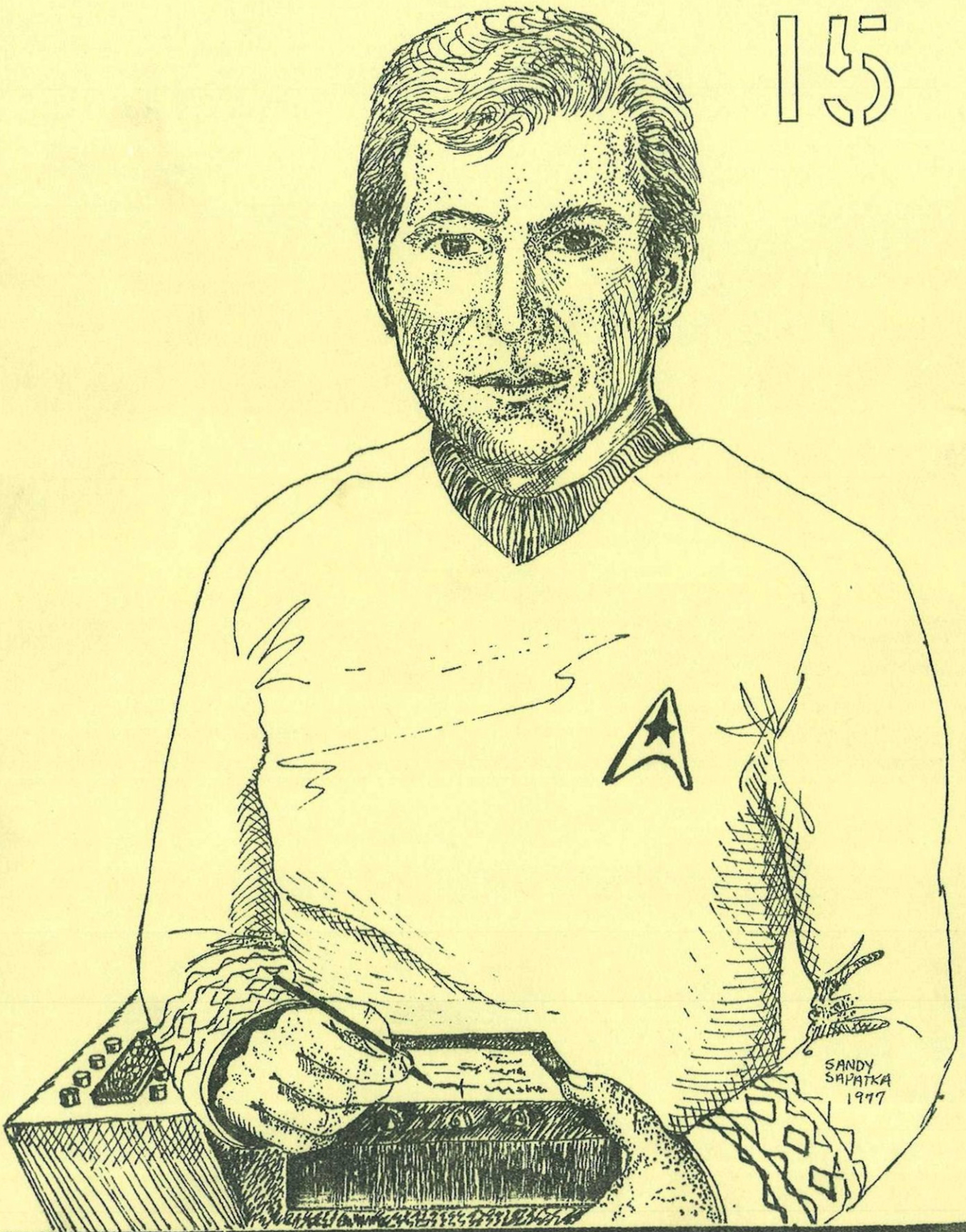
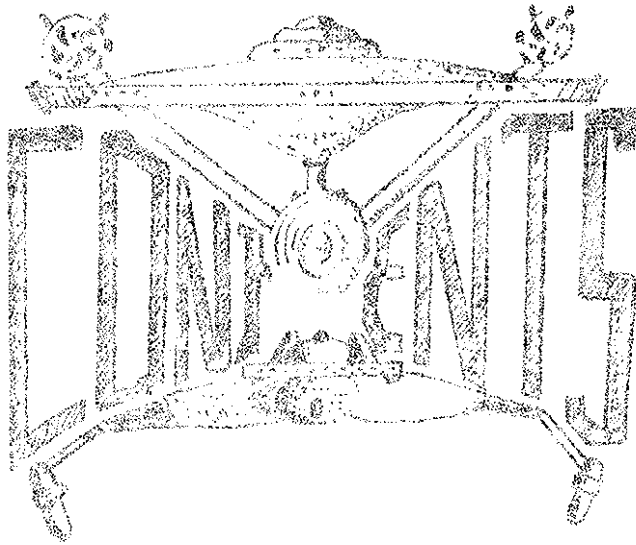


LOG ENTRIES

15





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The winner of the story competition in N/L 26 was Pam Baddeley;
Artwork winner was Betty De Gabrielle.

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Well, here we are again with yet another issue of Log Entries. I had great 'fun' compiling this one, for while I was doing the stencils, I suddenly discovered that two of the stories I had intended using had fairly similar themes - I'd forgotten they were so alike. Which meant a frantic letter to one of the writers begging for another story, since both were advertised as having items in LE 15...

Several people have obliged now by sending me comments. Unfortunately, this didn't prove quite as helpful as I'd hoped; when one person's favourite story turns out to be the one that someone else liked least, I'm left with no alternative but to do as I've been doing - trying to give you a reasonable selection, and hoping that there's at least one story in every issue that each of you will like. Mostly I try not to stick to the sort of story that I most enjoy, but I've yielded to temptation this time - there's one story in this issue that I've put in especially for me.

Mention was made in one or two of the letters about certain issues being slightly disappointing because they'd come immediately after one that the reader thought was particularly good. There's not much I can do about that, I'm afraid, especially when views on what was the best issue are also divergent. It just depends on which stories strike each of us as emotionally or intellectually satisfying.

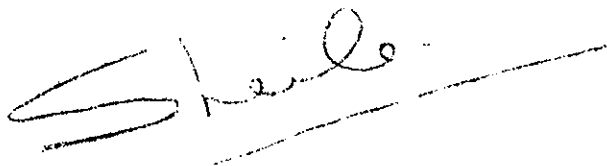
We have submissions from **Germany, the USA and Australia** in this issue, so we're getting truly international; how about some more from **abroad**?

For next issue, I've got stories by Janet Hall, Audrey Baker, and Simone Mason. There may be one by Valerie Piacentini, but it'll depend on the space. At the moment, Valerie and I are working on the second issue of Variations on a Theme, which we hope to have ready during the summer, and giving some thought to the third and fourth stories in the... saga? although these won't be ready for at least a year, probably more.

My usual thanks to Valerie for proofreading (she came through one weekend when Dundee was cut off by deep snow, all roads reported blocked and even the railways not very happy and for a while it looked like she mightn't get home again on time. It doesn't seem to have deterred her.) Also to Janet for the running off, and whoever I can persuade to help with the collating.

I think that's enough from me for this time. Read, and enjoy!

April 1978



Non-members of STAG can get information on zines in print and on new and forthcoming zines by sending SAE or addressed envelope and IRC to

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Strathmartine
by Dundee
Scotland.



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EMERGENCY by Jenny Elson

I was just about to go off duty when the emergency alarm sounded in sickbay.

"Medic team to transporter room!" came Scotty's urgent voice. "Emergency! Emergency!"

I grabbed a medical kit and ran, joining up with Dr. McCoy and the two techs in the turbo-lift. We tumbled out at the transporter room, where Scotty and a couple of transporter officers were bending over the crumpled forms of Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock. As we approached them, Spock struggled to his feet. There was a massive bruise on his forehead. The Captain was obviously far more severely injured. Barely conscious, he was moaning in pain.

"My legs... I can't feel my legs... "

"Easy, Jim, easy." McCoy bent down, tricorder in hand. After a few minutes he glanced up at us. "Multiple injuries. Spine's fractured, L2 and 3, cord partially severed, and severe internal injuries. Spock, what the hell happened?"

"The planet surface is unstable. A minor 'quake in the area caused a sudden rock fall, and the Captain was crushed. I tried... I tried to..." Spock swayed, and would have fallen had I not grabbed his arm.

"Get him to sickbay, stat!" I ordered one of the techs, then bent over the Captain as McCoy gave him a hypo to ease his considerable pain. With a sudden shock, I realised that the poor guy was not going to make it. That thought was going through my boss's mind too, because he kinda swallowed hard, and scrubbed his forehead before issuing swift orders.

"Nurse King, prepare surgery, fast! Alert all available medical staff, we'll be needing them, and have four litres of blood on hand too."

I took one last look at the Captain before I dashed off. He looked ghastly, and was already beginning to vomit blood from his internal injuries. It was with a sinking feeling that I arrived once more at sickbay. Oh, I'd seen severely injured men before; and many of them had not survived, at least, not in any useful capacity. That really cut me up. Hell, I liked Jim Kirk. It was a helluva end to his career.

Although Dr. McCoy liked to give the impression of a country doctor, he was a brilliant surgeon; the best I've ever worked for, and my admiration for him leaped upwards as he patched up the shattered Captain.

The most urgent priority was to deal with the internal injuries to colon, spleen, liver, and, to a smaller extent, the stomach. The peritoneum was a mess. Filled with blood and faecal matter, peritonitis was a dangerous threat. When we finally got it cleaned out, it became obvious that there was only one thing to be done. The colon was so badly crushed that a diversional colostomy was a life-saving necessity, to assist the recovery of the reconstructed colon. It was an awful thing to do to a guy like Jim Kirk, but totally unavoidable.

After two hours, we still weren't through. The fractured spine and severed cord had to be repaired... a delicate procedure, most skilfully performed. Even so, it was a hundred percent certain that, should the Captain survive the massive surgery, he would be paraplegic for some time until the cord had healed. For that reason we attached him to the medical equivalent of a personal plumbing system, then took him back to I.T. Even McCoy did not hold out much hope.

By this time, I was beat, having been on duty for over twelve hours. Poor Dr. McCoy was worn out, both mentally and physically. Chris Chapel went off to get us all some coffee, whilst Dr. McCoy faced Spock with the news.

Somehow, that broke me up; the sad confrontation. Spock was still suffering from concussion and what seemed to be a giant-sized headache. So, there were the Captain's two closest friends, the one, tired, depressed and emotionally

upset, trying his damndest to explain in a professional manner what he had done; the other fighting desperately to control his Human emotions and only just succeeding. I sure was glad when Chris arrived with the welcome coffee, which I drank gratefully before taking myself off duty.

Miraculously, Captain Kirk was still alive when I went on duty again eight hours later. In fact, he was conscious, but, as he was drugged up to the eyeballs, not particularly lucid. Chris gave me a detailed report.

"B.P. low, 80/20, but holding, so far. Pulse 120, temperature 39C."

"Sounds like infection."

"Possibly. His peritoneum was a mess, but he's bunged full of wide-spectrum antibiotics; so far, nothing is indicated on body function to suggest major infection, and the white cells are holding steady at 8.0. Fortunately, there was no major kidney damage. Urine output is good, 300 ccs, and the expected electrolyte imbalance has been corrected by Dr. M'Benga. Colostomy non-functioning as yet, of course."

"Paraplegia?"

"Total."

"Mr. Spock O.K.?"

"He's still suffering from Post Concussion syndrome. He vomited twice, but I guess that could've been partly reaction to recent events, despite what he says. He's all for discharging himself, but make him stay put, Cathy, at least for another twenty-four hours."

"You want me to sit on him, or tie him to the bed?" I chuckled, but Chris never joked about Spock. "Sure," I sighed. "I'll make him stay put. You get yourself off duty. You look like you could do with some shut-eye."

Nursing a patient as sick as Jim Kirk is a hard, emotion-draining job. Modern technology takes away the backache, however. The spinal bed supports the patient on a cushion of air, which both undulates gently, and rotates slowly from side to side, minimising handling. The air cushion also gives gentle, passive exercise to the paraplegic limbs. The bladder drainage not only negates the problems of inevitable incontinence, but also retrains the bladder sphincters. A sterile field surrounds the patient in the early days, assisting the prevention of infection. Thus, in one highly developed bed, the need for techs, nurses, physiotherapists and laundry facilities are eliminated.

All highly clever, but hell for the nurse who has nothing to do but watch the body-function panel. Maybe nursing is too highly technical these days, and I guess it would be kinda nice for both patient and nurse for a little more use of the tactile senses.

For over an hour the Captain babbled on about a guy called Sam, which did not make much sense to me. Then I suddenly became aware of Spock standing behind me, in sickbay issue pyjamas and bare feet.

"Mr. Spock, you should be in bed!"

"I am fully recovered, Nurse King."

"Like hell you are! Look at you, swaying all over the place... "

"Dr. McCoy... "

"Will not be on duty for another thirty minutes, and you're not gonna disturb him. He was dead beat last night."

"Dead beat?"

"Never mind." Go easy on him, Cathy! I told myself. His best friend just got mashed up, and even a Vulcan has feelings.



"I wish to ascertain the Captain's condition, Nurse King." He sounded quite forlorn then, and I felt sorry for him... this lonely man who couldn't even ask how his best friend was without being formal about it.

"O.K., come and see him, then. But only for a few minutes. He is still critical. Afterwards, you must promise to go back to bed."

"I will return to bed," he agreed tiredly.

He walked over to Kirk's bed, and looked down at the sick man. "Quite illogical," he murmured softly.

"Rock falls which crush a man usually are, Mr. Spock."

He looked up briefly. "The Captain saved my life. He pushed me away and took the full force of the rock-fall. That is what is so illogical."

"To have saved your life?"

"I, as First Officer, am more expendable than the Captain. It was illogical of him to save my life at the risk of his own."

"Maybe friendship had just a little more to do with the Captain's action than rank, Spock. And had the situation been reversed, it would have been you lying there instead of him, because you are his friend too. Please don't

denigrate his actions."

"I will not do that, Nurse King." He turned his head away from me deliberately, so that I could not see his face. "I will return to bed," he informed me shortly. "I still feel unwell."

He almost bumped into Dr. McCoy at the door. "Spock, what the...!" I made frantic signs to my boss to shut up, and fortunately he took the hint and allowed Spock to pass before he walked into I.T.

"What was all that about, Cathy?"

"Spock is kinda upset, I guess."

"Sure. I know exactly how he feels, for once." He glanced at the body function panel, frowning at the low blood pressure and high temperature. "Dammit!" was all he said.

"Sam...?" Kirk babbled. McCoy gently touched his hand. Like me, he was a great believer in the tactile senses.

"This is Bones, Jim. Just rest easy... "

"I hurt! Sam, I hurt so much... "

"I know. I know." He looked at me tiredly. "Sam was his brother."

"Was?"

"He died some time ago. Cathy, he needs more analgesics. See to that. I'll go see Spock. Don't worry, I won't upset him any more than he is already."

The hypo helped. Kirk slept for an hour, although when he woke up again he was more disorientated than before, and becoming frighteningly more violent in his efforts to disengage himself from the restrainers. This played havoc with his blood pressure. The diastolic reading plunged to an unrecordable level, and I hit the alarm button.

Almost simultaneously, he began to vomit blood in alarming quantities. Dr. McCoy came thundering in, pausing briefly to survey the battle ground. It seemed like there was blood everywhere.

"Christ Almighty!" McCoy swore, then galvanised himself into action like he was possessed. Whilst I concentrated on putting some blood back into him, he somehow managed to bring the Captain out of shock and quench the massive haemorrhage. Four minutes later, he relaxed slightly, and scrubbed his sweaty forehead.

"I had an awful idea this might happen. Those internal injuries... insipid infection... eroded through poorly anastomosed blood vessels... Dammit, there was so much rubbish in his peritoneum!" Poor guy, he looked near to tears.

"Don't blame yourself. At least Captain Kirk is still alive. No other surgeon could have done what you have already accomplished."

He smiled briefly. The moment of self-recrimination had passed. "Prepare surgery again, Cathy. If I don't close off that bleeding point, he WILL be dead. Another haematamasis like that, and... " The last words remained unsaid. Silently, I took myself off to prepare surgery.

Jim Kirk was one helluva guy, with one helluva will to live. I guess he held on to life by a very tenuous thread when he emerged from surgery a second time, but whilst it remained, so too did hope.

Dr. McCoy elected to stay with the Captain for the first few critical hours, although he was mentally and physically exhausted. There was no persuading him to rest, however, so on his instructions, I took myself off to inform Spock that his friend was still alive, if only just.

Spock was not expecting visitors, that was obvious. He lay on his bed, his arm across his eyes. He actually jumped when I barged in onto his very private grief. I am certain he had been crying, but he hid his feelings in his usual meticulous way.

"Mr. Spock, Captain Kirk is out of surgery. He remains critical, of course, but at least he is alive."

"Thank you, Nurse King."

No sigh of relief. No expression of thankfulness. I had not really expected any, but as he half-turned towards me, I felt, most intensely, the humanity within him. More than that, I sensed that it was no mere friendship between this strange half-alien and the Captain. It was love, and I guess I felt overawed by the revelation.

There did not seem to be anything more to say. A guy like Mr. Spock needs to be alone in times of stress, not to be comforted. So, without a further word, I just turned away and left the room.

For two days, Jim Kirk hovered between life and death. Meanwhile, those of the crew who knew him well were genuinely upset, particularly Scotty. Others who did not know him so well realised the possibility that Kirk might not recover, and began to lay bets as to who would be the next Captain of the Enterprise.

This made me real mad... and I wasn't the only one. Sulu and Chekov were involved in a fight with two of these guys and got themselves hauled over the coals rather than tell Spock, now fit and in command, why the fight had occurred.

Three days after the second crisis, I went on duty to find Chris actually smiling.

"Has Mr. Spock kissed you?" I quipped, and she treated that with the contempt it probably deserved. "Sorry. So what happy thing HAS happened?"

"The Captain has regained consciousness at last!"

"Well, that sure is good news, but there's a long way to go yet. Orientated?"

"Fully. He is alert, and relatively pain-free. Even managed a few sips of water without vomiting. I guess he's impatient now, which isn't a bad thing. Impatience is a fore-runner of determination, and he'll be needing that attribute in abundance."

"Does he know the extent of his injuries yet?"

Chris shook her head. "Leave that to Dr. McCoy, Cathy. It will be traumatic enough without us interfering. Anyway, he does have some inkling, but at the moment he's avoiding the inevitable." She yawned. "I'm for bed. Have a good day, Cathy."

There sure was a noticeable difference in the Captain. A tech was attempting to shave his chin, and he was grumbling like mad. I grinned. That was more like Jim Kirk.

"Mike, scoot!" I told the tech. "If he isn't satisfied with the way you're doing things, then let him try for himself."

"Aw, cummon, Cathy! He can't sit up...!"

"Shoo!"

Mike disappeared. I looked Kirk in the eyes. "O.K., go ahead. Get yourself shaved, Captain, then all you'll have to grumble at is yourself. I'll come back when you're through."

It took him ages, but he managed it, and looked kinda pleased with himself. "Cathy," he asked tiredly, "how long must I stay here, trussed up like a chicken? My ship... "

"Is being commanded quite efficiently by Mr. Spock. And you ain't going noplacement."

"But I want the john.. "

"With our sickbay--special plumbing , that's one place you DON'T want!"

"But your damned plumbing irritates like hell. I must preserve my... er ... assets."

"Your assets are still intact, Captain, I assure you. And you'd irritate a whole lot more if you wet the bed."

"Cathy!"

"Shut up, Captain. Just go to sleep, or you'll have much more than your plumbing to think about!"

Strange to say, he took my advice, and drifted off to sleep.

Two hours later, McCoy appeared, snappy and bad-tempered. "Nurse King, go find some other work!" he ordered curtly, his blue eyes flashing icicles. "I must speak to the Captain alone."

So, I know when I'm not wanted. And I knew my boss had a rotten job to do... to explain to a guy like Kirk what had happened to him. It was not easy at the best of times. For Dr. McCoy it was doubly difficult. Jim Kirk was his friend.

Not long after McCoy had had his say with the Captain, the expected reaction to the news knocked the hell out of us all; although we did recognize it as a perfectly natural safety valve, I guess, I for one did not expect it to be quite so traumatic.

At first, Jim Kirk flatly refused to co-operate with any of us, even to the extent of us touching him for any reason. This soon developed into a deep depression. All he wanted to do was lie there, and refused all help or comfort. McCoy ate his heart out. At one stage, it looked like the Captain would fade away from sheer lethargy. I was all for taking the bull by the horns and shocking him out of it. But, typical Chris, she advised against it, preferring to humour him.

Now Chris is a good academic nurse; hell, she's got umpteen dozen degrees. But she can be intolerably stupid when it comes to the practical side of things. She'd rather have the romanticized version of nursing and stick to her books and lab work than do something unpleasant. She would rather gaze at a dying patient, starry-eyed, than concentrate on the living. She annoys me like hell sometimes, and I don't take too much notice of her.

I was really surprised one day when I barged into I.T. to find Dr. McCoy and our four-star patient in the middle of a blazing row. Of late, such emotion had been quite beyond the Captain.

"Jim, for God's sake shut up!" McCoy shouted, like he was upset.

"Bones, you did me no favour by saving my life!" Kirk yelled back. "I can't exist like this! You know that! You should have let me die!"

Poor Dr. McCoy. I felt so sorry for him I could've cried. He did not argue any more. He just stormed out, so mad and upset that he did not even see me.

Jesus, I had had enough of James T. Kirk! And I'd also had enough of trying to humour him too. I marched up to his bed, ready for him.

"Now you listen here, Captain! Dr. McCoy saved your miserable hide against all odds. He fought for you, and I for one ain't gonna sit back and let you abuse him like that! So, you can do one of two things. Either pull yourself together and let us help you, or go your own way and stew in your own damn juice!"

He was so surprised at this unexpected turn of events that he just lay there, his temper simmering nicely.

"Well?" I demanded after a long silence. "What is it to be?"

He cooled down, and looked suitably chastised. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean..." He must have realised then that he would be getting no sympathy by employing the 'little boy hurt' tack. "O.K., where do we start?"

"By accepting what has happened to you, I guess. And then by concentrating on overcoming your injuries. It will be hard, but it's hard for Dr. McCoy too. The biggest compliment you could pay him would be for you to recover completely. It CAN be done. And we'll start now." I put a finger on the bed console. "You're gonna sit up. It will be an unpleasant experience, but stick it out. You can't stay flat on your back for ever."

The top of the bed hummed as it came gently upwards, very slowly, to ease Kirk into a sitting position for the first time in fourteen days. The spinal fractures were well healed now, but as the console switched itself off at the end of the operation, it became clear that he was suffering from an unexpected loss of equilibrium.

"I'm going to be sick..."

"Just breathe in and out gently through your mouth. Don't panic, the dizziness and nausea will go away quite soon, O.K.?"

After a while, he nodded, and gave a weak smile. Even though he looked quite haggard right then, he was kinda nice when he smiled. But now was not the time to get sentimental. I peeled back the bed-cover, surprised to discover he was quite shy at his partial nudity. I grinned at him.

"I'm not gonna rape you!" I quipped. "And I've seen more naked guys... in the line of duty, of course... than I've had hot dinners, so take that shocked expression off your face."

"Why aren't you the Captain?"

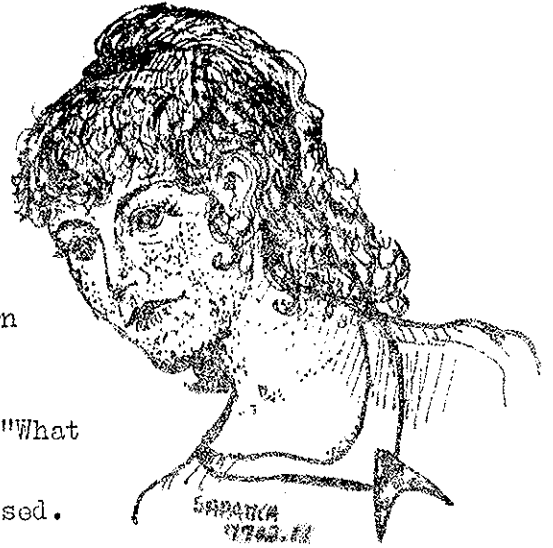
"Maybe I'll apply when you retire at ninety! Right now you are going to be treated to a lesson concerning your anatomy, like you've never had before. I guess Dr. McCoy told you the details of what happened. But now, it's time you got down to the practicalities. So, we'll work from the top downwards, so to speak. The diversional colostomy..."

"That's one thing I could do without," he mumbled unhappily.

"It probably saved your life, so don't talk wet! And you understand this, Captain! You're gonna have to live with it for at least another couple of weeks. It's part of your anatomy until then, and it's therefore up to you to look after it as such."

"I didn't ask for it..."

"In normal circumstances, you don't ask the sickbay techs to wash your backside, so why expect them to clean up the colostomy when it works efficiently? From now on, you will do that chore, with a little help from us, O.K.?"



He gave a weak grin. "Sounds like an order, so I'll have to obey. What's next on the agenda, Nurse King?"

"Plumbing."

"Aah, plumbing!" he repeated enigmatically. He was getting the message by now that I didn't intend to wait on him hand and foot, and even appeared to be warming up to the fact of actually doing things for himself.

"There are plans afoot to take it out soon, but only if you are co-operative. Because you are temporarily paraplegic, you have no sensation of wanting to pass urine. This... system... we installed helps to retrain the bladder sphincter by using the correct area of the brain to convey the message. But you have to recognise the message, which is different from the usual one."

"So how do I do that?"

"At the moment, the bladder empties into our tubing system every four hours. When it does that, it's up to you to sort out exactly why and how. Not so difficult as it sounds. By now, your brain has the message. All you have to do is decipher the correct sequence of impulses."

"Thrillsvilles! All that just to have a slash... "

"Shut up! We have now descended to the most important part of your anatomy... at least for the present exercise! Your legs. They will not move because your cord was damaged. But the damage is now healing. Already you are becoming sensitive to pain, which is a good sign. But they won't get better merely because the cord is healed. It's you who has to do the hard work. So, we can give you physiotherapy, but that will only account for a couple of hours in the day. You will have to account for the other twenty-two hours. Exercise is the only thing which will ever strengthen your legs."

He contemplated that for several minutes, and I did not interrupt him. Eventually he looked up, very serious.

"Nurse King...?"

"Yes, Captain?"

"Please go away and leave me in peace, huh? You've tired me out!"

Grinning, I straightened the bedclothes, then went off, humming to myself. For the first time in fourteen days, I knew that Captain Kirk would make it, with flying colours.

The change in Captain Kirk after that was astounding... even exceeding my expectations of him, and certainly increasing my admiration for him. Although he never really came to terms with his diversional colostomy, he took it in hand himself, and he exercised his legs to the point of near exhaustion.

"Please give up for a while!" Chris pleaded with him.

"Don't you dare, Captain!" I counter-ordered.

"Now look here, Cathy... "

Mentally, I stuck two fingers up at our beloved head nurse as I gave a knowing wink at Kirk and steered her out of the ward, so that she could natter on at me all she damn well pleased, and he could continue his exercises unobserved by kindly, but misdirected degree nurses.

The bladder drainage was removed, much to his relief, although he was desperately angry with himself when he got the 'message' wrong a few times and wet himself. But he soon learned to recognise the new stimulus, and

the 'accidents' became a rare occurrence after the first couple of days.

Meanwhile, the sensation in his legs was slowly returning. The constant exercising was paying off. Soon, he was able to get himself out of bed without assistance into the mechanically propelled wheelchair which Scotty had devised for him. He became positively dangerous in this as his natural exuberance for life returned to him, and it became a familiar sight to see the Captain whizzing along the Enterprise corridors at a fair speed in the contraption, much to the dubious pleasure of the crew who were in danger of a nasty collision. Eventually, Scotty had had enough. He modified his wonderful contraption, gave it a horn, and right and left indicator lights, whilst the bridge crew (Spock excepted) devised a document entitled 'The Highway Code, to be read by learner drivers.'

The Captain's laugh is very infectious. We laughed ourselves silly that day until Chris came in and broke the party up.

Then, for the third time, Jim Kirk went to surgery again, but this time he was genuinely looking forward to it. When he came round, he looked up at me through sleep-glazed eyes.

"Has it gone, Cathy?"

"Sure, Captain. It's gone."

He grinned happily and drifted off to sleep. That hated diversionary colostomy had at last been put back inside him and anastomosed to the well healed colon.

There was one last barrier to complete his amazing recovery, and that, he left as a surprise for Dr. McCoy and me. To this day, I'll never know if he engineered it to coincide with Christine's day off duty, but it did seem like he wanted to share his own triumph with no-one but we two.

"Bones," he said, acting serious. "I have something to give you. Here!" He held out his 'Highway Code' for learner drivers. "Guess I don't need it any more, thanks to you and Cathy."

He struggled to stand up like it was the biggest effort on Earth. I know now that he was play-acting, but right then, it seemed like a miracle. And the miracle did not end there. When he was upright, he began to walk towards us, haltingly at first, but gaining confidence with every step he took.

"Jim!" McCoy crowed, delighted, a big grin spreading across his face.

"Captain, you did it!" I screeched delightedly, as he purposely lurched into my arms and we both landed in an undignified way onto the floor. "You did it! You can walk!" I gasped.

He kissed me, once. Nothing romantic. Just a sort of 'thank you', which I appreciated more than anything else in the universe.

Two weeks later, Captain James T. Kirk of the U.S.S. Enterprise took command of his ship after ten standard weeks of long, hard struggle. In those weeks, I had come to like him an awful lot... not romantically, he was not my type... but as a man with a tremendous amount of guts, and as a friend. The friendship was entirely reciprocated too, and will, I hope, stand the test of time.

And, as I have told him before .. much to his embarrassment... and probably will again: "Captain, you are a giant among men."

And I mean that, too. Only rarely as I ever privileged to meet a man such as James T. Kirk.....

BEYOND THE FRINGE by Anne Snell

"Your hair is getting a bit long, Mr. Spock," said Kirk mildly one day, and indeed the First Officer was not looking his usual quintessentially immaculate self in matters tonsorial.

"I have been rather busy during the past two weeks," said Spock distantly, the tone of voice suggesting that his mind had been on higher things than hair-cuts.

"I don't suppose it would have anything to do with the fact that we have a new barber - a lady barber?" asked McCoy, who had come on to the bridge just then.

Spock raised an eyebrow, as much as to say, 'what's it got to do with you?' and said formally, "Captain, since the length of my hair is causing you some concern, I will of course endeavour to amend the situation at the earliest opportunity."

"She's very good at her job," said Kirk.

"I have no doubt that she is," replied Spock coldly. Even so, it was another twenty-four hours before he presented himself in the 'barber's shop'.

If ever a girl was the epitome of Irish loveliness, it was Maureen O'Hanahan. Sparkling green eyes, soft creamy complexion, and a beautifully riotous collection of red curls atop her darlin' little head.

All of which, of course, was completely wasted on our Mr. Spock.

She eyed him with a gaze that can only be described as 'fascinated!'. "I don't think I've cut your hair before, have I?" she asked in a lovely brogue, opening and shutting the scissors in her hand with a lethal snapping action.

"No," said Spock, sounding very much as though he wished she wasn't going to attempt it this time either.

"Well sit yourself down now, and Oi'll do me best." She smiled at him, not in the least put out by his solemn expression, and potted about fetching capes and towels and other paraphernalia.

Spock hesitated, as though he'd half a mind to leave now, and read up on 'Be Your Own Home Barber', then he sighed faintly and seated himself, very much in the manner of one going to his death in that ancient barbaric instrument called 'the electric chair'.

A spotless white cape was swirled around his neck with such a flourish that he wondered if Miss O'Hanahan had unfulfilled ambitions of becoming a matador. The cape cascaded gracefully around him, hiding all of him, and the chair to boot, and there he sat, awaiting her ministrations with trepidation. He could not see how anyone who allowed their own locks to be so wayward could be trusted to use restraint when dealing with other people's.

She stood behind him and ran her fingers through his hair and peered at it in the manner of all hairdressers when they are thinking up the best way to break the news that you have split ends or dandruff.

Then she spun the chair and tilted it at the same time, so that his head dangled backwards over the basin.

"I only require a trim..." he began.

"You'll get a better cut if it's wet first," she said cheerfully, and got on with shampooing and rinsing. And in fact, though he would never have admitted it to anyone, the gentle massaging movements of her fingers, and the warmth of the water, were most pleasant. He regarded the curls on her head, which were indeed extremely unruly, until he got a bit of soap in his left eye which immediately began to water uncontrollably.

"Oh, it's real sorry that I am," she said contritely, and very tenderly wiped his eye with a tissue. "There now, is that better?"

"Thank you," said Spock, and from then on kept his eyes shut.

The massaging and rinsing continued, and his mind began to slip away to a piece of music he was in the middle of composing for lyrette and cymbals, when she suddenly said "All finished", and the chair was righted with such speed that he only just managed to stop himself being propelled out of it and across the room.

"Well now," she said, "we'll just towel the drips away," and she swathed his head in soft pink fluffy warmth, and rubbed vigorously, singing 'I'll take you home again, Kathleen' under her breath.

"I should be most obliged if you would refrain from singing that particular song," said Spock in a strained voice.

The singing and towelling stopped, and Spock emerged from the pink towel, ear tips glowing.

As if by magic (how illogical!) the scissors appeared in her hand, together with a comb, and she proceeded to wield both with a speed that was breathtaking (if ever a Vulcan allowed his breath to be taken away by such things).

"I don't suppose you'd like a crewcut?" she asked, a gleam in her eyes at the prospect of being allowed to practise up on that style of almost-but-not-quite baldness.

"No!" Spock's head jerked convulsively, thereby nearly rendering him short of one ear tip.

"Oh well," she sighed, "no harm in asking. Well, we'll just blow you dry."

Visions came to Spock's literal mind of Miss O'Hanahan pursing that charming (really, Spock!) mouth and blowing on his hair, but she reached over on to a shelf, picked up a hand-dryer, and surrounded his head in a stream of warm air currents.

"There now," she said, looking enchanted with her handiwork, "don't you just look the bee's knees?"

Spock looked in the mirror, and paled in horror at the sight. She had given him a middle parting, and had swept the sides back in a most unflattering way.

"Oh," she said sadly. "You don't like it."

"No," said Spock.

"It's the latest fashion," she said.

"How interesting," said Spock drily.

"Well, I can wash it again and change it back, but don't you think you might like it if you leave it like this for a day or two, to get used to it?" she persisted.

"No," said Spock.

With a sigh, she swivelled the chair and tilted it. The hair was wetted again, the chair set to rights, and then out came the dryer once more. This time Spock was gratified to see she had curbed her enthusiasm for fashion, and that his hair was now back to its usual neat style.

At that moment McCoy breezed in, beaming at no-one in particular and everyone in general.

"Well," he said to Maureen O'Hanahan, noting her glum expression, "has Mr. Spock been giving you a rough time?"

"Really, Doctor, I fail to see why you should assume that I have done anything to Miss O'Hanahan."

"People don't look that glum for nothing," retorted McCoy.

"He wouldn't let me give him a fashionable style," said our Maureen, a little choke in her voice.

"Oh, take no notice of him," said McCoy, watching her remove the cape from the Vulcan. Spock got hastily to his feet and made for the door.

McCoy took his place in the chair. "You can practise on me," he said gallantly.

At the door, Spock turned and said impassively, "Miss O'Hanahan is anxious to perfect a style known as a 'crew cut'."

"Oh yes?" said McCoy. "What's that, a new fashion?"

"Yes," said our tonsorial artiste breathlessly, hardly believing her luck, and set to with a will.

No-one saw a great deal of the good doctor for quite a while after that. Except maybe Spock. McCoy decided it was time to give the First Officer a thorough medical check-up, which Mr. Spock of course underwent with typical Vulcan stoicism, and during which he no doubt counted himself fortunate that Dr. McCoy had taken the Hippocratic Oath!

AN OATH OF FIDELITY by Jayne Turner

I existed many years
before you reached out to me.
Full Human or Vulcan
I was never meant to be.
Caught between two different worlds
The devil and the deep blue sea.

But then - you came.
And changed this darkness into light,
For you - I'd give
My home, my flag,
My soul - my very life.

Are you worth this much?
I know you well.
For you as I
Unsure of what we are,
of who we are
Will need to know.

All I can say is this.
I stand by choice
and choice alone
beside you.
Wherever you may go
alongside you
I remain.

COURAGE by Pam Baddeley

The Enterprise was currently orbiting Rhiannon while Captain James T. Kirk, his First Officer, the ship's surgeon and six security men were below on the planet's surface to arrange a mining agreement with the two principal groups of inhabitants. Rhiannon had been settled several generations ago by colonists from Earth. Beset by numerous problems, they had fought back well but had regressed somewhat, technologically. They lived in several scattered, fairly small communities in the north-western corner of the largest of the two continents, which they had named New America and Europa respectively. Over the years they had been visited by various trading ships, but only recently by the Federation. The Republic had made a brief survey while en route to deliver supplies to a scientific colony in the next star system, and had made two important discoveries. The first was the presence of substantial dilithium deposits in New America, in a region overlapping into the settler's area. The second was that the colonists shared the vast continent with a much larger group of humanoids - the indigenous Rhiannons - a fact of which earlier visitors had either been ignorant or else had disregarded due to the difficulties in locating and transacting business with them.

The Rhiannons were nomadic, forming five great nations who came together for common festivals and for war. They also engaged in some trade with the colonists, though with a fair amount of mutual suspicion. The Humans knew little about the aliens or their movements, except that the territory of the largest nation bordered that of the settlement area, for the lizard-riders, as the colonists called them, made their summer camping ground there.

This fact was uppermost in the minds of the landing party - it meant that a large percentage of the dilithium was in tribal lands. Luckily, the Prime Directive was non-operational, as the nomads had already been open to Human influence for some time and seemed little affected.

A camp had been erected in the region where the two lands met and the treaty had been fully explained and discussed with the colonists who had sent messengers to the nomad's camp.

Kirk had been talking to Matthew Springer, headman of one of the settlements. "I tell you, Captain, you will find it difficult to make those savages see reason." They were standing by the conference tent, savouring the warm summer sun and the gentle breeze blowing across the tree-dotted plain. People were moving around the camp, clearing up after the mid-day meal or just chatting. Kirk noticed the watchful guards round the perimeter, some holding the home-made weapons - spears and crossbows; others, more or less modern weapons procured from trading ships. "All the years our people have been here, we've never been able to get on really friendly terms with the nomads. They still cling to their primitive existence - I doubt if they'll agree to any encroachment on their range. Believe me, we've had plenty of trouble from them in the past!"

"We'll do our best to see a satisfactory agreement reached on all sides, sir." Kirk could see that Springer was only half convinced.

"Well," he said, "I must see some of my people, Captain Kirk, so if you'll please excuse me..."

As he left, Spock crossed to join Kirk. "I have learned that the settlers were obliged to make a peace treaty with the Rhiannons two point eight years ago, Captain."

"Hmm. They weren't very pleased when they learned that the Federation is not prepared to supply them with arms in return for the dilithium. And Mr. Springer's been doing his best to convince me that the natives are dangerous and unreasonable. Well, we'll find out for sure when they get here." Kirk looked at his First Officer. He knew Spock had been intrigued ever since they first arrived by the sight of what appeared to be ancient ruins nearby, but

until now had had no opportunity to investigate. "Until then," he continued, "we can do nothing further, so let's take a look around those ruins."

As he and Spock made their way across the camp, they were joined by McCoy. He had been discussing medical matters with Dr. Langley, head of the small cottage hospital in Leicester, the largest settlement. As part of the agreement, the colonists were to receive medical supplies and expertise.

The three men headed towards the ruins, the security guards following. McCoy, glancing back, said, "You know, I feel a little conspicuous with those watchdogs trailing us everywhere."

"The guards are necessary, Doctor, since the Rhiannons would apparently regard the Federation as inferior without a show of force."

McCoy turned to Kirk. "When are they going to get here anyhow, Jim?"

"The messengers were sent when the Enterprise first got here, and their camp's only supposed to be a day's journey from here - "

"On foot or in one of those broken-down jalopies of theirs?" McCoy was referring to the few vehicles owned by the settlers, and now run on methane after consumption of the fuel they'd purchased. "If they went in one of those we'll still be waiting here next week!"

By now they had reached their destination. The crumbled walls and fallen masonry around them still showed traces of abstract patterns and half-legible inscriptions.

Spock was making a tricorder scan. "Readings indicate the age of these buildings to be approximately three thousand years, Captain."

"So the nomads were once city-dwellers - or conquered those who were," Kirk commented.

They turned left into what had once been a side street, its end once blocked by a wall, now crumbling and partly covered with a climbing vine-like plant hung with bunches of fruit. In front of it was a woman who swung round, startled, her mouth stained red, and dropped the fruit she had been eating. She stared at them, eyes vivid green under slanting eyebrows, long hair red like her mouth. From her clothing, a jerkin and leggings of simple rough material, high boots and a voluminous dark brown cloak, Kirk realised that she must be a native Rhiannon. He stepped forward, keeping his approach as casual and unthreatening as possible.

"I'm Captain James T. Kirk and this is Mr. Spock and Dr. McCoy. We're the Federation representatives you've heard about, come to arrange a trading agreement with your people."

"Yes," the woman acknowledged. "We travel faster than your messengers." Her voice held contempt. "You may expect their arrival tonight."

Suddenly there was a loud hissing sound from behind the wall, then a grotesque reptilian head mounted on a long sinuous neck appeared, a forked tongue flickering from its open jaws. To Kirk's right, Finch, youngest of the security team, produced his phaser and aimed it.

The woman's hand moved beneath her cloak. Next second, Finch uttered a choked cry of pain and dropped the phaser. A knife transfixed his hand. Another lightning movement and the nomad woman drew a long, wickedly sharp blade. Hair seeming to bristle with fury, she backed away as the creature behind the wall dropped to all fours out of sight.

"So you come to mine and trade, do you?" the woman cried. "You're as treacherous as your friends!"

She quickly sheathed her sword, and reaching up to seize a stout 'vine' branch, swung herself over the wall. Kirk and Spock ran forward and pulled themselves up just in time to see her galloping away on her lightly-built reptilian mount.



"Wait!" Kirk cried, but she did not look back. "Damn!" he muttered under his breath as he dropped lightly down.

"Captain - from what I obtained of the woman's life readings, it should be possible to locate her party with little difficulty."

"Well, that's something."

McCoy had removed the dagger and was running his medical scanner over Finch's wound.

"I - I'm sorry, sir," Finch stammered. "I thought it was going to attack her... "

Kirk nodded. He knew Finch was going to get a rocket from the Security Chief when this was all over; right now, it was important to get his mistake rectified.

"All right, Finch; let's get you to sickbay."

After arranging for Finch to be beamed up and a replacement sent down, he turned the communicator over to Spock. The Vulcan relayed the data he had obtained, requesting a scan in the direction indicated by the woman's flight. He then returned the communicator to Kirk and examined the knife which McCoy handed him. It was finely edged and well-balanced, its hilt set with precious stones in an abstract pattern.

"This would seem to indicate that its owner was of some rank, Captain," he commented.

Kirk nodded. Just what he was afraid of. Probably the chief's wife or daughter... he could easily imagine the sort of report she would make when she got back.

"However," Spock was continuing, "despite the colonists' allegations of bloodthirstiness among the nomads, she chose to injure Mr. Finch rather than kill him."

And she could easily have done it too, with skill like that, reflected Kirk.

They had retraced their steps out of the ruins when a call came in from Scotty. A party of about forty Rhiannons had been located about a mile away.

"Captain!" Spock said. His Vulcan ears had detected something the others had not. Then they saw two Rhiannons appear from behind the northern edge of the ruins, galloping rapidly towards the camp. Kirk turned to the others.

"Come on, gentlemen - let's get back there - fast!"

When they arrived, the natives - a man and a woman - were waiting, still mounted. The man spoke. "We come from Kelren, supreme chief of the Kelde-reess." The word he used was clearly the lizard-riders' own name for themselves. "Hear our words. There will be no agreement with the Starmen. There will be no Other-ones admitted to our lands."

They both swung their mounts' heads round. Kirk moved quickly to the man's side. "Tell your chief that what happened in the ruins was a misunderstanding. The guard believed the woman was in danger - he was not going to attack her."

The man gazed down at Kirk for a moment, then kicked his mount's sides, and both Rhiannons galloped away.

Macpherson, governor of Leicester, grabbed Kirk by the arm. "What was all that about?" The anger was clear in his voice. The colonists wanted this agreement and the goods it would bring them very badly.

"Governor, I suggest that you and the other colonists all remain here. We are going to pay Kelren a visit." Kirk led his men aside, then contacted the ship again. "Scotty, have you still got a fix on that camp?"

"Aye, Captain. They havena' moved."

"Good. I want you to beam us up and then set us down outside their camp - behind some cover if you can."

Only minutes later, they arrived behind a clump of bushes. In the open about a hundred yards away were the nomads, busily engaged in packing their belongings, folding up their tents, and strapping this baggage onto the backs of pack-lizards. At one end of the camp, the riding animals were tethered in two rows. The difference in build showed that the Rhiannons evidently used selective breeding to produce the two strains. A number of sentries were keeping watch.

Kirk sized up the situation. There was no way to get closer unseen. "All right, gentlemen; nice and easy - and keep your hands clear of your weapons."

As the strangers were seen approaching, the Rhiannons gathered together. Kelren counselled them. "We will hear their words. No fighting unless it begins with them."

"We come in peace to speak with Kelren, your chief."

"I am Kelren."

The red-haired woman spoke as she stepped forward, momentarily amused by Kirk's discomfiture.

"Well I'll be... "McCoy murmured, softly.

Kirk decided that some days it just didn't pay to get out of bed.

"I know that you have come to tell me that your follower thought only to save me from attack, Captain Kirk. These men and women are the heads of the fifteen greatest clans in the Kelde-reess nation, after that of the Tesh-kad. For three thousand summers our clans and leige-clans have used this land. Now you wish to dig rocks from it and will give us in return - what? Your friends, the ones who root themselves to the ground as if they were trees or stones, not men, also tried to take our land - they soon learned better! Then they traded with us and gave us new sicknesses. Will you take those back?"

Carefully, patiently, Kirk explained about the Federation to them; how the agreement would lay down the area where mining was to take place and guarantee the rest of the nomadic lands safe from interference. If diseases had been introduced by the colonists, the Federation would give medical help to overcome them.

Kelren and the other clan-leaders still appeared sceptical when a man came racing up on lizard-back. He leaped down and touching his left shoulder with his right hand in the Rhiannon salute panted out some words in the native language.

Kelren stiffened and asked a question. The man replied, looking uncomfortable. With that, Kelren marched over to the tethered animals and began saddling her mount. As she did so, she was shouting orders to warriors. The other clan chiefs also made for their mounts. Kirk and the others followed. Seeing them, Kelren said, "He came to tell me that my son has one of your peoples' fevers!" Her voice was controlled, but the anger in it was still apparent.

McCoy spoke up. "I'm a doctor - a healer. Let me help him."

Kelren froze for a moment, her eyes meeting McCoy's. "All right, make good your words with deeds." She called to two of her warriors in Rhiannon then turned back to them. "Can you ride?"

Kirk knew this was no time to have doubts. "We'll manage."

"Vorns have been readied for you - the most gentle we have." With that,

Kelren galloped away, along with the clan chiefs.

"Jim - only three of these things have been saddled."

"Yes, Bones - evidently only the three of us are invited."

Kirk quickly gave instructions to the Security Chief to notify the ship of developments and return to the colonists. The few spare nomads who had remained behind to bring the baggage and spare mounts watched curiously as the three men mounted the hissing creatures, which were made uneasy by the unfamiliar scents of their alien riders. Kirk and Spock had little trouble, but McCoy had to be helped up by a security guard. Muttering, "This is the last time I make house calls," he attempted to direct his vorn in the direction of its galloping fellows, now almost out of sight.

After a while, the three men more or less got the hang of things; with the animals pointed in the right direction, they gave them their heads. Kirk wondered if he'd ever be able to sit down again after a couple of hours. The vorns eventually slowed down to a steady lope and it was only as night began to fall that the gap between them and those in front began to close. Kelren, who had been setting a gruelling pace, now had to concede that the animals needed rest, and so called a halt for the night. In the last light, some of the party slipped off to hunt while the others unsaddled and tethered the vorns, then gathered wood for a fire. Evidently, rank did not preclude one's doing a fair share of the work. Kirk and the others rode up and shortly afterwards the hunting party returned. They had managed to kill some small mammals and to add substance to the meal had collected edible plants and roots. Since all cooking utensils and containers had been left behind with the rest of the baggage in the necessity for speed, the meat was roasted over the fire and the vegetables eaten raw. Despite the curious glances of the Rhiannons whose guesting customs prohibited outright stares, Spock managed to pass over the meat unobtrusively and consume only vegetables. Kelren took her share to the outer perimeter of the camp where she sat alone, gazing out into the darkness, accompanied by her thoughts.

After the meal, one of the warriors produced a slim wooden flute-like instrument and began to play an eerie haunting melody, strangely beautiful. The Rhiannons began to sing in their own language. A voice behind Kirk and his friends made them look round.

"They sing of the stars, the wind blowing across the plain, the earth and the waters, the creatures who feed us." In the firelight, Kelren's hair was like blood.

"It is beautiful," Spock said.

The woman's mood of reverie abruptly changed. "Tomorrow we reach the boy. Be sure your medicines cure him - he is to be clan chief of the Teshkad and chief of all Kelde-reess after me. If not - your farmer friends may learn of my displeasure." Leaving them to reflect on her words, she disappeared into the darkness.

The other Rhiannons began to prepare for sleep, leaving a few sentries on guard. The Enterprise men also made themselves as comfortable as possible, though McCoy couldn't resist grumbling a little. Throughout the night the warriors changed watches with nothing to report. In the morning, Kirk and the others were awakened by the activities of the nomads who were preparing to leave. Kelren was too anxious to be moving for anyone to bother about breakfast, and the sun was only just up as they rode off. Another couple of hours and they sighted the outskirts of the nomad camp. It seemed to encompass the whole horizon. On the way they passed a huge herd of horned, woolly-backed animals grazing. The herdsmen and women saluted as they saw who rode by.

On closer inspection, the great mass of people, tents and vorns now around them resolved itself into groups consisting of the main tents of the

largest clans, each with its subsidiary clans arranged round it. People raced ahead to spread the news of the chiefs' return and a great buzz of voices arose on all sides at the sight of the strangers.

At last they rode into the area of the Tesh-kad. Most of the individuals around them were red-haired. One, a man, came up to Kelren and spoke to her in Rhiannon. After a short conversation, she dismounted and spoke again, pointing to McCoy. The man flashed a startled glance in his direction, then spoke rapidly. His words were clearly uncomplimentary. Kelren cut him short and turned to McCoy. "Come with me."

Stiffly, he climbed down, stifling a groan, then, with a backward glance at his friends, followed the chieftain towards a small tent. The man, who had been watching silently, his expression clearly showing his fury, stalked away.

Inside the tent on a bed of skins lay a boy about six years old, red-haired, burning with fever, his breath coming in short, rapid gasps. McCoy crossed quickly to his side, and began scanning. Kelren watched, her face expressionless.

"This fever came with the farmers. At first, warriors and the weak alike died in great numbers. As years passed, it only killed the old and the young. Some of them even survive now." She dropped to her knees, her face only inches from McCoy's. "Our healer has been able to do nothing for Hedron. If you can save him you will have your rocks. Do it!" She glanced at the boy for a moment then swept out of the tent.

Outside, the clan chiefs had dispersed to their own areas and the Tesh-kad were standing a distance from the Federation men, eyeing them suspiciously. Kelren led the two men to the main tent, a massive structure. Inside, lanterns as yet unlit hung from the supporting poles. Underfoot were strewn dyed rugs in colourful abstract patterns, evidently woven from the wool of the animals they'd seen. They seated themselves on these and food was brought to them. Kirk and Spock could see that the tent was a communal living space. The sleeping areas were screened off, so the Rhiannons apparently believed in some privacy. After eating in silence, Kelren gave instructions to an old woman to see to the needs of their guests and then fetched a longbow and quiver of arrows. She then left. Kirk asked the old woman, who was in charge of those sewing and weaving in the tent, where Kelren had gone.

"Hunting," she replied, and returned to her sewing.

The two men went for a stroll around the Tesh-kad tents. They noticed two men on guard outside the tent where the sick boy lay. They were members of the guard Kelren had taken with her to the meeting. The rest had disappeared, presumably gone hunting with her. They also noticed that the only Rhiannons in camp were children, women with young babies, and the middle-aged and elderly. These older people looked after the children and did any tasks around the camp. A group of children aged between six and twelve were receiving lessons in knife-throwing and the bow, using small bows specially made for them. When the lesson was over they came over, a little hesitantly, to Kirk and Spock and began asking questions. Before long, they were all deep in conversation, their knowledge of each others' cultures growing. The children had even given them a lesson in the Rhiannon tongue. Although the younger children had some communication difficulties, the older ones were effectively bilingual, which showed the foresight of their chieftain at least.

That evening McCoy finally emerged from the tent for a moment.

"How's it going, Bones?"

"Well, Jim, this fever they got from the colonists - it's a mutation of the common cold. Oh, the cold itself doesn't produce fatalities, but it

lowers resistance, and pneumonia results. Anyway, I think I've got it licked now - his temperature's going down and we should see a real improvement by tomorrow. Where's his mother, by the way?"

"She went hunting, Bones; been gone about ten hours now."

"Hunting? And her son's lying there - dying for all she knew?"

Kirk smiled. "Your reputation must have spread further than you realised."

"Yes, well; I'll be with the boy if I'm needed."

Most of the Rhiannons had now drifted back to their tents and meals were being prepared and eaten. Afterwards, in the communal tent, one of the old people told a story to the children. Kirk could only make out a few words here and there, but it was exciting, judging from the children's rapt expressions. This was followed by some singing and then they headed for their respective sleeping places. Before making for the place they had prepared for him, Kirk slipped outside to contact the ship and report that all was well.

Kelren returned on the evening of the next day at the head of a hunting party. She went straight to her son, and found McCoy with him, eating supper.

"How is he?"

"I am better now, my chief." The small voice spoke from the bed. Kelren's white teeth flashed in the lamplight; it was the first time McCoy had seen her smile.

"He's still weak; he needs rest, plenty of liquids for a few more days. He's getting his appetite back though - he's had some broth."

Kelren nodded. "You are a good healer. You may go to your friends now, if you wish. I will stay with him."

As McCoy left, Kelren was telling Hedron of the kills she had made that day, while the boy listened, enthralled. McCoy puzzled over the relationship between this strange woman and her son.

The next day was spent in discussion of the treaty with the other clan chiefs. It was agreed that in return for the dilithium the nomads were to receive medical supplies, materials and grain (they already obtained some by trade with the settlers, and harvested wild grain when they found it). After that, they returned at a far more leisurely pace to the waiting settlers. On the way, Kirk and the others talked a lot with Kelren and learned that the Kelde-reess preserved memories of their wanderings eastwards which had led them into conflict with the city dwellers already in the area. The latter had eventually been overcome and absorbed into the nomad nation, from whence no doubt came their liking for abstract patterns, and perhaps some of their skills. Kelren was intrigued by the Vulcan culture and listened with interest to all Spock had to tell her of it.

Fortunately, the agreement now saw a speedy conclusion, and the colonists were soon packing up to go home. Kirk saw to it that the Security Guards were beamed up from inside one of the tents, figuring that remarkably resilient though they appeared to be to 'culture-shock', even the Rhiannons would find teleportation hard to swallow.

The Rhiannons had also prepared to leave and, as they rode away, Kelren lingered on vorn-back to bid farewell to the Starmen. Kirk looked up at this remarkable woman whose name he now knew to mean 'Courage', head of the Fire-haired clan and of the nation of the Strong People.

"Goodbye, Kelren - and good luck."

"Good fortune to you, James Kirk, and to your friends. We will remember your skills with gratitude, Healer. And I think, some day, that people

of the Tesh-kad will join your peoples among the stars."

"I think so too."

Spock made the Vulcan salute. "Live long and prosper, Kelren."

Kelren returned him the salute of her people. "Farewell then, till the seasons bring us together."

She then rode away. Kirk spoke into his communicator. "Three to beam up, Scotty."

Another successful mission was over. They were going home.

A DESPERATE GAMBLE by Gillian Catchpole

He met their eyes,
 Eyes filled with fear
 And the far distant hope that somewhere there must be a solution.
 Never for one second did frustration or helplessness
 Reveal themselves in his still silent face.
 He knew their lives were in his keeping,
 But there was nothing more to do except wait.
 Nothing more to do except one choice.
 In times other than this
 Such a suggestion would be instantly rejected,
 The odds of success were much too low.
 Such chances were outside his logic.

Decided, fingers reached for a switch
 And it was done.
 An action based solely on hope,
 A desperate gamble,
 One he was not used to taking.
 Seconds ticked away,
 There was no-one to see.
 Their ship a lighted flare in the blackness around
 Shone only for the stars.
 He'd gambled and lost
 And it struck him cold inside.
 He held it to be of no account
 That this was only the inevitable end brought forward.

In those moments before burn-up the people around
 Robbed of whatever time the future held,
 Could so easily have despised
 This man for what he'd done.
 Instead they offered words of comfort.
 At last he had done something they could understand,
 A desperate gamble born of the heart
 Far removed from the coldness of logic.
 Now there was a closeness not felt before,
 A union,
 A joining together to face disaster.
 When hope had all but disappeared
 And fear threatened to numb their senses,
 There was pleasure in this revelation of differences past.
 And finally when rescue snatched them from their burning coffin,
 A warmth remained stronger than any fire.

AFTERWARDS by Valerie Piacentini

"Let's get the hell out of here!"

Captain Kirk's tone was bleak. The landing party gathered around him, and each breathed a sigh of relief as the transporter pulled them back to the familiar safety of the Enterprise.

On the planet's surface the Guardian waited patiently in its city of ruins; they would return - or others like them. Eventually.

In the transporter room Kirk was once more the brisk, efficient Captain.

The guards dismissed, he turned to his anxious friends. "Uhura, Scotty - go and get some rest. Bones - sickbay. I want M'Benga to check for any after-effects from the cordrazene."

"But Jim... "

"Don't argue, Bones - just go. Mr. Spock, come with me."

Recognising the barely-controlled weariness in his voice, the Humans left with a last anxious glance; Spock followed without comment to the elevator. There are times, Kirk thought, when Vulcan reticence is very welcome.

The short journey was accomplished in silence. Only when his cabin door closed behind them did Kirk permit his weariness to show.

"Pour me a drink," he directed as he headed for the shower. Spock obeyed, handing over the glass when Kirk returned, rubbing his damp hair with a towel.

"Thanks." Kirk drained the glass, looked round for somewhere to put it, and found it taken from him. "God, I need sleep. Where did I put McCoy's pills?"

Seeing that this was no time for a discussion on the effects of combining alcohol with sleeping tablets, Spock located the bottle and shook out the prescribed dose into his Captain's hand.

Kirk sat down heavily on the bed. "Stay till I fall asleep, will you?" he asked. "I don't want to be alone... "

The Vulcan nodded and sank into a chair. After a moment,

"Why me, Captain?" he asked. "Surely Dr. McCoy... "

"Because you don't ask questions. Right now I don't want to discuss... I never thought I'd envy your emotional control, Spock." His voice was growing drowsy. Spock settled him carefully on the bed, drew the cover over him. Within moments, Kirk was asleep.

With his instinctive neatness Spock tidied the cabin, disposing of the worn clothes, the damp towels; he rinsed the glass and replaced it, then moved back into the sleeping area to look down at his Captain.

Kirk was tossing restlessly, his face tormented even in sleep. The soft whispering was almost inaudible, then one word came clearly.

"Edith!"

There was such pain, such naked longing in his voice, that the Vulcan shivered. This could not be permitted...

He leaned forward and positioning his fingers precisely on his Captain's face, "Sleep," he commanded softly. "For tonight - forget. Sleep without dreaming." The drawn face smoothed to tranquillity, the restlessness subsided and Kirk lay at peace.

When Spock removed his hands he found his fingertips were wet; tears had slipped from the Captain's eyes. Spock brushed them away, and looked curiously at the moisture on his fingers. Resuming his seat he studied his Captain thoughtfully.

Emotion. His logical Vulcan mind recoiled from the wild turmoil of grief and self-reproach he had sensed; if unchecked, it could destroy the Human... but he was useless as a comforter, he acknowledged honestly.

Very well, then, consider it as a problem in logic. The grief? Edith was dead. That could not be - must not be - altered; Kirk had known that himself. The guilt, the self-reproach? Only forgiveness and understanding could tame that destructive emotion - but they must come from one long dead.

There was one factor that Kirk was not yet aware of, but he would soon learn, for McCoy would not be able to conceal. Edith had known. She had seen the doctor's lunge forward, Kirk's frantic move to block his path. How could she, even if it were possible, forgive the man who had said he loved her, but who had permitted her to die?

Spock considered carefully the one possibility he could see. Was it worth the risk? His faultless memory superimposed on the peaceful, sleeping face the haunted anguish he had seen there, and his logical mind faltered before the picture.

He had never before allowed himself to consider his attitude to the Human. Kirk had proved himself a skilled, efficient Captain, a strong, self-reliant man, with a wisdom unusual in one of his race; he was someone to whom the Vulcan could pledge his loyalty without reserve - but that had been all, until now.

Loyalty was no longer enough. What was needed was something wildly illogical, dangerous, unreasonable; something that no commander had the right to ask of a subordinate - but something one friend might do for another.

Curiously serene now that he had made his decision, Spock rose - looked a moment longer at the peacefully-sleeping Kirk, then left the cabin. Ship's stores provided him with the necessary clothes, and Kyle beamed him down without protest.

A few questions to the Guardian provided necessary information, then with a firm step he passed through the time portal. The swirling mist hid him from sight, then cleared to a view of the desolate landscape beyond.

"Visitor for you, Miss Keeler." The nurse's voice carried the hushed respect of one who speaks to the dying. Edith knew she had little time left, but she was almost glad of that - she could not bear to live on, knowing that Jim might have saved her, but had not done so - had even prevented his friend from doing so. In fact, the sooner the better... then she would not have to remember those teasing eyes, the laughing mouth that had spoken lies...

For a moment the quiet words lit a flame of hope; could it be Jim? Had he come to explain the impossible?

Hope died as she recognised the tall figure; it was... the other; Spock. The dark eyes studied her with compassion, and despite her anger and despair she knew that this man wanted to help.

"Why have you come?" she asked dully.

"To explain. You are dying, Miss Keeler." She winced; no attempt to soften the words from this one. "I want you... to know why. You said once, that Jim and I were... out of place here. You were correct. He has returned to our own place, but I have come so that you might understand... and perhaps forgive. Look at me."

With hands that shook slightly, Spock pulled off his cap, and her eyes widened as she saw for the first time the full sweep of the winged eyebrows, the curve of delicately pointed ears. Shock prevented her from crying out.

"Who... what are you?" she managed at last.

The dark eyes shadowed for a moment. "I am from a planet called Vulcan. Your race and mine will not meet for many years."

"And... Jim?"

"He is as Human as you. We are from what will be your future."

"That explains much that puzzled me. But it does not explain why... he let me die."

"He had no choice. Listen, and I will tell you the history of your people as I know it."

Carefully, simply, Spock explained what was to him the history of the Federation and of Starfleet; Edith listened entranced to the stories of the great silver ships soaring out from the world she knew, to find and combine with other civilisations among the stars.

"You had a dream," Spock continued gently, "a dream of great beauty. It came true, as dreams so seldom do; until... Dr. McCoy sustained an accident, and became deranged; in his fear he passed through a time portal and changed our history, so that everything we knew vanished as though it had never been. Only Captain Kirk and I, with a few crewmembers, were protected from the change by our proximity to the portal. We did not know what McCoy had done; our only chance was to find him, and set right the time-line he altered. What we could not know was that you were the focal point. Jim loves you... but if you lived, thousands of millions would die; the Human race would never leave the planet of its birth. Everything we knew and loved and worked for would vanish."

"My life would make such a difference?"

"Indeed." Compassionately, but relentlessly, the Vulcan described the course of history after McCoy changed it, painting in vivid detail a proud race sinking slowly back into barbarism.

"That was the choice my Captain faced. You - or the Galaxy. His love - or the future of his people. How he chose, you know. Miss Keeler, the man you loved could have done no other."

"I... understand. But why did you come to me? Where is Jim now?"

"In his own time and place. At the moment, he believes that you were killed outright, but he will soon learn that you were not. He is desolate... but when he discovers that you knew he betrayed you, his guilt will destroy him. He is a... a good man, Miss Keeler; I would not see him hurt so. I thought, if I came... if I could make you understand... you might forgive him. To the end of his days, he will mourn you; I ask you now... let that be all he must bear."

Edith studied the slim figure quietly. It was too soon to make sense of the wonders she had learned; later, perhaps - if there was time - she might fully appreciate the immensity of the appalling choice Jim had made. Now the future spoke to her through those quiet eyes.

This was a man who never begged, she sensed dimly; but he was begging now, pleading for understanding and forgiveness for his friend. She had been uneasy in his presence, feeling that he watched her, that he resented Jim's growing love for her; now she realised that he had only been concerned for Jim, realising that Jim's growing love for her could only hurt him.

Impulsively, Edith stretched out her hand. The Vulcan hesitated, then took it - his fingers felt strangely warm.

"Tell him that I understand," she whispered. "That I love him - I will always love him. There is no need for forgiveness... he could make no other choice. I wish him happiness in that world I will never see. Yet I am luckier than most - my death has meaning, and I know it. My dream will live one day... how few can be certain of that!"

"Is there... anything I can do?" Spock asked gently.

"If you could tell me of him?" Edith begged. "Tell me of his life, of the world you share."

Leaning forward, Spock began to speak quietly, telling her of the man she loved. He spoke of the Starship Captain, proud, commanding as he roamed a Galaxy; of the man, Human and vulnerable, who followed a dream as beautiful as hers; of the friend whose loyalty had been tested a thousand times and never found wanting.

Edith listened, loving him all the more; and as she listened, she watched the bright dark eyes - how much he was betraying of himself, this alien!

At last Spock withdrew his hand and stood up, pulling the cap over his betraying ears. "I must go," he said quietly.

"Yes, my friend - he will need you. Guard him for me - I think you care for him too."

Biting back the instinctive denial, Spock considered her words. Did he care for James Kirk? He was not sure... but somehow he thought that he must.

"I will do as best I can," he assured her, "but your understanding will help him, I think. Farewell, Miss Keeler; regret is useless, and yet... I wish..."

"I know. Now go, my friend - go to him."

The dark eyes held hers a moment longer, then he was gone, slipping through the screens around her bed. For a moment the sound of him lingered, soft footsteps in the still air, the swinging of the ward door - then he was truly gone.

Edith turned her head on the pillow, seeking the window beside her bed. In the night sky the stars burned, stars which Jim knew as flaming incandescent fires, not the cold remote points of light they were to her. It was a strange thought that because she, Edith Keeler, died here, tonight, the man she loved would one day roam those starfields - it was as though they were in a way her gift to him, for she knew now that had she lived, Jim would never have been born. It was... enough.

Far away, and far in the future, Spock, once more in uniform, stood by his Captain's bed watching the sleeping face. Now he understood just how much Jim had lost; there had been other women - there would be more - but Edith, gentle, wise beyond her years, was the only one who would hold his heart.

For a brief moment the Vulcan retired as Spock's humanity came quietly to the fore. He had recognised and appreciated Jim's overtures of friendship, but he had not thought himself capable of responding to them. Now he knew that he would - even before she knew the truth, Edith had sensed where he belonged, and her final words had been to send him to Jim's side.

The Human would not understand - not at first; he would need time to heal the first sharp pangs of grief. Yet one day Kirk would meet Spock's eyes, aware of the friendship that had grown between them - and both would remember she who had made it possible. In his own quiet way, Spock too

would always mourn Edith Keeler.

Meanwhile there was a duty to be performed, a message to be given. Spock leaned forward, and shook Kirk gently.

"Jim, wake up," he whispered; the name was unfamiliar on his tongue, but he pronounced it with wistful eagerness. "Wake up, Jim - I have something to tell you."

THE VULCAN CHOICE by Gillian Catchpole

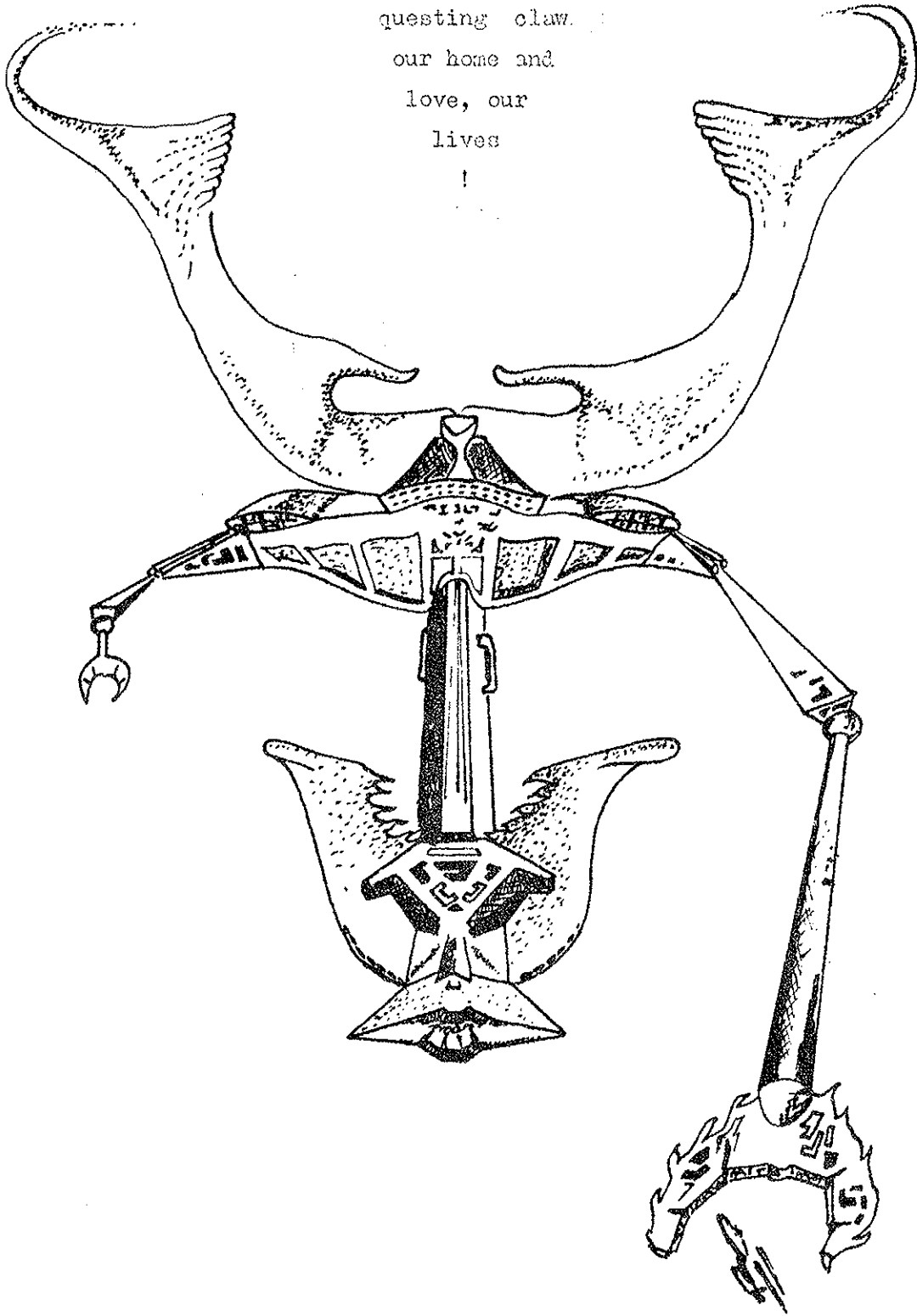
Pride demands that beliefs are vigorously held.
 When strong worlds seek to clash
 Pity only the being caught between,
 He must stand tall or else be crushed.
 The decision taking is easy,
 For a Vulcan there is but a single choice
 The true and logical one.
 Why then these feelings that will not cease?
 Strong words are needed to mask the fear,
 To soak the pressure from others' pain,
 To refuse while others beg.
 Is Vulcan more important than saving a life?
 Duty to the ship and all her crew,
 No matter the consequences
 This over everything must take precedence.
 And if the Human part cries out
 Let it not be heard, but suffocate
 Beneath duty, right and Vulcan philosophy.
 For duties are specified, so cannot be ignored.
 Responsibilities have been clearly stated.
 He must command, he cannot delegate.
 One does not endanger countless lives
 For the sake of family ties.
 Vulcan philosophy must be upheld.
 Personal anguish does not exist.
 All Vulcans would understand.

SONNET ON GENEALOGY by Kathleen Glancy

Spock's share of curiosity, they say
 Derives from both sides of his ancestry
 So when, while visiting the Earth, one day
 He saw a sign 'We trace your family tree'
 It's really not surprising that he thought
 He'd like to know about the Human side
 Of his descent. (The Vulcan side had got
 Records going back three thousand years, and pride
 To match, although suppressed.) But when they found
 Dick Grayson, who'd been famous — Spock cried 'OH!'
 And fled from them, making a choking sound.
 And who shall blame him? Would you like to know
 That the most famous forbear of your Mum
 Was Robin, the Boy Wonder, Batman's chum?

WAR-BIRD

A metal menace from the skies,
It looms about a tiny ship
A clutching, searching,
beast that tries to
capture in its
questing claw
our home and
love, our
lives



TRANCE by Mariann Hornlein

Spock stirred, opened his eyes to the impossibly blue sky, winced, and shut them again. He lay silently, trying to remember what had happened, but the waves of pain that washed over him made it difficult. Dimly, pictures began to form; a shuttlecraft, a distress signal, a crash - then burning flames. Someone had pulled him out - who? More memories danced crazily together. There was someone... he knew that face and was somehow afraid. Another face, smiling, hazel eyes... the Captain, his Captain... Jim!

Jim had pulled him out, had tended his injuries. But where...? He forced his eyes open and sat up, his gaze searching for his Captain. He was lying in a nest of sleeping bags in the middle of a makeshift camp, but the Captain was nowhere to be seen.

He sat up, flinching - since there was no-one to see - at the pain that washed over him, and discovered that his left leg was wrapped in bandages. Jim had bandaged his leg, then. Spock closed his eyes again. He had to remember! Kirk's face... Had that been a look of fear on it? Violence... a fight... Spock opened his eyes again and forced himself to rise. From this new vantage point he looked around again and his gaze fell on a crumpled pile of clothes tossed carelessly by the base of a tree. As he watched, the clothes stirred, and a knot of cold fear formed in his stomach.

The Vulcan forced himself to move towards the clothes, his leg nearly giving way under him. The clothes moved again, straightened into a figure; a figure which turned over and looked at him. Spock froze in horror.

The Captain... Jim...

His clothes were torn and bloodstained, with cuts and dark bruises showing underneath. His face was swollen, a livid bruise across one cheek. His hair was matted with dried blood from a cut across his forehead.

Spock dropped to his knees beside the battered form and stretched out an unsteady hand. "Captain..." His voice trailed off as Kirk drew back in obvious fear. The knot in Spock's stomach tightened again and more memories forced their way into his mind. There had been a struggle... something... something had compelled... Danger. He had fought back.

Kirk tried to move away, shrinking back against the tree. "Why, Spock? Why?" The Vulcan winced visibly at the pain and grief in Kirk's voice. He could not understand, surely the Captain did not mean...? Tears were running down Kirk's face as he fought for control. "Why did you attack me? Hurt me like this? I thought we were friends..." Even as Spock shuddered at the bitter hurt in Kirk's voice, the Human's eyes closed and he slumped sideways, unconscious.

The Vulcan sat as if turned to stone. His eyes involuntarily catalogued the injuries even while his heart cried. He had done that?

He had never seen Kirk look at him in fear before, and the look, the words, were a knife in his heart. How could he? What had possessed him that he could have hurt his Captain, his friend, like that? He tried desperately to remember. He had attacked something... something that threatened him... not Kirk. Never Kirk!

A shimmer interrupted his thoughts and McCoy materialised nearby, two security guards flanking him. The doctor took in the situation at a glance and had them both in sickbay before the Vulcan had time to sort out his thoughts further.

While McCoy worked over the Captain and M'Benga treated the Vulcan's leg, Spock stared at the ceiling, seeing over and over again the fear on Kirk's face, the grief in his voice. Why? He tried again to remember, but the low murmur of McCoy's voice, his own concern for the still-unconscious Captain,

made concentration impossible.

M'Benga finished, and Spock stood up, ignoring the doctor's protests. He walked over to McCoy and stared down at the pale, bruised face.

"How is he?"

McCoy glanced up, a quick retort on his lips, then slowly straightened. He had never seen Spock like this before. The Vulcan appeared completely emotionless, completely alien, but somehow McCoy was reminded, as never before, of a porcelain tragedy mask. He answered Spock's question quietly. "He'll be fine, Spock. He looks worse than he is. He's got a wrenched shoulder, some bad bruises and a mild concussion, but he'll be waking up soon. He'll be all right." Then the doctor's eyebrows met in a frown. "Hey! Where do you think you're going?"

Spock strode to the door. "To my quarters. I shall rest there." Ignoring both doctors' protests, the Vulcan headed for his cabin. The walk seemed endless. Disturbing memories filtered into his mind, memories mixed with Kirk's fear, with his own bewilderment...

When he entered his quarters, he headed straight for the bed, where he lay back thankfully. He closed his eyes and concentrated. It was surprisingly difficult. Unanswerable questions kept racing around the inside of his head. Why had he hurt Kirk? What could have made him hurt the only person who had ever reached out to him seeking only to give...

The Vulcan gathered his strength and forced the questions aside. The only place they could be answered was in his own mind, and he had to find the answers. It would be dangerous; somehow his injuries - perhaps a blow on the head - had buried his memories deep, and he would have to go deep to find them. If he were not very careful, he could become trapped in the darkness of his own mind, and be unable to get out. But he had to remember. He had to take the chance.

He concentrated, and slowly sank deeper and deeper into the darkening layers of unconsciousness. Pictures formed, clearing as he sank further down, and with disbelief he felt Kirk's flesh give under his hands, saw the red blood spurt from deep cuts, heard the Captain's gasps of pain, his terrified protests. Kirk had struggled, but the Human had never had a chance against his own Vulcan strength.

Spock searched still deeper, trying to discover why, and a voice sounded in the dim recesses of his mind.

You didn't just hurt your friend, you attacked your Captain. You took an oath to be loyal - is this the way a Vulcan keeps his oath? Oath-breaker! Oath-breaker!

The words pounded through the darkness, pounded in unison with the beat of the blood running through his veins. He was guilty. He had... he had reached the deepest part of his mind; too deep. He could never get back alone. It was fitting. He would die here, trapped in his own mind, with the words drumming him into black emptiness. Oath-breaker. Oath-breaker....

Kirk climbed painfully out of a deep, black pit that seemed to be filled with tar, pulling him back as quickly as he could climb out. Slowly he inched his way up, until finally full consciousness returned. He lay quietly, his head and body throbbing, a puzzled look on his face as memory returned. He reached for a button and called a nurse.

"Where's Mr. Spock?"

The nurse, someone he didn't know, smiled. "He's fine. He went to his quarters over an hour ago to rest. Do you want me to call him?"

Kirk shook his head. "No, Where's McCoy?"

The nurse continued to smile brightly, much to Kirk's inner annoyance. "There was an accident on one of the other decks. Nothing serious, but Dr. McCoy went to investigate. You get some rest. If you need me, I'll be in call."

The Captain watched her leave and closed his eyes wearily. He started to doze; then his eyes flew open and he sat up. Spock! If he thought... There was no telling what he would do. Kirk reached for the intercom and tried to call Spock's quarters, but no-one answered. Slowing, wincing at the pain from his stiffened muscles, Kirk climbed from his bed and headed for the corridor and the turbolift.

He had never known that particular piece of machinery to move so slowly. If that stubborn Vulcan had put himself on report... The door swished open at last and Kirk headed for Spock's cabin. There was no answer to his buzz, but the door was unlocked. He entered.

The room was silent, empty. Now where the devil... He moved into the sleeping area. Spock lay on the bed, silent, unmoving. The Captain stared, wondering if he should intrude; Spock never welcomed anyone who sought to 'help' his private worries, not even Kirk, the one man with whom he would occasionally relax his iron control. While he tried to make up his mind, the Vulcan's ashen face, the total lack of movement, penetrated Kirk's consciousness. Was Spock even breathing?

Kirk was not aware of crossing the space to the bed. He grabbed the lean shoulder. "Spock! Wake up! Spock!"

No answer. Kirk bit his lips and forced himself to be calm. He felt for a pulse, listened for a heartbeat, then slapped the Vulcan's face - hard. No response. He slapped Spock again and again, but the only reaction was the too easy movement of the dark head, and a small trickle of green blood from the corner of Spock's mouth. Kirk reached unsteadily for the intercom meaning to call McCoy, then changed his mind. His hand moved to Spock's face and he gently wiped away the line of blood.

Kirk's face grew still, then crumpled as he pulled the unresisting body into his arms. He buried his face in the silky dark hair and sobs of agony and grief shook him.

"Oh Spock! Spock, didn't you know how I trust you? I would never truly fear you. You were part of me, and nothing could ever change that!"

He released the body, laying it gently back down on the bed again. One hand grasped the Vulcan's cold hand, the other gently caressed the dark head. "It wasn't you, Spock. You did nothing, nothing at all." He spoke gently, reassuringly, as if the other could still hear. "It was Parmen. Remember him? He couldn't live with the knowledge that we had more power than he, so he left Platonius and came looking for us. He found out we'd be in the area and rigged the distress signal, used some sort of tractor beam to make us crash. He made you do what you did, as he nearly made you kill me before; then he made you forget that he was here."

Kirk's fingers moved down the side of the still face. "He made me say those things; made me draw away in fear..." His voice cracked and he grew silent, fighting to still his grief. "Do you remember how you said you hated Parmen for what he had done? The hate you felt, Spock, is nothing to what I feel for him now. He's down there, gloating over what he has done. I'll find him, though, Spock..."

He gathered Spock into his arms again and slowly touched his lips to the cold forehead. He looked long into the still face then rested his head on the Vulcan's for a moment. Finally he laid Spock back down. "Goodbye, my friend. Rest well. I love you... my Vulcan friend."

He stood, touched the lean shoulder one last time, and left.

The Vulcan was deep into death when a tendril of agony slowly curled its way past the mazes of dimming consciousness, reaching at last the final core of fire. When it touched there was a brief flare, a small glow of response. Slowly, the inner core of identity understood what the agony meant and reached up to follow; that grief could not be allowed! The core burned brighter, coming bringing warmth and feeling back to the surrounding mind. It was a slow, wearying process - he had been far into death - but he followed the thread back to life.

He could feel, hear, but could not yet move. Words were spoken, words that warmed and sheltered the growing flame. He felt a feather-light touch on his hair, fingers gently moving over his face, and struggled to respond, to ease his Captain's pain; to assure him that he would not now die, but he could not yet reach Kirk.

The weightless kiss, the soft words of farewell, quickened his return, but for long moments after Kirk left there was silence. Then a long shuddering sigh broke the stillness and the dark eyes slowly opened.

"Jim!"

Spock raced down the corridor, ignoring the pain in his leg. He burst into the transporter room.

"The Captain?"

The startled ensign on duty nodded. "He was just here, sir. He beamed down about five minutes ago."

Spock strode to the platform. "Energise. Then call Dr. McCoy to stand by here."

The Vulcan materialised on the planet's surface not far from the site of the crash. He looked around anxiously for the Captain. Kirk was standing near the tree where Spock had found him, looking at a grinning, sitting figure, his shoulders slumped in defeat. And Spock recognised Parmen. And remembered.

The figure taunted Kirk. "Live long and prosper, Captain! Live long and prosper! I will be dead soon; those with the power cannot leave Platonius long and live - and I cannot last long now, for I drained myself of strength at our last meeting - but you will not die! You will live with the memory of the words you said; with the knowledge that those words killed your Vulcan friend! And you can't even kill me in revenge. Your stupid 'honor' forbids you to kill a dying, helpless man!"

Parmen rocked with mocking laughter as Kirk's shoulders sagged in weariness. The Captain's face was grey with fatigue and pain as he stared at Parmen. The words reverberated in his mind like thunder, and he knew he would hear them for the rest of his life.

A gentle hand touched his shoulder; a well-loved voice spoke.

"I am not dead, Parmen, and my Captain will live long - and prosper."

A lightning thread ran through Kirk and he turned slowly to face that voice. His hazel eyes met dark ones that watched him with concern, and the look was the only sound spoken. Kirk closed his eyes and swayed, suddenly dizzy. The arm slid from his shoulders to curl around his back, steadying him, giving comfort and support.

"Are you all right, Jim?"

Kirk looked up, undisguised joy and relief in his eyes. "I'm fine. And you?" It was an effort to speak evenly.

The Vulcan's face softened, his eyes becoming deep pools. "I am also ... fine, Captain. I understand fully what happened. I understand... many things now, Jim."

Their glances met. Kirk smiled. "Better beam us up, Mr. Spock. Then send a medical team down for Parmen. Maybe we can save his life yet."

Parmen watched the two disappear in a shimmer of stardust. Spock was still supporting his Captain; Kirk watching the Vulcan with a gentle, affectionate smile on his face.

"No! It's not fair! I don't want to live! I want you to die!"

Neither man heard the childish outburst. Each was concerned only with the other's continued existence.

I know many have admired you,
For you are sleek and bright,
Shining like a thousand stars
A jewel - beyond my price.

I wonder - will you be comanded
by me?

Will you move with your
exquisite grace
at my bidding.

What knowledge you have learned,
A thousand worlds at my behest
A thousand worlds.
I did not know - or really understand
How beautiful you are.

You are necessary to me
My well-being - my very existence
depends on you.
This will be a love affair
between us two.

I see you
so tall - so regal
with starlike eyes
hair crowned by a thousand lights.
Just waiting.

Rejoice!
For I am coming home.
My Lady - My heart's desire
"Enterprise".

Jayne Turner

Question: What old tune does Kirk hum as he puts on his dress uniform?
Answer: Greensleeves.

Question: With all that acid, how do Hortas make love?
Answer: Very carefully.

Question: How does a sparrow get down from a rocket?
Answer: By s-parrowchute.

TOUCHE! by Robin Young

"Now Spock," said the Doctor, "you're sure this is true?"

"Of course," the Commander replied;

"The exercise will be good for you",

(And he stifled a chuckle inside.)

"What comes next?" said McCoy after quite a while,

"Want to finish before Jim gets here."

"You are doing quite well now." (Spock inwardly smiled.

These Humans, he thought, are so queer.)

"Is this right?" puffed McCoy in a tangle of limbs,

"Not quite," answered Spock with a stare.

"Your legs are all wrong, and your arms aren't tucked in,

Put this leg here, and lean over there."

"But it hurts," moaned the Doctor, attempting to stay

In one place, in one piece, on one ear.

"You must try to relax," Spock reproved, "there's no way

To succeed if your mind isn't clear."

"On Vulcan," Spock said, "this technique is as old

As the place where its origins lie.

The proof will be found, if you do as you're told";

So McCoy strove again to comply

"This way," lectured Spock. "Put that hand on your hip,

And the other front of your face.

Now, that finger, it must point up under your chin,

It's essential that it stays in place."

"But I don't see the point, and I feel such a fool,"

Wailed McCoy, as he held this position.

"Nor did I," answered Spock, "when you thought up that rule

Which required two check-ups in succession!"

I've been had! It's a joke! thought the horrified 'Doc.

"What's all this?" chuckled Kirk, and walked in.

McCoy tried to laugh, "I was just teaching Spock

How to... curtsy!" (To prove it, he did!)

((("Fascinating," said Spock, and he exited fast

(To avoid an involved explanation)

And McCoy kept his silence, for once, till the last,

Despite all Kirk's interrogations!))



I, MUDD by T.G.Z.C.

Trust Jim to find a way.

"Illogic should work," he said.

"Illogic should beat the androids."

It proved quite difficult
 To think of how we could
 Achieve our aim; despite Spock's claim
 That Humans are illogical, we all
 Are sensible men; and Spock, of course -
 I didn't think he'd manage.
 But he did.

We got away.

And looking back, I must admit
 I do feel slightly sorry now
 For Harry Mudd.

MEDIEVAL CONTACT by Simone Mason

"Well, Spock, is this planet suitable for contact with the Federation?" asked Kirk.

"I don't believe so, Captain. There is a civilisation, but I would estimate its level as roughly comparable to Earth in medieval times."

"I see. No chance of a Starbase here either, then! We'd better check and make sure. We're running out of possible planets in this quadrant."

"Appearances could be deceptive, Captain, so it is logical to check," agreed Spock.

"What are the inhabitants like?"

"Humanoids, Captain. In fact there is little difference from Humans, very few readings vary."

"Good, we shouldn't run any risk of being detected then."

The landing party of Kirk, Spock and McCoy beamed down on top of a hill overlooking a small town, equipped with a long-range viewer-recorder to catch preliminary glimpses of the way of life on this world.

They were not to know that this particular hill was always deserted because it was a sacred hill, and a constant watch was kept on it because a prophecy had announced that one day demons would materialise there and claim it. So the natives had built a passage inside to surprise the invaders.

What the Starfleet officers observed through their viewer confirmed Spock's report. The civilisation did seem too primitive for contact, no sign of technology anywhere.

"Just as well we beamed down here, Jim," remarked McCoy, "we'd have scared the pants off them!"

"You're probably right, Bones, and yet they seem a peaceful society, no signs of weapons anywhere."

"They may come out when needed, Captain," said Spock.

"True. I think I'd like to take a closer look, we must be sure this world is unsuitable." He flipped his communicator open. "Mr. Scott, you may beam the viewer-recorded up now. Feed the pictures into a computer and beam down clothes similar to the ones shown."

"Right, Captain,"

When the instrument had disappeared, Kirk asked Spock, who was busy with his tricorder, "Finished with your preliminary readings, Spock?"

"Yes, Captain, they confirm what we know."

"Right. You beam up."

"Captain... "

"I can give you plenty of logical reasons, Spock. This is a medieval society, therefore probably full of superstitions, and they have never seen a Vulcan. The conclusion is obvious."

"They'll be scared stiff of those pointed ears of yours!" finished McCoy, who was listening as he examined the local flora with interest.

"I can wear a hat... " protested Spock.

"Yes, Spock," agreed the Captain, "but they may have some weird custom which would require that you take your hat off, and where would we be?"

"Prime directive, Spock," quoted McCoy triumphantly. "We must not be detected as outworlders."

The First Officer managed to convey an expression of resignation in spite of the impassivity of his features as he took his communicator out, but he never had the chance to use it.

A shower of stones fell upon them, two of which connected accurately with Spock's hand and Kirk's skull, then a crowd of natives attacked. McCoy was overpowered before he could touch his phaser, Kirk had fallen unconscious from the start and Spock, in spite of his desperate effort to protect his Captain, was overwhelmed by sheer numbers.

The natives looked at him with awe, though, and McCoy understood why. It was not only the pointed ears, it was also the number of victims lying around him apparently asleep after succumbing to the nerve pinch.

An official-looking character in a long robe arrived on the scene and started shouting as though demented.

"Trouble!" murmured McCoy to Spock. "That's a fanatic if ever I saw one!"

"We don't understand what he's saying, Doctor."

"Whatever he's saying isn't good news for us!"

"How is the Captain?"

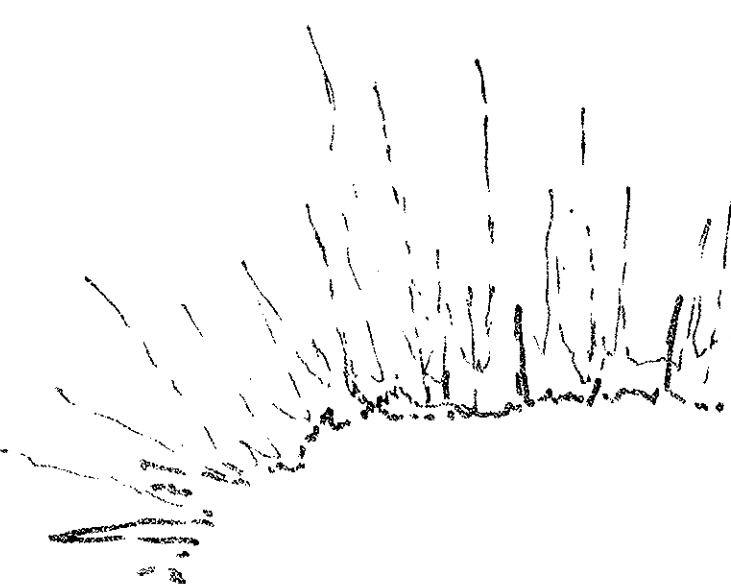
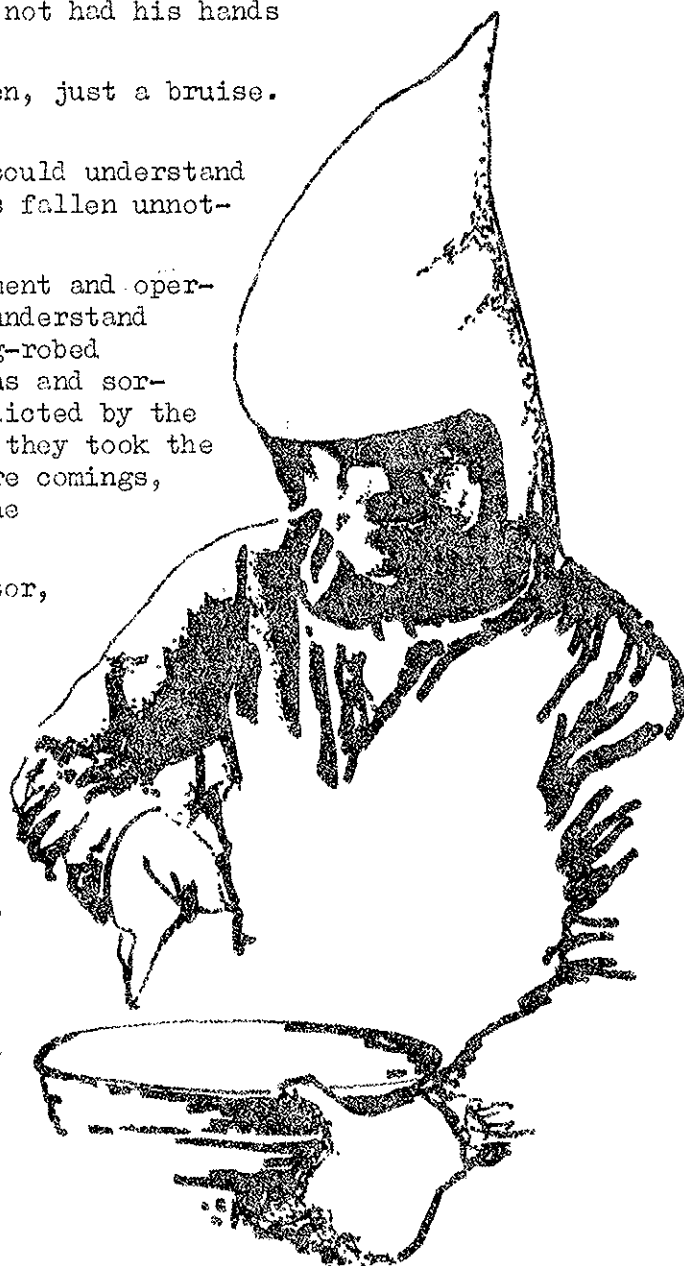
The doctor, who, unlike Spock had not had his hands tied, felt Kirk's head expertly.

"He'll be all right, nothing broken, just a bruise. He'll come to soon."

"It would be of assistance if we could understand these people, Doctor. My tricorder has fallen unnoticed not far from Jim, could you...?"

McCoy managed to reach the instrument and operated the keys. They were now able to understand and McCoy wished he couldn't! The long-robed individual was denouncing them as demons and sorcerers who had appeared to them as predicted by the Wise One, and more would appear unless they took the necessary steps to discourage any future comings, and how right he was to have ordered the watch on the hill.

"Do you still have your communicator, Doctor?" asked Spock.



McCoy showed him a small pile out of reach composed of phasers, communicators and his scanners and pouch.

Kirk was reviving and it did not take long explanation to acquaint him with their critical situation.

A communicator bleeped, cutting the native's speech short, and everyone stared at the small instrument. The speaker approached slowly and touched it. It opened and Mr. Scott's voice was heard.

"Clothes now ready, Captain. Sorry to be so long but..."

"Danger, no rescue!" shouted Kirk, cutting in and hoping to be heard.

A particularly large native smashed his fist into the Captain's head and Kirk slumped, while the long-robed individual whose name they now knew was Tilth seized the pile of instruments and hurled them into a small lake nearby. Then he noticed the tricorder, and McCoy exclaimed, "Don't destroy it! We can talk to you and you to us through it!"

Tilth turned to his people with a satisfied smile. "The demons and sorcerers need a box to talk to us! What further proof is needed that they are evil beings?"

Shouts of agreement were heard and Tilth continued, "But we are fair and just people, we want absolute proof before we condemn. Take them to the Place of Judgement."

Spock and McCoy were made to carry Kirk and they were led to the passage inside the hill which explained to them how they had been surprised by the natives. They arrived at an open-air field with a ring of flat stones in the middle, on the outskirts of the town.

"How is the Captain?" asked Spock as they settled Kirk down on the grass.

"Nothing broken, fortunately! He'll have a bad headache when he wakes up."

Tilth addressed the people, carrying the tricorder he had appropriated, and the two Starfleet officers noticed that a large group of natives had assembled to watch.

"The time of Judgement has come. The sorcerer who can overpower people by a mere touch of his hand will show us proof of his association with demons."

"He's not a sorcerer!" shouted McCoy with indignation.

"With those pointed ears?" asked Tilth, laughing.

The doctor was frantically trying to think of an explanation Tilth did not wait for as he seized a whip one of his attendants was carrying and slashed the Vulcan's chest, shouting, "Get up!"

Spock, who had been sitting next to Kirk, obeyed and Tilth looked at the green blood oozing through the tear in the shirt in triumph. "His blood is green - another proof!" He gave Spock a couple more vicious slashes and tore his shirt off to show the green blood on it to the natives.

McCoy looked sick as he managed to get near the Vulcan. "Spock, shall I try to create a diversion and you might escape?"

"No, Doctor, stay by the Captain. Whatever happens, there is nothing you can do."

"They'll kill you!"

"Not yet, Doctor. They want to see my powers, whatever they are supposed to be. If I do see a chance of escape, I'll attempt it. The natives would run after me and perhaps forget you, then you would be able to hide with Jim."

They did not have time to say any more as they were dragged apart and a large tray appeared, carried by four natives. The tray was full of incandescent pieces of coal, and Tilth addressed Spock as another native brought two heavy pails.

"See this?" He took a few drops of liquid from one pail and threw them on to the coal. A large flame immediately flared and died away.

He made a sign and his attendants took the Vulcan's boots and socks off, then put a wooden pole on his shoulders, each end carrying a pail of the inflammable liquid.

"You will walk over the fire, stranger. If you spill one drop of liquid, you die. If you finish the walk safely, it means you are a sorcerer."

"Don't, Spock!" shouted McCoy from the other side. "They'll kill you anyway!"

One of the attendants slapped him hard and Tilth smiled nastily. "You will walk across the fire, sorcerer, or he dies." And a native pointed a knife at Kirk's throat.

"Oh, no!" moaned McCoy, his head aching from the blow and from his desperate efforts to think of a way out, but he could think of nothing. To the natives they were not men, but demons and sorcerers, enemies... How was he going to bear watching Spock walk... Anything rather than that!

"Tilth," he shouted, "if he is a sorcerer, what am I?"

"You are a demon, of course."

"Then let me walk over the fire! I should be at home there if I'm a demon!"

"Of course you'd love it," replied Tilth disdainfully, "so we won't give you that pleasure!"

There is nothing more stupid than prejudice! thought McCoy in despair. There was no way out, he had to sit and watch Spock being tortured... or dying if he dropped any liquid...

"Don't watch, Doctor," said the Vulcan softly as he approached the brazier, the knife threatening Kirk's throat giving him no choice but to go through the ordeal.

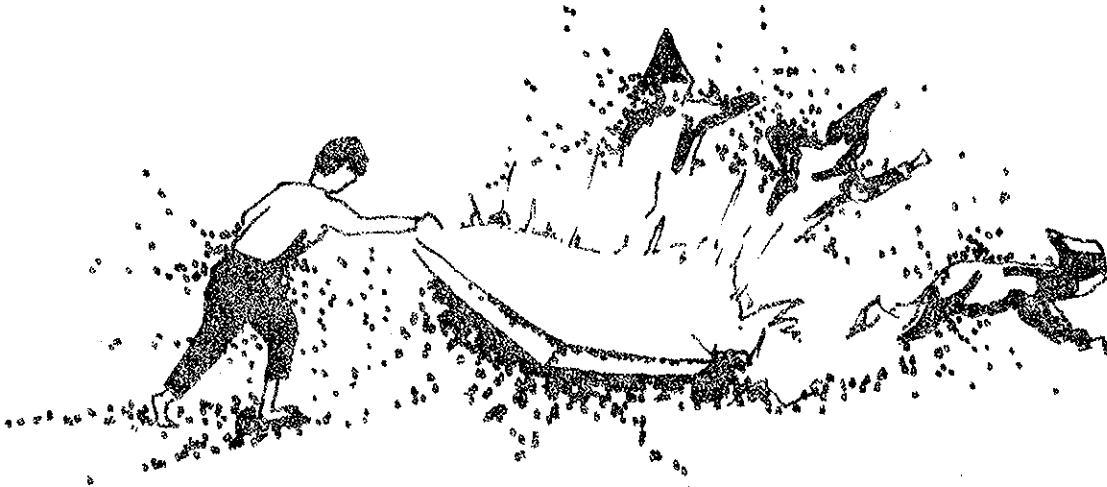
For once McCoy mastered his emotions and complied, understanding that it would help Spock if he had to deal with his own pain only. So the doctor stared at the Captain instead and could only be thankful that he was still unconscious. He desperately shut his senses to what was happening; Spock had enough to contend with, the least he could do was hide his own distress.

An awed silence fell on the natives as Spock started his walk over the burning coal, and the idea of having to carry the pails was of course to stop him from running over the fire and minimising the ordeal. A rigid control over the pain allowed him to show no stress, but his face shone with perspiration and a mixture of blood and sweat ran down his chest. When he arrived at the other side, not far from McCoy, he escaped the attendants and threw the pails towards the natives who scattered hastily. After a second of intense concentration, Spock seized the tray four natives had brought in and started lifting it, and this created a panic among the natives that the Vulcan had counted on.

"Doctor," he whispered, "I'll attempt to escape now, after I have overturned the coal. They'll pursue me; hide with Jim."

"Spock, you can't run... "

"I must, therefore I shall, Doctor. Make the most of the opportunity."



The tray overturned, throwing coal towards the natives and starting a huge fire. Spock took his chance and ran away from the town, through the thinnest part of the spectators which he had been careful to observe.

Their awe and superstitious fear overcome, a hunt started immediately and in the confusion, Kirk and McCoy were forgotten. The doctor hastily dragged the Captain towards a small wood he had noticed to his right. It was thick and offered good concealment and McCoy looked at the still unconscious Kirk in an agony of indecision. He hated to leave the Captain, but he could not bear the thought of letting Spock be recaptured by the natives. He had a pretty good idea of where the Vulcan would go, that lake from which it might be possible to rescue the communicators, but would he make it? If he did not, he would be killed... and he had nothing to use to revive Jim. McCoy rose, his mind made up.

"Forgive me Jim," he whispered, "but I must go to him."

He left the thicket and peered out of the wood. The coast was clear, and he ran to the foot of the hill and started circling it under cover of convenient bushes or ditches. Sooner or later, Spock would arrive if he could escape his pursuers and need help to get to the top...

He heard the noise of the man-hunt and ran in that direction, thankful for the rough terrain and useful thick trees. He was crouching in a ditch when he heard the light sound of running steps and Spock fell by his side, panting so much he had difficulty getting his breath back. As for his feet, McCoy preferred not to look, as he had nothing to help with. The Vulcan had not seen him and started when the doctor put his hands on his shoulders, then to his surprise, the Vulcan slumped on to his chest and clung to him.

McCoy found himself stroking the dark hair and murmured soothingly, "The hunt seems to be getting further away, Spock. Have a rest, then we'll try to get up the hill to that lake."

"Jim... Where is Jim?" asked Spock. Having got his breath back, he pulled away from the comforting arms and the doctor sighed, but let him go.

"He's safe for the moment, Spock, hidden in a wood. The natives will assume we have escaped and won't look so near the town."

"You should not have left him, Doctor."

"I couldn't do anything for him, Spock, and I can help you get up that hill. Come on."

"I'll manage, Doctor."

"Like hell! Come on, Spock, this is no time for discussions."

"Logical, for once, Doctor." The First Officer got up and nearly fell again, white with pain, his teeth clenched. McCoy felt like screaming with frustration and would have given his life for one hypo full of painkiller.

The very fact that the Vulcan accepted his help without a word showed how much he needed it and they hurried as fast as they could to the bottom of the hill and then started the ascent.

"Just our luck we're so similar to the natives," grumbled McCoy as they climbed. "Scotty must be having a frustrating time trying to find us. He may find you soon, Spock."

"He could not beam me up until he is sure I am not with a native, Doctor."

McCoy nodded with a sigh. Scotty was probably having his own problems, no point in worrying about them down here!

He went on to talk of the Captain and the need to hurry, knowing it was the one subject which kept Spock going, and the doctor never complained as the weight of the Vulcan's body he was supporting increased.

By the time they were at the top, McCoy was also kept going by sheer will-power, little else. Spock was semi-conscious and he was nearly carrying him. If there is anyone by that lake, we've had it, thought the doctor wearily, neither of us could fight an ant!

Fortunately the place was deserted and a depression of the ground hid them from the top of the passageway inside the hill. McCoy bathed Spock's feet and wondered how on earth he had walked, let alone run! He could only relieve his feelings by a stream of imprecations against the natives, and stopped hurriedly when he saw Spock's eyes on him.

"Go on, Doctor, if it makes you feel better."

"I don't need humouring..." But he bit his lips and forgot any retort to ask, "How do you feel, Spock?"

"I'll be able to dive now and attempt to find the communicators."

"Shall I try first?"

"Illogical, Doctor, you are too tired."

"I like that! Spock, you are not tired, you are exhausted!"

"But I am a Vulcan, Doctor."

"Always throwing that in my face! A superior being..."

"No, Doctor," interrupted Spock, getting undressed for his dive, "my statement was a simple fact." He slid towards the water and added before going in, "I'd not have made it up here without you, Doctor. I'm therefore responsible for your tiredness, which hardly makes me a superior being."

"But you are, Spock," murmured McCoy, giving way and squeezing his shoulder. "Take care, and come back."



The Vulcan disappeared and the doctor watched the surface of the lake anxiously. He could see nothing at first, then a violent agitation appeared and Spock's head surfaced, then disappeared again.

Trouble! thought McCoy, undressing rapidly in case he had to plunge in. If Spock needed help to get out... He joined their two belts to make a strong rope of a sort and waited with renewed anxiety.

Spock surfaced again with one arm outstretched and McCoy threw the rope and pulled, anchoring himself to a tree with one arm.

The Vulcan was fighting something and the doctor increased his effort until Spock climbed out of the water at last, gasping and retching. McCoy held him and supported his head, and when the First Officer went limp in his arms, he knew he had reached the limits of his strength.

"Doctor... I failed... Don't let me start a healing trance, hit me..."

"Spock, you can't ask me to do that!" begged McCoy.

"I was unable to find a communicator... There is an animal which attacked me... I must try again or we'll all die! Hit me..."

McCoy was also reaching the end of his own endurance. Pulling Spock out of the water had exhausted him further, he could not dive and hope to make it!

"Hit me, Doctor, please..." begged Spock.

I'll never forgive myself if I do, thought a desperate McCoy, but I must... Mechanically, he hit the Vulcan, feeling tears prick his eyes helplessly.

"Harder..."

McCoy hit him again, unable to see through tears, and heard a strange noise, but he could not register what it was and it did not matter, he had to go on hitting Spock...

The Chief Engineer of the Enterprise had the shock of his life to see materialise on the transporter pad an apparently vicious doctor hitting a wounded and clearly exhausted First Officer.

"Doctor, stop it!" shouted Mr. Scott, shaking McCoy who stared at him vacantly at first, then realised where he was.

"What's going on?" asked Scotty, baffled, "and where is the Captain?"

"Jim... get Jim..." murmured Spock before succumbing at last to exhaustion. McCoy was unashamedly crying in Scotty's arms, but mastered his emotion to give details of the Captain's approximate position.

"Beam him up and have him checked out in sickbay; then he should rest, Scotty. I'll have M'Benga see to Spock and go to bed myself, I really believe I'll sleep for a week. What took you so long to beam us up?"

"It seemed long to us, too! Humans and natives are practically impossible to tell apart. As for Vulcans, that was easy, but Mr. Spock was always surrounded by natives! It was only when we pinpointed him with one Human that we were sure, then a short-circuit had to happen and we have only just got the transporter working again. I have to check one of the engines too." McCoy left him to it and after seeing Spock in M'Benga's capable hands, retired to bed.

The Chief Engineer, anxious to see to his engines, ordered a subordinate to search the area indicated for Kirk and beam him up. The officer set the search pattern, but once completed, found no trace of the Captain. He was called then by Engineering for an urgent check on a repair he had made, and left his post to another officer.

"Carry on, will you?" he said, meaning the newcomer to increase the area of the search. But the officer, not yet completely familiar with the work, saw the search pattern marked 'completed' and assumed therefore that the Captain had been beamed aboard and he had simply to re-set the transporter and do a final check, which he did.

Scotty came in a while later. "The engine seems fine now. Captain aboard?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. No-one is likely to beam down now, so you can go off." He contacted the bridge and asked, "Any orders from the Captain?"

"No, Mr. Scott," replied Sulu, "we haven't seen him."

"They had a rough time down there, so I expect the doctors sent him straight to rest. Maintain orbit for the moment, Mr. Sulu."

When Kirk came to, he was amazed to find himself in a wood and alone. His head ached abominably and the memories of the natives did not help. Spock? McCoy? Were they dead? He got up slowly and searched the surroundings. He was definitely alone. He heard some noise and walked cautiously towards it. From the edge of the wood he saw a large party of natives going towards the town. They looked upset and angry, so much so that one of them, finding Spock's blood-stained shirt on the ground, kicked it savagely, and it sailed through the air and landed not far from Kirk's hidden position.

The Captain whitened and fought the horror rising inside him at the thought that Spock might be dead. Perhaps his First Officer was in need of help somewhere, or had they managed to beam him up? Kirk was now able to recognise the hill nearby. He had to get to the top; they would look for him there to beam him up.

But he was unlucky. A second, smaller, party of natives saw him as he ran from the wood to a ditch, and the man-hunt started again, the more ferocious because Spock and McCoy had escaped.

Disregarding the awful ache in his head, Kirk ran on towards the bottom of the hill when a burning arrow buried itself in his shoulder. He managed to pull it out, his hands burned and blood gushing from the wound. He found some cover to start the ascent, and had to stop behind a bush, exhausted, weakness washing all over him from the blood he was losing. The sound of pursuit roused him had he tried to get up. But how could he run when he could hardly stand, and felt dizzy and unable to see clearly? He would never make the top of that hill... He had to have help, but who would come?

There was only one thing to try.

Spock, Spock! he shouted in his mind. *Help me, please help me!* He could only hope that his friend was not dead and that the affinity between them which facilitated the mind meld would also work at a distance and that the Vulcan would hear him, if he was safe.

The answer came, weak but clear, and Kirk could have cried with joy.

Jim, where are you?

Trying to climb that cursed hill. Please hurry, Spock. Where are you?

Aboard the Enterprise.

The pursuit was definitely nearer and Kirk managed to run, hope giving him strength.

Don't move, Jim. I can only beam down as near to you as possible if you don't move.

Can't you have me traced and beamed up?

It would take too long - you are very similar to your pursuers.

I'll stop as soon as I think I'm out of their reach.

As there seemed no point in getting to the top any longer, he ran on round the hill and discovered a jumble of shacks, all abandoned. He reported the fact to Spock.

I should be clear of my pursuers for a while, but not for long.

Your pursuers are scattered over a wide area, some on their own, which makes it difficult to trace you, but I believe I have your approximate position now, Jim, thanks to the mind link. Beaming down.

Kirk looked out of the shack he was holed up in and saw nothing. Had the Vulcan beamed down to the wrong place? In that case, he would soon become a quarry too!

Spock, take care, he shouted mentally. *If they find you... *

I know, Jim, don't worry on my account. I'll be with you soon.

The answer had been much stronger now that Spock was on the planet, and Kirk felt a momentary elation - soon obliterated by his weakness as he started to feel light-headed and giddy. He thought vaguely that he was hearing footsteps running somewhere... the pursuers? He tried to hide, only to collapse helplessly. Where was Spock? He must have gone to another group of shacks by mistake and been captured, probably killed. Nightmarish visions filled his mind, visions of all the tortures they would inflict on his First Officer. How could he have called his best friend to his death? For that he deserved to die, and the natives would see to it; they could not be far now... in fact, he heard them calling for him... but why did they call him 'Jim'?

His gaze focussed painfully on dark eyes under slanting eyebrows, dark eyes expressing deep concern as an arm slid around his shoulders to help him sit up.

"Spock!" Kirk managed to whisper, his eyes filling with tears of relief. "You're safe... Thank God!"

"And you are safe, Jim." There was a definite tone of relief also in the Vulcan's voice and as their eyes met and held, they understood how they had both suffered great anguish on each other's account.

"Spock, my mind showed how much I needed you and whenever I need you, you come... "

"Don't talk any more, Jim," said Spock, opening his communicator. "I have a medical team standing by, and..." The First Officer stopped. His Captain had slumped into his arms and Spock caught the barely audible words before Kirk passed out.

"Take me home, Spock."

The Vulcan gave the order to beam them up, his features impassive as usual, and no-one could have guessed how moved he had been by the complete trust Kirk had shown in putting himself entirely in his care.

The Captain came to in sickbay feeling quite comfortable. His hand tried to reach out to something and was held still. He knew who by.

"Spock..." he murmured with a smile, still drowsy.

"How do you feel, Jim?"

"Not bad at all, considering!"

But something was wrong... His eyes focusing better, Kirk saw, with startled horror, that his First Officer was in a wheelchair.

"Spock, what happened? Can't you walk?"

"Not very well, Jim, but it is only temporary... "

"It didn't help that he had to go down to that accursed planet and rescue you!" said McCoy's gruff voice. "Somehow or other, this mission has been a nightmare!"

"I apologise, and feel responsible for your plight, Captain," said the Vulcan.

"Rubbish!" exclaimed McCoy. "Don't listen to him."

"Doctor, there are ill people here and shouting is not indicated."

"Giving me orders in my own sickbay now, you... "

"Stop it, will you?" ordered Kirk, grinning. "No need to remind me that I'm home with your arguments. Will one of you tell me what happened?"

Spock reported the events very succinctly, and McCoy soon exclaimed, "That's not all... "

"Don't worry, Bones," smiled Kirk, "I can guess all the gaps. Go on, Spock."

The First Officer finished his account at the time he sensed Kirk's call.

"You could have chosen another moment, Jim," said McCoy. "There was Spock lying quietly one second, docile and following my instructions, and the next getting up as though demented, asking why he had not been told that the Captain was not aboard yet and Earthmen were inefficient morons."

"I never used those words, Doctor."

"Not specifically, but you said the same things."

"I should have checked that you were aboard as soon as I came out of the healing trance, Jim," said Spock.

"He had only been out of it five minutes when he sensed your call, Jim," protested the doctor.

"Spock, to blame yourself is illogical," Kirk assured him. "I knew that if you were safe you would hear me and find me - you always do."

"Weird, if you ask me, the way Spock heard you so easily!" said McCoy. "May be he hears your mind more often than you think, Jim."

Kirk saw that the Vulcan was embarrassed as he said without his usual assurance, "I am sometimes aware of what you are thinking, Jim, but through affinity, not telepathy. I never try... "

"I know, Spock, and even if you read my mind, why should it worry me? After the number of mind melds we've shared, it'd be silly!"

The bridge called then and Spock, propelling his chair expertly, went to answer. Kirk could see that the doctor was bothered about something.

"What is it, Bones?"

"Jim, I... I shouldn't have left you. Your ordeal was my fault really... "

"If you hadn't left me, Bones, Spock might be dead! Is that what either of us would wish?"

No, Jim, but... "

"But what?"

McCoy looked towards Spock, who had asked for a link to the main computer and was absorbed in some problem.

"Come on, Bones, what is it?" asked Kirk impatiently.

"I never thought... he meant that much to me," finished McCoy in a whisper.

"That you left me for him?" smiled the Captain. The doctor nodded. "You made the decision you had to make, Bones, and I thank you for making it. How do you think I'd have felt if he had died because you'd stuck by me?"

"You'd never have forgiven me!"

"I might have, but it would have been very difficult!" agreed Kirk.

"Jim, do you realise how much that Vulcan has come to mean to us?"

The Captain grinned. "Yes, Bones, but why should it upset you?"

"It doesn't... I just didn't think about it consciously before, but ... I'm glad!" he finished with a beaming smile.

Kirk laughed as Spock returned and looked at McCoy suspiciously. "What is making the Doctor so happy? Some special treatment in store for either of us?"

"Exactly, Spock! Into that bed. Even in a wheelchair you manage to work! You're obsessed by work!"

"Doctor, I have the ship... "

"You gave orders to leave orbit and checked the new route; it's now routine. Into that bed - doctor's orders."

Spock complied with resignation and the doctor added, "Sleep, both of you. I'll be in my office but will keep my eye on you!" Both shut their eyes obediently.

When McCoy checked a while later, they were both asleep and he was making sure they were comfortable when Mr. Scott walked in and received a ferocious glare.

"No noise! What do you want?"

"Just wanted to report that everything is fine and see how the Captain and Mr. Spock are, Leonard," replied Scotty, aggrieved. "You all had a bad time, particularly Mr. Spock."

"They're fine, Scotty," assured McCoy, putting an extra blanket over Spock.

"You've become fond of Vulcans, Leonard," teased the Chief Engineer. "And they are a reliable and trustworthy race really, if you forget their pet obsession - logic."

"They won't let us forget it, and I've given up hoping that Spock will see the error of his ways."

"Have you? I never noticed!" exclaimed Scotty, departing with a smile.

McCoy grinned back and looked down on the First Officer's sleeping form, then smoothed the dark hair, murmuring softly, "I hate to admit this, you pointed-eared freak, but the Enterprise would not feel like home without you!"

Thank you, Doctor.

The voice in his mind startled McCoy, and he realised he had been touching the Vulcan, so of course... I can never have the last word with him! thought the doctor, walking back to his desk. But, come to think of it, he did not really care!

SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN by Beth Hallam

"I think it's absolutely stupid, putting a mental block against losing consciousness, what happens if I hit you on the head with a hammer?" McCoy asked the First Officer querulously.

Spock gave him a sideways look and a half smile lit his eyes. "I don't understand, Doctor," he stated, his voice deceptively innocent. "Why do you want to hit me on the head?"

McCoy chose to ignore the implications of the Vulcan's look and took his words literally. "For a highly qualified Science Officer you can be very dense - what I want to know is, if you've been mentally blocked against losing consciousness, what happens if something occurs that would normally render you unconscious?"

Spock did not answer the question, but after a short pause his Captain spoke up. "Well, Bones, as it is most unlikely that you or I or the leader of the Vulcan colony on 'Treaty' would try to make Spock unconscious, I don't see that the question is anything but academic." McCoy snorted his disgust at Kirk's compromise, but didn't continue the argument. Instead he got up to get some coffee from the back of the vessel. He bustled about the task, his mind considering the circumstances that had brought the Captain, First Officer and Chief Surgeon of the Enterprise out here in a tiny shuttlecraft.

To say that McCoy did not approve of the situation would be an understatement. He thought the whole thing was over-complicated and unnecessarily secretive. Why did the message from the Vulcan High Council to the Treaty colony have to be transmitted through a mind-meld anyway, what was wrong with the good old medium of speech? It had served the Human race quite well for three million years - damn Vulcans! McCoy's annoyance with Vulcans in general stemmed from his concern for the Vulcan First Officer of the Enterprise. Spock was being used as a living repository for the message. He had received the information by mind-meld and would pass it on that way. What worried McCoy was the inhibition against sleep, which was a necessary part of this patently intra-Vulcan method of communication. Spock had explained the necessity for this inhibition to McCoy. It was essential that the message content be exact as to wording and shades of meaning. Spock's brain must not be allowed to assimilate the message and maybe subtly alter it, and therefore he could not sleep! Every nuance, every accent must remain just as the Council meant it to be. But McCoy didn't believe it - three days, he thought angrily - three days since Spock had slept, and Vulcan or no Vulcan...

Kirk's voice interrupted his reverie.

"Hey! Bones, is that coffee ready yet? Spock, can you monitor this panel while I go and roust out McCoy?"

The Doctor heard the rustle of movement as the two senior officers changed places. He picked up the coffee cups quickly. He didn't want Spock taking on any piloting, he wasn't fit to do it, with that message undelivered. Kirk burst into the service area of the shuttlecraft with a bantering query, and an offer of help to carry the three cups of coffee. McCoy handed him his cup and gave the caustic advice to "Get back at the controls of this craft - QUICK!" Kirk laughed at McCoy's unprecedented concern for the Vulcan, and started to walk the short distance to the control panel. He didn't reach it.

There was a vicious snarl of shorting electronics, followed by a minor but forceful explosion. Kirk and McCoy were thrown to the floor as the shuttle bucked and danced through space. Hot coffee showered them, drenching their clothing, but they were essentially unhurt. It was Spock who had taken the brunt of the explosion. He was lying on the deck between the two pilots' seats, his face nestling in a small pool of green blood. The control panel he had manned was a mass of bare wires and sparking junctions.

Kirk rose to his feet, in spite of the careering of the craft, and made his way to the panel. He stepped carefully over his First Officer, knowing that McCoy would deal with his injured friend. One glance at the shattered controls was enough, he reached over and switched to the auxiliary panel. The sparking stopped and the bare wiring ceased to glow. Kirk brought the shuttle on to an even keel, then tested all the circuits. He quickly came to the conclusion that the shuttlecraft had to land, and pretty quickly, her navigation instruments were barely functional., the life-support system near to collapse. However, the sub-space radio equipment was undamaged. He scanned the area and decided that they would land on Treaty, but on the dark side, not at their destination Kes-dar, the Vulcan mining colony.

Kirk established a fix on the homing beacon of Treaty's main spaceport, New Earth. Leaning forward, he called one word into the mike, "Mayday."

When there was no immediate reply he repeated the call twice. There was a loud crackle of static then a strong, clear voice came from the speakers.

"This is New Earth spaceport, Treaty calling - come in, Mayday."

Kirk sighed his relief, and glanced at Spock and McCoy before answering. McCoy had Spock sitting in one of the passenger seats, he was conscious but seemed very dazed, Blood still oozed from a cut on his forehead despite McCoy's efforts to stem it. Kirk turned back to the radio.

New Earth, New Earth, this is Captain James T. Kirk of the Starship Enterprise. We are having difficulties with our shuttlecraft and will be forced to make an emergency landing at your spaceport. We have poor manoeuvrability and my First Officer is wounded. Kirk out."

"We have you on our screens now, Captain. An ambulance will be standing by and I will talk you down."

The landing was not as difficult as Kirk had anticipated. It would, of course, have been easier if he had had a co-pilot, but McCoy was too busy and was not a very competent pilot anyway. The controllers at New Earth were efficient, and in spite of the fact that the navigational aids ceased to function during it, he managed to make a good landing.

Immediately the faltering engine had ceased its clatter he rose and made for the door of the craft. He passed a stretcher party and a medical team as he went out.

"Captain Kirk?" An efficient looking man in middle life was calling him, introducing himself as Portmaster Kassim. "That was a fine landing, Captain, my congratulations."

"Thanks," Kirk replied crisply, "but I'm more worried about my First Officer, he was hurt when the instrument panel exploded."

"Don't worry, Captain," Kassim soothed, "We'll soon have him in hospital."

"No, sir," interrupted a quiet voice from behind Kirk. The Captain turned to see who had spoken. It was one of the stretcher bearers.

"What do you mean by that?" Kirk demanded. The young man ignored him, addressing his next remark to Kassim.

"It's a Vulcan, sir."

"What!" Kassim pushed both Kirk and the young man aside. He headed for the shuttlecraft, determined to check the news.

Kirk followed him, wondering what all this was about. Inside the craft was a tableau. Spock was still sitting in the passenger seat, green blood drying on his face. McCoy was standing beside him, his very stance declaring that he was a doctor defending his patient. The remainder of the medical team



were standing in a circle regarding the two Enterprise officers with cool distaste. Immediately he spotted the Captain. McCoy spoke.

"Jim, these people," he indicated them with a contemptuous sweep of his arm "refuse to treat Spock! It's outrageous!" And indeed the Doctor was truly outraged. Kirk shushed McCoy, intimating that he should calm down until they found out just exactly what was going on here. McCoy subsided, but with ill grace.

Kassim pushed his way through the crowd to look down on Spock. Dark brown eyes met dark brown eyes, neither wavering, until Kassim looked away with a grunt of surprise. He left the craft without a word. He was followed by Kirk and the medical

team. McCoy would have liked to go too, but his Hippocratic oath bound him to the side of his patient. McCoy was essentially a man of honour.

Three hours later, as they travelled eastwards in a hastily converted monorail capsule, McCoy was still complaining.

"I never thought to see the day when a hospital refused a bed to a sick man! It's... it's inhuman!"

"Conversely, Doctor. It was I that was inhuman." The Vulcan's voice was low and tinged with a taste of bitterness.

Captain Kirk rose and went to look at his First Officer who was lying very still on a contrived litter.

"I thought you'd lost your tongue," he said gently, looking down.

"No, Captain, merely the desire to talk." He paused for a moment then added with an effort, "It hurts to speak." McCoy was beside him in a moment.

"That's the pieces of metal lodged in your jaw and cheeks. Just don't talk. I want to operate as soon as we get to Kes-dar. I can give you a painkiller if you like?"

Spock shook his head, and found that just as painful as speaking. "I'm afraid you'll have to wait until I have passed the message on to T'Prell. I cannot be anaesthetised until then."

"Damn stupid thing to do," McCoy grumbled. "I told you you'd regret that block."

"Yes, Doctor." It was a measure of Spock's hurts both physical and emotional that he said it in all seriousness and almost with indifference. There was silence as the outmoded transport hurtled on towards its destination, the underground Vulcan settlement at Kes-dar.

The welcome which the two Humans received from the Vulcan miners was not particularly friendly, yet it was so much more friendly than that which Spock received from Treaty's Human population. McCoy was surprisingly responsive to his unfavourite species of alien, despite his anxiety to operate and remove the splinters lodged in Spock's face, hands and arms.

The message duly delivered, the Vulcan First Officer had submitted to the Doctor's ministrations and was now recovering in the community's small subterranean hospital. Kirk was sitting beside his bed, contemplating the chess board between them; in spite of his healing wounds Spock was in excellent form and was winning hands down. His concentration was broken by a gentle cough from the entrance to the sick-room. A tall Vulcan woman was standing in the doorway. She was a little beyond middle age, and had never been beautiful. Spock looked in her direction and lifted his hand in Vulcan salute, Captain Kirk rose respectfully to his feet.

"Greeting Captain Kirk, Spock of Vulcan."

"Greeting T'Prell of Treaty," Spock replied for both of them.

"May I speak with thee, Spock?" It was the old traditional form of address, Kirk noticed, though still in English.

"Of course, T'Prell." Spock hesitated before continuing. "Anything you find necessary to tell me I shall have to repeat to Captain Kirk as my superior officer."

"That I understand," she said proudly, then she looked away from the two men. "But it is hard to bare the... soul of Kes-dar before a Human."

"Not if that Human is James T. Kirk." Kirk looked with startled surprise at his Vulcan First Officer, he knew Spock trusted him, but he had never heard that faith expressed before. "I have always found the Captain most tolerant, understanding and sympathetic to all things Vulcan. You can confide in him with confidence, T'Prell."

"Thsnk you, Mr. Spock." Kirk turned to T'Prell and smiled. "I would be grateful for any information you can give me as to the situation here. I find it very disturbing. Treaty is supposed to be a symbol of Vulcan/Human co-operation, yet when we arrived we were treated to a disgusting show of special*intolerance. Also we find no communications, except the exchange of trade goods, between the two communities. Why is this, T'Prell? I must report back to the Federation."

T'Prell sat down slowly in a chair facing the end of Spock's bed. She took a deep breath in preparation, then plunged into her story.

"As you know the twin colonies of New Earth and Kes-dar were set up on Treaty in celebration of the first treaty between Vulcan and Earth. Tral-conite is a difficult ore to mine and the techniques had been a special study on Vulcan for many years. It was decided that the Vulcan colonists would be miners to get the ore and the Terrans would trade it to the Galaxy. Treaty is much like Earth.

At first it worked well. We are simple people, we follow the precepts of Surak, we practice the constructs but we are not the high-fliers of the Academy, we do not come from the noble families." She paused to look straight at Spock, he bowed to her slightly as if to acknowledge her implied criticism. She then turned to Kirk and explained to him in a humble tone. "We are miners, we work with our hands, we have little time for meditation and none for speculation. Our Human counterparts were similar, they were hard-working family people like us, trying to build a new home light-years away from the old. There was a mutual suspicion, of course, we had heard so much about emotional, quarrelsome Earthers, and they of cold, logical Vulcans, there was bound to be tension. But both sides were willing to try,

* special - of a species

and were succeeding, to live together.

Then it happened, and it was our fault." She paused to regain her composure and screw up her courage to tell it. Her eyes pleaded with Kirk and Spock to understand. "If we had known... But how could we?... How could we know that the change of planet could so upset our men's cycle?" She shook her head in extreme sorrow, and Kirk saw emotion written plainly on her face. He then realised how different from other Vulcans was his First Officer, who would never act so openly.

Spock himself leaned forward encouragingly. "What happened?" he questioned gently.

T'Prell pulled herself together and sat up, composing her hands in her lap. "There were a number of problems at New Earth, women were being attacked and some were raped. There were ten attacks, six rapes, and one of the women was so badly beaten up that she died. Then a woman managed to escape her attacker, she identified him as a Vulcan. The Human colony was very angry. We were no longer welcome in the town, arrangements were made for our supplies to come by the ore train. From there it could only get worse, we are a proud people. And when Seten became insane, we knew he was the attacker. We could not admit that the criminal was one of our number, anyway Seten would be dead within the week. So we became more and more insular, and the less the Humans saw of us the more strange and dangerous we seemed to them.

As a result of this we here at Kes-dar are in a very awkward situation. The only sub-space radio on the planet is in New Earth and manned by Humans. Any message we wanted to send must go through them, anything they considered a danger to them they could censor. Hence our request to the High Council. We knew such a radical change in Vulcan custom would need a mind-link reply, so someone from Vulcan had to come here, and not via New Earth."

T'Prell looked shyly at Kirk. "We expected they would send the Intrepid."

Kirk smiled at her sympathetically and was surprised to receive a ghost of a smile in return. He glanced at Spock to see if the Vulcan had any suggestions towards the rebuilding of relations on Treaty. But his First Officer was very pale and obviously in no condition to aid him, so he put forward his own ideas.

"T'Prell, I left a message at New Earth spaceport to be transmitted to the Enterprise as soon as she is close enough to receive it. When he gets that message Lieutenant-Commander Scott will contact me by communicator and I will get him to relay my report on your problems to Starfleet Command and to the Federation Council."

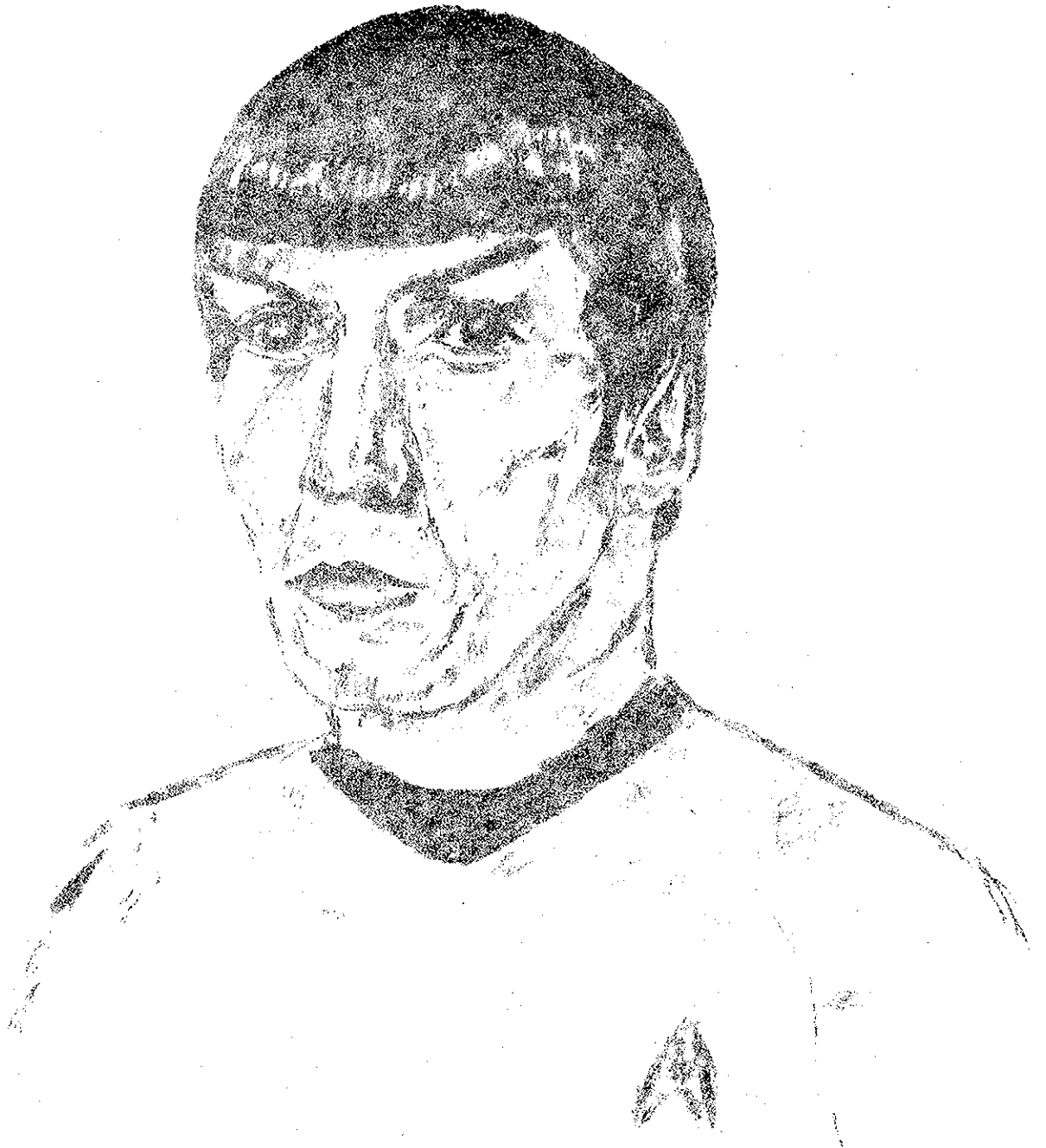
"Thank you, Captain Kirk," T'Prell said. "Thank you very much."

It was three days before Scotty called his Captain. McCoy had just allowed Spock to spend the day out of bed. He declared that the Vulcan should be fit to return to the ship the next day.

In the evening Kirk and Spock were playing a leisurely game of chess, and McCoy was making up a list of drugs that Scotty would transport down for the use of the Kes-dar colony. The usually peaceful evening silence of a Vulcan community was broken by a shout, quickly followed by others. McCoy jumped to his feet and rushed to the balcony of the underground sickbay. Below, in the rock-hewed square, men and women were rushing out of their homes to listen to a man giving them information in rapid Vulcan.

McCoy felt rather than saw Spock squeeze in beside him on the narrow balcony. "What's he on about?" he asked.

Spock listened for a moment then translated quickly. "He's saying some-



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thing about children, they are missing... the children went off into the mountains, two days ago, on an expedition and they haven't come back. He is reporting to their parents."

McCoy heard the flip of a communicator as the Captain, who had heard Spock's translation, called the ship.

"Scotty, there's some trouble down here! There are children lost... in the mountains. Get the sensors working and have search parties standing by in the transporter room awaiting my orders; Kirk out."

T'Prell was calm and efficient, but obviously greatly concerned about the missing children. As she had pointed out, her people were simple miners with no experience in rescue work, she turned to Kirk for help. He was only too pleased to be of service. These Vulcans, who reminded him of the farming folk of his own home, had moved him deeply. Within minutes, the Enterprise had organised search parties scouring the surrounding countryside.

T'Pet was the oldest child in the group, being of long-lived race which took a time to mature, she was about the size of a seven-year-old Earth child, with the intellect of a thirteen-year-old. She had lived twelve rotations of Treaty. Selan and Sees were twins, a very unusual phenomenon among Vulcans, they were ten Treaty years old. With them were the two grandsons and one grand-daughter of T'Prell, eleven, seven and five. None of them were yet telepathically aware, as the Kas-der colony did not bond their children at seven wishing them to marry outside the colony to avoid inbreeding.

T'Pet became aware that they were lost after they had failed to re-find the mapped path they had left to pick alpine blooms. She kept the knowledge to herself until T'Pret, the youngest child, sat down and refused to move, declaring that her feet hurt. Her eldest brother Slark looked at T'Pet curiously.

"Do you know our way home, T'Pet?" he asked.

T'Pet was unsure of what to answer, but her Vulcan education and a natural preference for the truth made the decision for her. "No!" she stated flatly.

Selan and Sees looked at each other then at T'Pet, they both began to speak, as Selak burst noisily into tears. Slark hushed them both into silence. Selak's crying became stifled sobs.

"We must decide what to do," Slark said solemnly. "We must consider our position logically and find a solution to our problem."

Five hours later they were no nearer a solution to their problem, and much nearer a small Human farming village. Munchen Muri was an Alpine hamlet high in Treaty's hills. Its inhabitants derived from many of the high altitude dwellers of Earth. There you could meet Swiss, Tibetans, Pyrenean Spaniards, Highland Scots and Indians from the Andean mountains. They were all living the kind of life their ancestors had known. Their main occupation was the tending of domestic animals, keeping sheep and goats on the lower slopes, yak and llamas on the higher.

As night came closer the Vulcan children saw storm clouds gather over the mountains. With the darkness their newly acquired logic fled, leaving primeval fear and animal instinct. All but the two eldest were weeping, as they huddled together in a tiny crevice in the rock and thought longingly of their underground homes and loving parents.

It was the threatening weather that saved their lives. Carl Gunter and his son Hans, observing the coming storm, set out to gather their flocks to safety from the open slopes. They trudged the path that they and their sheep had worn in the soft stones of Treaty. By now the wind was howling, coming full at them as they struggled upward. Borne on the wind was the sound of weeping. Hans, whose younger ears had caught the cries first, put out a hand to stop his father.

"Listen!" he ordered.

Carl looked at him questioningly. "To what?" he asked.

"I can hear someone crying, close by."

Carl listened, his old ears straining, worrying that one of this year's lambs had fallen and was calling to its mother. They could lose both mother and lamb that way. Then he heard it, but it wasn't an animal's cry it was Human, or almost Human. Without speaking he pointed in the direction from which the sound came, and he and Hans laboured on.

After a few minutes' search they found the children, all six of them crowded together for warmth. Old Carl pushed his traditional Tyrolean hat

back on his head and stared in amazement. Hans, who was born on Treaty and had never known a time when its two communities had worked together in harmony, was completely bewildered.

"Are they pixies?" he asked, unable to believe what his eyes told him. His father cast a look of scorn in his direction.

"They're Vulcans," he explained. This was even harder for Hans to believe, he had been warned about Vulcans as a child. They were huge, and super strong, and they ate children for breakfast.

"But... they're so small. I thought Vulcans were bigger than Humans."

Carl chuckled and bent down to smile into the six pairs of anxious brown eyes that regarded him. "Not when they're children," he answered simply.

Hans and Carl stared at the young Vulcans for what seemed a long time to T'Pet. Unable to bear the suspense any longer, she lifted her hand in salute and whispered the ancient words of greeting to her rescuers.

Carl carefully copied the gesture, and casting his mind back to his youth and the early days on Treaty, he stumbled out the words, "Live long and prosper." He nudged Hans, who after a few moments' hesitation, copied his father's action and words. Then the rest of the children, remembering their manners at last, mumbled the greeting.

Carl introduced himself and Hans, then pointed to each child in turn while they told their names. Then he picked up T'Pret and placed her across his shoulders, piggy-back fashion. Hans did the same with Selak, and with a hand each for the other children, they left the mountain, and their flocks, to return to the village.

Captain Kirk snapped closed his communicator. "Well, that does it, the search will have to be abandoned while this storm lasts. I'm sorry, T'Prell."

The leader of the Vulcan colony was as literal minded as the First Officer of the Enterprise. "There is no need to apologise Captain, the storm is not your fault," she assured him. "But thank your men for trying, we shall just have to wait."

The snow was already beginning to settle when Hans and Carl Gunter trooped back into Munchen Muri with their bunch of small, shivering Vulcans. The streets of the tiny town were still full of pedestrians hurrying home. Several people came to look at the Gunters and their strange entourage.

"What happened, Carl?" yelled Kentsing, one of Munchen's Sherpa citizens.

"We found these Vulcan kids out on the mountainside. I thought I'd better bring them in to shelter. After all they're only kids." As Carl explained, more townsfolk gathered, a puddle of melting snow around their feet.

"I'll take one of the girls," offered Maria, Kentsing's Swiss wife. Like all high-dwellers, the people of Munchen Muri were hard-working, dour and hospitable.

"Thanks, take T'Pet will you." Carl pushed the eldest child forward. "She's very sensible, and I think T'Pret and Selak ought to stay with us, as they are so young and already know Hans and me."

"The twins can come and stay with us," offered Bianca McLeod. She was childless and always willing to take in an orphan beast or child.

Overground the storm raged, but in the underground homes of the Vulcans there was no indication of it. However a storm did rage in the caverns, it was a contained tempest, but enough to disturb the surface tension. Quiet, dignified Vulcan couples stood about waiting patiently for the weather conditions to improve and the search for their missing children to continue. Not a tear was shed by the anxious mothers, no worried, irate fathers berated the authorities for their lack of action, yet there was an atmosphere of grief and tension.

James Kirk turned away from the balcony overlooking the square with a sigh. His First Officer, now recovered from his injuries, looked up at him inquiringly.

"I feel so helpless," exclaimed the strong and resourceful Kirk. "Those people appear so self-contained, yet I can sense their feelings. I want to help them and I can't."

"Be at peace, Captain," Spock spoke very gently, and coming forward laid a hand on Kirk's arm. "They know, and are grateful." Kirk felt oddly reassured - not only by the words but by the touch as well.

The storm blew itself out during the night, and the people of Munchen Muri awoke to bright sunshine reflected off white, unmarked snow.

Selan woke first and ran to the window of the farmhouse eager to find out what was filling the room with such bright light. He looked out on the snow covered farmyard, in a line across from the farmhouse door to the cattle shed were the footprints of a man and a dog, milking was in progress.

Selen excitedly shook his brother awake.

"Come and see, come and look!" he shouted into Sees' ear. His twin immediately clapped his hands over his ears and stirred sleepily, mumbling at Selan to go away. But his brother was too excited for that, he dragged the bedclothes off Sees and pulled him, sleepy and stumbling to the window. As soon as his eyes met the wonderful sight of the white yard Sees forgot all about sleep and wanted to dash outside, dressed just as he was in an old pair of Dan McLeod's pyjamas cut down to allow movement. Just as he expressed his desire, Dan himself appeared at the shed door, a jug of steaming milk in his right hand. Dan looked up and spotting two eager faces, waved, they waved back then turned and made a concerted dash for the door.

They would have run straight through the kitchen and out into the sparkling yard, but Dan entered the kitchen as they tumbled in and caught them in his arms and called,

"Bianca, our guests seem ready for breakfast."

Usually Vulcans do not eat until midday, but like all young their children were ready to polish off a meal whenever there was a chance. In this case they finished two bowls of porridge each and eleven slices of toast and jam between them. Then bundled up in over-large clothing, their own apparel being highly unsuitable for walking through snow, they set off with Dan to meet all the farm animals.

It was very fortunate for Slark, being of a studious turn of mind, that he found himself billeted with the village school-master. The school-master was a kind, scholarly man, with a genuine love of academic study. Slark, like T'Pet, had already begun to learn Galactic and when he woke that bright winter morning he dressed and went in search of his host.

He found the master in his study, which doubled as a library for the small school. It was a holiday and Arturo Musgrave was indulging in one of

his favourite pastimes, Philology. Slark tapped lightly on the door, failing to rouse the student he coughed loudly and Arturo looked up.

"Good morning," he said as clearly as possible, he had already discovered that his young guest could converse if one spoke carefully.

"Good morning," echoed Slark, raising his hand in salute. "Your wife told me you were in the library and suggested I joined you."

Arturo smiled. "Of course." He displayed a Vulcan/Galactic Dictionary he was studying. "I have taught myself to read Vulcan with this," he explained. "I was hoping you would help me learn to speak the language."

"It would give me honour," said Slark a little oddly, and he gave Mr. Musgrave a half smile.

They spent the rest of the morning in joint study of each other's culture.

T'Pet had been a child last night, tired, exhausted and ready to lean on any handy adult. But after a hearty supper and a good night's sleep, she felt the weight of her years, with the mystic ability of the teenager she changed from child to woman overnight.

This bright, crisp morning she sat at breakfast with her hostess dressed in a pretty cream negligee, part of the trousseau of her hostess who had been a tiny woman in her younger days. The cream accented the colour of her skin and in the warm Swiss-style kitchen she glowed a beautiful golden-green. The sunlight streaming through the window eccented the silvery highlights of her newly-washed blue-black hair. In that prosaic setting she looked vital and enchantingly exotic.

Maria had discovered that her young guest had a fair command of Galactic and was telling her about her own family and their life in the high mountains of Treaty. As she talked her husband and son entered the house from outside. Fifteen-year-old Miang had been out last night, his father had told him of their visitor. But he had not expected the strangely beautiful vision that met his eyes. His father had described a child, the exquisite and poised person who sat beside his mother was surely a woman, despite her diminutive size.

When Miang and T'Pet had been introduced, the men sat down to the morning meal. As the Kentsings were Buddhists T'Pet found no problem enjoying her breakfast. Miang hardly touched his food, he could not keep his eyes from the dainty, alien creature that sat opposite him. Unnoticed by their son and guest his parents exchanged an inquiring glance, they had expected Miang to grow up one day soon, but not quite so suddenly. When the meal was disposed of Miang leaned forward, he looked straight into T'Pet's slanted eyes and smiled. She did not smile back, but there was something in her eyes which encouraged him to ask,

"Would you like to come and build a snowman with me?"

T'Pet did not know what a snowman was, but no boy had ever looked at her like that before. She had already made up her mind that she would go anywhere or do anything just to be with Miang.

James T. Kirk awoke with a start at the sound of his communicator. He had fallen asleep in his chair last night, tired out yet too anxious to seek his bed. As he struggled to his feet to retrieve his communicator from the side table, he glanced over at the bed. This was the room Spock had occupied when he had come wounded to the colony. Spock, also awakened by the communicator, had raised himself up on his elbows, unable to move further

because of McCoy who had fallen asleep across his chest, having been sitting on the bed on which Spock was lying.

Struggling through stiffness and sleep it seemed an age before Kirk reached the frantically beeping communicator and flipped it open.

"Kirk here," he muttered through a yawn.

"Good morning, Captain," exclaimed an over-bright Scott. "We have some good news. The storm has cleared and our sensors have located the children. They're in a Human village in the mountains. As soon as the communications centre in the village opens up I'll get in contact with them."

"Great, Scotty." Jim Kirk was now fully awake. "I'll tell T'Prell and get their parents informed. Can you let me know as soon as you get in contact with that village."

"Aye, Captain. Scott out."

Kirk smiled over at Spock and McCoy who were now both on their feet.

"We've found them," he announced triumphantly.

It was noon before all the arrangements were made. Scott had contacted the communications office at Munchen Muri and had made arrangements for the children to be picked up by their parents. Three shuttlecraft from the Enterprise sped towards the surface of Treaty. One went straight to Munchen Muri, with Scotty and Nurse Chapel aboard. The others landed near the surface entrance to the Kas-der settlement. They were to convey the parents of the rescued children plus Kirk and McCoy to Munchen Muri. Spock had already beamed aboard to take command of the Enterprise.

The journey by shuttlecraft was uneventful. The Vulcans were their usual unemotional, calm selves, though Kirk noticed that one or two couples were clasping hands unobtrusively.

As soon as they landed Scott came forward to meet Kirk. There was a lot of introducing to be done, and thanks to be given for the care the Human community had given the Vulcan children. T'Prell ran straight into her mother's arms and was hugged delightedly. The people of Munchen Muri and the men of the Enterprise were all shocked to see tears run down the face of an 'emotionless' Vulcan woman. The greeting of their parents by the older children was less demonstrative but evidently happy. Salen and Sees came forward holding a Border Collie puppy each, a gift from the McLeods, if they would be allowed to keep them, old Dan McLeod muttered in explanation to the twins' father.

"But they are quite acceptable," the Vulcan exclaimed. "They will be good for our children, who have had little contact with animals in our caverns." He turned to his wife to say, "You said we needed a sehlat."

Slark wanted his father and mother to meet Mr. Musgrave, who had a plan whereby Human and Vulcan children were exchanged for short periods. This, he said, would improve their future relations, and give them the chance to speak each other's language.

T'Pet came forward shyly, trailing Miang behind her, their hands held fast. She bowed politely to her parents and dragged Maing to the front, announcing that they wished to be bonded. Both sets of parents expressed surprise, and discovered a need to discuss the matter further. But neither said 'No, so there was hope for the young lovers.

Six hours later when Kirk and McCoy joined Spock on the bridge of the Enterprise, messages were already coming in from the surface. Accusations

of unwarranted interference from New Earth, messages of thanks from Kas-der, and invitations from Munchen Muri, particularly from Maria and Kentsing, who were anxious to meet the half-Vulcan First Officer, perhaps for a preview of their grandchildren?

After many years of silence between the two races that had colonised Treaty, there was now a beginning of reconciliation. Kirk's report to Starfleet would send social workers and diplomats to Treaty. The planet would once again be united, and the Enterprise could take a little of the credit.

TYPEWRITER ENTITIES by T.W. Francis

Spock: Captain?
 Kirk: Yes, Spock?
 Spock: I believe he is going to start again.
 McCoy: OH NO!!!
 Kirk: Steady, Bones.
 McCoy: Sorry, Jim, it's just that I don't think I can take much more.
 Spock: (said with concern) Indeed Doctor. I am correct however, for as you can see he has placed his typewriter on his desk and is removing the cover.
 Kirk: Everyone, get down, get under cover. Bones, get under the 'tab' key, he hardly ever uses that. SPOCK! Where are you going?
 Spock: I was attempting to observe the process whereby he places the paper into this antiquated machine.
 McCoy: For the love of all that's holy! Come down, Spock, he's going to start any moment.
 Kirk: (forcefully) Make that an order, Spock.
 Spock: I fail to see any reason for your concern. As soon as he begins we shall be safely transported into the scenario he had decided to put us in.
 Kirk: Look out, everyone, he's going to start.
 McCoy: Will you look at the size of those fingers: poised up there like ten mighty sledgehammers.
 Kirk: Bones, are you O.K.?
 Spock: I believe the good Doctor is waxing poetic in this hour of crisis.
 Kirk: Hang about, why hasn't he started?
 Spock: His hands are still poised above the keys.
 McCoy: He's a sadist, that's what he is. He's prolonging the agony. Keeping us in suspense. I know, he's planning to bump us off this time.
 Spock: That would be most illogical, Dr. McCoy.
 Kirk: What's happening now? LOOK! He's taken the paper out.....
 (deathly silence)
 Kirk: Will someone get some light on in here.
 Spock: Fascinating. He has replaced the typewriter's cover and is putting it away. How disappointing. I find its workings most...
 McCoy: If you say 'fascinating' or 'interesting' I'll brain you.
 Spock: Intriguing.
 McCoy: I give up.
 Spock: I am at a loss however to explain why he failed to start typing.
 McCoy: Yeah. I know it's a bit of a reprieve but perhaps he's planning something really out of this world for us. Which means we've gotta wait about here until...
 Kirk: (suddenly understanding) Spock... Bones. Don't you see? It's obvious when you think about it. HE COULDN'T THINK OF A THING TO WRITE!
