. The Selans had changed out of dress uniform into yet another one. He had expected standard uniform to be the clothes they had worn the first time they had appeared in the transporter room, but no; this uniform consisted of deep beige boots, black trousers, and a wide black belt with a shiny clasp in front; an open-necked shirt, embroidered collar, puffed sleeves and a lace-up front to the shirt, with square silver buttons; also attached to Karlen's belt by a silver clasp was a formidable leather whiplash. They reminded McCoy of the pirates of old. There was no party elegance about them now. Karlen strode over to them and nodded to McCoy.

"Shall we go to the bridge?" said Spock.

All eyes were on the lift as it opened; Spock and McCoy stepped out followed by Karlen. Chekov swallowed hard. Karlen looked strangely fierce, almost barbaric; Chekov saw the coiled whip and realised what Karlen had meant when he had laughed at the lace handkerchief. Karlen paid his respects to all on the bridge, but when it came to Chekov, he bestowed a rather curt nod in his direction. Chekov nodded back. He had hoped that Karlen had forgotten his laughter... but apparently he had not!

"Plot a course for Rigel 9, Mr. Chekov," said Commander Spock; Karlen went and stood over Chekov and Sulu, looking at the controls.

"They work quite simply, sir," said Sulu. "You just -"

He got no further. "I am well aware of how they work, Lieutenant," Karlen said sharply.

Chekov read out the figures which he had calculated for the course. "You are inaccurate, Ensign, by 0.379 degrees," said Karlen.

"I am not, sir!" answered Chekov.

Spock checked it and confirmed Karlen's figures.

"I am sorry, sir," said Chekov.

"An inaccuracy of 0.5 degrees is allowed," Sulu said in Chekov's defence.

"I see that you are somewhat lax in discipline aboard this ship," Karlen said turning to Spock. "Accuracy is necessary at all times; lack of it is a sign of laziness and is a punishable offence aboard my vessel."

"But this isn't your ship!" retorted McCoy.

"That is a logical observation, Doctor," answered Karlen curtly.

Three days later, McCoy had had his bout of fever and was now convalescent; luckily neither he nor Kirk had suffered too seriously with the curative drugs provided by the Selans. McCoy went on to the bridge to converse with Karlen; it was the first time the Doctor had had the opportunity to speak with him privately.

Excuse me, Commander Karlen," McCoy began, "but I am rather curious to know why you wear that rather vicious-looking whip attached to your belt."

"All Captains and First Officers wear one of these. We do not wear them for decorative purposes, Doctor, the lash is the punishment for petty offences and insolence to a superior. Spock has been telling me that you have no kind of corporal punishment in your fleet - or should I say that you have it but it is never used. I find it difficult to imagine how you are able to maintain discipline."

"Force of personality," McCoy replied. "We believe a good officer should be able to command men without resorting to harsh punishments such as these."

"You call these harsh, Doctor..." He laughed, and a cold chill seemed to work its way down Chekov's spine. "No, this is not harsh, and it is always dealt out with fairness, never too severely, Doctor."

"I'm glad to hear it," retorted McCoy. "But surely there are alternatives."

"Indeed there are, Dr. McCoy; for example, one could take the power of resistance from the other person's mind and inflict mental torture by telepathy, but this has been found a little too harrowing an experience, so it is no longer used; the lash has been substituted in its place."

"I see," said McCoy, rather taken aback. "I trust that you'll save that whip solely for your own crew, Commander."

Karlen seldom smiled, but when he did his face lit up, giving him rather a boyishly impish expression. "Of course, Doctor, with pleasure, provided that your crew behave... Understand, Doctor," he went on in a low voice, "I do not enjoy using it; none of us derive pleasure from hurting each other. Indeed, I have been attempting to learn Vulcan ways from Spock, they are fascinating... it might do we Selans good to adapt ourselves to Vulcan self-discipline."

But McCoy did not see why Vulcans were in any way 'fascinating', so he left Karlen to his own devices...

Karlen sat for many minutes on the bridge, trying to think of a way to explain the behaviour of his crew to these Humans, who admittedly did not seem to have the same problems of discipline. Even the man Chekov... after that one time, he had been perfectly respectful... Karlen had met Humans before, but had never fully understood them; there were several so-called mixed marriages on his home planet Selanis, even although it was not a member of the Federation; these Humans had come from a colony that had little to do with their home world. Some of these seemed to have worked out tolerably well, but there had been one common factor in all these marriages - the Human side of the partnership, like the Selan side, was telepathic.

For other marriages, there had not been happiness, just toleration, which invariably ended in divorce, a practice which had always been frowned upon by the elders. Yet it was inevitable, as the children suffered the most in these toleration atmospheres. He understood about children from these broken homes - was not his dearest friend half Human? A victim of one of these marriages that had not worked out, his friend was still bitter and still bore the emotional scars of his parents' differences; one of the many reasons why he had not yet settled down.

Humans were intriguing, mused Karlen. Whatever spare moments he had were spent in talking to the Enterprise's First Officer, Spock, about his life in a Human society, and about the Vulcan techniques of controlling telepathy. His questions were seemingly unending, yet Spock was quite willing to answer anything put to him by Karlen, who thirsted for this new knowledge. In return, Karlen told Spock many of the secrets of the Selan way of life; both discovering that Vulcan and Selan cultures had many profound similarities - which Spock had suspected ever since realising that the language had similarities.

Captain Kirk would have liked to have joined Spock in these conversations, but the fever had taken a great deal out of him, much to his intense frustration, and although he had been continually assured by Dr McCoy that he would be up and about again in the not too distant future, he was still convalescent, allowed to wander around but on no account to go anywhere where he might be tempted to resume active duty! The most frustrating thing of all was that McCoy had bounced back to health inside three days...

One evening in the recreation room, second officer Horek had been observing Ensign Janet Macrae for some time. He stood up, went and sat next to her. She smiled and said "Good evening."

"Good evening," he replied. There was a pause, then "You are very beautiful, you know," he muttered.

"Come on, Uhura, sing something for us," said Sulu.

"Yes, go on," said Captain Kirk, enjoying the last of his convalescence. So she began to sing, accompanied by taped music from the audio-visual set.

"Will you dance with me, Janet?" asked Horek.

They stood up and began to dance, Horek tutoring her in a Selan dance. At that moment, Spock walked in. He watched for a moment, then realised what dance it was; he knew it must be stopped before the end. He called Karlen over the intercom, and told him what was happening.

Within moments, Karlen arrived; he turned off the music, and Uhura faltered to a stop. Regardless, Horek continued to dance. Karlen swung him round by the shoulder. "That is enough, Horek!" he said in a loud voice. It snapped Horek out of his dream. He shouted something at Karlen in Selanian; Karlen replied in English, "Get out, Horek, go to your quarters!"

Ensign Macrae watched, frightened, not understanding. Spock caught her arm and took her to one side, where he explained that the dance was an ancient ritual Selan wedding dance. Had the dance been finished, she would have found herself married to Horek...

Meanwhile, everyong was watching Karlen and Horek as they faced each other. Horek again spoke in Selanian... Karlen's eyes blazed. He detached the coiled whip from his belt and flisked it open, then wound it round and round his fingers in an effort to control himself in the Vulcan way he had been trying to master.

"Get out! You heard me, get out!" commanded Karlen.

Captain Kirk exchanged glances with Mr. Spock; the Enterprise crew looked from one to the other, alarmed. Horek turned away from Karlen and laughed, and again spoke in Selanian; this time Karlen answered him in Selanian, raised the whip and struck Horek. A cry escaped from the young Selan's lips; Karlen dragged him from the room...

The Enterprise crew looked confounded at such amappalling display of violence.

"But why did he hit him, for dancing?" asked Ensign Chekov, bewildered.

"No," answered Dasek. "He hit him for insolence. No-one can be insolent to a senior officer without being punished by the whip." Dasek spoke coldly and unflinchingly; Chekov shuddered, and thanked God that this type of punishment, although still in the fleet, was no longer commonly used.

Now, and only now, did the Enterprise crew begin to believe that the Selans were indeed different to Vulcans.

Karlen had still not decided how to explain Selan ways to Humans, these Humans who looked upon Karlen and his crew as barbarians...especially after last night, when Karlen had resorted to violence in punishing his second officer, Horek, for insolence.

Karlen was homesick; how he missed his family; but there was no use getting sentimental over these things... He understood how the rest of his crew was feeling, if there was a chance here of some kind of social life among the Enterprise crew they would give anything to become part of it, even for a short while. How...how... how could he explain?

At that moment, his reverie was broken by Captain Kirk. "Commander Karlen," began Kirk, "I have had little opportunity to speak with you earlier, and to thank you for all your help. Mr. Spock has been telling me how great an asset your officers and yourself have been to him."

"We are pleased to be of assistance to you, Captain Kirk. I am glad to see that you have recovered fully, with no unpleasant side effects."

The two men continued to talk for quite a while, each becoming more at ease as the time passed by.

Later that evening in his quarters, Captain Kirk had a long overdue conversation with his First Officer. They spoke of many things, not the least of these being the Selans; Karlen was the first Selan Kirk had conversed with at length, and he told Spock that he had found Karlen to be extremely intelligent, well-spoken and highly sensitive in character to the needs of both others and himself.

Kirk had witnessed the violence of the night before and had been appalled by this taste of barbarism, and shocked that a people who so closely resembled his second in command could be so cruel and merciless in their punishments. Yet there seemed such a difference between the hard, unyielding Selan of last night to the man he had spoken to today. Karlen was certainly an enigma...Kirk needed more time to try and understand, for although fairly perceptive in his dealings with other Humans, he was not a Human telepath and was as yet unable to understand fully the people of Selanis.

"Perhaps," thought Kirk, "if I had a chance to see them in their home surroundings, to speak with them at greater length..." But he knew that this was an impractical thought.

Two hours later, Captain Kothan beamed over to the Enterprise. "Captain Kirk." He spoke with urgency in his voice. "My ship must depart at once for Selanis. Our planet is being attacked by Klingons; they are trying yet again to capture our planet."

Kirk spoke. "Mr. Chekov, plot a course for Selanis."

"Aye, sir," answered Chekov.

Kothan looked quizzically at Kirk. "Do not feel obliged to help us, Captain. The Klingons are a vicious, warlike people; there is great danger if you come with us."

"My ship is used to facing danger, Kothan; besides, the Klingons are enemies of the Federation too. Is that not so, Mr. Spock?"

"Very well, Captain. Thank you. Karlen, we shall return to our ship." Kothan went over to the lift, and Karlen followed.

"Ahead warp factor five, Mr. Chekov," said Kirk.

As they came in sight of Selanis, the Klingon vessel was being held at bay by one Selan flag-ship; two other Selan battle cruisers were approaching with the

Arriasta and the Enterprise not far behind. They surrounded the Klingon warship and opened ship-to-ship communications with them; the Enterprise bridge personnel watched and listened on audio-visual contacts.

"Surrender, we have you surrounded," Kothan was saying. "We will take war hostages - we know that it is not the Klingon custom to do this, but Selans are not like Klingons who kill their prisoners; we are not barbarians. We give you thirty seconds to surrender, or we destroy your vessel."

Before he had finished speaking, the Klingon ship sent a burst of phaser fire directly at the Arriasta. The ship could not avoid it but its deflector shields withstood the blast. Another Selan ship, jointly with the Enterprise, opened fire on the Klingon vessel before it had a chance to fire again on the Arriasta. The Klingon vessel was destroyed, and the Selan battle cruiser Mareysa picked up survivors from it.

Three other Klingon ships were approaching. Kirk recognised their flag-ship as being that commanded by Captain Koloth. In no uncertain terms, Kirk told Koloth to leave Selanis or he would have a full-scale battle on his hands; Kirk said that he had radioed all Federation Starships in the vicinity...he neglected to say that there were no other Starships within nine hundred light years of Selanis... Happily Koloth did not call Kirk's bluff, and departed fairly speedily with his fleet.

Kothan and Karlen did not waste any time in beaming aboard the Enterprise; they invited the bridge personnel to Karlen's home for refreshments and to meet Karlen's family. Kothan was not married, but had a brother and sister who lived with Karlen's family, although Kothan had a home of his own for whenever he chose to marry. Karlen had hopes of Kothan marrying his younger sister, but he did not play the matchmaker too often for fear of offending his friend.

The bridge personnel beamed down to Karlen's front orchard; Kirk and McCoy were enthralled by the beauty of the orchard and garden; a small stream gurgled alongside the path...

Karlen's children simply could not restrain themselves in the house to receive their guests politely; they dashed into the garden and flung themselves in a heap onto Karlen and Kothan; a tall youth tried to restrain the younger ones, but when he succeeded, Karlen grabbed him and they embraced, laughing and crying at the same time. Kothan too embraced them with almost equal vigour.

Suddenly Karlen remembered his guests. He gasped something in Selanian, and the chatter eventually died down. "Captain Kirk, my children speak only very broken Terran. Let me introduce you..."

Kothan cut in. "I can do that, Karlen, go inside and see Shanyia."

Karlen smiled. "I shall not be long - excuse me, Captain, Spock..."

"We shall follow in five minutes, Karlen," said Kothan, then added as Karlen left them, "His wife..." Then he began introducing the children; he was holding Shanyseya, Karlen's youngest daughter, in his arms. "Shall we make our way to the house now?"

Once in the house, the bridge personnel were introduced to several other members of the family. They all looked so young; Karlen's mother and father, Kothan's grandparents, they could all have been brothers and sisters as far as Kirk was concerned. Later, Spock explained that this was a vulcanoid phenomenon - the aging process in their metabolism was unlike that of Humans.

Two hours later, Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock were summoned by the Selan High Council of Elders. Kadon, a dignitary, spoke. "Welcome to Selanis, Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock; Kothan and Karlen have been telling us about you. We had, of course, heard of your Federation; now, we consider joining it. We have one proviso, that we must keep our own space fleet."

They continued discussion and Captain Kirk contacted Federation High Command; it was agreed that Selanis would be suitably inaugurated into the Federation. The Selan High Council announced a celebration in honour of their guests from Earth,

and to welcome home their fleet. The celebration would commence in three days' time; Karlen was determined that the Enterprise bridge crew would be guests in his house while preparations for the celebrations were being effected. Kirk needed very little persuasion, as this was a chance for his crew to have some long overdue shore leave.

The following afternoon, Kirk, McCoy, Spock, Uhura, Sulu and Chekov were having refreshments, Selan delicacies - Mr. Spock was in his element, it had been too long since he had tasted foods like these, which reminded him of his childhood. He was very silent; what was it that he was feeling? nostalgia? sentimentality? was it an emotion experienced purely by the Human part of him? He was remembering... the cool veranda as he sat in the early evening looking out across the rugged hills... his mother speaking to him in her Terran tongue. She smiled... suddenly he realised that he had been less perceptive than he had thought at the time; his mother Amanda was happy, had been happy, was happy now! How was it that he had not seen that, had not understood that she had chosen the Vulcan way of life and culture... now he could see it, but then... then, he had been too young, too ready to misconstrue people and situations.

He had been too sensitive in judging others, could it have been that he had succumbed to the emotions which he had so desperately fought against and trained his mind to suppress in his youth? These emotions that he had scorned as belonging to the Human half of him... He was suddenly struck by the full force of realisation, that it was in fact the Vulcan part of him with which he battled! The illogical, irrational part, perhaps he had known it all the time... His Vulcan barbaric ancestry had never really been far away, it had never left the planet of Vulcan in the millenia of their past...no, it was with them every moment; they had only to discard their facade of self-discipline and control and they would become more Human than the Earth people, who never ceased to boast of their humanity! He was thinking of one person in particular, Dr. McCoy, who spoke of Human emotion as lightly as if it meant nothing to him... what a blow this visit must have been for the Doctor; he had always been an indulger in platitudes!

The evening of the celebration arrived; Captain Kirk and his officers changed into their dress uniforms, although when Mr. Spock requested that he might wear Vulcan ceremonial dress to honour the Selans, Kirk agreed; he had never seen Vulcan ceremonial dress before.

They beamed down and approached the Selan gathering; the clearing was lit by flickering lamps which overhung arches, intertwined with fresh blooms of exotic flowers. Surrounding the arches were shrouds of gossamer-like threads, which shimmered in the firelight and shivered with the gentle breeze...

The Selans welcomed them; the Enterprise crew found themselves speechless in wonderment. It was like a fairy glade... an elfin glen. The Selans were wearing ceremonial dress surprisingly similar to that of Mr. Spock.

There were sounds of wind-chimes and ethereal bells in the distance; music was being played upon a lyre, and rich mellow tones echoed across the clearing...

McCoy rubbed his eyes. "Jim, I must be dreaming, I feel like I'm in fairy-land!"

"It is as though they had stepped out of a fairy tale," said Chekov.

"And that includes you, Spock, in that Vulcan ceremonial dress!" said Kirk.

That was how the Selans appeared to the crew of the Enterprise, as though they existed in some ancient elfin legend of enchanted forests, wizards, goblins, bold and magical deeds... The clothes worn by the Selans were of elfin design; on top, the men wore cloaks of the most gorgeous and finest cloth that Jim Kirk had ever seen; the material glimmered, reflecting the firelight, creating the impression of a myriad of stars flickering in the distance. The Selan women were clad in similar dress, some in flowing gold-lurex robes, their hair adorned with incandescent jewels.

From out of the fairy-tale world of that night, Ensign Janet Macrae had consented to marry second officer Horek, and live on his home world of Selanis; but first he had to gain permission from Captain Kothan. This, however, was a mere formality. Ensign Macrae told Kirk, Spock and McCoy about her engagement, and they congratulated her, wishing her all happiness; then Horek and Janet requested permission to see Kothan alone.

Kothan listened to the young man, then was silent. "Horek, Miss Macrae," at last he spoke, "I regret that I cannot give my consent to your marriage. You have not known each other long enough, and besides, you know how difficult it is for mixed marriages to work. No; there are too many risks, too many chances of unhappiness. I cannot consent."

"But Kothan..." pleaded Horek.

"That is all, Horek; I am sorry. I shall not change my mind; you may go."

When Janet and Horek went outside, she was crying; Kirk, his party, Karlen and Shanyia waited for them.

"What's wrong?" asked Kirk.

"Kothan would not give his consent!" said Horek. His voice shook. "I hate him - as long as I live I shall hate him!"

"You must not speak thus of Kothan," said Karlen, going over to Horek and putting his arm round Horek's shoulder. "He is sad and bitter about his parents' marriage, you must try to understand, Horek."

"Could you explain to us?" Kirk asked.

"Very well," said Karlen. "His father is Selan and his mother, Human." Kirk exchanged glances with Spock. "They were divorced when Kothan was sixteen; he had suffered long from his mother's lack of understanding of the Selan nature." There was a pause. "You see, Captain," Karlen continued, "she was not a Human telepath. Kothan's father knew it but they chose to ignore this fact. It affected Kothan very deeply. I shall try to talk to him, but I do not think he will change his mind."

Karlan was right.

In desperation, Janet Macrae pleaded with Captain Kirk to speak to Kothan.

"Captain, let me try," said Spock.

"All right, Mr. Spock," he replied. "You possibly understand his feelings better than most of us." So Spock went in search of Kothan and did not return for fully three hours. Kirk was about to go looking for him when they returned.

Kothan went over to Janet Macrae. "Miss Macrae," he said, his voice strangely quiet. "I have changed my mind; you may marry Horek, and I wish you every success." Janet was so enthused that she kissed Kothan. He smiled at her. "Go now and enjoy what is left of the festivities." Joyfully, they wandered off together.

Soon the celebrations were over and it was time to part. Kothan said his farewells to the Enterprise crew; then -

"Goodbye, my friend; I look forward to seeing you again," he said to Spock. Spock nodded at him.

"Spock," said Karlen, "I hope that you and your friends will return for a longer visit, and teach us your Vulcan control."

"I shall be privileged to do so," said Spock.

"You had no harem, did you, Spock?" smiled Karlen. Spock looked at him and raised an eyebrow. Karlen laughed. "We will leave it at that, Spock," he said.

They embraced and parted, and the Enterprise began its journey once more into deep space...

GRANDPAPPY'S PATENT HYDRO-VACUUMATIC FLAG-WAGGLER by Margaret Draper.

It was spring-cleaning time down in sickbay, and McCoy's temper was even viler than usual. If there was one thing he hated, it was people messing about shifting equipment and instruments from their old familiar locations, installing new monstrosities in place of the well-known, well-used apparatus he was accustomed to working with, and generally creating havoc where spotless order had reigned before.

Christine was in her element, of course, running around with trays full of this that and the other, telling the technicians where to set up the new console 'scopes - what was wrong with the old ones, for pity's sake? and helping M'Benga decide what to do with the things that were being discarded.

Dam' cheeky, some of those young technicians were, too - talking to him as if he'd come out of the Ark, making him feel like a spare part...

And Scotty, of all people, as well! The unkindest cut of all, that - the patronising smile of the expert towards the ignorant layman when he had come to fix the blood analyser unit. Well, how was McCoy to know some fool of a maintenance man had unplugged it? He was a doctor, not a.....

Mumbling to himself, he retreated to the sanctuary of his office; but he wasn't safe even there. Christine was tidying up! As if it hadn't been tidy enough already...

Driven forth again, he had to contend with M'Benga, as anxious as he was to get things ship-shape again.

"What do you want doing with these, Doctor?" The negro jerked his thumb towards a jumble of assorted diagnostic instruments and apparatus.

"Oh, just - leave them in the corner there. I'll sort through them some time."

Hours later, when the last technician had removed his unhygienic self from the sterile wards, and Christine had gone off duty, McCoy wearily turned to the task of sorting out the junk-pile in the corner. Some of it cost a pang or two to discard: a favourite scalpel, a pump that must be getting on for a museum piece by now. Evidently Christine had taken advantage of the general melee to turn out some cupboards as well. And that - what in blazes could that be? McCoy thought guiltily. He must be getting old: at least he usually recognised the basic function of a piece of equipment, however ancient or new-fangled it might be, but this one had him beaten. Perhaps it was part of something else? Hastily he ran his eye over the new arrivals, but could see nothing obviously missing.

There was a sort of flywheel thing, and a metal cylinder, and - oh well, Scotty might know, if he'd condescend to.....

McCoy paused, and a smile slowly spread across his face. Scotty, the great engineer, eh? Carefully he began to pick through the pile, selecting an item here, rejecting another, and when he was satisfied he carried the bits and pieces into his office.

"...an heirloom, if you like; my cousin just sent it to me. Grandpappy was a kind of inventor, and this was the pride of his collection," McCoy explained glibly. Scott said nothing, but continued to walk round and round the Heath Robinson contraption on the table, his eyes bulging with amazement.

"Of course, I was just a kid when he first showed it to me...hasn't been working properly recently, Cousin Beau tells me. We thought maybe you could fix it?" continued the Doctor wickedly.

Scotty cleared his throat noisily. "Ah could try. ah suppose." He coughed again. "Er... whit is.....?" McCoy's eyes met his innocently.

"You were saying?"

"Nothin', nothin'. I'm sure I can get it working fur ye in a trice. Jist leave it tao me," said Chief Engineer Scott confidently.

"Hey, Bones!" Kirk waved a friendly hand to the Doctor across the coffee lounge, and McCoy obediently changed course to join him at his table.

"Seen Scotty anywhere about? He's been hiding away somewhere these last two or three days."

"Indeed," Spock corroborated solemnly, "I have found him extremely elusive of late. I have been wanting to check the Stores requisition lists with him, but he seems preoccupied with some private task at the moment."

McCoy choked on his coffee. "Oh, that - it's just a little repair job he's doing for me." He grinned to himself. His companions looked at him curiously, but forbore to comment, and gradually the talk drifted to other topics.

A week had passed, and McCoy was beginning to have the uneasy feeling that the joke had gone too far, when Scott unexpectedly burst into his office just after morning rounds.

"I've done it!" he exclaimed triumphantly.

McCoy leapt to his feet. "Who... what?"

"I've done it! It's working! And a beauty it is too."

The Doctor stared at him blankly.

"Come on, man - it's out there now!"

Dazed, he followed the Engineer into the outer office. There on the bench, proudly gleaming, stood what he vaguely recognised as his own brainchild. But what a transformation had been wrought!

"O' course, it was easier when I realised a couple o' screws and such had been lost, and the copper piping," remarked Scott, further obscuring matters for McCoy.

"Oh, of course."

"Well, don't you want to see it working?"

"Sure, sure. Yes, of course."

Scott pressed home the plunger from the remains of McCoy's second-best hypo, and the contraption sprang into life. There was a mighty hiss of escaping steam and a trap-door in the top sprang into life. Slowly a narrow, silvery rod emerged from the trap until about six inches protruded and poised there, quivering.

There was a tense silence. McCoy turned to the Engineer.

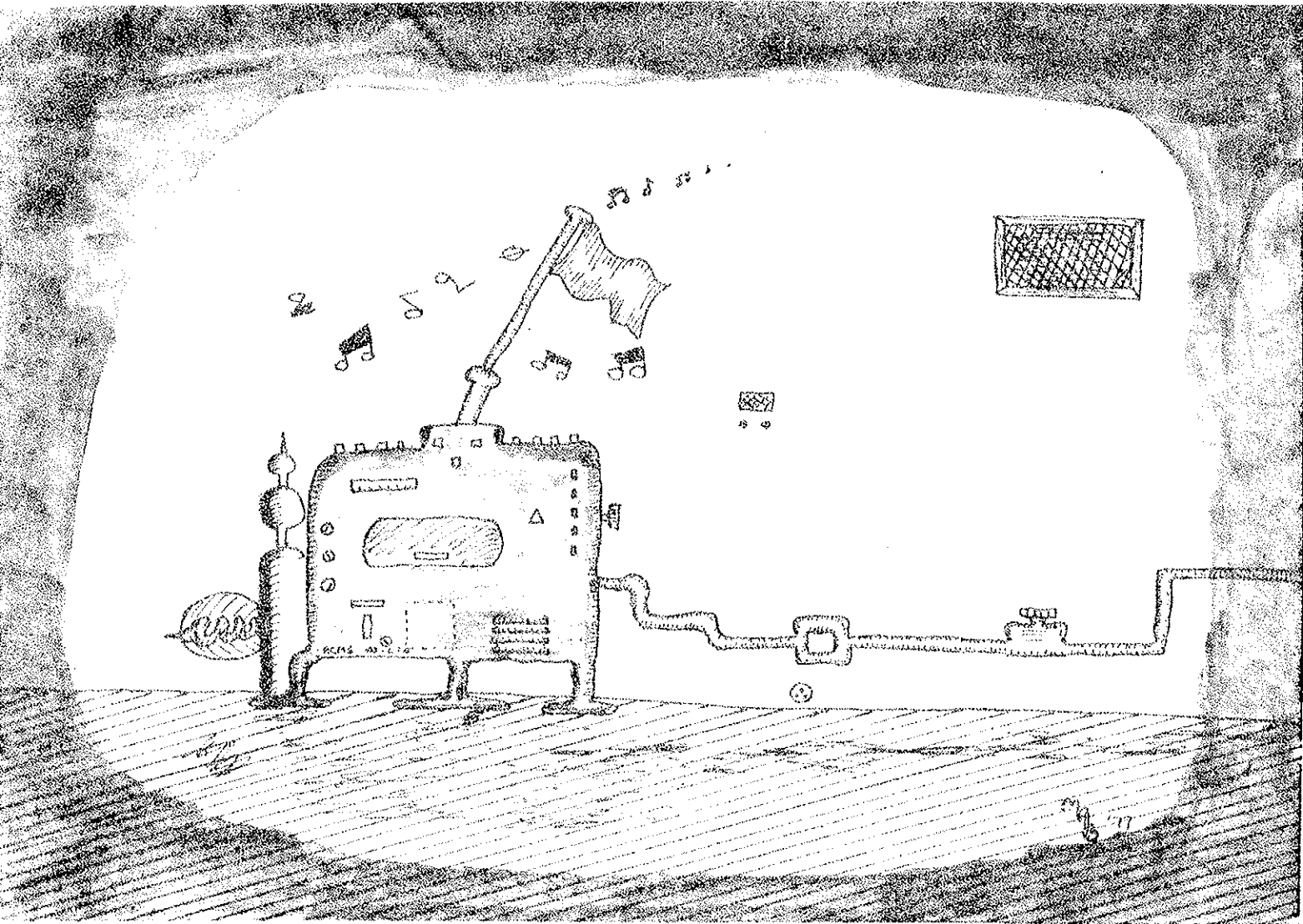
"Is..."

Without warning, the machine gave a piercing whistle, coloured lights flashed on, and the rod quivered again. Then, at three times the normal tempo, it burst into a shrill rendering of 'Dixie', a tiny old-style American flag broke from the top of the rod and the whole set-up began to revolve at high speed, flashing brilliantly.

"My God," breathed McCoy.

"Aye, isn't she the beauty?" replied Scott proudly. "And verra rare, too. It's a hydro-vacuumatic flag-waggler, mebbe the only one left still working..."

The machine had by now finished with 'Dixie' and was well on the way through a frenetic version of the 'Stars and Stripes', banner wagging furiously.



"It's for celebratin' special occasions," Scotty continued. "Grand, grand. And that's not all it does."

Before the bemused Doctor could ask any further questions, the doors at the far end of sickbay slid open and Spock strode in, saying as he did so, "Excuse me, Doctor, but I believe Stores has mistakenly deliv..." He stopped in his tracks as the full glories of the hydro-vacuumatic flag-waggler met his startled gaze. He swallowed, then continued gamely, "Mistakenly delivered here a package intended for Rec Room 2. It contained a tea dispenser..." He broke off suddenly, staring carefully at the infernal machine. Mr. Scott, too, was looking at the metal cylinder at its heart, then he turned awfully towards the Doctor.

There was a silence, broken only by the shrill whistle of 'Yankee Doodle'. McCoy smiled sheepishly.

"Leonard," began Mr. Scott, more in sorrow than in anger, but he was interrupted by the Starfleet Anthem, fortissimo. The flag quivered to attention, the revolving stopped, and with a roar and a hiss the machine produced a thermal beaker full of bubbling liquid.

Mesmerised, Spock leaned forward, picked it up, sniffed, and sipped the scalding brew. "Excellent," he murmured.

McCoy's face broke into a lopsided grin of relief, and a tiny gurgle escaped the Engineer. Spock, oblivious of them both, had pushed the 'on' button and was watching in rapt fascination as the massacre of 'Dixie' began once more.

"Come on, Leonard," whispered Scotty.

"Hum?"

"We've got some celebratin' to do as well! And, no disrespect to your grandfather," he chuckled, "I think something stronger than tea is called for!"

With a glance of mutual understanding, the two men tiptoed out of sickbay. Behind them echoed the strains of 'Yankee Doodle' as the enraptured First Officer happily poked and prodded at the knobs and switches of the flag-waggler, absently imbibing his second cup of tea!

PUZZLE

Find all fourteen heavy cruiser class starships. The names may be written vertically, horizontally or diagonally, and may read from left to right, right to left, top to bottom or bottom to top.

N E N O I T A L L E T S N O C
 O E I L E I N A P Q F A R P O
 T E N T W R P R I S E R V O N
 G O C H E E B I O T I A O T S
 N D I B T O I S P C L T R E T
 I D L C H O S A R I O T K M I
 X L B S E R G R A S I O T P T
 E F U L X P I N E D P K O K U
 L S P O C R T W O C K H W I T
 H T E H A E Y O R K T O W N I
 L O R U L T S C O T B O N L O
 O K I R I N T R E P I D I S N
 A E T E B E I Q A O E P D O G
 O I X T U G A R R A F A D O O
 D U P E R E T E X E T E P I K

The list of ships to be found is as follows -

Constellation	Constitution	Enterprise	Excalibur
Exeter	Farragut	Hood	Intrepid
Kongo	Lexington	Potempkin	Republic
Valiant	Yorktown		

Compiled by Steven Hatton.

Answers on page 31

Kirk left the rec room with a sigh
 And a tear in the tail of his eye
 And he said, "Beg in vain,
 I'll not trust you again
 Spock, you finished the chocolate pie."

HOME IS THE HUNTED by Veronica Wallace

"Come, Kirk-ala!" Tiraytha crooned, long spiked lashes fluttering over liquid amber eyes. Surely she was the sweetest, most beautiful woman on Kapan!

"Forget the strange one," she murmured. "Patoorit guests him. They see the wild land. He learns what he wishes. Come, Kirk-ala, drink. Eat of the fruit of Kapan. Then we dance for you. Tiraytha, she dance well." She raised the wine decanter gracefully.

"No. No more, Tiraytha! It must be nearly dark." Kirk struggled out of the depths of the Kapan guest chair. "We have to get back to the Enterprise. Scotty... Bones... It's time we left. You've entertained us well, Tiraytha, you and your friends... How much longer will your brother be? He said the visit would be brief, an hour or so in the flier, out to the wild lands. Spock should be back by now. What's keeping them, Tiraytha?"

"Always the strange one!" Tiraytha pouted. "Are we not beautiful? Does the guesting displeas? Speak, Kirk-ala, we will remedy. Kapan is guest-world. Let us guest you."

She wound slender brown arms around his neck and smiled up into his face. McCoy was having similar trouble - Sireeth would not let him leave his comfortable chair! Scotty, on a guest-ease talking to three of the Kapan maidens, showed no sign of stirring. Jim Kirk frowned. The party could go on... and on... and on... There was no need to leave. The Enterprise hung in orbit with a skeleton crew on duty, while the rest took very welcome shore leave on Kapan. A guest-planet, beautiful, welcoming, paradise indeed after the dull routine of the last months. And yet... this vague uneasiness... Spock had been gone so long... with the Kapan men-folk... he had not called in. But then again, why should he? If the wild lands held him interest... even although it got dark...

"Tiraytha, no. The party's over." He pushed her firmly from him, shook her very lightly. "Spock, Tiraytha, my First Officer. When do I get him back?"

She jerked away angrily, the translucent scarlet shimmer-gown fluttering around her sinuous body.

"Unkind, Kirk-ala! Ungracious! You spoil the guesting... all for that, the strange one... We go. Sireeth, an end. Come, leave them!"

Bright glittering fabrics swirled around the room, the multi-toned bell-beads of the door curtain chimed a frenzied harmony and the girls were gone. Scotty sighed and drained his jewelled cup. McCoy rose and crossed the flower-strewn mosaic floor to where the Captain stood, trying again and again to contact Spock on the communicator. To no purpose. The Enterprise reported a similar loss of contact.

"It's a guest-planet, Jim. What harm can come to him?" McCoy's reassurance was hesitant, revealing his own doubts. "He preferred to tour the planet with the men. He's having a ball somewhere, studying the mating habits of the sludge-beetle, or something. Patoorit will take care of him. Why worry?"

"His communicator could be damaged," Scotty suggested.

"In which case, he'd return." It was certain now, something must have happened. "We beam up. With the ship's sensors at our disposal we can scan the whole planet if we have to!"

"Spock!" Patoorit chuckled, long-lidded eyes glittering. "Another strange one! Look at the ears, my brothers, and the skin! Ah, we have bruised it... just a little! Shall we see it bleed?"

His hunting spear flashed in the dying sunlight. A long line appeared across Spock's naked body. Blood began to trickle.

"Green..." hissed his tormentors. "It has green blood, yet calls itself a man!"

"Vulcan blood." Spock was calm, almost relaxed in the fierce grip of his captors. Ringed with ready spears in the hands of Kapan under blood-lust, resistance was impossible. Watch, listen, learn...

"I am half Vulcan; you know that, Patoorit..."

A savage blow to the mouth jolted back his head.

"'Lord', creature, call me 'Lord!'" Patoorit snarled. "Are we your equals, animal? You dare to wear man-shape, to speak man-tongue! Kapan shall be cleansed of such!"

"I had gathered your antagonism is racially based," Spock said through swelling lips. "Perhaps there are also religious reasons? I know so little of..."

Another blow stunned him into silence.

"Religious reasons?" Patoorit panted. "You think us mumbling idiots? We are men of Kapan, creature - hunters, always hunters! But our fathers left us little game to hunt; only the crawling things our brats can kill bare-handed. So now we stock our hunting lands with such as you; you will make good sport, animal. But first you roam the lands awhile. Seek out the others... breed... My sons shall hunt for yours... Bell him, Catingis!"

Rough hands jerked back his head, thrust round his neck a noose of unbreakable hold-string. Bell beads chimed on it, each brilliant colour marking a different tone. He felt the coil tighten, a flash of pain as the heat-lock fused the ends together.

"We shall hear you, creature, when we hunt. The bells, their tones are noted. We tell our quarry by the tune it plays." He laughed. "Throw it down, friends. Let it run free, for now..."

Spock was dragged to the cliff edge - a steep slope of blue chalk. Spears pricked his back. He fell, and the bell-beads jingled as he rolled and tumbled down into the shadowed undergrowth below. Half stunned, he lay still, listening...

"We guard the borders, creature. Join your kind. One day, we hunt..."

A short while later the fliers soared into the evening sky and swooped away across the empty lands.

"People, in the wild lands?" Kirk was incredulous. "One group, you mean? Spock, Patoorit's party?"

"No, sir." Ensign Chekov was quite definite. "The sensors show many small groups scattered over the entire area. Human, probably very primitive. No machinery, nor power of any kind. Unless Kapan has religious groups who choose to live in monastic seclusion, as nomads... But there is no mention of that in the library computer. Or of these people."

"And Spock could be any one of them? The sensors cannot pick him out?"

"At this range, sir? If he were wholly Vulcan..."

"Captain!" Uhura's voice was urgent. "The Chieftan of Kapan! He wishes to beam up. He brings you news of Mr. Spock."

Spock loped tirelessly along the narrow track in the dense tangle of undergrowth. The sunrise scarcely warmed him, but by its light he saw the tracks of men among the twigs and fallen leaves. Not recent tracks... but he would find them, the hunted of Kapan... Who were they, natives of this planet, or 'guests' as he had been? Men, women, children, condemned to live and die as animals, prey to Patoorit and his kind?

The bell-beads round his neck sang at every step, their piercing notes dulling his hearing, vibrating through his mind. He made a conscious effort to cancel out the auditory receptors most affected, leaving his hearing part impaired, but capable of registering sounds on other levels. Running naked, bare-foot, a long forgotten sensation from his childhood; but with unknown perils, here. The wild lands of Kapan were so little documented. But the others, they survived... how? As savages? Did fear and degradation keep them as ferocious as the hunters?

Spock had every intention of finding out. Then he could turn his thoughts to the problem of contacting the Enterprise.

They waited in the transporter room as three figures shimmered into being; Tiraytha, Patoorit, and their father Thath, Chieftan of Kapan. Tiraytha ran wailing to crouch at Kirk's feet, Patoorit flung himself face down before them, arms extended, hands empty, open, palms up.. Thath, a burden in his hands covered in a heavy grey cloth, stood tall and dignified, his eyes downcast.

"Thath - you are welcome to my ship." Kirk gave formal greeting hurriedly, trying to ignore the chill foreboding that he felt. "News... You bring me news of Spock?"

"The missing one is dead." Thath's voice was calm, impersonal. He raised sharp, watchful eyes to study them. "My son returns alive to tell his death. That is his shame. We bring you these - belongings of the dead one. They have been cleansed. I regret that sorrow touches you, here on Kapan. Patoorit, speak."

Kirk took the bundle from the old man's hands, uncovering Spock's equipment, tricorder, communicator, belt - everything but clothing. Thath watched wordlessly, his face a wrinkled sallow mask. Patoorit was speaking, a low, inaudible mutter.

"Stand up, Patoorit... and Tiraytha. How did he die?" Kirk's voice was harsh. McCoy's hand closed on his shoulder.

"The worms..." Patoorit spoke jerkily, standing stiff before them, his gaze reaching woodenly beyond them. "...He crossed a glade and fell into their nest. He died. There was no way to aid, or save. The wolf-worms took him."

"Where is his body, Patoorit? If Spock is dead, we give his body honour. Why did you leave it?" Angry disbelief was raging in Kirk's mind. Spock could not be dead...

"The dead one leaves no body." Patoorit's eyes shifted a little. "Wolf-worms are all-devouring. We used our spears to reach his tools, metal they cannot harm."

"And I was harsh to you," Tiraytha wept. "Forgive, Kirk-ala! It was the strange one spoiled our guesting... I weep. Forgive...!"

"Spoiled the guesting?" McCoy was incredulous.

"Spock, Tiraytha," Kirk muttered. "His name was Spock." Strange that they never named him - was there some reason? "Patoorit, take us there." Resolve stirred him to action. He had to know the truth. "Can you pin point the spot? So we can beam directly there?"

"Not I!" Tiraytha's trembling cry was piteous. "I fear the worms."

Patoorit glanced at her indifferently, shrugged, and looked at Kirk. "I can do it. Come, we see the worms. But not the lost one. There is nothing left to see."

McCoy and Kirk watched him turn away with Scotty, and looked at one another questioningly. A certain smugness in his voice, a hint of triumph, even...?

He was tiring, but the track was broader. Spock had covered many miles, seen the wavering paths branch and cross. Always he had chosen the wider trail, or that most recently used. Now he had crossed the hills, and the path wound down towards

a river valley. Wound tortuously... a direct line across the turf, under the feather-fronded trees, would save him time and effort. He left the path, loped on downhill, into a heady scent, while a corner of his brain pondered on the oddity of that unnecessary... detour in the path? To avoid what...? His feet thudded on the turf, the slender trees vibrated... A sudden hail around him, a shower of red... petals? Seeds? They pattered against his bare flesh, clung there, swelling.

Spock raced out into the open, beating at the things, uselessly. He recognised the panic that had gripped him, quelled it, investigating as calmly as he could this new phenomenon. He had, after all, set out to study Kapan's ecology...

Flowers, small red flowers, already fertilised... There were tendrils amongst the petals, anchoring them to his skin... No, rooting them... The tendrils had pierced the skin, were probing him... Pain was spreading like a slow fire. Difficult to quell entirely... The blooms were rubbery, he could not crush them, or detach them... The swelling, the seed pods were developing, fed on his blood, his tissue. An unknown species of carnivorous plant... and likely to remain so... Blackness was rising, engulfing him... He heard bells chiming as he fell...

"Hold still, fool. There are so many, they will kill you." The voice was young, a girl's. He lay gasping on his face while firm hands held him down.

"I have an antidote... a flower extract... but maybe not enough. Be still, I dare not waste it."

She worked in silence on his back and shoulders. A lancing spear-point of agony at every touch, that eased as suddenly, taking the fiery pain with it. She rolled him over, working quickly and carefully. Her head was a dark patch against the sun, which made her hair a halo.

"I have so little left... This last, here in your hair... I cannot, it is finished." She leaned closer, studying the bloom. She wore a tunic of woven silvery leaves, a cape of grasses. "It does you little hurt. Your hair is thick. The flower clings to that, it does not touch the skin. You are made safe."

She sat back on her heels and smiled at him. Her skin was honey gold, her eyes grey and humorous. Spock sat up.

"I should have known. Paths do not detour round safe places. Thank you. It seems unnecessary to add that I'm a stranger here."

"As are we all." Her face was sombre suddenly. She held up her hands, small, slender, graceful hands... six-fingered. "We differ, each of us. But we are not animal...and we do not go naked. Here, take this for now."

She gave him her cape and waited while he wound and tied it round his waist.

"I am Ardan. I take you to the Keep. Come, it isn't far."

"Here," said Patoorit, pointing to the churned black earth. "The pit. They dig beneath the ground. The strange one's weight broke through."

There were scraps of cloth in the soil... Spock's clothing, shredded... boots half-buried. Kirk moved closed, searching.

"Too close!" Patoorit stopped him and McCoy drew him back a pace.

"Watch!" Patoorit opened the skin bag at his hip and pulled out a chunk of rotting meat. He thrust it on the point of his spear, reached out and plunged it in the ground. When he lifted it out, it was alive, white with crawling, heaving inch-long worms. The disturbed soil was boiling with them... the grasses near their feet... Patoorit tossed the stinking mass away, and the worms veered back, towards it.

"The strange one died. They killed. You wish to stay?" Patoorit was brusque, almost insolent. Kirk shook his head and turned away. It was the

Doctor who called the Enterprise requesting a beam up.

The Keep was a cavern in the hillside. A spur of rock jutted high into the sky above it, towering over the gently swelling hills. The entrance was a cleft in the rock, screened by thorn bushes. There was no guard. Spock lifted an eyebrow and Ardan smiled.

"Why should we guard the Keep? It is the place for children, for the old and sick. The hunters scorn to touch it."

"Where are the others, then? The men and women?" They were walking now down a widening tunnel lit by smoking torches.

"We roam the wild lands, alone or in small groups. The fliers watch us always. It is forbidden to gather in large numbers. They punish us with fire."

"I saw only spears. They have other weapons, then?"

"Only on the fliers, to herd and threaten with. They take a pride in hunting with spears alone. And we have only wood and stone to fashion our defense." Ardan's voice was bleak and bitter, her face unreadable in the flickering shadows. She led him out into a chamber where children sat in groups around elderly men and women. "We teach the children all we can. Knowledge is strength. Come, all strangers must be brought to the information room. It is beyond."

"You teach strangers how to survive the hunt?" Spock questioned.

Ardan laughed. "Survive? We teach all that we can. But it is our custom to learn from strangers all that they can teach. Our elders write it down, our young ones learn from it. One day, perhaps, we shall have knowledge enough to achieve the home-going."

They were entering a smaller cavern now, where grey-haired people sat at rough hewn tables strewn with tablets of indented clay. Some studied, others wrote with pointed sticks. A tall, white-haired man rose to greet them.

"Ardan, you bring a new-comer! Welcome, both." He took their hands in his. "You are tired? Hungry? Come and sit awhile. Selta, bring food and drink - and healing salve. You have the marks of blood-blooms on your skin, my friend. Ardan released you?"

"Of all but one, Tarindi." Ardan smiled. "That one in his hair will die by morning. It does not touch the skin. I have no essence left. Can your healers give me more?"

"Gladly, child. But first you rest and eat."

He led them to a couch of dried sweet-smelling leaves. A woman with a humped back came with water and fresh bread on a wooden dish, and a clay pot full of ointment. Tarindi took it, began to tend the green-black marks that covered Spock.

"I don't believe it, Jim." McCoy slammed a balled fist into his palm, pacing fretfully to and fro. "That meat stank. I know of no creature that kills for food which would respond to meat that rotten. Except when starving, which, according to Patoorit, those worms weren't. I don't trust him either. Scotty, Jim, do you?"

They shook their heads, frowning.

"So," Scotty mused, "we assume that they are liars, and Spock, alive or dead, is somewhere else."

"Alive." Kirk was thinking clearly now. The shock and horror that had stricken him were lifting. "If he were really dead, they'd have shown us his body, in that hole. Being eaten, but still recognisable. Green blood would prove his identity. So, he lives. A captive? Or escaped?"

"Why would they keep him captive? What use could he be?" McCoy faced them. "Those Kapan buildings - they're simple structures. It's a guest world, and we have right of entry anywhere."

"A search? It's possible. Crewmen, in groups of two or three. But only as guests, exploring, visiting... Meanwhile, I think the wild lands deserve closer study. The shuttlecraft, Bones. We'll tour the place until he's found."

"But first, we get some rest." McCoy was adamant. "We can leave in time to catch the next sunrise over that area. But we have to be fit if we're to help Spock any."

"Agreed. Meanwhile we'll keep the area monitored. It may give us a lead."

"Ardan spoke of home-going." It was night, but underground it made little difference. "Tarindi, are you natives of this world, or visitors, as I am?"

"Both, and many born of us here in the wilds. We do not make distinctions between peoples. We are all hunted, far from home. There is a faith that one day we will return. We keep the call-horns for that time. Here, in the Keep, the Great One. Others at watch-places in the lands. It is foretold that help will come suddenly. Our people must speed home, and the Keep here is the gateway."

"You can call them in? All of them?" Spock was eager - there was a chance, for all of them. "The Enterprise is somewhere overhead. It will be searching. They are not easily deceived. If we can make some sign, to let my people know... and call yours in, before the hunters strike..."

"Fire for signalling by night, and smoke by day." Ardan had caught his enthusiasm. "The hunters will come for sure, but our people travel quickly, even by night."

"It is not time." Tarindi was sombre, unimpressed. "The Call-horns may not sound before the day of Home-going. It is the Law. We may not break it, however strong your faith in those you leave."

The old man rose and turned away. Spock made to follow him, but Ardan caught his hand.

"He will not be persuaded. The old need much convincing. They wait for certainty, or miracles. Tell me your plan. The Call-horn is unguarded..."

It was dawn. Spock caught the first rays of the rising sun as he stared down from the summit of the great rock spur. Mists filled the river valley, but on the hillside - that was smoke, from carefully tended fires. He raised the Call-horn to his lips again. So small, it seemed, and yet the ancient, fine-honed wood and red-fibred mouthpiece sang loud enough to deafen him. Other horns answered his, from all around... nearer, much nearer than before...

"The groups are moving, Captain. Gathering in towards the South." Chekov was jubilant. "If Mr. Spock is one of them... I can give you the co-ordinates for the gathering point. Will you still need the shuttlecraft? We could beam down..."

"I'll scout it first. Any sign of the Kapan fliers? Do they patrol at night?"

"Seemingly not, sir. But we have detected some entering the area."

"Keep me informed. Bones, Scotty, we're leaving now."

The fires were burning well. Now, in the light, Ardan and her friends were working against time. The hillside grass and shrubs made too much smoke. If fliers came too soon... Already the fires on the lower slopes had done their

work. The outline of the Starfleet insignia was nearing completion. If the hunters reached it first, they would have to fire the whole hillside to burn away the mark. Even then, the Enterprise would notice it, ask questions. They had a chance...

The fliers came, swooping low over the further hills. Spock, from his vantage point, saw them first. He blew the horn again, short, strident notes - the alarm he had pre-arranged with Ardan. People ran for cover as the hunt ships flamed across the hillside, soared, turned and came again. The grass was burning in wide arcs already, Spock's signal scored across, almost unrecognisable... But there, to the East, the Galileo... They had come.

Kirk was dogging the fliers, trying to study the ground through the drifts of smoke. Scotty, his accent sharpened with excitement, was in contact with the Enterprise. McCoy strained to see...

"Jim, a man on the cliff-edge. They're shooting at him..."

Scotty shrieked co-ordinates to the Enterprise as the figure slipped, hung for a moment, then began a slow, dream-like fall down the sheer rock wall. If the transporter could not catch him...

Uhura's voice, almost delirious with relief:

"We have Mr. Spock, sir. Report from the transporter room coming in... he's unharmed, but... he's wearing a grass skirt, beads, and there's a flower in his hair. He also has a trumpet, made of wood... What kind of party was that, anyhow?"

"Welcome him home, Uhura. We're setting down. I want to meet his friends. Send word to Thath... I think Starfleet will want an explanation from him. Kirk out." He was grinning now.

McCoy whooped with laughter. "Spock in fancy dress... I hope someone up there had the sense to get a picture of him..."

ANSWER TO PUZZLE

```

N E N O I T A L L E T S N O C
O E I L E I N A P Q F A R P O
T E A T E R P H I S E R V O N
G O C H E E B I O T I A O T S
N D I B T O I S P C L T R E T
I D L C H Q S A R I O T K M I
X L B S E R Q R A S I O T P T
E F U L X P I N E D P K O K U
L S P O C R T W O C K H W I T
H T E H A E Y O R K T O W N I
L O R U L T S C O T B O N L O
O K I R E N T R E P L D I S N
A E T E B E I Q A O E P D O G
O I X T U G A R R A F A D O O
D U P E R E T E X E T E P I K
    
```

CHEKOV: Why aren't there any dogs on the Moon?

SULU: Because there aren't any trees.

THE CLEANSING FIRE by Security Officer Baillie

Did you ever see that old motto that people used to stick up in offices and such places way back?

"You don't HAVE to be crazy to work here - but it helps."

Well, there are times when I reckon that whoever wrote that must have known about the Enterprise. Think about it - weeks of nice, normal, peaceful routine, then suddenly everybody's rushing around in a frenzy of activity and sheer heart-stopping terror. So why do I stick around? I guess because I'm crazy too.

Take our visit to Tessra, for instance. At the time, I swore blind that if I ever got off that planet, I'd quit Starfleet so fast even Scotty couldn't build an engine to catch me.

It all starts out as a routine planet survey - but then, doesn't it always? Spock's running the show because McCoy's hauled the Captain off to sickbay - he picked up a bad case of fever on our last call, and it's not responding to treatment. Our tame witch-doctor's just about running himself into the ground trying to come up with a cure.

Nobody gets too excited when orders come from Starfleet Command to survey Tessra, even though the Prime Directive is in operation; it's the sort of mission we've done a hundred times before with no problems.

It doesn't even matter too much when Scotty reports a transporter malfunction which he reckons will take quite a while to fix. Rather than hang around, Spock decides to use the shuttlecraft to take a landing party down to complete the survey. He goes himself, of course, taking Sulu, a geologist, and a couple of security guards, me and a bloke called Danvers.

I'm helping Sulu when it blows up on us; we're quite a distance away from the rest of the survey party when an alarm call comes from Danvers, who's working with Spock and the geologist. Sulu and I drop everything, and head back to where we left the others. Not being too sure what's happened, we approach quietly, and take a look from hiding. It's lucky we do, because what we see is pretty bad. Danvers and the geologist are dead, no question about that, and at first I think that Spock is too, until I see him move, and realise he's only been knocked out. Standing over the bodies are about a dozen Tessrans, and they don't look any too friendly. I don't see any firearms, but they're all armed with efficient-looking swords and spears. Sulu has his translator on, and we can make out what they're saying. The leader, who has been bending over Spock, turns to the others.

"Bind the demon securely, and watch him closely. We must return at once to the temple - the High Priest must be told of this."

A couple of the men lead up some animals that I suppose you'd call horses if you weren't too fussy, and Spock is tied on to one; he looks dazed, but he's trying to pull himself together. The others mount up, and they head off East. As they move off Sulu leaps up, and I have to pull him down again.

"Just what do you think you're doing?" I ask him.

"They've got Mr. Spock - we can't let them take him."

"Listen, Sulu, remember the Prime Directive is in operation here. It's bad enough already, but if we go charging in, there'll really be trouble. Nobody's going to leave Mr. Spock, but we've got to think things out first."

Luckily, the Tessrans haven't spotted the Galileo concealed among the rocks, so Sulu and I take the bodies on board, and try to work out the best plan of action. The first thing is to find out where Spock is, so Sulu calibrates the sensors for Vulcan life readings, and we manage to track him. After a couple of hours we've got a fix on him - wherever the Tessrans were heading, they're there; presumably in the 'temple' the leader spoke of. In the meantime, I've called up Scotty, and filled him in on what's happening.

He wants us back on board, so we prepare to take off; I tell him that on the way back I'll fly over the co-ordinates we now have for Mr. Spock, and try to get some idea of the general layout. The sensors should give us a good picture of the terrain, and we can fly high enough not to be seen from the ground.

That done, we return to the Enterprise. The bodies are taken to sickbay, and Sulu and I are called to the briefing room.

It seems weird to be sitting there without either the Captain or Mr. Spock in charge. Apart from Sulu and me, there's only Scotty and Dr. McCoy.

"Right," says Scotty. "What happened - and how did it happen?"

I tell him, with as much detail as I know. "Don't ask me how it happened," I end up. "Danvers was security watch on Mr. Spock. He's paid for his mistake, poor devil."

"The trouble is," says Scotty, "that Mr. Spock may pay as well. Doctor, what's the Captain's condition? Is he in a fit state to be told what's happened?"

"Absolutely not," says McCoy firmly. "You know what he's like - if he gets wind of this, he'll try to take over, and it'll finish him. We've got to handle this ourselves."

"The transporter's still out," Scotty says distractedly, "so we can't snatch Spock that way; the Prime Directive forbids a rescue party. We can't leave him there, yet we can't go in and get him, so what the hell do we do?"

"We can't send a landing party," I say slowly, "but we could send a couple of men down in native clothes to take a look at the situation on the ground. I'd be glad to go myself - I might be able to contact Mr. Spock, and he may have some ideas himself."

"It does seem to be a possibility, Mr. Baillie," Scotty nods. "Let's see what information the shuttlecraft picked up."

The film projected onto the briefing room screen shows what appears to be a fairly large city; its most distinguishing feature is a large, flat-topped pyramid set in an open space in the shadow of a towering cliff.

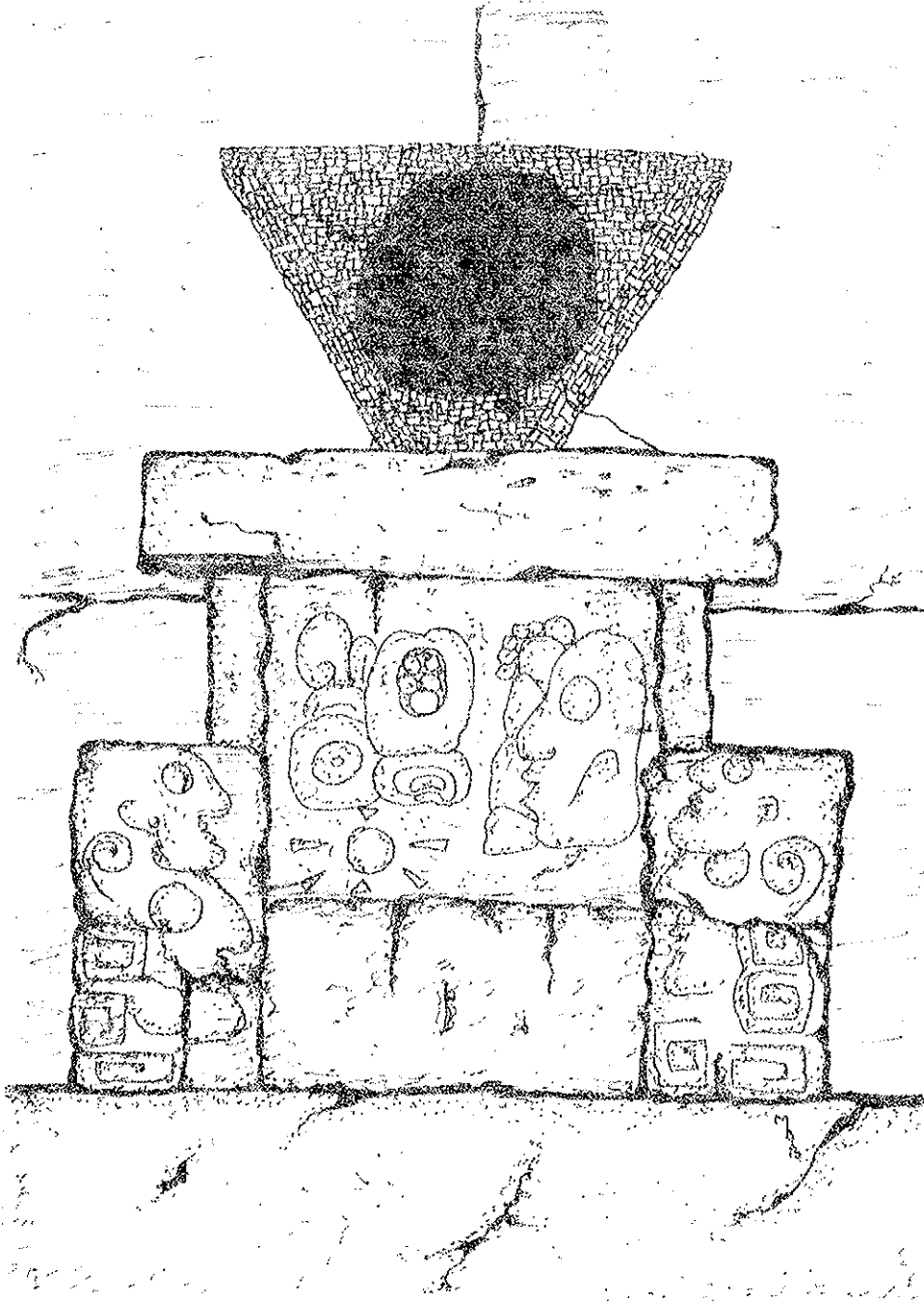
"The life readings place Mr. Spock within the pyramid," says Scotty. "Presumably this is the 'temple' the Tessran leader spoke of; that, and the reference to a 'High Priest' seems to indicate some sort of religious authority. Taking that into account, I don't like the fact that they called Spock a 'demon'; he could be in really bad trouble."

"It's those ears of his!" snorts McCoy, but you can tell he's worried too. "Scotty, we should do something soon - the longer we leave it, the worse trouble he could be in."

We fix it up that Sulu and I will take the shuttlecraft and return to the surface. Disguised as Tessrans, we'll try to get into the temple and contact Spock. Scotty gives me a miniature communicator in case I get a chance to smuggle it to the Vulcan; it won't reach the Enterprise, but I'll be able to pick it up on my own communicator. It's not much, but it's the best we can do for the moment.

We land the shuttlecraft as close to the city as we dare, and conceal it as well as possible among the rocks, then we set out on the hike to the temple. Seems as if the entire population have the same idea, because we soon meet up with crowds of Tessrans all heading in the same direction. Our disguises pass muster, and it turns out to be a lucky break, because we're soon lost in the crowd.

On this level we get a better idea of the layout of the city. The pyramid temple stands alone, backed by the towering cliff that rises behind it, and an open space in front, bounded by a line of marker posts, and forming a triangle with a curved base; beyond this boundary the streets radiate out, so that the city forms a semi-circle with the cliffs as the diameter, and the temple at the centre.



At last we pass through the open gates of the temple, and come into a vast hall which takes up most of the ground floor of the pyramid. On the rear wall is an intricate mosaic picture, which I recognise as a stylised sun disc set in a triangle. In front of this is a raised platform, on which stands an altar and a carved throne. Just as Sulu and I come through the gate, the notes of a gong echo round the hall, and the Tessrans fall to their knees as if they'd been slugged; not wanting to be conspicuous, Sulu and I go along with the crowd. Out of the corner of my eye I can see some movement taking place on the dais, but I wait until everyone else stands up before I risk taking a look. There are now about half a dozen of the guards we'd already seen, and the throne is occupied by an elderly man I take to be the High Priest. At first I don't see Spock, then the woman in front of me moves aside, and he's there. At the edge of the platform is a post, and he's chained to it by a metal collar round his throat. His hands are bound behind him, but he doesn't seem to be hurt.

"Draw nearer, Children of the Sun," says the old priest, "and look upon the demon who has been sent to trouble us."

There's a general movement towards the platform, so Sulu and I take advantage of the confusion to work our way nearer to Spock; soon I could reach out and touch him.

"Find me a diversion," I tell Sulu. "Preferably something noisy." He nods, and slips off through the crowd, just as I manage to catch Spock's eye. Trust old stone-face - he doesn't bat an eyelid, but he knows I'm there, he's recognised me.

The High Priest has risen from the throne and moved forward.

"My children, we have questioned the demon, but he will not reveal his purpose here. Never in history has such a one appeared to us, though the teachings of our ancestors have prepared us to deal with the evil he brings. The passage into our world has weakened his power, and by the grace of Hedra, we have been able to chain him."

At this point everyone bows in the direction of the altar, and it's pretty clear even to me that the Tessrans are sun worshippers, and Hedra is the incarnation of the sun. The priest goes on.

"We know that the power of the demon will be weakened for three days, therefore at sunrise on the third day he must pass to judgement. We ourselves dare not deal with one so great in evil; he will pass through the cleansing fire to Hedra, who will judge him in his own realm. Do not fear, he can do no harm. Go now, my people, and return at sunrise on the third day, when the fire will be lit, and this evil will pass from our midst."

As his words sink in, I realise just how much trouble we've bought this time; if I've picked up all this talk of fires correctly, the High Priest means to have Spock burned alive.

I'm just wondering where Sulu's got to when I hear a terrific crash from the temple entrance; somehow I manage not to look round, but take advantage of the confusion to move even closer to Spock, whose eyes are still on my face.

"Have you been searched?" I whisper, hoping he can hear me. He can, because he nods, then shakes his head when I ask, "Are you chained all the time?"

Thankfully I reach out and drop the communicator into his boot. "I'll be nearby," I tell him. "Contact me when you can."

I'm about to turn away, but his eyes hold me. "How is the Captain?"

His face and voice give nothing away, but I know him better than I did, and I can see how worried he is.

"The Captain's fine," I assure him. "Dr. McCoy is taking good care of him - he'll probably be up and about by the time we get back."

So O.K., it's a lie, but I wasn't going to add to his troubles. I grin, then lose myself in the crowd. Now I've got to locate Sulu, and get out of there. As I get near the entrance, I spot him making his way towards me. At the same time, I see his 'diversion'; he's used his phaser to cut through the hinges of the gate, and the crash of its falling gave me the time I needed.

"Lucky nobody spotted your phaser beam," I mutter.

"No chance. I made my way to the back of the crowd, and they were all too interested in the 'demon' to notice me."

"Good. Come on, we've got to find somewhere to hole up until Mr. Spock makes contact."

It's no use going into the city, and we can't get too far away because of the limited range of the communicator, so we decide to try the cliffs behind the temple. There don't seem to be any guards rushing about, so it's obvious the Tessrans don't expect anyone to come screaming in demanding their demon back.

Sulu's performance with the gate hasn't caused a panic either, so I reckon they've assumed it was some sort of accident.

As we pass behind the temple, Sulu spots a cave not too far up the cliff face which makes a good hiding place, so we settle down to wait. There's no word from Spock for a couple of hours, and I'm starting to get restless, when my communicator bleeps.

"Baillie here," I acknowledge.

"Good evening, Mr. Baillie. I trust that you are safely concealed?"

Just once, I'd like to see that man get really agitated about something.

"Yes, thank you, Mr. Spock. Sulu and I are in a cave behind the temple."

"Ah, yes, Mr. Sulu. I take it he was responsible for the diversion?" Honestly, social chit-chat at a time like this!

"What's your position, Mr. Spock?"

"I am at present confined in a cell just under the roof of the temple. There are guards outside, but I am not under constant supervision."

"How about windows" Any way out there?"

"Negative, Mr. Baillie. The opening is too small."

"Could we get to you from inside the temple?"

"I think not. The upper part of the temple is restricted to the guards and priests; you would be questioned almost at once."

None of this sounds any too helpful, but I persevere. "Have you been told what they intend to do with you?"

"Yes, the High Priest was most explicit. The...execution...will take place on the temple roof. I will be chained to the pyre at sunset, and the fire will be lit at dawn."

His voice is as dispassionate as ever; you'd never believe he's talking about his own agonising death.

"Listen, Mr. Spock," I tell him. "To be honest, I haven't the faintest idea how to get you out. As soon as it's dark, I'll try and reach the temple roof - I may get some inspiration once I've seen the layout."

"Someone is coming," he says hurriedly. "Spock out."

I put away the communicator, and take a look at the temple; the sides of the pyramid are stepped, and I reckon I'll be able to climb it - I used to do a bit of rock climbing once.

As soon as dusk has fallen, I start the climb; no point in hanging about. I've got the beginnings of an idea, but I'll need to check out the roof before I go any further. It's a stiff climb, but not impossible, and at last I crawl over the low parapet onto the flat roof. Trying to get my breath back, I take a look round. The site of the execution is obvious enough; in the centre of the roof is a high platform which I judge can be clearly seen from ground level; on the platform the wood for the pyre is already in position, with the metal stake rising from the centre. There's a small altar on the platform, and I'm betting Spock's life and mine that the High Priest will light the fire from that spot. I can see that a man bound to the stake would be well above the head of anyone standing on the platform. All at once my idea seems possible. I make the return trip to the cave, where Sulu is waiting anxiously.

"I think I've got it, Sulu. Any word from Mr. Spock?"

"Nothing, Mr. Baillie. I hope he's all right."

I trigger the call signal on the communicator; Scotty's rigged it so that the note is too high-pitched for Human (and, we hope, Tessran) ears, but audible to Vulcans. There's no reply at first, then at last,

"Spock here."

"Thank heaven! I think I've found the way out, Mr. Spock; Sulu and I are going back to the ship for some equipment - don't worry if you can't reach me for a bit. I'll contact you again before we make the snatch."

"Thank you, Mr. Baillie. Please do not take any unnecessary risks on my behalf. Spock out."

To tell the truth, I'm a bit worried by this exchange. Spock is never exactly bubbling over with enthusiasm, but his voice sounds strange - even more than usually flat, and stilted. Still, the only thing I can do for him is get back to the Enterprise and start things moving, so Sulu and I head off back to the Galileo.

Once more it's just the four of us gathered in the briefing room. McCoy looks distinctly edgy as he comes in, and says to Scotty,

"Jim's beginning to suspect that something's wrong - he's come round a couple of times and asked for Spock; I don't know how much longer I can stall him."

Scotty turns to me. "Any progress, Mr. Baillie?"

I explain the situation to him, then go on, "As I see it, the best solution would be to rescue Mr. Spock without the Tessrans realising he's gone. They get rid of their demon, we get Spock back, and we don't upset Starfleet Command by violating the Prime Directive."

"And how do we accomplish that little miracle?" snorts McCoy.

"That's up to Mr. Scott. At sunset tomorrow, Mr. Spock will be taken from his cell to the temple roof, and chained to the stake. He will remain there until dawn. That's when we make the snatch - during the night. Mr. Scott, do you have enough time to construct a robot duplicate of Mr. Spock? It won't need to be elaborate, as long as it looks like him and has the ability to move."

"I get the picture," Scotty says excitedly. "Yes, it can be done."

"Well, I don't get it," grumbles McCoy. "What's the idea?"

"The idea is that I climb the pyramid during the night, release Mr. Spock, replace him with the robot duplicate, and we head back to the shuttlecraft. It's full of holes, I know, and it's a terrific gamble, but I don't see any other way. From what I've seen of the arrangements, the Tessrans won't get close enough to detect the substitution; once the execution is over, it should be easy."

"Well, laddie, it's the best chance we're likely to get; I'll away to Engineering and see what I can do about the robot. Bones, you'd best get back to sickbay and keep an eye on Jim - we don't want him getting wind of this."

For the next few hours I feel pretty useless; I try to grab some sleep, but it's no good - I keep going over things in my mind, trying to plan ahead for any snags that might crop up. There are so many I nearly scrap the whole thing right away, but it's the best we've got to work with. At long last Scotty calls me back to the briefing room; he's beaming like a proud father, and with good reason - the robot is as near perfect as I ever saw.

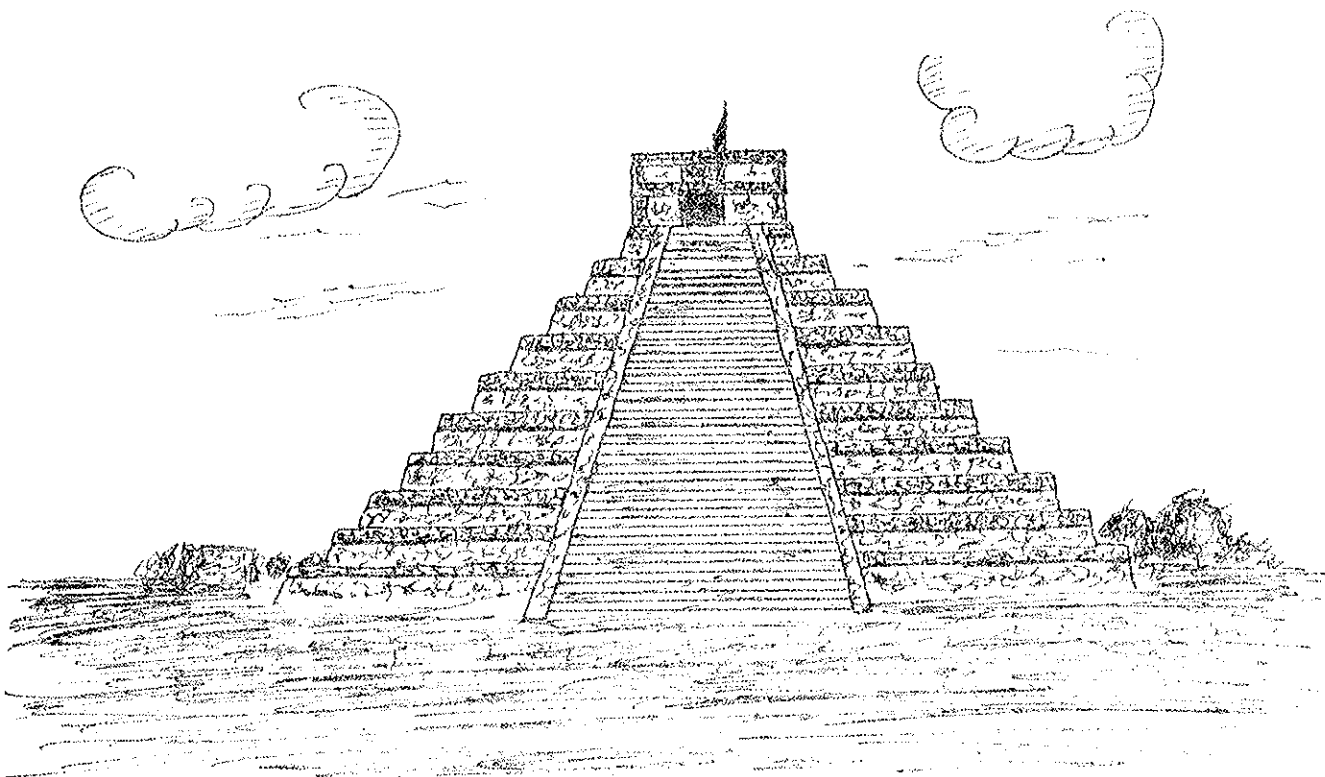
"Chekov spoke to it in the corridor," he says smugly, "and didn't spot it until I told him. It won't be able to do much, but I've programmed it to react to the flames; it should fool the Tessrans. I think it would be better, though, if I beam it down to you once you're on the roof. The transporter's all right for equipment now, and it'll save you having to control it on the way in to the city."

"Thanks, Mr. Scott. I'll keep in contact."

I winkle Sulu out of the rec room where he's busy chatting up one of the new nurses, and we're back into action. On the way down to the surface, we fix it up

that this time he'll stay with the Galileo while I go and get Spock; it's taking too much of a chance leaving the shuttlecraft unguarded so near the city.

By this time, I could find my way back to the cave blindfolded. The Tessrans are not a nosy bunch, luckily, and nobody seems to have noticed my comings and goings. I tuck myself away in the cave, and try to call Mr. Spock to let him know I'm back on the job, but there's no answer. I tell myself not to worry, there are probably guards around and he can't use the communicator. I'm sure he'll find a way to let me know if there has been any change in the plans for him. Sure enough, just about sunset I make out some activity on the temple roof. I don't want to blow the whole deal by being spotted now, so I keep a discreet eye on things from cover. It seems somebody up there likes me, because when they've finished I can see that Spock is alone on the roof - the Tessrans haven't posted any guards.



As soon as it's dark enough, I make with the mountaineering bit again. There's enough light for me to see where I'm going, but not enough to make me easily seen from the ground. I'm just congratulating myself on how well things are going when I reach the pyre and get a good look at Spock. That's when I start reciting a list of the unpleasant things that should happen to idiots like me who join Starfleet Security. They've given him a real working over; the state he's in, I wonder that he's still conscious, but he lifts his head as he hears me.

"Good evening, Mr. Baillie. I am pleased to see you."

His usual unflappable greeting; but his voice is a mere whisper. He's been horribly flogged; some of the lashes have landed on his face, which is badly cut and swollen, and his lips are bleeding. When I release the collar from his throat I have to catch him as his dead weight falls against me. He's never going to manage the climb down from the roof, so I lay him down, move out of earshot, and call up Scotty.

"There's been a change of plan," I tell him. "I'm going to need some extra equipment."

"What's the problem, Mr. Baillie?"

"Mr. Spock has been hurt. We're not going to make it back to the Galileo tonight, we'll have to hide out in the cave."

"What do you need?"

"Ask Dr. McCoy to send me a medical kit - I'd better give Spock a sedative before I try to get him away; in fact I'd be happier if he was totally out - he's in pretty bad shape. I'll need some rope as well, and when we get back to the cave we could use some food and water."

"Right. That's a medical kit and rope now, food and water when you give me the co-ordinates for the cave. Stand by, I'm sending the robot down."

A couple of minutes later the shimmer of the transporter effect signals the arrival of the robot. First thing is to do something for Spock, so I fetch the medical kit. Bones has labelled the hypo, so I give him a shot, and he passes out. Then I reckon I'd better get the robot in position just in case anybody gets nosy, so I ease off Spock's torn shirt, and put it on the robot. It still doesn't look right, so to complete the picture I smear some of his blood on its face. When I get it locked into position on the pyre it looks convincing enough to me; I can only hope it does to the Tessrans.

Now I've got the job of getting Spock back to the cave. There's no other way, I'll have to carry him, so I get him over my shoulder in a fireman's lift and tie him to me as securely as I can manage. I take a last look round; everything looks much the way I found it, so I reckon I'd better get out of there.

The climb down is hellishly difficult - Spock's no featherweight, and I don't have much freedom of movement; at the same time I'm trying not to move too abruptly as I can't tell how badly he's hurt, and I don't want to make things worse. A couple of times I think we've had it, but we get down in one piece. The climb up to the cave is no picnic either, but eventually I stagger inside and lay Spock down. I make him as comfortable as I can, and do my best to clean up his injuries; he looks pretty bad to me, but what do I know? It's one time I could really do with McCoy here.

When I've done the best I can for him, I get back on to Scotty.

"Enterprise - Scott here. What's happening, Mr. Baillie?"

"I've made it back to the cave, and done what I can for Spock. Any chance of the transporter working soon?"

"Negative. It's going to take some time yet."

"Oh, damn! Well, I suppose there's no help for it, we'll have to stay here today and hope Mr. Spock is fit enough to make the Galileo after dark. Will you let Sulu know - he'll be wondering where we are."

"Will do, Mr. Baillie. I've got your co-ordinates now, and I'll have some supplies beamed down to you. Oh, Dr. McCoy's here - he wants a word."

"Baillie? How's Mr. Spock now?"

"Asleep, Doctor. He looks bad to me."

"Well, listen. I'm sending you some more medical supplies. Give him something to eat, then keep him asleep for the rest of the day. Just before you set out for the Galileo, inject him with the second hypo - it's labelled. It's a stimulant to keep him on his feet, but don't use it until you're ready to leave. Call me at once if there's any change in his condition. Good luck."

"Thanks, Doctor. Baillie out."

As I put away the communicator the supplies are beamed down, so I investigate, as I'm getting somewhat hungry by this time. It's fairly standard stuff, but then comes a well-wrapped parcel, and I get the shock of my life. Scotty has actually parted with a bottle of his illicit alcohol; real, honest-to-goodness Scotch, no less, which he usually guards like he does his engines. Making a mental note not to say anything nasty about him for at least three weeks, I pour myself a drink. Just as I down it Spock comes to, so I take him over some food and water - no use offering him any Scotch. "Vulcans do not..." - you know how he goes on. Give him

his due, he makes a damn good job of hiding his pain as I help him sit up and give him the water.

"I owe you my life, Mr. Baillie. Thank you."

"My pleasure, sir," I grin. "Hey, it's nearly dawn - I'd better take a look and see if we've got away with it."

Stubborn as a mule, that man; he climbs to his feet and moves to the cave entrance with me. We've timed it just right, the Tessrans are already arriving on the roof. My heart's really in my mouth as they gather round the pyre, but nobody seems to notice anything different about the chained figure. There's a fair bit of chanting and moving around, then the High Priest takes a torch and sets light to the pyre. As the flames rise, the robot reacts according to Scotty's programming, and it's so realistic I break out in a cold sweat, realising how easily it could have been Spock up there.

"Well, Mr. Spock," I tell him, "it's not everyone who gets a grandstand seat at his own execution."

"Believe me, it is an experience I do not wish to repeat," he says. "Now, I believe I would like to sit down."

I help him back inside, and give him some more water.

"How did it happen?" I ask as I rebandage the still bleeding scars on his chest and arms.

"The High Priest believed that I could be persuaded to reveal my purpose here. He persisted in the belief that I am some sort of demon, and that pain would so weaken my thinking that I would tell him what he wanted to know. That is why I was unable to reply to your last signal - I could not reach the communicator."

He's very white when I finish bandaging him, and ease him back against the cave wall. I'm still wishing McCoy was here, but in the absence of our pet witch-doctor, I give him another shot with the hypo. As soon as he's safely out I pour myself another drink from Scotty's bottle, and settle down to pass the day. From time to time I take a look outside, but everything stays peaceful.

As darkness falls I waken Spock, and take him his share of the remaining food and water. He eats carefully, in total control of his actions, yet I know he must still be in great pain; and somehow we've to cover several miles of rough country before morning. When we've finished eating, I give him the Tessran clothes I've had sent down for him, and the hooded cloak which completes the disguise, because if anyone spots those ears, it's all up with us. He gets edgy when I take out the stimulant from the medical kit.

"I am perfectly all right, Mr. Baillie," he says stiffly. "I have no need of any of Dr. McCoy's drugs."

"Sorry, sir, orders," I tell him, and move over to give him the shot; in his normal state he could stop me easily, and it's a sign of how bad he is when he submits without further protest.

"Come on, sir, time we were going."

I take a last look round to make sure we haven't left any evidence of our stay, then we begin the climb down. He's very slow and unsteady, unlike his usual swift and precise movements, but we make it safely to the ground and set off through the city. There are plenty of Tessrans about; looks like they've been celebrating the destruction of the 'demon', because most of them are drunk. It's a lucky break for us, as Spock's hesitant step could be put down to intoxication if anybody is watching. We're just passing a particularly merry group when he stumbles, and only my arm round him saves him from falling. Normally I'd never dare touch him, knowing how he hates it, but this is an emergency. As I expect, he stiffens at my touch, but I guess he realises he needs help, because he leans on my arm for a moment before he pulls away and we go on.

At last we're out into the darkness of the countryside, but if the danger from the city lights has passed, we now have to contend with the rough going. I think he's too far gone to notice as he accepts my help again; I can feel how the strain is telling on him - it's sheer will-power that keeps him on his feet now, and I've no medication left to give him. Somehow we struggle on, making the best time we can. If dawn catches us in the open, I guess we've had it.

When I'm sure we're near the Galileo, I give Sulu a call, and he's the most welcome sight I've seen in a long time when he appears out of the darkness, and gives me a hand to get the by now only half-conscious Spock aboard. As soon as we've cleared with Scotty, we head off back to the Enterprise.

The short rest on the return flight seems to have perked Spock up a bit, because he manages to leave the Galileo on his own two feet. McCoy's waiting, diagnostic scanner in hand, looking as if someone's just done him a personal injury. He takes readings from Spock, and his expression is one of deep concern.

"I'm sorry, Spock," he says slowly, and considering the way he normally talks to the Vulcan, the gentleness of his voice really surprises me. "Do you think you can hold out a bit longer? Jim's been asking for you, and if he sees you in this state, it'd worry him; he's not fit to take over yet, but he'll insist on it if he thinks you're out of action. I hate to ask you, but..."

"I shall be all right, Doctor," interrupts Spock. "I think, however, that we should not delay - I cannot maintain control much longer."

We all troop after him to sickbay, McCoy fluttering round him like an anxious hen; poor old blue-eyes really has his hands full this time with both of them out of action.

The Captain's eyes are fixed on the door as we go in, and the relief on his face is plain to see. "Spock! Are you all right?"

"Of course, Captain. It was a normal, routine planet survey, successfully completed. Dr. McCoy tells me that you have been unnecessarily concerned because we were unfortunately out of contact for some time."

"But your face?"

"This?" The hand he raises to touch his cheek is as steady as a rock. "An unfortunate accident - I carelessly stepped on some loose stones, and suffered a minor fall. As you can see, the damage is not severe. Now I suggest that you follow Dr. McCoy's advice, and get some sleep."

While he's talking I can see from where I'm standing that only McCoy's grip on his arm is keeping Spock on his feet. As soon as Nurse Chapel has given the Captain a shot, he folds to the floor like a rag doll. I help McCoy lift him on to the next bed.

"Out!" he orders me. "I've got a sickbay to run, and Mr. Scott wants to see you."

Sulu and I head off to the briefing room, where Scotty is waiting impatiently. We bring him up to date, and he relaxes visibly when he realises we're all back safely. By the time we're through, I'm about asleep on my feet, so I head off to my quarters, pausing at the door to say,

"By the way, thanks for the Scotch."

"I thought you could be doing with it, laddie - but don't look for any more."

In a few days things are back to what passes for normal on the Enterprise. Kirk's over his fever and back in command; Spock, with his Vulcan powers of healing, is back on duty quicker than I'd have expected. The Captain is madder than fire when he finds out how we tricked him, but with his usual incontestable

logic Spock points out that killing himself trying to help wouldn't've done anybody any good.

As soon as they're sitting up and taking notice, the Captain and Mr. Spock call me in to thank me for what I've done. I carefully refrain from pointing out that as senior security officer of the landing party, I'd've been up to my neck if there'd been an inquiry into the loss of our first officer; and accept their thanks with becoming modesty. As it happens, I've done myself a bit of good, because Kirk tells me he's decided to make me up to security chief - a nice little bonus. I make myself a promise, though; if that blasted Vulcan does another planet survey where the Prime Directive is in operation, I'm going along as his personal bodyguard. I might get my head blown off, but even that would be preferable to going through another situation like Tessra.

Like I said at the start -

"You don't have to be crazy to work here - but it sure helps!"

CAVEAT SCRIPTOR!

"Are you related to Dr. B?"
 I asked the Vulcan, politely,
 "Or do you find child-care a bore,
 Unlike that other Spock of yore,
 And cannot feel the slightest zest
 For toilet-training and the rest?"
 The Vulcan shook his haughty head
 And distantly and coldly said
 "Despite the fact we share a name
 Mine is a different claim to fame -
 I combine curiosity
 With rarified verbosity
 And carelessness provokes my ire
 And stirs up long-forgotten fire,
 So those who call me Dr. Spock
 May meet with an unpleasant shock.
 And now, excuse my abruptness -
 I promised Jim a game of chess."
 And off he went, and left me there
 With thudding heart, and frightened stare,
 Aware I'd been within an inch
 Of getting the Vulcan neck pinch!

Caroline Nixon.

"Oh, Sarek, come here," cried Amanda,
 There's a live fur rug on the veranda...
 You say it's a sehlat?
 It's more like a door-mat
 That somehow got crossed with a panda."
 * * *

Said Spock, as he hid from Nurse Chapel
 "I've heard people say that an apple
 When eaten each day
 Keeps the doctor away -
 I wish it would work with Nurse Chapel."

REPORT

The following is taken from a draught of Sociologist Akarsten's impending report to the Development Council.

My worthy colleagues,

In dealing with the situation on Terra (Sol III, Rigel sector), the state of development of the native dominant race gave me little scope to work with. Although the time since our last ministrations has been short, since then they have matured beyond the point where we can appear as 'gods' and influence them by religion. Indeed, regarding the internal state on Terra, I believe that any personal appearance by one of us would have a 87.3% probability of being fatal, and an almost equally high chance of precipitating the world war we are trying to delay until the end of the century, such is the extent of international mistrust and unease. I decided therefore that it was necessary to take a more subtle approach.

The decade of their years since I started this project, although such a time is infinitesimal to us, is, I think, sufficient for my purpose. How successful the project has been I will leave you and the future to judge. The probability of this war is still uncomfortably high, but the projected damage to be caused seems to have been considerably reduced. However, my main concern was not so much with internal matters, but with the first outworld contact, which I estimate will take place at nearly the same point in their history. It is obvious that such an aggressive and warlike race could not be trusted to make such a contact unaided, or the encounter would probably prove final and fatal to both parties. Also, the present predictions indicate that the continuing lessening of interest in spaceflight would result after the war in all attempts at interplanetary travel ceasing for the next century. In such an event, interstellar capacity might never be developed, and our forecast for this galaxy will be drastically altered for hundreds of millenia.

My mission, then, has been to encourage interest in space travel and research generally, a tolerance towards alien races, and where possible also peaceful cooperation between races on Terra itself. You will notice that the project is directly concerned with only a minute fraction of the planet population. It will have a very mild effect on a larger percentage. However, this small number of people makes short term prediction more accurate, and I think close study will show that since the type of people represented by many of this group - doctors, scientists, teachers, writers - and their position in society, should make this number sufficient. Also, in such a security-minded world, the number affected is so small that there is a probability of only 1×10^{-18} that any suspicion of our manipulation will be suspected. Such a risk is, I think, acceptably small. And since the method is so unusual, I doubt that anyone having thought of it would believe it.

For the technological state of their development, I feel this way was most appropriate. Even the Humans themselves are beginning to realise the possible effects of the media on their audiences. As already noted, I doubt they will notice this one, although it has already outlasted most of its contemporary creations of the '60s - as predicted, an interesting phase of social development. This length of time has also enabled the project to span another generation. Attached to this report is a description of a television series called 'Star Trek' (technical note: 'television' was a method of transmitting and receiving images, either monochromatic or colour, in two dimensions. It was based on the electron gun, also cathode ray oscilloscope.) I also enclose newspaper reports for the following ten years, telling of 'fanatical' interest. While some of these reports are obviously meant as sarcasm or sensationalism (I assure you some of their figures are quite erroneous) they contain an essence of truth, born out by the admittedly biased fan magazines. But then

it is on those biased fans that this project depends. And, most importantly, the many different age groups included in that following should ensure the transmission of the effect to the children and grandchildren who will man the exploration ships of the early 2000s, and initiate the new societies of the Centauri colonies.

From the same people who rioted at the very broadcast of 'War of the Worlds' (an early 'science fiction' story of invasion from another planet - see history section under Wells, H.G.) I believe I have succeeded in producing enough of those who believe in peaceful contact with other races, and the equality of intelligent being, terrestrial or otherwise, and who are prepared towards such ends. In the creation of the series, I am indebted to Varneth, who helped me a great deal in the concepts for the characters. Obviously, none of our race could create a believable Human character, so we used prominent characters from one of the more optimistic avenues of their future, and the rest could be left to the Humans' own imaginations.

You will doubtless notice the importance given the character of 'Spock'. This pleases me - the resemblance of the Vulcans physically to some more unpleasant aspects of Terran mythology might have otherwise proved difficult. We must do all we can to ensure that the predicted Vulcan-Terran alliance, with all its inherent benefits to the galaxy, becomes fact.

Obviously, some details of the probable future have been distorted to make them more acceptable, and the Humans themselves have altered and replaced others as they found necessary. However, the point I needed to make is still clear, and the representation of the future is quite acceptable - indeed, it is an interesting coincidence that some of the characters even look a little like their distant descendants ought to.

I see in this no violation of the Terrans' rights - certainly not one they have not themselves perpetrated on each other - and we have given no forced path, but only a clearer view of one choice to their destinies. I find it fitting that the more they believe in it, the more likely it is to come to pass. I call your attention to this report urgently, since their life-spans are such that by the time we have debated the project, the results will be already known. And by the next meeting of the Council, the Starship 'Enterprise' (although I doubt she will have that name), if she is to exist at all, will already be history.

My salutations to you all.

Akarsten, sociologist for the Rigel sector.

G.R. (second age) 889734.745

(For historical purposes, the approximate Terral date is September 1976 AD)

A real Southern gent named McCoy
Was the medical team's pride and joy.
When Spock lost an ear
He cried, "Never fear -
I'll soon stick it back on with Gloy."

* * *

Waiter! Waiter, there's a spaceship in my soup!
It must be left over from launch-time, sir.

THE DREAM OF SHANDA-KOR by Simone Mason

The ion storm raged around the Enterprise and violent flashes of vivid colours made a grandiose spectacle the crew did not have time to admire. To maintain course was proving impossible and the ship was being pulled inexorably towards uncharted space.

"Spock, how long will it last?" asked Kirk anxiously

"Unknown, Captain... We will be entering uncharted space in six minutes, ten seconds."

"Will we be able to find our way back?"

"Yes, Captain, the computer can extrapolate our position by comparing our charts with the stars visible - "

"Yes, yes, thank you," interrupted Kirk shortly, controlling an angry retort. He did not need a detailed reply.

Kirk took a deep breath. He was tired, but Spock had been on duty even longer, and none of this was the Vulcan's fault.

The storm went on for another thirty-five minutes, then died away, to be replaced by wispy clouds of colours reaching out and curling around the Enterprise like graceful tentacles.

The Captain rubbed his eyes tiredly.

"What is this now, Spock? Residue from the storm?"

"Negative, Captain, those colours emanate from a specific area of space."

"Any pull on the ship, Mr. Scott?"

"No, sir, none at the moment."

Kirk stared thoughtfully at the whirling shapes displaying their beautiful colours, and heard Spock whisper, "Fascinating!"

"Beautiful, I agree, Spock, but what are they?"

"I have pinpointed the source, Captain, a planet in the next solar system, name of course unknown."

"Are they clouds of energy? Gas?"

"Negative, Captain, I cannot define their nature."

"So beautiful!" murmured Kirk, entranced by the symphony of shimmering colours. "As we can easily find our way back to charted space, we'll investigate this first. Mr. Sulu, set course for that solar system."

As they established orbit around the planet, the clouds of colours became even more beautiful and McCoy himself, now on the bridge, could not take his eyes away.

Spock however was frowning. "Captain, I believe I can ascertain the nature of..."

His hands flew to his head and he swayed, then slowly crumpled to the floor.

"Spock!" Kirk ran to him, closely followed by McCoy.

A quick check by the doctor revealed little. "It is nothing physical, Jim, and yet he went out like a light! He's asleep."

"Asleep?" exclaimed Kirk.

"Yes, asleep. How long has he been on duty? Have you been overworking your First Officer because he's a Vulcan, Jim? Can't you have some consideration..."

"Just a minute, Bones, relax. Spock was on duty about three hours before I came on, that's all, so you see he could not be overtired."

"No, he couldn't, so why fall asleep? Have you ever known Spock fall asleep on duty?"

"Of course not, Bones."

"Then something is wrong. Let me try this,"

The injection worked and Spock's eyes opened, looking urgently at Kirk.

"Captain, go..."

His eyes shut again and he became rigidly still, as though under stress. McCoy was reaching for another hypodermic, but the Vulcan pushed it away and got up, now looking normal.

"What happened?" asked Kirk, helping him up.

"I am recovered now, Captain - just a temporary indisposition."

"You're not prone to such things," said McCoy, "so I want to check you out in Sickbay."

"Doctor, there is no need..."

"Please, Spock, do as he says. If you are fine, you can come back," said Kirk soothingly.

They left the bridge and the Captain listened to a preliminary report on the planet from Chekov.

"Earth-type, Captain, no inhabitants, but evidence of a past civilisation." He went on to give further details when Kirk interrupted.

"The clouds - they have gone!"

"Yes, Captain, they disappeared when Mr. Spock fell."

"Bones," called Kirk urgently by intercom, "how is Spock?"

"One hundred percent fit, Jim, and on his way back."

The First Officer walked on to the bridge a few minutes later and Kirk watched him carefully, then went to his station and put a hand on his shoulder. The tenseness he felt confirmed his hunch: something was wrong.

"Spock," he murmured. "Whatever it is, you can tell me."

"Tell you what, Captain?" replied Spock, his features expressionless.

"What happened when you collapsed. Why tell me to go? Go where?"

"Temporary aberration, sir, to be ignored."

"Why did you fall asleep?"

"I regret my lapse of duty, sir, and understand that a charge - "

"I didn't mean that, Spock!" interrupted Kirk with impatience. "What sudden ailment could make you fall asleep?"

"I am perfectly fit, as Dr. McCoy testified, Captain."

Kirk saw that it was no use, and went back to his command chair with a frown. It was unlike Spock to reject his help and not be completely truthful, and the Captain could not master a strong feeling of unease at the back of his mind.

The First Officer was giving further reports on the planet when his audience heard him say with his usual calm,

"We are about to be contacted, Captain."

"But there are no inhabitants!"

"None in one sense, Captain, but there is an intelligence..."

"Captain," Uhura interrupted, "message coming through."

"On audio, Lieutenant."

The screen showed a medium-sized sphere without substance, inside which whirls of colour shimmered and sparkled.

"Welcome to Shanda-Kor, Captain Kirk," said a voice, and after wondering where it could have come from, and how could a sphere talk, Kirk realised that it had spoken inside his mind.

"How do you know who I am?" he answered aloud.

"Your First Officer's mind told me."

"Spock, why...?"

"Captain, I sensed the probe, but was informed that if I attempted to make you turn back, I would be put to sleep. The being then proved that it could accomplish its threat. There seemed no purpose in being unable to help you."

"I see. What is your name, and what do you want?" asked Kirk of the alien.

"My name is Shaan. Please beam down to Shanda-Kor, Captain, and you will understand."

"May I bring some of my officers?"

"Not yet, Captain, you are the one who has the right to understand first."

"Very well, I'll beam down."

The screen image disappeared, and McCoy protested,

"Jim you should not - "

"We have to investigate, Bones, and I prefer to go alone and leave Spock here to take care of the ship in case of trouble."

On their way to the transporter room, Kirk asked, "Spock, did you sense anything from the mind probe?"

"Very little, Captain, the contact was brief and I was then rendered unconscious. One thing I do know, the clouds of colours were mental projections from Shaan himself."

"What was his purpose?"

"An invitation perhaps, or a bait."

"We don't know what we are up against, Spock, and if I give the order to leave, you will obey."

"Yes, Captain."

Equipped with a phaser and communicator, Kirk stood on the transporter pad and gave the order to energise with a feeling of apprehension, but he knew his First Officer would take the Enterprise out of danger if necessary, regardless of McCoy's protests - provided Shaan allowed it. Or would the alien be unable to stop the ship's departure?

Kirk materialised in the middle of a city and stared around him in wonder. Even although it was partly in ruins, many structures still stood proudly in the brilliant sunshine, beautiful shapes of glass and jewelled stones throwing beams of colour in an aura of glittering magnificence.

His communicator took him out of his absorption.

"Captain," said Spock's voice, "you left your phaser here."

"Did I? Yes, I have not got it, so I must have."

"Should I attempt to beam it down to you?"

"I doubt that you could."

"So do I, Captain."

"Leave it, Spock, I see no evidence of immediate danger. Kirk out."

He had just had time to put the communicator away when he saw the alien approach, the sphere hovering noiselessly over the ground.

A very pretty alien, thought Kirk, but he knew better than to trust appearances and was relieved Shaan stayed a reasonable distance away.

"I am glad you appreciated my clouds of colours and came to investigate, Captain. I rejoice at your arrival," said the voice in his mind.

"What happened to the people who lived here?"

"There is no-one but myself, and now you, Captain. But you must be impatient to know about the new life awaiting you and your crew."

"We don't want to live here, Shaan," protested Kirk.

"You will, Captain. Let me show you."

"Could you explain first..."

"Later, Captain, later! You must do as I say, I cannot wait any longer."

To be ordered about by aliens, pretty or not, was not something Kirk accepted readily, so his back was up.

"And if I refuse?"

"You can't refuse, Captain. Don't waste time in useless argument, please."

A heap of glass and coloured stones stood nearby, clearly a previous statue or sculpture, and the alien continued,

"You will rebuild this work of art, Captain."

Kirk appreciated art, but had no artistic ability whatsoever, and was going to protest, when a force irrupted into his mind and he found himself picking up pieces of glass and putting them together.

To feel like a controlled robot was not to his taste and he tried to reject the control, which made his head ache violently.

The alien Shaan did not seem to notice or care as he explained with enthusiasm. "Your crew will come down and help you, and this town will be rebuilt in all its glory, then another and another as your people reproduce themselves, and..."

"We don't want to stay here! We are not builders!" Kirk tried to shout, but found he was not able to escape the horrible pressure on his mind. He tried desperately to concentrate all his strength against it, without success, while any physical attack was just as impossible. He was rebuilding a sculpture and could do nothing else.

A nightmarish vision of his crew helplessly enslaved by that alien filled him with horror. He had to stop it.

The structure was now taking shape and he sensed that the pressure was easing a little; Shaan was becoming absorbed in the concept behind the sculpture. With a desperate effort, Kirk managed to seize his communicator instead of more stones, and shouted as he opened it.

"Spock, leave immediately, go..."

The pressure returned double-strength and he screamed, letting the communicator fall and collapsing himself into unconsciousness, a welcome relief from pain.

Aboard the Enterprise, the scream echoed around the bridge bringing horror in its wake and freezing everyone into immobility. Everyone except Spock;

"Maximum power, leave orbit immediately."

As he was saying it, he had run to Sulu's station and was executing his own orders with a speed the frozen Sulu could not have achieved.

The planet receded fast from the screen and Spock sank back in the command chair.

"Maximum power until we are back in charted space, Mr. Scott; please let me know the second you discover any interference with our escape."

"Aye, aye, sir," said a still bemused Chief Engineer.

As was to be expected, an irate McCoy arrived on the bridge. "Spock, we can't leave the Captain in the hands of that monster!"

The First Officer, who had been seated in the command chair meditating over steepled hands, now went to his station and started working rapidly, ignoring the Doctor's outburst. This naturally intensified McCoy's anger.

"Spock, are you deaf?"

"When you are around, Doctor, I wish I was!" replied the Vulcan without stopping work. "You heard the Captain's orders."

"But we can't leave the Captain just like that, Mr. Spock," protested Scotty, who had also approached.

"How long until we reach charted space, Mr. Scott?"

"Twenty minutes, sir."

"Mr. Sulu, have a shuttlecraft prepared for departure, programme D," ordered Spock.

"Now you're talking, Spock!" exclaimed McCoy. "We are going back for Jim?"

"I doubt it, Doctor," said Scotty. "Not you, that is. Programme D means maximum fuel and one passenger only."

"Correct," said Spock. "My calculations indicate that I can reach Shanda-Kor and get back to charted space if I leave within the next ten minutes. You have the con, Mr. Scott. Once you reach charted space, wait for six days, then report to Starfleet and proceed to the nearest Starbase if the Captain and I are not back by then."

The First Officer left the bridge for the hangar deck and McCoy and Scott accompanied him, the Doctor pressing Spock to let him come as well, but the Vulcan refused.

"Apart from the need the Enterprise has for her Chief Medical Officer, Doctor, the fuel I can carry is just enough to take me there and back with the Captain. An extra passenger would make return impossible."

"The Enterprise could meet us part of the way."

"No, Doctor, the Captain's orders were to ensure the safety of the ship and crew. Should we be unable to reach you, we can send a message for assistance when we are half-way, if it is safe."

They were at the hangar deck by then and Spock opened the door of the shuttlecraft as the Chief Engineer said in a low voice,

"I know you don't believe in it, but good luck just the same."

"May you be in time and save Jim!" added the Doctor.

"I will endeavour to do so, Doctor. I am not going all that way to return alone."

He was going to close the door when McCoy said urgently,

"Spock, if you are too late... come back anyway."

"Yes, Mr. Spock," added Scotty. "We don't want to lose both the Captain and you!"

The Vulcan did not answer, perhaps tongue-tied by embarrassment at their words, and they saw the door shut with shared anxiety, then ran out of the hangar deck as the alarm sounded to clear it of personnel.

It was a very worried crew who watched the shuttlecraft disappearing from view on their screen, and Uhura expressed all their wishes.

May we see them both back safely!"

As the Captain regained consciousness, he felt his mind free from pressure, but his elation was short-lived when he opened his eyes and saw Shaan hovering by his side.

"To send your ship away was stupid, Captain; now it will take you much longer to restore the past, and when you die, no-one can take care..."

"I am not interested in your past, Shaan, and..."

"A temporary aberration due to lack of understanding, Captain. It is a pity you get tired so quickly. Why did you need such a long sleep?"

"That was no sleep, I was hurt by the pressure on my mind."

"I don't see how... but then your mind is strange to me. Perhaps I should have asked the Vulcan down - he had no emotions, however, so could not have understood. I find it so difficult to deal with alien minds after such a long solitude! But now, Captain, back to work."

Kirk felt rested, and wondered how many hours he had 'slept', but the Enterprise had escaped, which was a relief. Now he had to try to escape the alien or he would go mad; he could not bear that awful pressure... it was back again!

The Captain fought with all his renewed strength, to no avail. He had to go on with the rebuilding of the sculpture. Only when it was finished did his mind feel some relief, but his head was burning and he was exhausted.

"I must rest!" he croaked, staggering towards a small building near an open space overgrown by luxuriant vegetation.

The alien must have agreed because Kirk was not prevented from going in. He found a wooden bench inside, lay down and fell into the dreamless sleep of exhaustion.

He was awakened, he had no idea how long afterwards, by an intrusion into his mind and he rejected it violently, then sat up amazed at his success, to meet the familiar dark eyes under slanting eyebrows with a start.

"Spock!"

"Please, no noise, Jim, I was trying to avoid it."

"So it was... I am sorry, I would never have rejected you had I known! But the ship, Shaan said she had gone."

"She has, and the crew is safe. I returned in a shuttlecraft, but whether I have been detected or not..."

"You came back..."

Kirk gripped his First Officer's hand in a mixture of gratitude and affection. "I should have known you would! I am being selfish in saying this, Spock, but I am glad you are here. Perhaps between the two of us, we'll escape that alien."

"May I merge minds with you to save time, Jim?"

"Yes, of course, you'll see what happened quickly and then we can decide what to do."

The mind meld took place and Kirk relaxed, welcoming the gentle touch of his friend's mind; there was no pressure or hurt here.

Afterwards, Spock looked faintly troubled.

"Jim, something is wrong, and I am unable to comprehend how Shaan could hurt you without realising it. He is obviously a telepath, but I would say failed to contact the whole of your mind. Yet I sensed he was very strong when he contacted me."

"Never mind that now, the main thing is to escape."

"I doubt that we'll be able to, but we can try. The craft is on the other side of that open space."

"Let us move through the vegetation for cover. Is it still daylight?"

"It was dawn when I landed, Captain."

"I slept longer than I thought! Let us go. Give me your phaser - I have no wish to be a robot again!"

They ploughed through the tall plants and arrived at the craft, only to see Shaan waiting for them. Kirk levelled his phaser at the alien, who said without any trace of anger,

"A ghastly object which you cannot use, Captain, so put it away, please."

Compelled to obey under threat of that awful pressure, Kirk complied with the request and the alien turned to Spock politely.

"Welcome, Commander Spock, I am pleased you came to assist your Captain. Will the rest of the crew also return?"

"No, Shaan," replied Spock. "I alone came back to rescue my Captain; the ship needs him."

"Shanda-Kor has a much greater need, Commander. We'd better get to work, the Captain is rested..."

"Shaan," interrupted Spock, "wouldn't it be logical to explain your purpose in keeping us here?"

"You may be right, perhaps I have been too impatient - but I waited so long... I am not myself a native of Shanda-Kor. I came from another galaxy a long time ago and chose to settle here. The people were gentle and loved beauty, so I was pleased to be able to help them build the kind of civilisation they wanted."

"You mean you took them over, don't you?" asked Kirk.

"No, Captain, they were my tools, if you like, but their minds had a creative ability I could enhance and perfect to a degree which brought them and myself great satisfaction. Shanda-Kor became a beautiful world, where cities, art, life, everything was an enchantment, and you can still see evidence of this."

Spock was gazing at a structure of golden spheres linked by delicate silver filaments, standing on graceful columns, with an admiration he was not trying to hide.

"Yes, indeed, Shaan, much beauty remains here; but the people - where are they?"

"Dead, all dead."

Genuine sorrow could be sensed in the alien's voice in their minds as Shaan continued. "A terrible disease, for which no cure could be found, appeared, so the time came when I was alone on Shanda-Kor, alone among a beauty I could

share with no-one, alone among a beauty I was unable to stop from deterioration and ruin! But I knew this galaxy must have other races, and I waited. One day, people would come to help me restore beauty and give life to Shanda-Kor again. It has been so long! But my dream stayed vivid and clear, and now you can make it reality."

"I understand your wish," said Kirk, moved in spite of recent events, "but I can't help you."

"When I sensed your ship, I felt such joy! I sent clouds of colours as a welcome, sure you would understand, and you will when you know..."

"Shaan," interrupted Spock again. "Will you allow a mind meld between you and me?"

"Spock, you should not... Take care," begged Kirk.

"It is the only way, Captain, and I hope we can achieve it."

"Your mind was not pleasant to me when I contacted it, Commander," said Shaan, "and yet there was a kind of beauty in its stern logic, I must admit. I allow the meld."

Spock touched the sphere gently, finding it warm and pleasant to the touch, and concentrated. To Kirk's relief, no stress was apparent in his First Officer. The meld lasted quite a while, then the Vulcan withdrew and his hands flew to his face as he leaned against the shuttlecraft for support.

"Spock, are you all right?" asked Kirk anxiously, putting his arm round his shoulders for further support. He felt the Vulcan lean on him for a second, as though for comfort, then his head lifted and he said in a voice nearly normal,

"I am all right, Jim. It was disturbing only because of the intensity of Shaan's probe."

This infuriated Kirk, who knew only too well how much Spock valued his privacy, so he turned on the alien with anger.

"Did you have to hurt him too?"

"I am not really hurt, Jim," protested Spock, but Shaan was speaking.

"Captain Kirk, I owe you an apology. I never realised that my presence in your mind was harmful. The natives I used to merge with were telepathic and their minds were different. Your Commander's mind I found more congenial after assimilation of his concept of logic, and his telepathic ability made the meld painless. I can assure you, Commander Spock, that my deep probing was not caused by avid curiosity, but by interest and a wish to understand the kind of beauty logic represents for you. Whatever I saw is safe. My race has similar ethics to your own and to betray the secrets of a mind is vile."

"Thank you, Shaan," said Spock, "but are you now able to realise that what you need here are people who are artists, not spacemen like us?"

"I am not so sure it would not work with you. Would you be willing to try an experiment?"

"What kind?" asked Kirk distrustfully

"Commander Spock is a musician. Here, there are similar instruments to his own, which can be repaired easily, and you could both play under my influence."

"No, thank you..." started Kirk, but Spock interrupted.

"Channelled through me, Shaan's mind would no longer be painful for you, Jim. I am tempted to agree; it could be fascinating."

"Look, Spock, I don't want to spend the rest of my life playing music, no matter how beautiful!"

"Captain," said Shaan, "let me explain. When you arrived and I made you rebuild the sculpture, I never realised that you did not enjoy the task and were hurt by my mind, or I would have stopped. I have no wish to enslave you; what I

thought I was doing was showing you how much you were able to achieve; I believed that afterwards, you would have wanted to continue."

"I know Spock is anxious to try, so I agree, but I am no musician; I never played a note in my life."

"Your mind has many areas unused, Captain, and you may be surprised at what you can achieve. I promise you, however, that you will be free to return to your ship if that is what you want afterwards."

"In that case, let us get it over with."

They found the instruments, similar to harps, well preserved and in need of only minor repairs, then settled in front of the shuttlecraft with Shaan nearby.

Spock merged minds with Kirk first, then with Shaan, and the Captain was relieved that the contact was now painless, even pleasant.

The Vulcan started to play and Kirk mechanically struck a few notes, mourning his inability to produce the beautiful sounds Spock was creating, when a glow filled his mind and he followed and understood Spock's music fully. Not only that, he found himself joining in, amazed at the ease and simplicity of creating beauty.

How long they played he had no idea. All he knew was that his head, his ears, all his senses were filled with the beautiful melodious sounds echoing among the tall and graceful glass structures gleaming in the sunlight. I am discovering a new world, a new dimension, thought Kirk entranced, I was blind, deaf, before! So much beauty!...

Their surroundings seemed to blend with and enrich the music to perfection. He followed Spock's concentration on the cluster of golden spheres and imagined them erupt into a myriad of stars cascading all over the town in a rain of scintillating snow flakes.

Then a fountain attracted their attention. Kirk was thrilled to accompany the translation into music of the water running down a translucent web of thin filaments shimmering in the sunlight like rivers of gold.

His eyes fell on the sculpture he had rebuilt. How could he have missed the sheer artistry of its shape, the wonderful blend of colours which made it a symphony to the eye! That symphony could be translated into music and the Captain marvelled at the facility of the process, his mind lost in the great poetry of artistic creation.

Above all, the awareness of Spock in his mind made him conscious of the quality of their music, and of the quality of their sharing.

Much more beauty filled his mind, his whole being as he played and played, vaguely aware of tiredness but not wanting to stop the enchantment, as enchantment doubled by the sharing of Spock's own interpretations.

At last he had to stop, his fingers aching and hardly able to move any longer, and tears of frustration came to his eyes. Spock was not tired, how could he spoil this for him? He sensed the Vulcan reassuring him, then the mind link broke and exhaustion hit Kirk so violently that he fell asleep with no further conscious thought.

When he woke, he saw that twilight was sending orange beams all over the glass city, making it glow like a fiery light. Spock and Shaan were on each side of him and memories of the music flooded Kirk's mind.

"I'm sorry I had to stop!"

"I was getting tired also, Captain."

"It was... I never thought I could... Spock, I can't put it into words!"

"There is no need, Jim, we know how you felt."

"Do you understand now, Captain?" asked Shaan. "I was trying to communicate beauty to you, unaware that your mind had a very limited conception of it, hence the pain you felt. But through your Commander, you were able to assimilate and understand, and I could awaken parts of your mind you never used."

"What I felt, saw, played, it was all due to you, Shaan, and to Spock."

"No, Captain, I was contributing some of my own concepts, but also enriching yours and enabling you to discover them."

"Mine and Spock's."

"Yes," agreed Shaan. "I owe to your Commander the understanding of a new kind of beauty I had not discovered before, the beauty of a symmetric shape, the beauty of order and the control of dimensions to make them into fascinating patterns! It is true to say that I learned from both of you."

"What can you have learned from me?" asked Kirk.

"The enhanced quality that affinity between two minds can bring, Captain. Your merging with Commander Spock enriched both your minds, and mine as a consequence."

Kirk looked at the Vulcan quickly, afraid the First Officer would be upset thinking his Captain had betrayed too much of their friendship to an outsider, but Spock's eyes smiled at him, the half-smile which hardly affected the impassivity of the features.

"Shaan's mind is very strong, Jim, and he is able to read both our minds easily."

"Not quite correct, Spock," said Shaan. "You threw an effective shield that first time I contacted you. But as I said before, whatever I saw remains with me. Now, your decision, Captain. Do you wish to stay, or return to your ship?"

Kirk was amazed to find himself hesitating.

"It was an experience I'll never forget, and for the first time in my life I can feel some regret for the path I have chosen... But I am a Starship Captain, not a musician. However, I'll understand if Spock wants to stay."

"No, Captain. I too can feel regret, but even if I am a musician in a small way, I am a scientist and your First Officer."

"I will respect your decisions," said Shaan, "and wait longer to see Shanda-Kor regain its original beauty. You cannot imagine the frustration of my race at the inability to create anything except abstract colour patterns!"

"We may be able to assist you," said Kirk. "I'll send a report to Starfleet recommending that artists be informed, and when they hear about Shanda-Kor, I am sure they'll flock here in earnest."

"They will," assured Spock, "and provided you take care not to hurt them, Shaan..."

"I won't again; now that I am familiar with Earth minds, I could not repeat my previous mistakes. I'll take great care not to upset anyone."

"Then don't despair any longer, Shaan. Before long, many artists' colonies will be enthusiastically rebuilding and creating beauty on Shanda-Kor."

"Your words are real music to me, Captain Kirk. My dreams will come true at last and Shanda-Kor will live again! May you both return safely to your vessel."

"Live long and prosper, Shaan," said Spock, making the Vulcan salute.

"Vulcans will always be welcome, Spock, and thank you."

"Thank you, Shaan," said Kirk with emotion, "I'll never forget that, thanks to you, I created beauty for a short while."

They stepped aboard the shuttlecraft and lifted off, with a lingering glance at the lost beauty of Shanda-Kor.

"What a shame that music we created is lost!" sighed Kirk.

Spock took a tape out of the tricorder he had been carrying. "There is a recording of it here, Captain."

"Spock, you are... We'll each have a recording, and whenever we play it, we'll think of how we both created it with Shaan."

"And we'll remember Shanda-Kor," added Spock.

They looked at each other and knew that the tape would be one of their most treasured possessions, a vivid memory of the time when their minds were united in the creation of beauty. The music itself was a reflection of the affinity between them, a beautiful reflection of their friendship.

An enthusiastic reception welcomed them aboard the Enterprise and McCoy seized the Captain's arm happily. "Thank God you are safe, Jim."

"I told you I was not going all that distance to return alone, Doctor," said Spock.

McCoy for once could not be sarcastic. "Even if you had come back alone, I would have said, 'Thank God you are safe, Spock'."

"Our anxiety was not for the Captain alone, Mr. Spock," added Scotty.

Kirk smiled at his First Officer's embarrassment and led the way to the bridge where he settled in to his command chair with a sigh. Relief? Regret? A little of both, he thought wryly.

"What happened on Shanda-Kor, Spock?" asked McCoy with his usual eagerness.

"Many things, Doctor. Perhaps it made me understand, as much as I ever shall, how emotion can contribute something to beauty."

"And perhaps I understand how logic can also contribute to beauty, Spock," added Kirk.

"What are you two talking about?" exclaimed the Doctor, baffled.

"Spock and I have shared a dream," said Kirk in a far away voice.

"A fascinating dream," agreed the Vulcan.

"What can be so particular about it if it was only a dream?" asked McCoy.

"It was a beautiful dream, Bones, because, unlike most dreams, ours had a fleeting moment of reality."

At his sign, Spock inserted the tape and the music echoed around the bridge, filling everyone with wonder.

"I never heard anything so beautiful!" sighed McCoy. "What is it called, Jim?"

"The dream of Shanda-Kor."
