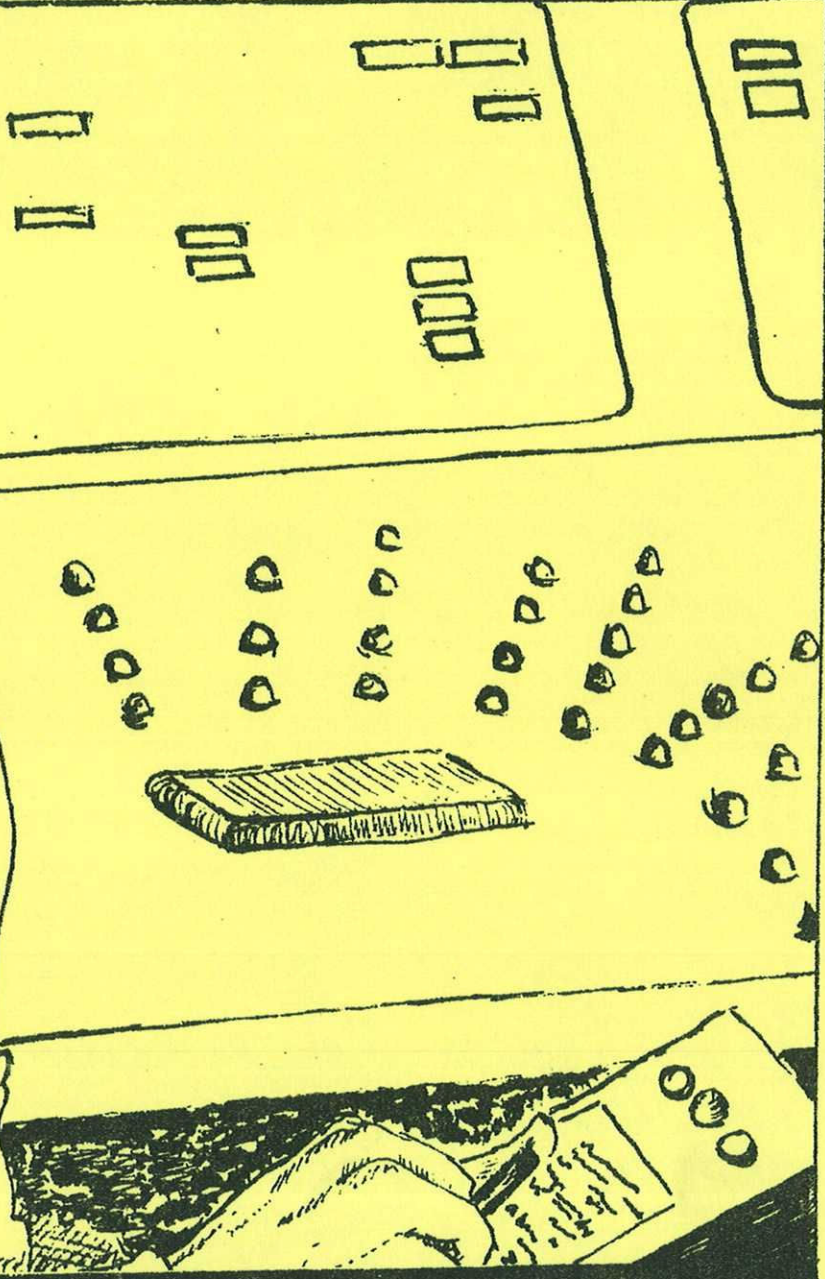


LOG ENTRIES

19



S. SAPIKA
1977

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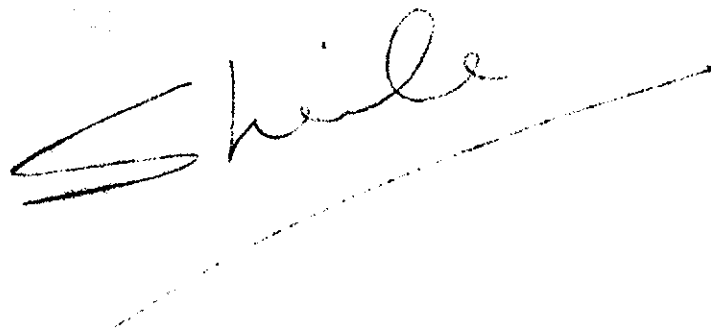
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Hello again. Welcome to LE 19. We're certainly churning them out these days!

There's not really anything to say this time, except that the few letters I've had on the question of illustrations have all indicated that while they'd be willing to pay more to get illos, when it came down to brass tacks they'd rather we used the space for more story - so that's what we'll do. We'll put in some illos, but these will be sparse now compared to previous issues - Janet at least will be very happy about that; she doesn't like running off pages with illustrations!

For next time we have stories by Simone Mason, Valerie Piacentini, Meg Wright and Mariann Hornlein.

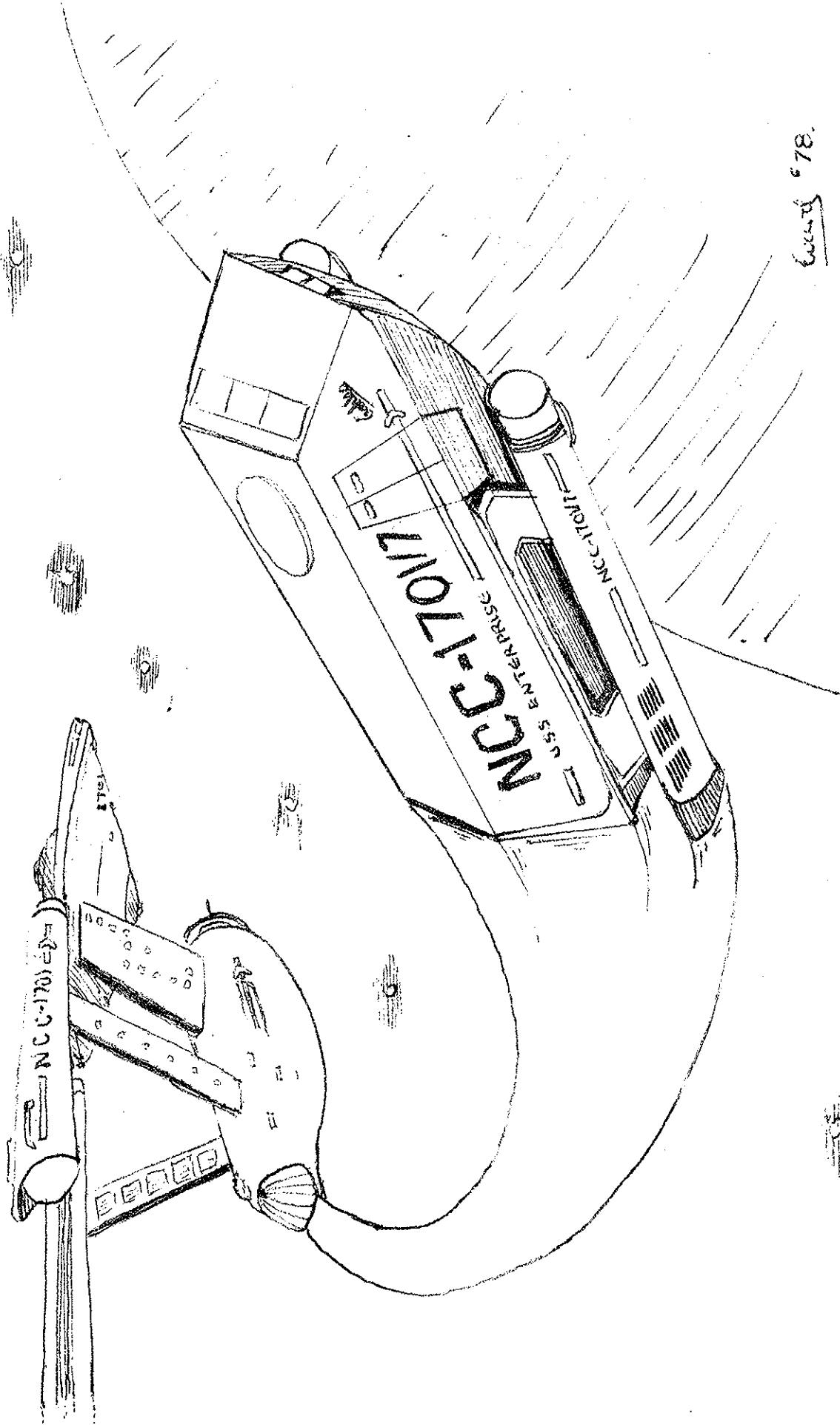
Enjoy yourselves!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sheila". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a long, thin horizontal line that extends across the width of the signature.

September 1978

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Sheila Clark
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Scotland



Lucy '78.

VISITATION by C.E. Hall

Captain James T. Kirk, seated in the command chair on the bridge of the Starship U.S.S. Enterprise, slumped wearily, fatigue in every drooping line. He was weary, tired beyond words, exhausted both physically and mentally. Physically because during the past week he had spent many more hours in that responsible seat on the bridge than he should have done, and mentally, because of the many unsolvable problems besetting his mind every waking hour. He had eaten little and barely slept for many days, and the effect of that on his stamina was worsening steadily.

But he couldn't help it. His ship, his beloved mistress, was in a sorry state, and there was very little he could do to help her. Battered and combat-stained, she limped slowly through uncharted space, while her engineers, led by the indefatigable Scotty, worked day and night to restore to her enough power to reach safety.

Morosely, Kirk cast his mind back to the days of the action. It had all started peacefully enough. They had just completed the last of their checks of the outposts along the edge of the neutral zone, moving towards the as-yet uncharted reaches beyond, and were preparing to alter course and return to Starbase 4 for a long-delayed rest and recreation period.

Then quite suddenly they had been beset by Klingon battelcruisers. Their sensors had picked up the first one, and the Enterprise had gone confidently to battle stations to confront it. But four more Klingon ships had joined the affray, two from concealment behind a large asteroid, and two which had suddenly appeared, using some sort of cloaking device similar to the Romulan one. We must try to get a warning about that to Starfleet, if ever we get back within communication distance.

The Enterprise had fought bravely, responding magnificently to all he had asked of her, and her crew had been alert and efficient as always. But the odds were too great, even for them, and Kirk had been forced to accept the old adage that 'discretion is the better part of valour', and had beat a swift retreat. Unfortunately, because of the position of the Klingon ships, this had had to be away from safety, and out into the unknown. At first they had been pursued, and Scotty had had to coax the best out of his damaged engines for longer than he would have liked. But either the Enterprise had outrun the 3 Klingons or they had been recalled, for one by one they had given up the chase.

Much to Scotty's relief, the Enterprise had been slowed, but it had not been soon enough. The overworked engines had begun to complain. Mr. Spock had gone down to engineering to give Mr. Scott his valued assistance, but even their combined skill had not been sufficient to anticipate or prevent a violent explosion in one of the input chambers. One section of the warp drive machinery had been irreparably damaged, two men had died, and six others lay seriously ill in sickbay, including Mr. Spock, who had been badly injured, and was fighting for his life. And, according to Dr. McCoy's latest report, slowly losing the battle!

Misery filled Kirk's mind at the thought, and, adding to the weariness, brought on a bout of self-recrimination. Was it all his fault? Could he have avoided it? Was there some other course of action he could have taken? Something else that he could have done? Was he to blame for condemning his crew to a lingering death in a disabled ship?

A voice disturbed his unhappy thoughts. The slim young man sitting at Spock's console had turned towards him.

"The sensors, sir," he said in an agitated tone. "They are picking up something unusual."

"Be more explicit, Lieutenant," snapped Kirk, and then was instantly contrite. It wasn't young Morton's fault. It was expecting too much for him to

fill Spock's place.

"Sir, I think we are being scanned," said Morton, struggling to control his nervousness. Kirk's frown deepened. Scanned? Out here? And by whom?

Suddenly, a low-pitched musical hum filled the air. Beside Kirk's chair, a light began to glow, gaining in intensity till all the bridge crew had to lift a hand to protect their eyes. Then it gradually faded to reveal a figure standing there. It was humanoid, a male of indeterminate middle-age, dressed in long flowing robes of a clear vibrant blue.

Kirk gazed at the apparition, suddenly realising that he was feeling no alarm or apprehension over the unexpected arrival. In fact, in some odd way, the visitor seemed to have brought an aura of peace and calm with him.

"Who are you, sir?" asked Kirk, and somehow wasn't the least surprised when the stranger answered in perfect Terran.

"My name is Darian," replied the man gently. "I am a traveller through the universe, and I have come to help you."

"To help us?" queried Kirk. "How?"

"In every possible way," replied Darian. "That is the prime reason for my existence."

Kirk looked at him doubtfully.

"I see you do not believe me yet, Captain Kirk," continued the gentle voice. "But I do know your problems, and I will help with them all, I assure you." He gazed round, meeting the wondering looks of the bridge crew. He smiled gently at them.

"Let me start with some simple problems," he said. His gaze lighted on the communications officer. "Miss Uhura," he said, "that intermittent loose connection on your console that you keep having to adjust. Let's cure that."

As Uhura glanced instinctively at the defect, which had been too minor to bother Scotty with in his present desperate situation, she saw a bright blue glow hover over the offending part. When it faded she put out a tentative hand to test it.

"It's working properly," she said in amazement.

"Of course," smiled Darian. "And now that broken finger nail that is irritating you." The glow moved to one slim brown hand, and as the girl watched, the nasty crack disappeared, and the nail was smooth and strong again.

Darian turned to face the other way. "Now, Mr. Sulu," he said with a smile. "That rare Argelian flowering fern of yours that will not flourish. Try watering it with a mixture of milk and water, and it will thrive, I promise you. And that crossword clue that is eluding you is 'excelsis', is it not?"

"Why yes, of course it is," gasped Sulu, with a beam of amazement spreading over his expressive face.

Darian turned to Captain Kirk. "You see, Captain," he said. "Little things, but I know them and can fix them. But I would rather get on with the bigger, more pressing problems now. Will you guide me to Mr. Scott?"

Wondering if he was dreaming, Kirk got to his feet. As he met the gentle gaze of his visitor's warm blue eyes, he realised an odd thing. His tiredness had gone! He suddenly felt fit and well again, and most astonishing of all, happy for the first time in many days. He looked round at the bridge crew. It seemed to be happening to them too. The signs of stress, caused by worry and fatigue, were going fast. Backs were straighter, eyes were brighter, and a new liveliness was evident in them all. Smiles were showing on faces that hadn't had them for a week.

Turning over temporary command to Uhura, he led his visitor into the

turbolift, and took him down to engineering. As they walked the last bit, Darian's unusual garb drew many eyes his way. He smiled gently at each one he encountered, and as they met his warm gaze, the crewmembers felt new life revitalising them. Small injuries, bruises received during the violent manoeuvres of the battle, healed of their own accord. Worries and fears about their future melted away, and a new self-confidence returned.

Kirk led Darian to where Scotty and his men were working among the tangled wreckage caused by the explosion. Kirk could see that they had worked hard, and had cleared a lot of the debris, but repairs were going to be a very difficult task indeed.

"Mr. Scott," said Kirk. "This is Darian. He has come to help us."

Scotty looked at the visitor. His strange garb and benign expression seemed totally out of place in this atmosphere of desperate effort and mounting despair. As far as Scotty could tell, his engines, or at least one vital part of them, were beyond help, and if that was so the Enterprise was lost too. Added to this, his heart was sore for the good men lost and injured. He couldn't see how this man would be able to help them much. He was about to come out with an impatient retort when his troubled eyes met the calm blue ones. A feeling of peace and calm began to flow over him, and the quick retort was still-born.

"Come, Mr. Scott," said Darian, putting a gentle hand on the engineer's arm. "Show me what is needed."

In the next couple of hours things happened that left Kirk, Scotty and his engineers doubting the evidence of their own eyes. Scotty only had to indicate a broken bit of machinery and explain what its function was for the action to begin. A blue glow would spread over it, and, right in front of their gaze, twisted metal would untangle and straighten, missing parts would be filled in, and within seconds the unit was complete again and functional, only waiting for the technicians to reconnect it. They did so, at first in disbelief, and then with gaining confidence as they found that the section was being perfectly rebuilt. Not content with repairing the damage from the explosion, Darian went on to deal with all the battle-damage too. He gently insisted on going over the whole ship, repairing here, restoring there, improving worn parts and fixing minor malfunctions.

At first stunned and disbelieving, Scotty was now at a fever-pitch of excitement. Not since she was new had his beloved ship been in such perfect shape. No refit, however lengthy and detailed, could have done what Darian had done in a few short hours.

"I don't understand it," he expostulated, shaking his head, "but it's blooming marvellous."

"There is no need for you to understand, Mr. Scott," laughed Darian. "Just accept it and be glad."

"Oh, I am, indeed I am," Scotty said fervently.

"Now," said Darian, turning to Kirk, "let us deal with your remaining problem. Sickbay next, I think."

Kirk led the way. He was still in a kind of dream, but he dared not pinch himself to see, in case it was only that. The feeling of recovery and new life in his ship was almost a tangible thing - a marvellous sensation he did not want to lose.

They entered sickbay. McCoy appeared from his office. Kirk saw with a pang how tired and haggard he looked. Poor Bones, he thought, he worries so over his patients, especially Spock. Although he delights in needling him, he really does care about him.

"Bones," he said, as he had done to Scotty earlier, "this is Darian. He has come to help us."

"How?" asked Bones suspiciously. Much as he needed a little respite from his efforts, he wasn't prepared easily to let a stranger interfere in what he regarded as his own special province.

"I don't know, Bones," said Kirk honestly. "But please trust him - I do."

Darian looked solemnly from one man to the other. "You must understand, Captain Kirk, Dr. McCoy," he said, "that this is a very different matter from repairing damaged machinery. Living things need very special care. Life is sacred, and the power over life and death belongs only to the Giver of All. I cannot give you back the men that died, but I can and will help the recovery of those that were injured."

He moved over to look at the beds in the ward, followed by Captain Kirk and a bewildered-looking Dr. McCoy. He stood at the foot of each bed, and gazed for a few moments at each sleeping occupant. As he did so, the bright blue glow that Kirk had already seen moved slowly up each form from toes to head.

Kirk followed him as he entered the small side ward where Spock lay. His heart sank again as he looked at the motionless figure lying there. The Vulcan's eyes were closed. His face was deathly pale apart from a livid bruise high on his cheek-bone. His right arm and shoulder were heavily swathed in dressings, and Kirk knew there were more on the lean frame beneath the light cover. And looking up at the fluctuating lights on the diagnostic panel, Kirk knew from past experience that they were dangerously low.

He felt a gentle hand on his arm, and turned his anguish-filled eyes to meet the warm smiling ones of Darian.

"Do not worry so," said Darian reassuringly. "I know the place this Vulcan holds in your heart. You will not lose him, as you fear. He will soon be well and strong again, and with you for a long time to come."

He turned and concentrated his gaze on the pale Vulcan face. Kirk's eyes followed the blue glow that crept slowly up the bed. Was it only his imagination, or were the deep lines and dark shadows etched by pain easing just a little?

A hand tugged at Kirk's sleeve. It was McCoy, a puzzled look on his face. He pulled him to one side and whispered urgently, "Jim - these men out here - they are improving rapidly! They are resting more easily and their readings are much better. I don't understand it."

"Neither do I, Bones," smiled Kirk, "but I'm very grateful."

Darian came out of Spock's room and smiled at them both. He had a gentle warm smile that lighted his whole face. "He, too, will be all right," he said. "With plenty of rest, and the special care I know you give him, Dr. McCoy, he will soon be well."

Kirk and Darian returned to the bridge, leaving a bemused McCoy to take one more look at his rapidly improving patients before sitting down to take a much-needed rest, happier in his mind than he had been for days.

As they emerged from the turbolift, Captain Kirk looked round at his bridge crew. The change in atmosphere was wonderful. All were alert and confident again. He turned to his visitor.

"Darian," he said, "I don't know how to begin to thank you for what you have done for us. I just don't understand how or why you came to our aid, but we are all very grateful."

"There is no need to thank me," smiled Darian. "To aid your kind is my prime reason for existence. I cannot tell you 'how' for it is too technical for you to understand, but I can explain a little about 'why'." He beamed round at all the interested bridge crew.

"We come," he began, "from far out beyond the space that you know. We serve the Giver of All. For a long time we have been watching your worlds. We have seen you, in spite of trials and setbacks, gradually develop and grow. We have observed you reaching out farther and farther into the universe around you. We know the many difficulties and dangers you have bravely overcome. We know there are many more, as yet unthought-of by you, that you will have to face."

With intent faces his audience hung on every word, sensing something far beyond their total understanding. Darian continued. "The Giver of All has assigned a number of us to help you. There is a line beyond which we are forbidden to go, and we have had to wait and watch. But you came to me! You travelled within my reach. I saw you were in sore straits, and I was glad that I had now the chance to help you. I was very proud to undertake at last my allotted task. Now you will be ready to go forward to new experiences as your knowledge and skills advance."

He stepped forward to hold Kirk's hand for a moment between his own. "I must leave you now," he said. "But first I will give your helmsman the co-ordinates to take you back to more familiar areas." He went to lean over Sulu's shoulder, and indicated to him the figures to feed into his console.

Kirk's intercom beeped. It was Dr. McCoy.

"Jim," he said in a cheerful tone, "Spock's awake, and needs to see you. I've told him everything is all right with the ship, but I don't think he'll settle to the rest he needs till you explain it to him."

"All right, Bones," replied Kirk happily. "Tell him to be patient - I'll be down in a little while." He turned to his guest again. "Darian," he said. "May we tell people about you when we return?"

"Certainly you may," smiled Darian, "though whether you will be believed I do not know. Now I must say 'farewell'. May you all thrive and prosper. Perhaps one day our paths may cross again. I should welcome that. Farewell."

The brilliant light began to glow again. When it faded their strange visitor had gone.

Kirk instructed Sulu to follow the co-ordinates he had been given. He called down to Scotty for power, and the renewed engines responded beautifully, taking the Enterprise safely back towards known space.

Kirk went down to sickbay. He found McCoy talking to Spock. The Vulcan looked much better, and his eyes were alert and interested. Kirk pulled a seat up beside the bed, and proceeded to tell him the whole story, incredible as it seemed. "He seemed such an ordinary gentle-looking man," he mused, "and yet he had such powers."

"I suspect," said Spock wisely, "that he only assumed that particular form to make it easier for you to accept him. In reality he is probably a being far beyond our comprehension. Perhaps we will encounter him, or others like him, again as we reach out into space."

"Well, I for one," meditated Kirk, "find it both humbling and at the same time heartening. Humbling because I felt so ignorant and helpless when I watched what his powers could do - but very heartening too, for to me it means that someone or something out there, with more power than we have ever dreamed of, still thinks that we are worth encouraging."

And this solemn but inspiring thought stayed with them all for a long time afterwards.

A friendless man is like a left hand without a right.

Hebrew proverb.

SURVIVAL by Janet Balch

"I don't want to hear any excuses - just get them up here!" shouted Kirk into the chair intercom, slamming his fist down on the button. He sat back in his chair, then glanced over to the science computer section, Spock's post. Empty. Beyond, to communications, where Lt. Palmer was sitting in for Uhura. He looked at the screen showing the strangely Earth-like planet Alma. Somewhere down there were Spock and Uhura.

Scott's voice brought Kirk's attention back. "Scott to bridge."

"Kirk here," answered Kirk, tensely.

"Captain, I think you'd best get down here to the transporter..."

"On my way, Scotty." Kirk headed for the turbolift. He turned to Lt. Palmer just before he entered it. "Keep trying to rouse Spock and Uhura."

"Aye, sir."

The transporter room seemed to be in a form of organised chaos. Engineering technicians, wires, cables, tools, all in a symbiotic confusion. Scott and Kyle were at the controls, huddled over something. Scott saw Kirk, gave some directions to Kyle, then walked over to Kirk.

"Captain, it's just no good. The transporter blows every time we try to use it."

"Mr. Scott!" Kyle called. Scott went over to him.

"It canna be!" Scott's voice loudly reached Kirk who gingerly stepped over some high tension cable.

"What is it, Mr. Scott?"

"Captain, we've just lost them - they simply vanished from the scanner!"

Kirk reached the intercom as it beeped. "Kirk here."

Lt. Palmer answered him. "Captain, Mr. Spock and Lt. Uhura no longer appear on the sensors, nor can we make any contact with them."

"Thank you, Lieutenant. Continue sensor search."

"Aye, sir." The intercom clicked off, leaving Kirk with a knotted feeling in his stomach. Kirk turned to face Scotty, his mouth opening, but whatever he had to say was cut off as Caroline Masters and Dr. McCoy entered.

"Jim, I think we have a problem," said McCoy.

"You're telling me," muttered Kirk. "Scotty tells me we can't repair the transporter, communications are out, Spock and Uhura are stuck down there in the worst storm for years, and even if everything else worked they've vanished from the sensors..."

"Well, now you've got that off your chest, here's another problem for you." He glanced at the girl accompanying him.

"You won't be able to use the sensors for..." the rest of her sentence was lost in the clamour of tools and the raised voices of the technicians. Kirk led them out into the corridor.

"Let's get to the briefing room - we may get the chance to talk there."

The silence of the briefing room enabled Kirk to think properly. He got himself a coffee and sipped it, feeling the hot liquid seep into his stomach. "What's that you were saying about the sensors, Ensign?"

"Well, sir," said Caroline, "I was on board the Tobarer when it was involved in a rescue attempt on Alma two years ago. The winters are notorious there

- the storms prevent any transmissions leaving or reaching the planet. I have brought some tapes of previous expeditions; they show that the atmospheric storms also disrupt transporters and sensors - "

"They already have. Play the tapes, Ensign."

McCoy looked down at the table top. "Jim, you realise that without life support units..." He shook his head slowly. "The temperature down there reaches 50° below zero at night; they had only emergency rations - a week of high concentrates, if the cold doesn't kill them first. Spock doesn't have that much endurance against the cold. If they find shelter, light a fire..."

"Don't you think I know all that, Bones? Let's see what those tapes have to offer, Ensign."

She slipped a tape into the viewer and a crisp clear voice sounded. "This is Commander Jeffries on board the Canternum merchant ship. Captain Lant and four crewmen have been separated from the landing party; weather conditions are worsening. We have lost contact with them, and find it increasingly difficult to maintain contact with base camp..." There was a lot of static, then a new voice came through.

"... engines under strain. We are trying to maintain standard orbit but are not able to sustain..." the voice disappeared into static again.

Commander Jeffries' voice returned. "We are being pulled into the planet's atmosphere. We must attempt to break free and go for help, leaving the immediate search in the hands of the Alma rescue authorities."

Kirk snapped off the tape. "Did they get their men back?"

"No," said Caroline. "All dead. I have several tapes here, Captain - two shuttles were sent out but never returned. In all, twenty five men and one woman were lost."

"Bridge to Captain Kirk." Lt. Palmer's voice filtered through the intercom.

"Kirk here."

"Message from Starfleet, sir."

"I'm on my way to the bridge, Lieutenant."

Starfleet ordered Kirk to take the Enterprise to Starbase 10, telling them to leave Spock and Uhura's rescue in the hands of the Alma rescue authorities - that group of colonists whose main job was helping their fellows who had run into difficulties in coping with the arduous winter conditions on their planet. It was with anger that Kirk ordered the course set for Starbase 10; he and McCoy watched the planet diminish on the screen.

"We'll be back, Spock," said Kirk. "Take care of Uhura."

Uhura sank to her knees in the crisp powdery snow. Her voice came in quick pants and each breath she drew was more painful because of the unbearable cold.

"Mr. Spock, what can be happening? Why don't they beam us up?"

"Lieutenant, I think we must accept the obvious; these conditions must have disrupted the sensors as well as interfering with communications. It is also possible that the Enterprise has been ordered away by now; Starfleet cannot sacrifice the time..."

"But they wouldn't just leave us - Captain Kirk, McCoy, Scotty..."

Spock looked down at Uhura, who had buried her face in her hands. He bent down and put a hand beneath each elbow and lifted her to her feet. "Lieutenant, look at me."

Uhura moved to look at the familiar face of the Enterprise's First Officer.

"You trust me, Uhura?"

"Yes, Mr. Spock."

"Then do everything I say. Look." He pointed into the distance at a row of low hills barely visible, white upon the whiteness of the tundra. "We must make for those hills. Shelter is our only hope. We have supplies for a week; we must camp, light a fire... "

"Yes, you're right, Mr. Spock. It's just so cold I can hardly think." Panic began to creep into her voice.

"It will be better when we have warmth." Spock shivered. He looked down at his hands. They were beginning to become frostbitten.

Not even in Sarpeidon's Ice Age had he felt as cold. His strength was ebbing away; if he were alone he would find it difficult to will himself on, but his duty to Uhura pushed him forward. "Come, we must make haste - try to walk. If we stop, it could be deadly. Keep moving; it's our only hope."

Spock was trying to sound as calm and normal as possible, although he was finding the cold too extreme for his Vulcan body. He pulled Uhura along, pulling her up when she stumbled and lay crumpled at his feet, the snow drifting on to her, trying to bury her. The biting wind was behind them, and although it was not snowing the snow on the ground was being picked up and blown about as if by a blizzard, making everything seem dark as it cut out the weak winter sun.

Uhura realised that Spock was carrying her. "Spock, put me down! You can't carry me, put me down!" Uhura stopped, surprised at her own voice. Surely she wasn't that weak? She felt her eyes close and all she could do was sleep.

Her eyes were open - weren't they? But everything was dark. For a moment she thought Am I blind? then she heard a sound behind her. "Spock?" she called.

"It is all right, Lieutenant, we are safe for the time being. I am endeavouring to light a fire. We shall soon have warmth and light."

A light flickered and Uhura could see Spock kneeling beside a pile of flaming moss. She glanced around trying to make sense out of her confusion.

"We are in a small cave in the hill we observed earlier," Spock said, answering her unspoken question. "The immediate danger is past; we have shelter and fire." He indicated the moss which was burning well.

"Why is there so much light, Mr. Spock?"

"The walls and roof are coated with a form of rock salt. It reflects the light."

"It makes the cave beautiful." She smiled weakly.

"It serves our purpose well," said Spock.

Uhura's smile broadened. "It doesn't hurt to have pleasant surroundings."

Spock nodded. "How do you feel, Lieutenant?"

"My hands and feet are numb."

Spock came over and bent down beside her as Uhura held her hands in front of the fire. He shook his head.

"It is not advisable to hold your hands to the fire. First let us get the circulation going." He took her hands in his to rub them. She gasped.

"Spock, your hands!" She looked down in horror. His hands were covered in a green rash, the skin peeling off in places. "You seem to be in more need of

attention than I am."

"Vulcans are unable to bear the cold for long," said Spock, offering a reason. He rubbed Uhura's hands between his. "How do they feel now?"

"It feels painful - pins and needles... "

"I believe that is a good sign; the feeling will not last long." As he spoke he removed her boots and massaged her toes. Uhura noticed some green blood on her left foot.

"Spock, your hands are bleeding."

"Unimportant, Lieutenant." He wiped the green blood from her foot.

"How long have I been asleep?"

"Six point eight three hours," said Spock, reassuringly Spock-like. "However, I am afraid we only have my pack of emergency rations; you appear to have dropped yours - we shall have to ration them."

"No! How could I have been so stupid as to drop... "

"Do not blame yourself. The conditions were extreme. That we survived at all can be attributed solely to Starfleet training, and a stubbornness to live on our part," he added.

Uhura looked at Spock. That sounded odd coming from the Vulcan, but he was still calm, as though on the bridge of the Enterprise.

"As a Vulcan, I am able to survive without food for longer than a Human. I therefore suggest you use the rations. I have already computed the quantity you will require daily for your survival - "

"Mr. Spock, I can't allow... "

Spock looked at Uhura in mock severity. "That's an order, Lieutenant." He quoted Kirk easily. "I shall search for other food sources."

Uhura knelt and looked towards the cave entrance. "Mr. Spock, is it night yet?"

"Yes," Spock said simply.

Uhura swallowed. "Are there animals hereabouts?"

"Yes."

"Big animals?"

Spock turned from where he was arranging some moss. "Are you worried about hostile predators?"

"Yes, Mr. Spock."

"I believe the fire will serve to deter any attempts they might make to enter the cave," said Spock, trying to reassure her.

"You realise that this cave could be the lair of some bear - or its counterpart here," said Uhura.

"It was," said Spock, standing up, his head bent to avoid hitting the roof. He walked over to a small alcove in the cave wall and pulled off a moss cover that Uhura had not previously noticed, uncovering the crumpled body of a squat ape-like creature. It was green, its fur a hard bristle-like hair except for its hands and its head, which were bald, but covered with green scales.

Uhura shivered though she did not now feel cold. "It's dead?" she asked.

"Quite dead, unfortunately."

"Unfortunately?" echoed Uhura.

"The creature obviously had the right to be here; this was its home. I

found evidence of its last meal over there." He indicated the back of the cave where shadows still persisted. "I do not kill unless there is no other option; it was evident the creature would not give up its cave freely, but we could not have survived out there."

Uhura nodded. "Life is harsh here."

"It is the survival of the fittest," Spock continued to pile a second mound of moss closer to the cave entrance than the other. "That is why, to remain fit, you must eat tomorrow. I shall investigate the possibility of the creature..."

"What possibility?" asked Uhura.

Spock was silent for a moment. "We may have to eat it... although the thought repels me - I do not normally eat flesh - as the officer in charge I must try all possible food sources. I do not believe we will find any vegetables in these arctic wastes."

Uhura looked at the creature with new horror. "But green flesh..." she muttered. "I don't think I could..."

"Would you prefer to starve?"

"No," said Uhura. "But..." She shuddered.

Spock held the large hulk of the creature, pulled it to the cave entrance. "I will put the creature outside so that it will not become putrid in the heat of the cave; the temperature outside is 30° below zero - and it will become colder." He disappeared into the darkness with the creature.

There was a terrible silence. Uhura went to the entrance and looked out, the cold air hitting her. "Mr. Spock!" No answer. "SPOCK!"

She heard a noise and Spock appeared, walking slowly. They reentered the cave.

"I find the cold difficult to bear," he repeated, shivering. "We must light more fires. I shall sleep near the entrance - yes, we must try to sleep."

Sleep did not come easily to either of them but it did come - finally.

Three days passed slowly. With nothing to pass the time Uhura in particular felt rather bored. Rations were adequate, although even after eating her day's ration she felt hungry. She kept the small food containers after removing the heat caps, using the canisters as water holders, melting the pure snow over one of the fires.

During the third day she noticed that Spock had left the cave. She always worried, relieved to see him return. Now he had been gone too long, she thought, and was about to go looking for him when he entered. He carried a large specimen bag.

"I have found some possibly edible roots and vegetables." He sat down heavily beside the fire opposite Uhura.

"Are you well, Spock?" Uhura looked at the Vulcan. He did look unlike himself but Uhura couldn't quite pin down why.

"I believe I have a temperature," he mumbled. "I am uncomfortably cold yet I repeatedly feel hot."

"I don't like the sound of that." Uhura moved to beside Spock and placed her hand on his forehead. "You're burning hot! You must have a fever!" A cold chill went over Uhura. "I wish McCoy were here..." No - Spock was never ill! "You're probably just tired - and you haven't been eating."

"No, it's not..." Spock's words ran into each other, making him

incoherent. He turned away but not before the look of worried anger he had tried to conceal showed plainly in his eyes. His face was damp with sweat and the drops slid along his jaw. He moved slowly, carefully, as though he were half drunk.

His Vulcan muscles seemed worse than useless. There was a pounding headache above his eyes and a dull aching pain filled his back and loins and went down to his legs. At a sudden chill he shivered involuntarily; the feeling of nausea was overwhelming.

Uhura took hold of his arm and led him to his moss bed. He tried to pull back. "Must go outside and..."

"No, stay here, please, Mr. Spock." He will stay here even if I have to knock him unconscious, she thought, for if he went outside she knew that he would die.

He was still reluctant to stay in the cave but he was rapidly losing the ability to make a decision; by the minute, he grew more dazed and weak.

Now he dropped onto the moss bed with a heavily drawn sigh, his eyes already closed. He shuddered frequently as though cold but Uhura could feel the sweat seeping through his shirt.

He lay still, hardly breathing. Uhura went to the cave entrance and looked out. She stared up at the sky, willing the Enterprise to be there. She looked at the snow; it had been swept against the rocks but she could still see, lying about three feet away, the carcass of the green ape. One arm was gone. Had Spock been experimentally eating it? Was that what had made him sick - trying to see if it was safe for her to eat?

Uhura shook her head. No! Starfleet regulations... 'Never blame yourself for a landing party death - all crew members are volunteers; everyone knows the risks.'

Uhura looked further along the path. Was it... could it be... She bent down to brush aside some snow.

I don't believe it! She was looking down at a plant some fifteen inches high... and in spite of the conditions, it still carried rose-coloured flowers. Milfoil yarrow? It shouldn't grow here... and yet... She picked a large armful, frowning slightly. I hope it is!

When she entered the cave everything was quiet. Spock was lying as still as when she had left him. Uhura filled one of the food cannisters with ice and placed it on the flame; into another cannister she put some of the plant she hoped was yarrow, crumpled up. She was glad she had read some books on the North American Indians; she remembered their cure for fever. When the water boiled she poured it carefully over the leaves, making a kind of tea. She left it to brew.

Spock stirred. She went over to him, bending over him. He was flat on his back, but he was moving restlessly, his eyes still closed. She felt his brow then straightened to move away. He looked up at her then suddenly reached out and grabbed her wrist, giving it a savage jerk. "What are you doing?" His voice was thickened and hoarse and the words were slurred and ran one over another. His eyes glittered yet were congested, bloodshot green. He tried to get up but she forced him down again on to the moss. At least, Uhura thought, while he's fevered I'm stronger than he is - I can keep him from wandering off.

When he lay perfectly still again Uhura nodded in satisfaction then went over to the brewed potion. There was a noise behind her; she turned and gasped. "Spock!" she cried, The Vulcan stood in the middle of the floor, staggering; he looked hardly conscious. "Mr. Spock, where are you going?"

"Outside," he muttered. He turned and gave her a defiant stare, raising one arm to ward her off, muttering something she couldn't make out. She grabbed

hold of him, steadying him, and then to her surprise he gave her a shove that threw her backwards with ease. She gave him a sympathetic look, staggered forward again and clutched at him as he began to fall. He tried to save himself but simply managed to clutch at Uhura and both of them crashed to the cave floor. For a moment Uhura lay still, stunned. She found it hard to breathe with Spock's weight bearing down on her. His eyes were closed; he was barely conscious.

Uhura crawled out from under Spock then stood. She hooked her hands under his armpits and pulled him but it was no good; he was too heavy, and past helping himself. She lifted him up slightly and pushed some moss under him, making the ground more comfortable.

Spock had vomited and now looked up at Uhura with a mixed look of humbleness and guilt; he was clearly ashamed and feeling humiliated.

Uhura held the tea concoction to his lips. The smell was revolting, but she hadn't made it to smell - or taste - good. The smell put him off; he pushed it away. She tried again. This time he took some then pushed it firmly away. "Enough - water now."

She brought him a cannister of water, lukewarm from the fire, and Spock held it in both hands and swallowed half its contents, gulping avidly as though he couldn't quench his thirst. Then he sighed and lay back.

Uhura gave him what she hoped was yarrow tea every two hours. She didn't sleep for two days or nights.

When Spock at last looked rested and still, Uhura let herself sleep. When she woke Spock was sitting up, still looking ill but much better; he seemed fully rational again.

"Uhura, how long have I been sick?"

"Three days, sir."

"Three days?" echoed Spock. "What have you been eating? The supplies..."

"I found some plants, sir. The roots are quite nutritious and the leaves were suitable for making a sort of tea."

"Very good." Spock seemed tired with the effort of speaking.

"How do you feel, Mr. Spock?"

"Much better. What is this plant you found?" Spock was studying it.

"It resembles - and seems to have similar properties to - milfoil yarrow, Mr. Spock. It was used on Earth as a cure for fevers..."

"I did not know the Academy ran a course in primitive medicine."

Uhura laughed. "It doesn't. I read it. One thing about these long space missions - we can get through a great many tapes."

Spock looked at her. "Yes, I know."

There was a noise outside. Uhura glanced round quickly, afraid that another of the green apes had found its way here and would dispute their ownership of the cave. She relaxed when the familiar figures of Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy appeared.

"How did you get here, Captain?" Spock asked. "The weather conditions..."

"We got a modified shuttle from Starbase 10 - tell you about it later," smiled Kirk. "Let's get back to the Enterprise."

McCoy looked up from his medical scanner which he had been running over both of them. "That's a good idea - they'll both need a while in sickbay. Spock's suffering from the aftermath of a fever, and Uhura's not in the best of shape, either."

Back on the Enterprise, Uhura and Spock finally returned to duty. Spock hesitated beside her before he moved to his station.

"I have not had the opportunity to thank you, Miss Uhura," he said quietly. "I consider that the performance of your duties on the planet was most masterly."

It was the finest compliment that he could have given her. "Thank you, sir," she smiled.

Spock nodded, and moved on to his station.

A SPLENDID INNOCENT by Gillian Catchpole

Only the wind dancing by,
 Can pause awhile to share a twirl,
 Then leave unchanged.
 Yet still my fragile beauty,
 Petals proud in the morning sun,
 No-one it seems can blame.
 In living life your own sweet way,
 You'll always be
 A splendid innocent.
 Never knowing that gentle place,
 So filled with tender happiness,
 You gave to us poor wandering souls.
 It seems a shame,
 But now I see outside the spell,
 I doubt, if we could ever have remained
 And still been men.

CAUGHT IN A CONFLICT by Gillian Catchpole

Cold, they said,
Like ice all hard and frozen.
 I knew them to be wrong.
 To suffer such pressures and still emerge
 A good and glorious man,
 Was more than many would have done.
 This was his struggle.
 To form from fragments that would not match,
 A pattern for life that fitted and flowed,
 It required a sacrifice.

Somewhere demanding impossible expression
 Dwells a deep humanity,
 Where silent feelings although suppressed
 Do still live on though tightly held.
 And sometimes in eyes so cool and sure
 A flickering of deepness surges through,
 To shine and then be swallowed whole.
 Committed to Vulcan disciplines,
 Only he can tell of lonely pain
 And conflicts that will not settle.
 Caught in a conflict his life is structured,
 Logic for the world -
 Humanity a silent secret kept inside.

MR. GRIFFITHS WILL KNOW by P.S. Dale

"We're agreed then? I'll put a notice on all messdecks." The speaker leaned back in his chair and looked round his friends.

"Will we have enough for two teams, Shonni?" asked Chekov doubtfully.

"Haven't we just passed a motion deploring the obsession with soccer-football and baseball in this ship?" retorted Shonni. "There's enough of us here to coach two teams. It's time everyone knew that there's only one game..."

"Rugby football!" shouted several of his supporters.

Shonni Griffiths grinned. "Rugby Union football," he corrected. "We're bound to get a team..."

"Lt. Griffiths to the transporter room," broke in the ship's intercom.

"Sounds like trouble," said Chekov. "You're not on standby, are you?"

"No. Tell them I'm on my way, Pavel, it'll be that damned machine. I had it in pieces yesterday. One of these days I'll hammer it to bits and transport it out into space."

"How're you going to do that if..." Chekov's voice was cut off as the door closed behind Shonni.

The scene that greeted his eyes when the transporter room door opened was more reminiscent of a front line dressing station. There were two bodies under sheets. Blood everywhere. Dr. McCoy was crouched on the floor, Mr. Spock limp in his arms. There were more medical staff in the room than the engineer dreamed existed. He sidestepped two orderlies as they charged for the door, then crossed the room weaving in and out of the casualties. Mr. Scott and the engineer on duty were deep in consultation, leaning on the transporter console.

"I only beamed up fourteen, and fourteen arrived," said Lt. Kyle. Shonni got the impression that this wasn't the first time he'd said it. Mr. Scott ran his hands through his disordered hair and said helplessly,

"The Captain must be somewhere... Ah, Shonni. We've lost the Captain. He didn't beam up with the rest. Mr. Kyle says he's not been lost in transit but he's not on the surface either. Will ye check out the transporter?"

"There can't be much wrong, I had it in bits yesterday. It'll take about ten minutes." Shonni was confident that Captain Kirk hadn't been lost in the beaming process.

Mr. Scott watched Dr. McCoy hustling the orderlies out of the door with Mr. Spock's stretcher, then said wearily, "That leaves me as ranking officer." He activated the intercom. "This will tak' longer than I thought, Mr. Sulu. Mr. Spock is now in sickbay but the Captain's still missing. Start searching the planet surface as best ye can, though I think he must be within that force-field. Ye have the con until I get back... Arrange for Lt. Martin and a security detail to report to the transporter room in fifteen minutes." He switched off the intercom and turned to Shonni, who was unscrewing the instrument panel. "Ye'll have finished by then?"

"Sure."

"Good. I'm goin' tae sickbay and then to the bridge."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Scott hurried out, leaving Shonni alone with the transporter. He continued working, humming to himself and occasionally breaking into song. Any of the engineering department hearing him would have been reassured. As

Mr. Scott had said after Shonni had been on board a week - while his working song was 'Myfanwy' they could rest easy. It was only 'Sospan Fach' that heralded trouble.

As he was putting back the last screw, the security detail strode in, among them several survivors of the recent encounter. One of Shonni's rugby-playing friends was amongst these and drifted over to the console.

"What happened down there?" asked Shonni, eyeing his rather battered friend with unconcealed curiosity.

"That's what I'd like to know. The Captain and Mr. Spock were checking the power source that's blanketing this area. Not a sign of any natives, then all hell let loose - they were all over us. We were cornered against the rock face right under the mountain. When Mr. Spock went down, I thought that was it. We'd got back here before we discovered that the Captain wasn't with us."

"How very odd... Anyway, this heap of junk's not to blame." Shonni patted the console and contacted sickbay. "The transporter's in full working order, sir."

"I'll be wi' ye in a moment."

The security detail and Shonni were hotly involved in argument - Security on the defensive - when Mr. Scott hurried in.

"I'll test the transporter, sir, then Security can use it," said Shonni, stepping onto the transporter platform.

"No, if ye say it's working, it's working."

"I'd still like to go, sir," said Shonni, pleased by the unexpected compliment.

Mr. Scott looked exasperated, but he understood the drive for perfection in his junior officer. "Verra well, but the security detail will go wi' ye. Lieutenant?"

"Sir?"

"Search the area thoroughly, but beam up the minute ye see anybody."

"Yes, sir." Lt. Masters sounded disappointed that he wouldn't have a chance to avenge their ignominious defeat.

"And keep in contact. Don't waste any time down there, Mr. Griffiths, beam up immediately."

"Yes, sir."

A few minutes later, Shonni looked round the rocky canyon which so recently had been a battlefield. The security patrol began its search but Shonni deliberately delayed. He tried to put himself in the Captain's place. According to his friend, James Kirk had been standing against the cliff when he instructed Lt. Kyle to beam up the party. As he picked his way over the stones, his eye was caught by the glint of metal. Wedged between two stones was a communicator. No-one had mentioned losing one. It must be the one the Captain was using. Lying about an arm's length from the rock face... The question remained - dropped or thrown?

Security looked very busy. Shonni felt that it was a suitable moment to avenge slurs against the transporter - it was one thing to call it names himself but for non-technical staff... Unable to suppress a triumphant smile, Shonni bent down to retrieve the communicator, activating it as he did so.

"Mr. Scott?"

"Why aren't ye back up here?"

Shonni grinned in the direction of the Enterprise. "Just doing Security's job for them. I've found the Captain's communicator."

There was a stunned silence, then the worried voice asked, "Where?"

"About two feet from the base of the cliff. I'll bring it up with me." Shonni stood still and seconds later was handing the trophy to his superior officer.

"That's narrowed the field. The Captain must still be on the surface. I wish we knew more about Mr. Spock's power source. Dr. McCoy said he doubted if he'll be conscious before tomorrow."

"Dr. M'Benga told me Vulcans shut down most of the body functions to concentrate on healing the damaged areas. Must be useful."

"I've seen Spock like it before - it could be days. I'm awa' to pick the Science Department's brains. Ye're in charge in Engineering."

All was quiet in sickbay, Mr. Scott's feet hardly sounding as he strode restlessly up and down.

Dr. McCoy looked up from the report he was studying, automatically checked Mr. Spock's pulse and watched his friend's anxious pacing. "Sit down, Scotty, you're doing no good - for yourself or for Jim. Go to bed, there's nothing we can do tonight."

"But where is he? We've searched the surface, he must be on the planet somewhere. There must be machines in there, the whole mountain's shielded from the sensors and the transporter. The Berrians have just reached the industrial age, so it canna be them. Our observations have proved they've been visited frequently by traders, but I'd guess it's a left-over from the past - like Vaal of Landru."

McCoy had heard all this before and was just letting Scotty talk out his worry. He finally put the experiment reports on the floor and said firmly, "If Jim wasn't killed immediately, he'll survive. This isn't the first time we've lost him." He paused as he racked his brains for another encouraging idea, but his attention was caught by his patient.

Mr. Spock was becoming restless. According to the instrument panels his heartbeat and respiration were growing stronger. McCoy checked the readings with Spock's pulse and drawled, "Take it easy, Spock. Another hour won't make all that difference."

Perhaps there was something in the quiet Southern drawl that spurred the Vulcan into greater effort. A few minutes later he opened his eyes. Focusing with difficulty on McCoy's lined face, he managed to say, "Jim?"

"I only wish we knew."

"What happened? Did ye see?" demanded Scotty over the bed.

Spock frowned as he struggled to speak. "The mountain face opened... " His voice faded away and his eyes closed.

McCoy fussed round checking the machinery enclosing his patient's chest, muttering, "Just because you've the constitution of a camel, there's no reason to suppose your body will stand anything. It won't. Lie still and don't try to speak."

Both his audience knew that his irascible temper was only a cover for his anxiety - for Spock and for Kirk. McCoy had just decided that for once Spock had obeyed him, when the Vulcan's eyes opened.

Watching him, both men were amazed by the vigour in his eyes and the strength of his voice as he said firmly,

"Mr. Griffiths will know."

Then the light went out of his face and he collapsed back into unconsciousness.

McCoy straightened up after monitoring this relapse. "He's put himself back at least a day by pushing himself. Who is Mr. Griffiths anyway?"

Mr. Scott, who had reached the intercom, opened the channel to Engineering. A clear tenor voice was softly singing in a language unknown to the doctor.

"That is Shonni Griffiths... Sickbay to Engineering," he added loudly. The singing instantly stopped and a faintly Welsh voice replied.

"Lt. Griffiths."

"Report to Sickbay immediately."

"Yes, sir."

As Mr. Scott walked back towards him, McCoy asked, "What's he got to do with it?... I remember him now - dark, skinny and tousled - he's your new officer."

"Aye, the best in years. Two passions in life - engines and rugby football. But what that's got to do with Spock or Jim, I wouldna' be knowing."

Before McCoy could hazard a guess, Shonni strolled into the room - not deceiving either of the men, who knew he must have run all the way to have reached sickbay in the time.

"We have a small problem, Shonni. Mr. Spock regained consciousness for a few minutes. He managed to say that ye knew what had happened to the Captain."

"ME?" Shonni was startled, then he remembered that Spock shared his secret. He wondered how to explain. "What exactly did Mr. Spock say, sir?"

"He said, 'Lt. Griffiths will know'."

"That explains it. I don't know now but I will know," he said slowly. Seeing their astonished faces he added baldly, "I'm a sort of receptive telepath."

"Sort of?" enquired McCoy, not surprised by this revelation.

Shonni grinned. "That about explains it. I spent my childhood shuttling between the outer planets of the Empire. My father is a trader and his partner is an Ilsmeyian, who are the highest rated telepaths. My mother died when I was born, so I was brought up by a family of telepaths. I suppose years of having information dumped wholesale into my mind must have set up some sort of reaction. I found I could pick up strong emotions. Mr. Spock knew this as soon as I came on board..." Shonni broke off suddenly. His face showed utter and absolute amazement. He smiled wryly to himself as he walked over to inspect the readings on the life support machine. He frowned and looked sharply at Spock's motionless body, then turned and grinned at his chief officer.

"I don't quite believe it, but that was Bhenn Marronen, Father's partner. We appear to have strayed into the Confederation and Empire of Worlds. Uncle Bhenn says not to worry, the Bethania's the only ship in this quadrant. They're revisiting these border planets and on a routine telepathic sweep, my brothers discovered Mr. Spock. Thimen was talking to him at the time of the ambush. He says that a door in the mountain opened and Captain Kirk fell inside. That was when Mr. Spock was wounded. They're holding on to him - it's difficult to explain but I've seen it done. The telepath takes over the entire brain and keeps the vital organs going until the patient's capable of doing it for himself. The Bethania's coming here with all speed, so they can concentrate on looking for Captain Kirk. Uncle Bhenn will need some guidance, it's nearly impossible to pick out someone you don't know."

"Now we ken where to look... I'm awa' to the bridge," said Mr. Scott, heading for the door. "I'll keep a watch for the ship."

"How far away are they?" enquired McCoy once Scotty had left.

"He didn't say. I can't pick things out of his mind, it's strictly one way."

The family taught me how to assemble my thoughts so they could read off the information they wanted without delaying for it. They've never been keen on speaking aloud... Not being a projective telepath or a real receptive one is a great relief. I don't have Mr. Spock's problems. I only hear what a telepath wishes to tell me, but strong emotions do register - I find myself humming or singing, it shuts out a lot."

"You're luckier than Spock in that respect. But it must be useful to be able to project your thoughts sometimes."

"Useful but with disadvantages. My brothers find it very lonely to be away from other telepaths. The Imperial Navy always has more than one on their ships. Mr. Spock must find it difficult living on the Enterprise."

"I'd never thought of that... I must admit I don't know much about the Empire. I know that it was when settlers left the Federation looking for pioneer worlds that the old Empire gradually became the Confederation. That and the Emperor's fascinating title, 'The Splendour Enthroned'! Is there still an Emperor?"

"Yes, but the glory has departed. The Council of Worlds elects an Emperor every year. I've never been to the centre of the Empire, it's so far from the borders where we traded. I suppose that's why the Federation has so little contact with the Empire, the centres of our galaxies are so far apart that it's impossible to trade with them."

"We've been mapping the borders for months and we still haven't seen an Imperial scoutship," agreed McCoy.

"The Navy's always overstretched. Most of the trouble's usually over the other side of the Empire in the outer worlds."

"That reminds me. If you were brought up in the Empire, how come you ended up in Starfleet?"

Shonni chuckled. "My grandfather spent ten years commanding the Hood, so there wasn't any other choice. I think Starfleet was a little doubtful about all that planet hopping, but Grandfather and his cronies leant on the selection board. The Bethania is a registered Federation vessel but Father was too much of a wanderer to remain in charted space. He specialises in first contacts... I'd better go to the bridge, the family's back." Shonni rose to his feet and made for the door. Part of his mind concentrated on navigating his way to the bridge, while the rest held on to the message.

"I've informed Starfleet of our predicament," said Mr. Scott as soon as the lift doors closed behind Shonni.

"I've just had a message from the Bethania. She hasn't our warp drive but they're doing their best. Father hopes to be with us in a couple of hours."

"Any news of the Captain?"

"No, but when they've any news they'll call us."

"Keep a channel open for the Bethania, Lieutenant," said Scotty, turning in his chair to speak to Uhura. "Mr. Griffiths, you're in charge in Engineering. Maintain orbit and send Ensign Holland off duty."

He lay in the darkness listening. Nothing but silence. Complete silence. Broken only by his own breathing. He blinked several times hoping to break the illusion. The dimly lit cavern still loomed over and around him. A dream that refused to fade, a dream that had solidified into reality. Shafts of pale light pierced the gloom from high in the roof. When he moved his head he could just make out the deeper darkness of a passage leading further into the interior... The interior of where? And why? And who?

He sat up slowly, his eyes fixed unseeingly on the distant wall. He

couldn't push the subject to one side any longer. Who? That was the frightening thought. He felt a moment of complete panic as he faced the truth. Resolutely he pushed aside the fear and tried to concentrate. Who was he? What was he doing here? A prisoner in a dungeon? His clothes looked like some form of uniform, so perhaps a prisoner of war? Whoever he was, or whatever he had done, he was still in trouble. No food, no water, and what felt to be a hole in his head. That probably accounted for his amnesia but the knowledge didn't bring any comfort.

"Pull yourself together," he said aloud, his voice echoing in the empty cavern. Fighting the resurgent fear, he added, "John... James... Peter... Michael? Can't say any of them sound familiar. On your feet - a name can wait."

Standing up, he staggered and leaned hurriedly against the wall. When the floor settled down, he took a tentative step towards the passage. Stumbled and almost fell. Peering through the gloom, his eyes followed the tibia, through the pelvic girdle to the skull of a fellow prisoner. His reviving spirits sank to zero. Was there no way out of here?

Was it curiosity, instinct or hope that drew him towards the passage leading into the unknown? He had no means of telling as his faltering footsteps took him into the enveloping darkness.

"I've got one person, sir," said Lt. Kyle from the transporter console. Lt. Commander Scott and Shonni turned to watch the column of sparkles solidify into one man in a navy blue coverall.

Shonni gasped as the visitor was revealed. He hadn't been told which of the family would come. Five brothers all alike - tall, reddish skinned, black haired. But Mikel he never expected.

"You may be half witted, little brother, but there's no need to emphasise it," Mikel's telepathic voice sounded amused. "Introduce me."

Shonni recovered his scattered wits. "Mr. Scott, this is Lt. Mikel Marronen of the Imperial Navy." He didn't add 'and I haven't a clue what he's doing here' but both men could easily read it in his voice.

"Thank you for welcoming us, sir. I'm not here as a representative of the Confederation and Empire of Worlds. Father seems to think I'm the best one to search for your Captain. May I borrow Shonni?"

"Certainly. Is there anything else we can do to help?"

"Not at present. May I make Sickbay my base?"

"Aye, whatever ye think best. I'll be on the Bridge, Shonni."

"Yes, sir." Shonni followed Mikel out into the corridor before demanding, "What are you doing here?"

"Don't you get any leave in Starfleet? I told you to join the Imperial Navy! Our fathers decided I should spend mine overhauling the navigation console... Mother sends her love; she'll see you when all this is over."

"Will it ever be over?" Shonni felt as if the nightmare would last for ever.

"Don't lose faith now... Commander Spock has settled into the Vulcan healing trance, so we let go," added Mikel as they reached Sickbay.

Dr. McCoy looked up from his research reports as the two swept through the door. His office was becoming less and less of a refuge as the days went by - once upon a time he could hole up there in peace and quiet.

"This is Dr. McCoy, our Chief Medical Officer," said Shonni hurriedly as McCoy looked explosive. "Doctor, this is my brother Mikel. He's here to look

for Captain Kirk. Where're you going to start, Mik?"

"With you. Sit down and lay out everything you know about Captain Kirk."

"But I've only been on board three months," protested Shonni. "I've only spoken to him twice."

"Don't argue."

Dr. McCoy watched fascinated as Shonni scowled at his brother but obediently sat down in the only spare chair.

"For once, little brother, you were right... I suppose I'll just have to read his medical reports."

"You just hoped to be able to do it without doing any work," retorted Shonni, then turned to McCoy. "May Mikel look at the Captain's encephalograms and his medical record, sir."

"Before I can trace anyone, I have to know what I'm looking for. Everybody's mind has a different pattern. I can then eliminate most of the life down there. Your search parties are complicating an already crowded area," explained Mikel, guessing that McCoy would prefer to know exactly what he was doing.

"Nurse Chapel will get all the records you need," said McCoy. He opened the door into the next room and could be heard issuing instructions. As he walked slowly back to his chair, Shonni eyed him speculatively, receiving the wave of worry and anxiety that the doctor was radiating.

"What exactly did you hope to learn from Lt. Griffiths?"

"A picture of Captain Kirk - not physical but psychological. Anything to distinguish his mind from the thousands down there."

"I've known him for many years... I'm also used to the Vulcan mindmeld... Could I be any help to you?"

Mikel looked at the tired, lined face and said gently, "If you wish. I hoped you would offer, but I had to wait for you to ask me... Just empty your mind of everything except for James Kirk. Picture him as if he were here in the room talking with us. I don't need the physical contact of the Vulcan mindmeld, nor is there a joining of minds. I can read off the information like a visual printout," explained Mikel, actually scanning McCoy's memories as he spoke. For a beginner it was a very good attempt to exclude all the irrelevant material. Mikel attributed it to a scientific medical training.

"That's better. Thank you, Doctor, I'm building up a definite picture... Are these the Captain's records?" Mikel asked as Nurse Chapel deposited a box on the desk.

"Thank you, Nurse," said McCoy absently, selecting a reel and slotting it into the machine. He found the precise place and indicated the screen.

"The Captain's encephalogram."

"Thank you. May I make Sickbay my base?" Mikel asked, and added telepathically, *Go and tell Mr. Scott I'm progressing, Shonni - and call Uncle Ivor to send Frey over in an hour.*

The passage seemed to stretch endlessly ahead, but he had become accustomed to the half light. Enough to see where he was putting his feet and to be certain that the tunnel had been manufactured, not formed naturally. His head hurt, his feet were unsteady but he continued driving himself onward into the unknown. The damp wall that was his guide curved to the right and suddenly there was a pinpoint of light ahead. A pinpoint that grew encouragingly as he plodded wearily forward. His ears caught the hum and chatter of machines. The noise was faint but familiar, teasing his mind with vague stirrings.

Thoughts that stayed elusive, hovering on the edges of memory.

He edged forward, instinct telling him to proceed with caution. Whoever had immured him in this prison would not look kindly on an escaping prisoner. The light grew stronger as he neared the tunnel entrance. For the first time he could see that he was indeed wearing uniform. Looking down at the rings of braid on his sleeve, a slight stirring of memory prompted his feeling of high rank. At least someone somewhere would have noticed his absence.

He leaned against the wall and cautiously peered into the lighted cavern beyond. He realised at once that the place was deserted, had been deserted for a long time. Cobwebs and dust hung over most of the machines, even those whose lights and chatter proved they were still active. Whoever operated them had long since departed. Which left him with a problem. How had he got there? His head throbbed and he found it difficult to concentrate, but gradually a theory formed. Perhaps he had been caught in a trap set by those who wished to guard these machines against their return.

Hesitantly he stepped nearer one of the machines, hoping that something about them might strike his reluctant memory. Green and red lights flickered across the screen. They were only so many pretty patterns, although he was sure he must know their purpose. He crossed the room slowly, not daring to touch anything. Fearing to make things worse. He reached the tunnel at the other side and rested his back against the wall, steeling himself for the journey ahead. Hoping that the tunnel did not lead to another dungeon. Somewhere there must be a way out, the former inhabitants could not have disappeared into thin air. His speculations died unspoken as he caught sight of a movement at the other side of the cavern. Rumbling past the machines, limped a cylinder on wheels. It was obviously only working on half power, but one look was enough. He couldn't remember why but he knew he was in danger. Instinctively he slid into the cool darkness of the passage and stood motionless, unable to find the strength to run.

There was a flash, then a huge hole appeared in the opposite wall, showering him and the passage with bits of rock and dust. Somehow he managed to stay upright, a flash of memory warning him that any sound or movement would alert the machine. For what seemed hours he leaned against the wall, scarcely daring to breathe, until he heard the welcome rumble of wheels receding into the distance. The guardian of the machines was satisfied that the intruder had been eliminated. Gathering together his tired limbs he staggered into the welcoming darkness. One thing was certain, this was no time to pit his new ignorance against machines.

The pool was brown. Possibly stagnant but still water. Water that he needed badly. Time meant nothing in these underground caverns but he knew that at least one day had passed, perhaps longer, for he had slept fitfully for a considerable period. He felt stronger after his sleep but now his mouth and throat were constricted, reaching the stage where he had been thinking about food and drink to the exclusion of all else. If the water was bad, he would possibly die. Without water he would die. Life itself was not a pleasant prospect either - not knowing who, or where or why. On balance death seemed preferable, or at least not so much of a deterrent for him not to gamble. He drank sparingly and then tried to wash the cut on his head. Judging from his bloodstained shirt, the only result was that he had started the bleeding again.

He had become so used to the half light in these tunnels, a kind of glow given off from the fungi on the walls, that it wasn't until he turned the next corner that he discovered what he thought imagination was reality. Daylight. Above him was a patch of blue sky - in front a wall of fallen stone. At some time since the inhabitants had left, the roof had fallen in. A difficult climb for a fit man, a veritable unscalable wall for an invalid. He slowly sat down and rested his aching head against the warm rock, looking up at the friendly sky. Was it a case of out of the frying pan into the fire? Perhaps his

enemies lived outside? If he escaped and was recaptured, would they only put him back inside the dungeon? Surely he wouldn't have come here alone, out there could be his friends. A fleeting image of faces refused to stay in his conscious memory, but reassured him that someone would be worried about his disappearance.

"Whatever's up there couldn't be any worse," he said aloud and began climbing. Inch by inch he pulled himself upwards. Upwards to the beckoning sky. Time after time he was forced to halt spreadeagled against the cliff, clinging by his fingers and toes, whilst his head throbbed and the chasm spun round in darkness and flashing lights. Upwards, ever upwards to the welcoming blue. His bleeding hand reached out for a firm hold, his foot slipped from the outcrop. Frantically snatching at stones, he began to fall backwards. Slithering, sliding down into darkness.

"Bring the stretcher, Doctor," said Shonni, leaping up from his chair and rushing for the door. Dr. McCoy picked up his medical kit, yelled for two orderlies and followed the Welshman. Knowing nothing but that Jim must have been found.

"Where is he?" he demanded as he caught up with Shonni in the transporter room.

"Somewhere on the surface. By some strange chance he's found a place where the forcefield has broken. Frey's giving me the co-ordinates," he explained, sweeping past the ensign on duty to set the controls. "Mik was too late to prevent him falling but he's holding on to him. I'm glad you set up the theatre for surgery... That's it. Got him!"

The sparkles had barely settled before McCoy was on the platform beside Kirk, shouting for his orderlies and anxiously running the tricorder over the crumpled body.

"I'm surprised he's still alive," he said slowly as Shonni joined him. "Help me lift him."

"Until you've operated he is clinically dead. Mikel is keeping his heart beating and his brain alive. We must hurry, they can't continue indefinitely," said Shonni, knowing that his brothers were already tired from the long search and keeping contact with Mr. Spock.

"I may be only a country G.P., but I'm not entirely stupid," growled McCoy. "I know even a telepath gets tired... Go and tell Scotty that the Captain's in surgery."

Shonni smiled at the doctor's retreating back, receiving the full benefit of the wave of mixed anxiety and relief.

"Sorry, David, it was an emergency," he said to the ensign. "I suppose I'd better find Mr. Scott."

"I just don't understand it. There's nothing wrong with his brain, but he still can't remember anything," said McCoy, burying his face in his hands. His office was full of the people who had haunted it for the past few days.

"I can explain that," said Mikel. "There's a machine that wipes out all the memories of the captives but it's malfunctioning. It merely drove his memory deep into his subconscious."

"What do we do?" asked Scotty, who had spent more time in Sickbay than on the Bridge, giving Sulu a rare chance of occupying the command chair.

"Wait. Spock isn't fit enough to try the mindmeld. He says he is, but I'm not letting him try." McCoy sounded more like himself.

"We canna wait much longer. Starfleet wull no' be put off by our delaying

tactics. They'll ground Jim if they ken the truth," warned Scotty.

"In that case, perhaps we could help," said Bhenn Marronen slowly. "For your Captain's sake it would have been better if Spock rebuilt his memories - but I think we've all proved to him that he is still unfit. While we have the highest telepathic ratings, we've never had much contact with Humans - only Ivor and Siön. My wife Silvie was once a gifted mind healer, but she preferred to wander with the Bethania. She asks me to offer her talents."

"We would all be very grateful if she could restore his memory," said McCoy slowly, seeing clearly the puzzled look on Jim's face as he talked to Spock and Nurse Chapel.

"Bring Captain Kirk across to the Bethania this afternoon. My wife lost the use of her legs in an accident, so I'm afraid you'll have to come to us. Perhaps you would allow Siön to come too, Silvie would like to see him before we leave."

"That reminds me, where is Shonni? Mr. Mendoza said ye sent him off duty," said Scotty, looking at McCoy.

"In his place, I'm sure I would have given in long ago. I gave him a sedative and sent him to bed."

"That didn't do much good," commented Mikel. "I can tell you exactly where he is. As far away from people worrying about Jim Kirk as he can get. In this case, the herbarium. Armed with his clarinet and the history of Rugby Union Football."

"Poor Siön, we keep forgetting that he can't shut out emotion. Leave him there, Doctor - unless the crew's allergic to the clarinet! Come on, boys, Ivor will be needing help." Bhenn Marronen gathered up his sons and swept them out of the office, leaving McCoy and Scotty with a faint sense of loss.

Mikel followed the melody of Mozart's clarinet *concerto* and found his foster brother propped against the wall, surrounded by chrysanthemums.

"I've been sent to fetch you. Mother's about to restore your captain's memory and Uncle Ivor wants you to look at something in the engine room," he said aloud into the sudden silence.

"You don't have to speak aloud, it's not words that make my head hurt," said Shonni with a sudden smile, then added hurriedly, "No, don't blanket me please - I must get used to it."

"Has it been getting worse since you've been on the Enterprise?"

"Yes, but I put it down to being in an enclosed space with a lot of people. At the Academy I could get away by myself."

"And at home we've always shielded you to some extent. I wonder if your psionic powers are growing, in which case... I don't think Uncle Ivor needs you desperately. When we get on board, we'll find Frey and investigate."

"I can do without my mind being turned inside out by you two after the week I've had," retorted Shonni, locking the clarinet case and picking up his precious history of R.U.F.

"That wasn't quite what I had in mind. I'd like to see if we can teach you to raise a more effective mindblock than Welsh folksongs," explained Mikel falling in step beside Shonni as they re-entered the busy corridors and headed for the turbolift.

"Do you really think that I'm picking up more than before?"

"I haven't seen you for five years, so I'm hardly in a position to judge. I've been taught so much by Service telepaths that I can't even remember what the family's capable of. I was talking to your Mr. Spock, he seems to think

your range has increased since you've been on board."

"I suppose it wasn't difficult to monitor me. He wouldn't need mindtouch to read my face... Has Dr. McCoy taken the Captain across?" he added as the transporter room door opened in front of them.

"And Mr. Spock. Mother's having a last-minute panic."

"Sit down, Jim," said McCoy, propelling his patient into the nearest chair, then took time to look around with interest. Full of comfortable furniture, the walls covered with tapestries and embroidered hangings, the cabin was obviously the family's living quarters. Every available surface and most of the floor was littered with book tapes, handicrafts and half built electronic gadgets.

"This room gets worse," sighed Bhenn, sweeping a pile of clothes off a chair and sitting down. There was a startled screech and a black shape leaped for the floor, one raking paw narrowly missing Bhenn's hand.

"Blasted cat!"

"You're in his chair," reproved a soft voice from behind them. The visitors turned as Silvie Marronen wheeled herself across the obstacle course. Like the rest of her family her long black hair was fastened up in a complicated pattern, but instead of the serviceable coverall the lady of the ship wore a long full skirted dress, the colour matching her violet eyes.

"Do sit down, gentlemen, make yourselves at home," she said, expertly bringing her chair to rest by an unoccupied couch. Bhenn lifted her onto the cushions and pushed the wheelchair out of the way.

"I'll be in the engineroom, Ivor needs some help," he said striding purposefully for the door. Silvie smiled affectionately at his back, then held out her hand to Kirk.

"Jim, my name is Silvie. I can help you remember your past, if you will trust me. Do you remember anything about the Enterprise now that you have returned to her?"

"There are times when I think I am about to, but nothing. I know Spock and Bones are my friends, but that's just instinct. Even when they remind me, it's like listening to a story about three other people." Kirk's voice was uncertain and his hazel eyes unhappy as he tried to force recollection.

Silvie held his hand in hers and smiled encouragingly. "Don't try so hard. Sit comfortably and relax - that's it. Look into my eyes, forget this room and come view your memories with me."

"Don't look at her," whispered Spock urgently, catching McCoy's sleeve. "Look at the floor or you will sleep too."

McCoy dragged his unwilling eyes away from the golden flocks dancing in the violet eyes and stared at a leaping deer half carved from a block of honey coloured wood.

"He's asleep... I'm sorry, Doctor, I'd forgotten you didn't know. We've always used hypnosis for healing," explained Silvie, the gold gone from her clear eyes. "Would you keep monitoring your friend and tell me if you think he needs a rest. I've had so little practise with only Ivor and Shonni. If I need you, Mr. Spock, will you link with me to decide what is best for him."

"If you wish."

So began the strangest hour in McCoy's life. Silvie lying back on her cushions, eyes closed and her face still. Jim Kirk apparently fast asleep in his chair and Spock motionless at his side. In such a room it resembled more an after-dinner slumber than a vital medical operation. The black cat ambled

back into the room, cast an experienced yellow eye over the occupants and leaped unerringly for McCoy's knees. Two shuffles, a wriggle and a snort and he too was fast asleep, leaving McCoy feeling like the odd man out at a party.

Fortunately he was near enough to keep checking Kirk without disturbing the cat, but after that he had nothing to do but let his mind wander. Wander back through the years to his first days aboard the Enterprise, where Scotty was the only one to know about his unhappy marriage. Since then he, Jim and Spock had been through some tight places, but nothing like this strange encounter. He shut his eyes and revisited some of the planets and lived again through some of their worst moments - and all their celebrations, just as Kirk would be doing under Silvie's expert guidance.

"Doctor," Spock's voice broke into his reverie. "Silvie is requiring our help."

McCoy returned with a bump to the present and found their hostess watching him, a smile lurking in her eyes.

"Mr. Spock suggests you may be in a better position to judge. I am finding blocks in his memory, placed there by Mr. Spock. Do you think it necessary to keep them?"

McCoy looked enquiringly at Spock, who said in answer to the unspoken question, "Reena Kapec, Edith Keeler and Miramane."

"Oh yes, I remember. The blocks on Edith and Miramane were only to blunt his grief, weren't they?"

"That is so."

"It's so long ago. I think he could stand the knowledge of how much he loved them... What do you think, Silvie?"

"There is very little blocked, they belong to his past now - but Reena is a different matter. I would suggest we leave things as they are, Spock has created a masterpiece of false memory... It will take me another fifteen minutes if Jim is not too tired."

"He's fine," reported McCoy as his own memory conjured up an image of the lovely android who had destroyed herself when forced to choose between her maker and James Kirk. He also remembered Kirk's violent grief and how Spock had used the mindmeld to comfort him.

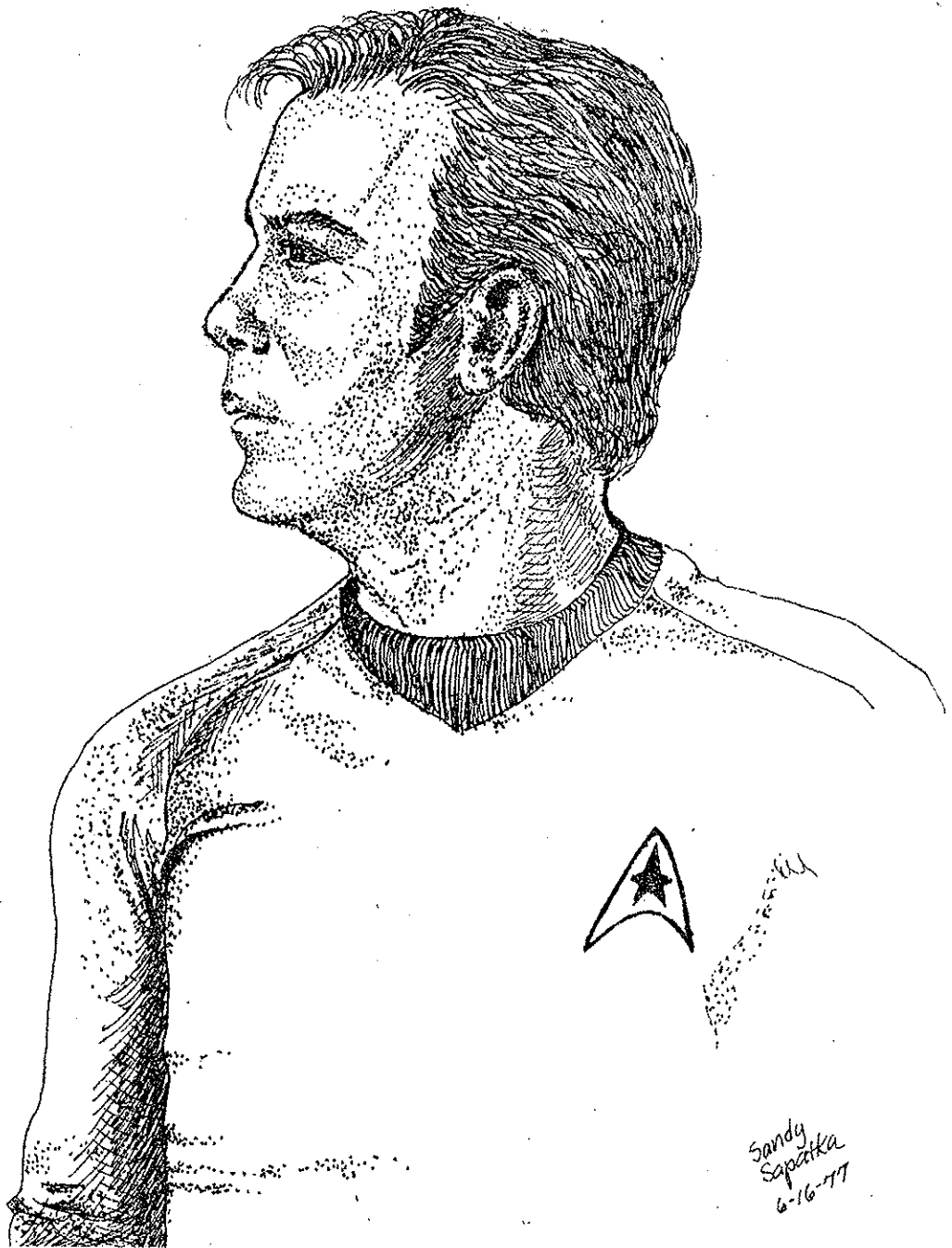
It seemed no time at all before Silvie sat up and smiled at her audience. "I've done all I can. He may be a little hazy about his childhood, but the rest is clear. If you'll push me as far as the engine room, Doctor, perhaps you'll help me persuade Ivor to let you lance his boil - he won't let me near him... Oh, I'm sorry about Taliesin. He thinks it's dinnertime, so he likes to keep an eye on me," she added as the cat opened his eyes and yowled plaintively.

With great delight, McCoy handed the cat to Spock before lifting Silvie into her chair. She retrieved the hungry animal from the relieved Vulcan, saying, "You'd better explain us to him, I didn't try to inform him of what happened on the Enterprise after he left."

"Which ought to be interesting seeing as you were out cold for twenty-four hours," added McCoy cheerfully as he pushed the wheelchair towards the door.

James Kirk opened his eyes, blinked and stared again at the feathered dragon on the wall. Where on earth was he? The last thing he remembered was talking to Lt. Kyle. Or was it? Gradually a picture built up of a damp cave...

"Jim?"



The quiet voice drew him back to the present. He turned his head to smile at the anxious dark eyes watching him.

"Where are we?"

"On board the *Bethania*. Do you remember Silvie Marronen?"

Silvie? Kirk shut his eyes and remembered. Remembered everything. "I lost my memory and she healed me," he said slowly. "You and Bones brought me here."

"The Doctor has gone to lance a boil," explained Spock, answering the question in his friend's eyes. "The *Bethania* belongs to Lt. Griffiths' father and his Ilsmynian partner. We have inadvertently crossed the border into the Empire and Confederation of Worlds. One of the Marronens was in contact with me when we were attacked. They came to look for you because the sensors could not penetrate the forcefield. Mikel Marronen found you as you fell."

"There seems to be a lot left out of that narrative," said Kirk with a teasing smile, but Spock merely raised a weary eyebrow and said,

"I suggest we retrieve the Doctor and Lt. Griffiths and return to the ship. Starfleet is waiting for your report, Mr. Scott has been covering up for your absence."

"Has Scotty been in command all this time? He'll be demented by now at being parted from his beloved engines. We're bound to get his 'I thought I was going to grow old in this chair' speech... Spock, you were hurt, I saw you fall."

"I am well again, but the Doctor will not discharge me from Sickbay."

"He usually has his reasons... That's the worst part, how could I forget you and Bones? We've been through so much together. You and I have shared so many memories, yet you still appeared a stranger."

Kirk was so distressed that Spock automatically reached out to comfort him. As the slender fingers touched his face, Kirk relaxed and accepted the mind meld. They were both startled by his heightened response. Spock immediately assured his friend that all was well, Silvie had sought and found the means of giving them both happiness. Their minds merged together, each seeking the peace and joy of unvoiced emotions. Spock toned down Kirk's remembrance of his memoryless days and showed him what had happened during that time. Reluctantly he broke the link, leaving Kirk relaxed but bereft. Neither said a word, there was nothing left to be said, they were still so close in comfortable silence.

Preceded by Taliesin, McCoy and Silvie re-entered the room - filling it with bursting energy and good humour. Kirk smiled sleepily as McCoy advanced on him, tricorder in hand.

"Don't fuss, Bones, I'm fine - just tired," he said, catching McCoy's hand.

"Time you were back in bed," retorted McCoy, sounding much more his usual self. He turned on Spock. "And as for you, you point-eared computer, you can stop cluttering up my sickbay and get back to work... Malingering again!"

Spock responded in kind but Kirk wasn't listening to the old, old argument. Instead he took Silvie's hand.

"I can't put into words what I feel. I don't think you can thank someone for your past... or for the gift you have given us," he added in a low voice under the energetic argement surrounding them.

"You've discovered that already? Vulcans are just beginning to extend themselves so more than that I cannot give you. Use my gift well, Jim and neither of you need be alone again... Where's that cat gone? Dinner, Tally? ... May we keep Shonni a little longer?"

"We'll send for him just before we leave. Keep him till then, it's the least I can do in return."

"I've never been so glad to see the back of any planet," said Kirk, leaning back comfortably in the command chair. "At least Ivor has called in the Imperial Navy to deal with those machines. I'd hate anyone else to get caught in that trap. It ought to keep their archaeologists happy for years."

"Why didn't the Bethania notice that forcefield when they were here last?" demanded McCoy, glowering at the planet's image on the screen.

"I don't suppose they came round this side, the main cities are on the other side. The Bethania is trading, not surveying."

"What did Silvie say - 'Go with love'?" asked McCoy softly to Kirk as Berrianus 4 receded into the distance. "And she meant it... I think that's one of the nicest things anyone's said to us. We're going to miss them, Jim."

"Especially you and Scotty. You must have realised they were helping you

all the time I was missing."

"I didn't at the time until Shonni told me. I just thought morale was good, it never occurred to me that all the Marronens were radiating confidence and optimism. Do you think we'll see them again?"

"I hope so. We're in this quadrant for another year, but Ivor Griffiths reminds me of the early seamen. He goes where the breeze takes him, so who knows... Mr. Sulu, set a course for Starbase 11. Starfleet wants us to prove we are all still in one piece."

BEGINNINGS by Gillian Catchpole

Along the line,
With formal introductions it now begins.
A row of uniforms
Topped with watchful eyes,
Studying me with an experience
Hard won and long remembered;
On that kind of judgement I must rely.
They in no doubt
That I am doing much the same,
Assessing my officers,
On the men I must depend;
To be considered later on.

An inspection of quarters to satisfy Spock
And I am alone.
An empty quiet.
The formalities over I sigh with relief,
Loosen my collar, then flop on the bed.
This room, I reflect, says nothing of me,
For I am the stranger
And in saying that I feel lost and uncertain,
For now it begins, my first command.

Have I the awareness, the strength to lead?
I must believe and continue to believe
That yes, I have,
For confidence inspires respect.
Whatever doubts remain
Must of necessity be mine alone.

And what of Spock,
Yes, what about Spock?
Record packed with facts,
Dependable in a crisis,
Without question an asset to the ship.
Makes interesting reading,
But there's something missing.
An empty gap...
A gap I haven't adequate understanding to fill.
Except for vague mentions of logic
Nothing on the Vulcan way of life.
And what do I know of Vulcans?
Little, except stories well worn and best forgot.
Admitted, a pathetic foundation for understanding
My second-in-command.
But in the beginning everything remains unknown --
And everyone.

SONG by Kathleen Glancy

(with apologies to the shade of Noel Coward)

- Kirk & Spock
(together) Starfleet's not like the Indian Army
Of the old British Empire. But strange
As it seems, and indeed it seems barny
There are some things that just never change.
- Kirk Whatever became of young Slickers?
He chased women much more than I do.
He'd endeavour to rip off their - garments
On a minute's acquaintance, or two.
I recall, as I shall for the rest of my life
At our passing-out dance, how before you'd say knife
He assaulted five girls, one an Admiral's wife
- I wonder what happened to him?
- Spock Captain, do you remember old Smithers?
His one interest was horses, I think.
He would chatter of 'hands', 'hooves' and 'withers'
Till he drove all about him to drink.
And when given command of the cruiser 'Altair'
How his choice of First Officer made people stare
Seeing that she was Bessie (his favourite mare)
- I wonder what happened to him?
- Kirk Spock, did you ever meet little Percy?
Such a gay and a delicate lad.
Faced with Klingons, he used to scream 'Mercy!
All this fighting is nasty and bad!'
But it wasn't a Klingon of any degree
Who provided him with sev'ral scars - no siree -
Well, he should have known better than try to kiss me
- I wonder what happened to him?
- Spock Did you ever encounter MacPherson?
He liked bagpipes and whisky and Burns,
And was, as Humans go, a nice person -
But he used to take rather odd turns.
For upon any planet with very hot sun
To dance nude in the street was his notion of fun
And he got sent to Vulcan, where such things aren't done
- I wonder what happened to him?
- Kirk I recall how poor Godfrey Carruthers
- Very upper-class English was he -
Went to Eton, like all of his brothers,
Came to Starfleet, expecting to be
Held in awe by his mates, but alas the poor fool
Was assigned to a battleship under the rule
Of First Officer Murphy and Captain O'Toole
- I wonder what happened to him?
- Spock Did you meet the Arcturian, Ladli,
Who was hated, I know, by the staff
Of the Starfleet Academy madly
- Human pupils, though, tended to laugh - ?
You'll remember the staff, as a matter of form
Liked to keep all the girls in a separate dorm.
To change sex every week is Arcturian norm
- I wonder what happened to - ???

Kirk Do you know what became of John Buncle?
Or 'Old Dimwit' he used to be called.

Spock I know Admiral Bloggs was his uncle
So although his instructors, appalled
At his shocking stupidity, frequently planned
To expel him from our quite select little band
I should think that by now he's in Starfleet Command

Both - I'm sure that's what happened to him!

JUST A DREAM? by Ann Neilson

Is it really so impossible?
to have a world of beauty and peace,
where a man is accepted for what he is,
regardless of his colour or creed,
and to put aside hatred and greed.
Can the sum total of mankind
then together, reach out for greater things.
Well, is it really so improbable?

COMBAT by Jayne Turner

I never thought the day would come
When they would stand - one against the other.
If somebody had said,
'Put not your trust in him'
I would have laughed,
Secure in the knowledge of his loyalty.
But not today.
For here we stand
Within this ancient place
Of ageless tradition and loyalty of a different kind.
Where tinkling bells and wind blown chimes
Proclaim their doom.
I did not really understand
How it came to be so.
We came only as friends
Not to take part,
But then she challenged - it was her right.
And as she chose her champion
I could not watch.
There is no other way,
And I do not wish that he should die
As die he will.
Unless.....

Relax, it's only a stabiliser
To compensate for temperature and atmosphere.
It's nearly over - as locked within each other's arms
He stumbled - then fell.
Kroykah!!!!
He will not rise again.
It's finished - he's dead.

TWISTED IMAGE by Jean Barron

"Keep away from me! Don't touch me!"

Spoken by any man, these words might have caused a ripple of surprise - hurled as they were by the Captain of the Enterprise at his First Officer, the effect on the crew members present was one of utter amazement.

Kirk, Spock and Yeoman Kwei had just materialised in the main transporter room when the Captain, swaying from exhaustion, snarled this warning at Spock who had turned to assist him.

In the shocked silence that followed, every vestige of colour drained from the Vulcan's face but he maintained a rigid control over his features as he stepped down from the platform and walked with mechanical precision out of the room. Kirk watched stonily, then lurched forward and M'Benga was barely in time to catch him as he lost consciousness. Since the Yeoman promptly collapsed into the arms of a startled Chief Engineer, it was obvious that immediate explanations were out of the question.

James Kirk had been away from the ship only a matter of hours when disaster struck in the crowded transporter room. Seconds earlier, Lt. Kyle had responded to the bleep of the intercom.

"Mr. Kyle, please advise me when Dr. McCoy and his party are ready to transport down."

"They're standing by now, Mr. Spock."

"Very well, Mr. Kyle. You will await my order before proceeding."

Kyle, who had been standing almost at attention despite the fact the First Officer was speaking from the Bridge, acknowledged the instruction and turned to McCoy.

"Sorry, Doctor.. I don't know how much longer this is going to take."

McCoy scowled. He had been dragged away from a piece of research that had reached a critical stage and, as a result, was feeling far from pleased with the situation. His indignant protests on first being presented with his orders had been met with a cool indifference that had infuriated him.

"Damn it, Spock, can't you send M'Benga? I've got more than enough to cope with at the moment."

"The Captain has specifically requested that you join him, Doctor. Are you asking me to countermand his orders?"

Angry blue eyes had glared into cold, dark ones for an instant, then McCoy had turned on his heel, muttering, "All right, all right."

Now, some thirty minutes later, his temper had not improved and he leaned forward to reactivate the intercom.

"Transporter room to Bridge. Spock, would you mind telling me what we're waiting for?"

Spock's tone was infinitely patient. "You are waiting for my signal, Doctor... and I," he added, neatly anticipating McCoy's next question, "am waiting for the Captain's order. He is at present still engaged with the Haderan Consul and will advise me when negotiations have been concluded."

McCoy's heated reply was destined never to be heard for, without warning, the world exploded in his face in a blast of orange-white flame and blackness reached out to engulf him. He had no idea how long he had been unconscious but, when he came to, he was lying on his back in complete darkness and coughing on acrid, suffocating smoke. There were groans of pain all around

him and he thought he heard Scotty's voice but his ears were still ringing from the shock of the explosion and he couldn't be sure. Someone knelt down beside him and put an arm beneath his shoulders, raising him slightly.

"Doctor?"

McCoy would have suffered torture rather than admit it but Spock's presence immediately dispelled the confusion in his mind and the note of concern in the Vulcan's voice was ridiculously comforting.

"Spock! What happened?"

"There was an explosion, Doctor. I am taking you into the corridor."

McCoy protested feebly as Spock lifted him without apparent effort and began to thread his way towards the door. "What about the others?"

"They are being attended to, Doctor. I suggest you save your strength to cope with your own injuries."

Up to that moment, McCoy had been conscious only of a numbness in his chest and arms. Now needlepoints of pain were beginning to pierce the numbness and, irritated by the increasing discomfort, he snapped, "Couldn't you at least get some emergency lighting on, Spock?"

By this time they were in the corridor where the air was comparatively smoke-free and Spock lowered him onto a mobile stretcher before replying quietly, "The lights are on, Doctor."

Stunned into silence, McCoy lay still in his own dark world as the trolley was pushed swiftly along the corridor.

Their talks having come to a conclusion, Consul Svoura, a cadaverous looking man with unexpectedly gentle eyes and a shock of iron-grey hair, rose and bowed courteously to the Captain of the Enterprise.

"I thank you for your patience, Captain Kirk. I am sure your people and mine will be able to come to an amicable settlement."

"I'm sure we will, Consul. In the meantime, I shall be happy to have my Chief Medical Officer, Dr. McCoy, give what assistance he can with your medical problems."

Svoura nodded gravely. "It is unfortunate that my predecessors were concerned more with the technical aspects of science rather than in the field of medicine. The high mortality rate on our planet is a source of great shame to me and to my Council."

"The Federation will do its best to help you change that situation, Consul. If you'll excuse me, it's time I contacted my ship."

Kirk turned to leave and almost fell over the young woman standing immediately behind him.

"Yeoman," he said with a sigh, "I realise this is your first detail, and that you're nervous - but will you please not stand so close. You're here to record these talks, not as my bodyguard."

The Yeoman's chin went up. "I realise that, sir. I just wanted to be sure I was at hand if you needed me."

"I appreciate that, Yeoman, but will you try not to be... quite so handy."

"Yes, sir."

Kirk permitted himself a faint smile as he strode out of the council chamber and into the pale sunlight, the Yeoman following at a distance. Being James T. Kirk, he was not unaware of the fact that Mitsu Kwei was an

extremely attractive addition to his crew but for the moment there were other, more important matters on his mind. He was reaching for his communicator when it beeped.

"Kirk here."

Spock's voice was calm and precise. "Captain, there has been an explosion in the main transporter room. The transporter system will be inoperable for an undefined period. We have eight casualties including Dr. McCoy."

"Bones? How bad is he?"

"Dr. McCoy was standing by the console when the explosion occurred. He was blinded."

"Blinded?" Kirk's voice was raw with shock.

"A temporary condition," Spock said quickly. "Dr. M'Benga assures me that the Doctor is suffering from 'flash blindness'. Two other crewmen were similarly affected and their sight is already returning."

"Thank God for that!"

"He is also suffering from first and second degree burns to his upper limbs and body. These are responding to treatment."

"See that he follows M'Benga's orders, Spock."

"I shall endeavour to do so, Captain although he is a difficult patient."

Kirk smiled despite his concern. "I'm sure you'll be able to handle him, Spock. Now - about the explosion - what caused it?"

"I have been unable to evaluate the evidence as yet, Captain. Mr. Scott is working on the repairs with a full emergency team."

"All right, Spock. I'll leave it in your hands. In the meantime, Consul Svoura has suggested that I make an inspection of the mines to round out my report to the Federation. It shouldn't take more than two hours and, if the transporter isn't operating by then, you can send the shuttle for me. I'll keep in touch. Kirk out."

Spock released the communication button, trying at the same time to ignore the vague feeling of apprehension that was insinuating itself into his mind. Fear was an emotion and, as such, foreign to Vulcans, but after the unexplained malfunction on the transporter system, his Human half was uneasy about the Captain's protracted stay on Quimpas IV.

His slender fingers moved to another button.

"Transporter room - Scott here."

"Mr. Scott, I would appreciate a progress report."

"We're working all out down here, Mr. Spock, but it'll be a good five hours or more before we have the main system working again. Some of the components are fused together just as if they'd been welded."

"Thank you, Mr. Scott. Please advise me if you are able to improve on the estimated time for repairs. Spock out."

The First Officer unfolded his lean body from the command chair and returned to his library computer station, pondering again on the information that the computer had supplied at his request.

It seemed that, immediately prior to the malfunction, the ship's sensors had recorded a fiercely concentrated beam of energy directed at the Enterprise from an isolated spot on the planet's surface. Spock had been unable to convey this information to the Captain since he would almost certainly have been overheard. Until he could establish who controlled the energy beam, he was not prepared to jeopardise Kirk's safety by revealing these facts. After an hour

spent checking and re-checking data through the computer, he turned to Sulu.

"Take the con, Mr. Sulu. I will be in sickbay. Please relay all messages to me there."

Propped up on pillows, McCoy was feeling rather like an ancient Egyptian mummy in his cocoon of bandages. There were gauze pads over his eyes and he felt particularly helpless knowing that M'Benga was having to cope with a number of other casualties; the fact that most of these were minor burns did nothing to alleviate his frustration.

Footsteps passed his bed but, before he could speak, they had faded away as had many others during the past hour and he resorted to muttering a few non-medical terms under his breath.

"Fascinating," observed a familiar voice. "A second language, Doctor?"

"Spock! Where have you been? What's happening, and where's Jim?"

"I have been on the bridge, Doctor, endeavouring to establish the cause of the explosion. Mr. Scott is effecting repairs and the Captain is being taken on a conducted tour of the mines on Quimpas IV."

"Why isn't he here? You could have sent the shuttle down."

"The Captain realises there is little he can do here that is not already being done and the negotiations for the Haderan mining rights have to be handled with a certain amount of diplomacy."

McCoy grunted his acceptance of the explanation and raised a bandaged hand to his eyes.

"Doctor, I believe Dr. M'Benga has advised you to keep your eyes covered for a further two hours."

"Yes, yes, I know!" McCoy's tone softened slightly. "I suppose it's no good my thanking you for what you did?"

"I did what... "

"... anyone else would have done in your place!" finished McCoy irritably.

"Exactly, Doctor. If you insist on showing your gratitude, however, you could do so by obeying Dr. M'Benga's orders."

McCoy's wandering hand dropped to his side once more.

"It would be a pity if anything were to happen to those beautiful blue eyes," said a dulcet voice from the foot of the bed.

The Doctor's ill-humour vanished at once and he beamed in the direction of the speaker. "Who said that?"

Spock raised an enquiring eyebrow at the nurse who had spoken but she blushed and shook her head before retreating.

"It would seem that your admirer wishes to remain anonymous, Doctor."

"Spock! You must know... "

"Bridge to Mr. Spock! Bridge to Mr. Spock!"

"Spock here."

"Mr. Spock, I have the Captain for you."

Kirk's voice was relaxed and apparently unconcerned but Spock immediately recognised an underlying note of warning in his words.

"Mr. Spock, I am nearing the end of my inspection. Perhaps you would be kind enough to advise Consul Svoura accordingly and tell him that I appreciate

the guidance provided by his assistant, Venn - and his friends... " At this point, the transmission was abruptly terminated.

"Captain! Captain!"

Lt. Uhura broke in. "I'm sorry, Mr. Spock. I am no longer receiving the Captain's signal."

"Did you obtain a fix on the source of the signal, Lieutenant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have Mr. Sulu pinpoint the exact spot on the planet's surface and advise me. I will be in the shuttlecraft bay."

McCoy had listened in silence to this exchange and was suddenly aware of an unusual hesitancy in Spock's movements. "What's the matter, Spock?"

"I should stay aboard the ship and send someone else."

"You think that you're being influenced by the fact that it's Jim out there?"

Spock did not reply - there was no need.

"Would you go if it were Scotty - or me?"

McCoy felt a light touch on his bandaged hand, then he was alone and struggling to cope with his own growing sense of inadequacy.

Svoura had received Kirk's news with concern, offering the services of his own technicians but Kirk politely declined the offer, pointing out that he had absolute confidence in his Chief Engineer.

"Will you make your inspection of the mines as arranged?"

"Yes, of course. My First Officer has the situation well in hand."

"Very well, Captain. I regret that my present duties make it impossible for me to accompany you but I will arrange an escort."

Kirk and the Yeoman had been waiting outside the council chamber for some little time before their guide, a thin young man, presented himself. "I am Venn."

He smiled and Kirk took an instant dislike to him for the smile did not reach the pale grey eyes but faded as though the effort to maintain it was too great.

"Will we be taking a hover-car?" asked Kirk, indicating the sleek, silver shapes of the Haderan vehicles nearby.

"That will not be necessary, Captain Kirk. The mines are quite close by. Please follow me."

A tiny, warning light flickered in Kirk's mind when the terrain across which Venn led them became rock-strewn and scarred with fissures making progress difficult, to say the least. The planet's sun was at its zenith and the mining area seemed further away than Kirk had supposed...

His growing suspicions were confirmed when the guide brought them at last, not to the mines, but to a formidable miniature fortress of grey stone.

"What is this place?" he demanded.

Venn did not reply. He was standing apart from them, looking extremely nervous and staring about him as if he expected company. Kirk reached instinctively for his phaser but froze as a harsh voice spoke from behind him.

"Please do nothing foolish, Captain, or I shall be obliged to destroy your young friend."

With his hands at his sides, Kirk turned slowly to stare into the swarthy, bearded face of a Klingon lieutenant!

The Klingon bowed mockingly but the strange-looking weapon in his hand did not waver, "How kind of you to walk into my trap so willingly, Captain. Let me introduce myself - I am Kahl."

"What do you want with me?" snapped Kirk, ignoring the introduction.

"Why, Captain, have you forgotten your manners? Is this the famous Captain Kirk, revered among his brother Starfleet officers?"

"I repeat - what do you hope to gain by this?"

The smile became wolfish. "First of all, Captain, I want you to contact your ship to assure them that all is well. You will make no attempt to alert your crew - or your companion will suffer the consequences."

Yeoman Kwei returned the Klingon's leer with a cool stare but, when he looked away, she took a step closer to Kirk who gave her a reassuring smile before reaching for his communicator.

"Remember, Captain Kirk, you are merely checking in."

Kirk flipped open the communicator. "Kirk to Enterprise. Come in Enterprise."

Within seconds, Uhura had put him through to Spock and, adopting a casual tone, he began to speak, but Kahl was not deceived and he struck the communicator from Kirk's hand, crushing it beneath the heel of his boot. He raised the pistol which was unlike any Klingon weapon that Kirk had ever seen, and pointed it at the Yeoman's head.

"I should kill her now... but I'm not yet ready to give you a demonstration of my new toy. Tell me, Captain, how is your crew coping with the emergency? Have they discovered what caused it?"

"If they haven't, they soon will."

"I doubt that, Captain." Kahl waved a hand in the direction of the fortress. "Within that building lies a most devastating weapon. It can cut through your shields as easily as a knife penetrating flesh, pierce the outer shell of a ship and destroy any target that I choose, without damaging the hull. Impossible? I could immobilise the Enterprise in a split second."

Kirk forced himself to smile derisively although he had seldom felt less amused. Kahl knew a little too much about the transporter malfunction.

"You find the thought entertaining, Captain? Perhaps you would care for a demonstration?"

"From that hand weapon?" taunted Kirk.

"This, my dear Captain, is merely a prototype possessing only a fraction of the destructive power of its off-spring."

Again the pistol was raised but this time it was aimed with infinite care at Kirk's head.

"Kahl, no!" Venn, who had remained cravenly silent until this moment, ran forward. "Remember, Kahl, if we are to succeed... "

The Klingon hesitated, then altered his aim slightly. "I have not forgotten, Venn, but I cannot allow the Captain's disbelief to continue."

His finger moved almost imperceptibly and something slammed into Kirk's left upper arm with such a colossal impact he was hurled several metres through the air before landing on his back in the dust. Dazed and winded, he stared in blank disbelief at the gleaming shards of bone that protruded through the ripped sleeve of his uniform. He was vaguely aware of a voice raised in

protest, then mercifully he passed out.

The shuttlecraft had barely cleared the hangar and begun its descent when Sulu passed on the co-ordinates of the Captain's last known position. He was astute enough to avoid pointing out that this location was not where the ship's sensors had placed the Haderan mines; he knew this would be immediately apparent to the First Officer.

Spock issued further orders, the import of which he had considered carefully before coming to a decision.

"Acknowledged, Mr. Spock. Good lu... !"

"Thank you, Mr. Sulu," came the dry reply. "Spock out."

At that same instant, an invisible force struck the Vulcan a massive blow on the left arm and threw him bodily from his chair into painful contact with the starboard instrument panel. He resumed his place with his usual economy of movement but not before the shuttle had bucked violently and screamed into a steep climb.

Ignoring the questions being yelled through the intercom, he fought the wildly gyrating controls for a tense thirty seconds before the craft swung back on course.

"Enterprise to shuttle! Mr. Spock!"

"Spock here."

"What happened, Mr. Spock?"

"Everything is under control, Mr. Sulu. There is no cause for alarm."

On the Enterprise bridge, the crew members who had seen the crazy antics of the shuttle on the monitor screen exchanged bewildered glances and went reluctantly back to their duties.

Spock made several minute adjustments to his instruments, automatically registering the information supplied by various dials and gauges, but his mind was far from his present surroundings. The vague feeling of presentiment that had been with him since the explosion on the transporter console had intensified and he knew, beyond a doubt, that the violence he had just experienced was directly connected with the Captain. Had he been required to explain this conviction, he would have declined to do so for the feeling was so deeply embedded within him that even he dared not question it or examine it too closely. It was there, and he knew with heart-stopping certainty that Kirk was in danger - there was nothing more he needed to know.

With cold deliberation, he suppressed these thoughts and focussed the whole of his attention on the fast approaching planet visible in the forward observation window.

The landing spot he had chosen was six kilometres from the co-ordinates of the Captain's last signal, a distance which should allow him to reconnoitre the area before his presence was detected. The shuttle touched down lightly amongst rocks and shrubs and he reported his position to a patently relieved Sulu before shutting down the power and emerging from the vessel into the fading light.

Glancing at his tricorder, he struck out in the direction indicated. The temperature was dropping rapidly but soon he was travelling too swiftly to be aware of the cold, moving cat-like across the rough, inhospitable countryside. Almost two hours had passed when he came at last to a sharp rise beyond which he could hear the murmur of voices. Wriggling on his belly to the top of the rise, he raised his head cautiously, then sank back. In that moment, he had seen a grey stone fortification with few windows and a heavy, metal-studded

door. But it was the men standing outside the door that caught his attention - four Klingon troopers engaged in desultory conversation while, a short distance away, two more troopers stood at attention before an officer.

Back at the foot of the slope, Spock removed one of two communicators from his belt and hid it in a small hollow beneath a rock. It was now quite dark but, far from taking advantage of the concealment it offered, he scrambled up the slope once more, miniature avalanches of stones cascading from under his booted feet, and stumbled with extraordinary clumsiness down the other side - and into the arms of the Klingons.

Kahl, buoyed up by his moment of triumph, did not pause to consider his massive good fortune in finding a second Starfleet officer so conveniently within his grasp. Instead, with great good humour, he prodded Spock along the stone passageway towards the barred door at the end where a Klingon stood on guard. At Kahl's command, the jailer opened the door and Spock was thrust unceremoniously into the cell.

"Svoura will be pleased to know we have captured two officers from the Enterprise. He was prepared to settle for one."

Spock had no need to wait for his eyes to grow accustomed to the semi-darkness but he waited, nevertheless, until the door was slammed shut behind him before walking slowly forward. Beneath a tiny window set high in the opposite wall, he could see two figures, one lying supine on a metal-framed cot, the other crouched beside it.

"Yeoman."

Mitsu had watched his approach with incredulous eyes but, at the sound of his voice, she rose quickly. "Mr. Spock! How did you get here?"

"Irrelevant, Yeoman, since I am here."

But his tone held no reprimand and, conscious that the attention given so fleetingly to her was now centred wholly on the figure behind her, she moved away.

Spock gazed down at his Captain, taking in the grey, perspiring face and shadowed eyes, the crudely bandaged arm strapped to his side, the torn, blood-stained shirt. He lay on a thin, hard mattress with no blanket to cover his shivering form, no pillow for the handsome head with its tousled, sweat-dampened hair.

The Vulcan had known deep within himself that the Captain was not dead but, finding him like this, his anger at those responsible threatened to overthrow his composure. Keeping his face hidden from the Yeoman, he fought to suppress this most damaging of Human emotions. Puzzled by his silence, Mitsu knew only that the blue-clad shoulders were uncompromisingly rigid and she restrained the impulse to go to him.

Kirk had been only too aware of the moment when he had been carelessly dropped onto the cot - the jarring of his shattered arm had almost wrung a scream from him. It was only the look of anticipation on the faces of his captors that had given him the strength to remain silent. Since then, however, he had alternated between bouts of pain-filled consciousness and dark periods when his fevered mind had conjured up a series of images, swirling, forming, dissolving inside his aching head - Svoura bowing politely and mouthing soundless apologies, the pale-eyed treacherous Venn, the delicate, oriental features of Yeoman Kwei staring horrified at the bloodstains on her uniform, and Kahl... Kahl towering over him as he lay sprawled on the ground, Kahl laughing as feeling returned to his paralysed arm and the pulsating agony began. Then, as the Klingon's evil face faded, another took its place, a grave face with dark, compassionate eyes from which he turned hopelessly, perversely denying himself the comfort it offered for fear reality would be too much to bear.

Now, barely conscious, he opened his eyes to stare at the figure standing



over him. In the meagre light from the window, it was difficult to see more than a featureless face and midnight black hair. Refusing to hope, he whispered through dry lips, "Spock?"

The answer came in an oddly strained voice. "I am here, Captain."

"What kept you?" came the faint gibe, a weak and useless attempt to hide the spark that flamed in his eyes and was answered by a fierce gleam in dark, alien eyes.

"I apologise for my tardiness, Captain," Spock replied, doing his part to ease the tension that quivered in the air between them. There were other words that needed to be said but these had, perforce, to remain unspoken since they were not alone.

Kirk began to smile as Spock sat on the edge of the cot, then his eyes suddenly widened. The pain that had subsided to a dull ache was now rising in dizzying waves, growing in intensity until he was forced to grit his teeth to hold back a groan. Unable to think coherently, he was filled with the desperate fear that Spock would discover the humiliating depths to which he had been sunk because of a little pain. He knew he had cried out when there had been only the Yeoman to hear him and had been vaguely aware of the single, helpless tear that had fallen on his cheek as she leaned over him. He clung grimly to one thought - must not let him touch me... if he touches me, he'll know!

Breathing deeply in an effort to control the pain, he sensed that Spock was about to lay a hand on him. "No!" he gasped. "Please... don't!"

"Captain, what happened?"

"Happened... ?" Kirk was rapidly sinking back into a state of delirium, the face that had become reality after countless fever-induced dreams now blurred before his eyes and, his resolution forgotten, he reached out a trembling hand.

"Help me, Spock, help me."

The feverishly bright eyes closed as Spock instinctively grasped the supplicating hand, totally unprepared for the violence of the pain that suddenly exploded inside him, striking every nerve with exquisite accuracy. His body stiffened involuntarily but gradually, as he deliberately shielded his mind from the agony being suffered by his friend, the rigidity went out of his muscles. Held in the grip of pain and delirium, the Captain was beyond his help for the moment and Spock had to keep his thoughts free to consider, dispassionately, what was to be done.

"Yeoman."

"Yes, sir."

"Your report, please."

Mitsu gave her report clearly and concisely, recounting the events that had led up to the appearance of Kahl, but she could not prevent a note of horror creeping into her voice as she described the moment when Kahl had fired the strange weapon at Kirk, smashing his arm and spattering her uniform with his blood.

"We were brought here and I was given a strip of cloth for the Captain's wound. Apart from that, he has had no medical attention, and no water."

"Neither have you," prompted Spock.

"No, sir. The Captain was cold. I tried to keep him warm... by lying beside him but... I was afraid I would hurt his arm."

"I am sure the Captain would have been grateful for your efforts had he been aware of them."

Mitsu blushed faintly, remembering how physical contact with the Captain's muscular body had affected her; she had been sharply aware of his disturbing masculinity even when he had been delirious and burning with fever. Spock understood the reason for her heightened colour and made no further comment. He went to the cell door.

"I wish to speak to your officer."

The Klingon guard scowled. "You have nothing to say that he would want to hear, Vulcan."

"That would surely be for Kahl to decide."

"Take care, Vulcan. Svoura has given no orders about keeping you alive."

The guard's last words were accompanied by a menacing gesture towards the disruptor gun worn at his side. Spock turned away as though intimidated but, in fact, he was deep in thought, and quite indifferent to the sneer on the Klingon's face. Beside the cot, he stripped his shirt off, folded it and placed it under Kirk's head.

"Mr. Spock! Your shoulder!"

Mitsu was staring at the ugly abrasion that extended from the Vulcan's shoulder down to his elbow.

"It is nothing - a slight accident in the shuttlecraft. You need not concern yourself, Yeoman."

"Yes, sir."

"I will need your help in removing these bandages. I wish to examine the injury."

Mitsu grew pale.

"I trust you are not about to faint, Yeoman." Spock's reproving tone was enough to bring Mitsu to her senses and she came closer.

"I had better deal with the bandages, sir. You may have to hold the Captain down."

She unbuckled the Captain's belt which she had used to immobilise his arm and began to unwind the strips of cloth. They had by now become caked with dried blood and were difficult to remove. However, by gentle persistence, she was able to complete the unpleasant task without disturbing the patient unduly.

Spock regarded the exposed wound with an outward calmness that would, for once, have won McCoy's approval for the strongest stomach would have quailed at the sight of torn flesh and splintered bone intermingled with scorched shreds of uniform. The Yeoman had turned her head as she laid aside the last bandage and stared white-faced at the floor while Spock tried to determine the extent of the damage to the arm. Even without McCoy's expert diagnosis he knew the outlook was far from encouraging. There were already signs of infection deep in the hideous wound, confirmed by Kirk's high temperature.

"Spock." Kirk's voice was barely audible but he appeared to be lucid.

"Captain?"

There was the tiniest glint of humour in the sick man's eyes as he noted the Vulcan's state of undress. "You're out of uniform, Mr. Spock."

"Guilty, Captain. I shall place myself on report when we are back aboard the Enterprise."

At the mention of his ship, Kirk frowned. "You have to get out of here, Spock... take the Yeoman..."

"You will leave with us, Captain."

"No... I can't go... you can see that, Spock," argued Kirk weakly.

"Then we will wait until you are able to move."

"And when will that be?" Spock did not reply. "Be honest, Spock. How bad is it?"

Spock met his eyes unflinchingly. "If you do not have proper medical attention within a few hours, there is only one possible course of action."

"No!" Kirk's harsh whisper coincided with a gasp of horror from Yeoman Kwei.

"If nothing is done, Captain, you will surely die."

"Spock, you've got to promise me you won't do it."

"I cannot promise, Captain." Spock's tone was implacable but there was a trapped look in his eyes.

"But I'd lose the Enterprise! You know I'd rather die!"

"I will not let you die." Spock ground out the words in a low, intense voice in which, at any other time, Kirk would have recognised the Vulcan's deep emotional stress but, in his present state, he was only aware that his career was being threatened. Helpless, he felt his surroundings drifting away again. His hand on Spock's naked shoulder was ice-cold yet his body still shook with uncontrollable rigors and his skin when Spock touched his forehead was frighteningly hot and dry.

Mitsu could only wonder at the gentleness of the man she had always thought of as cold and remote as he began to replace the blood-stained bandages. She thought she heard him advise the Captain to get some sleep, but did he really call him 'Jim'?

Spock returned to the door of the cell. "I would advise you to inform your officer that, unless my Captain is treated for his wound, he will be dead within twenty-four hours."

These words, spoken in a flat, expressionless voice, had an immediate effect on the guard, who stared at Kirk through the bars, demanding, "Is this a trick, Vulcan?"

"I do not play tricks. I suggest you bring Lt. Kahl here at once."

Mitsu was surprised when the guard left in a hurry. "Why should they care if one of us dies?"

"Not one of us, Yeoman - the Captain. He is apparently of some importance to them alive."

"I don't understand. If they want him alive why did Kahl injure him?"

"For emphasis, perhaps. They are obviously anxious that the Federation should not gain a foothold on Quimpas IV. The Captain's report on his experiences is no doubt meant to convince us that we are not wanted here."

"Then why did Svoura invite us in the first place?"

Spock declined to offer an opinion. He spent the next few minutes watching - without appearing to do so - the bloodless face of the man on the cot. When heavy footsteps sounded on the stone floor outside, he did not move but Mitsu was not made of such stern stuff. She ran to the door and stared into the gloomy passageway to see Kahl approaching with Venn and the guard in close attendance. It was glaringly apparent that the Lieutenant was not in a good temper.

"What is this nonsense, Vulcan? The Human is not dying!"

"No doubt you intended to inflict a simple, painful fracture but, as you can see, the result has been considerably worse."

Far from being conciliated by Spock's reasonable explanation, Kahl grew angrier. "Open the door!"

Held at bay by the guard, Spock was obliged to watch as Kahl tested Kirk's condition by the simple expedient of gripping his injured arm cruelly in his gloved fist. When this brought no response, he was satisfied that Kirk was deeply unconscious.

After a brief conversation outside the cell, he and Venn left together but the Haderan returned some time later with a pitcher of water, a drinking vessel and a small vial containing a colourless liquid. When he made to approach Kirk, Spock barred his path. Venn smiled thinly, poured a few drops of the liquid into the cup with a small measure of water and swallowed the mixture with a look of bravado that sat ill on his narrow features.

"Eight drops, twice each hour," he advised before scurrying away.

Satisfied that there could be no harm, at least, in giving Kirk the drug, Spock mixed the appropriate dose and carried it to the bedside. As he knelt and supported the Captain's head against his shoulder, Mitsu could not rid herself of the feeling that she ought not to be there watching. She didn't know why but the feeling persisted as Spock poured the medicine drop by drop between the dry lips. Afterwards, he moistened the Captain's face with a little of the water and eased his head back onto the bed.

During the next few hours he repeated this procedure several times but not once did he ask Mitsu to perform the task. In the end, she no longer thought it strange - it somehow seemed right that the handsome, alien officer should minister to the needs of the sick Human. She was certain that, had their roles been reversed, the Captain would have treated his First Officer with a similar deep regard. The thought warmed her and helped keep her mind off their present situation.

Imperceptibly at first, Kirk's condition began to improve, soon his raging temperature had dropped several degrees until his skin no longer burned the unsuspecting hand, his restless movements slowed and the exhausting fits of shivering stopped altogether. When he opened his eyes at last, Mitsu was beside him and he smiled at her. Then his gaze shifted to the door where Spock stood with his back toward them and she was astonished to see in his eyes an unmistakable look of fear and revulsion.

"Captain?" Her anxious voice drew Spock from his post where he had been observing the actions of the guard. He put out a hand to touch Kirk's forehead and froze when Kirk shrank from him.

"I am pleased to see you well, Captain," he said, his tone so stiff and formal that Mitsu could have wept, unable to understand what had happened to destroy the tenderness she had been privileged to witness.

"If you are able to stand, Captain, we should leave this place."

"I can stand," muttered Kirk ungraciously.

"Please remain where you are for the moment, sir, and close your eyes." With a whispered instruction to the Yeoman, Spock moved back to the door, standing to one side of it. He nodded and Mitsu jumped to her feet, screaming,

"He's dead, Mr. Spock! The Captain's dead!"

The startled guard flung open the door and rushed headlong in, realising too late that the Vulcan was behind him and was unable to avoid the paralysing touch that dropped him in an ungainly heap on the stone floor.

"Yeoman, you will help the Captain."

"Yes, sir."

Mitsu was obliged to put her arms right round Kirk in order to assist him to his feet where he stood, swaying, with his arm about her shoulders. Spock retrieved his shirt and donned it quickly before leading the way out of the cell.

Progress was slow for Kirk was still pitifully weak from shock and loss of blood and the Yeoman was barely able to keep him upright let alone moving forward. Spock said nothing and offered no assistance.

When they eventually reached the great studded door that led to freedom, Kirk slumped wearily against the wall, his new-found strength exhausted, and Mitsu could see that there was fresh blood seeping through the ragged bandages. Spock's face when he turned back to them was as pale as the Captain's.

"I have a communicator concealed not far from here. I will go on alone and contact the ship, then I shall return here."

The Captain was too close to collapse to understand but Mitsu nodded and took a firmer grip round his waist as he sagged forward.

Opening the door a few inches, Spock saw by the pale blue light of the Quimpas IV moon that the two guards had begun to stroll towards the outer corners of the building. He slipped silently through the gap, ran across the strip of flat ground and flung himself over the crest of the ridge just as the guards turned to retrace their footsteps.

The small metal box was still in its hiding place.

"Spock to Enterprise. Spock to Enterprise."

"Mr. Spock! Am I glad to hear your voice! Did you find the Captain and Yeoman Kwai?"

"Yes, Mr. Sulu, they are safe. If you can restrain your enthusiasm for a moment, I would appreciate a report."

Suitable admonished, Sulu adopted an official manner.

"The transporter is back in operation, sir. Mr. Scott is on duty in the transporter room. I sent the message to Consul Svoura as ordered and he is at present waiting with a fleet of hover cars manned by security forces, in your vicinity. Mr. Scott took the liberty of beaming one of our communicators down to him so that we could advise him when you are safe. You were right, sir - Svoura did not send Venn to escort the Captain. A search was made when they got our message and the real guide was found unconscious -- he'd been drugged. It seems that Venn is a member of a rebel group hoping to gain support from the Klingons by trading a new weapon."

"Thank you, Mr. Sulu. I cannot get back to the shuttlecraft since the Captain is in no state to travel. You will have to retrieve it later. When you have signalled the Consul, I shall rejoin the Captain. Mr. Scott should be prepared to beam up three on my signal. The Captain will require immediate medical attention. Spock out."

So it was that M'Benga was in the transporter room to witness the extraordinary scene enacted there before whisking the Captain into surgery. McCoy, now able to see as well as ever and comparatively free of bandages - there were still dressings on his chest and right arm - could not be persuaded to leave Kirk's treatment to M'Benga. His colleague sighed, in no way insulted, for it was indeed a rare occasion when anyone but the C.M.O. was allowed to treat any part of the Captain's person, but remained to watch as McCoy, with the aid of a bone laser, painstakingly repaired the shattered humerus, finally cleaning the gaping wound and closing it up. M'Benga was not even permitted to apply the dressing or to fit the light metal splint which would hold the arm immobile for the next ten days.

It was not until the Captain, still heavily anaesthetised, was wheeled into the isolation ward that McCoy was told the story of his behaviour toward Spock.

"Where is Spock?" he demanded, a knot of apprehension tying up his stomach muscles.

M'Benga shrugged. "Resting in his cabin, I suppose. He was like a ghost when he left the transporter room."

McCoy stood outside Spock's quarters and glared at the closed door.

"Spock! I want to talk to you!"

There was no sound from within the room.

"If I have to kick the door down, I'll probably break my ankle!"

These persuasive words had the desired effect and the door slid open. Seated at his desk, Spock appeared to be concentrating on a series of circuit diagrams on the viewer but the doctor knew better. He leaned over and switched off the viewer, and Spock continued to stare at the blank screen, his eyes dull, his expression as unreadable as ever. The fact that he hadn't even changed out of his stained uniform was proof enough to McCoy that he was under some kind of strain.

"Are you going to tell me what's going on?"

Spock turned to face him.

"And don't bother to tell me you don't know what I'm talking about. I heard what happened in the transporter room."

"Then you know as much as I, Doctor. How is the Captain?"

"You know damn well how he is. Christine told you when you spoke to her on the intercom. Don't change the subject."

"What is it you wish to know, Doctor?"

"Is there any reason why Jim won't have you near him?"

McCoy hadn't meant to put the question quite so bluntly and he felt a twinge of guilt when Spock flinched as though from a physical blow. The answer was just audible. "Yes."

McCoy stared. He had expected a flat denial and this reply caught him unawares. When it became apparent that Spock was not about to enlarge on the subject, McCoy prompted him gently. "What happened, Spock?"

"I proposed to end the Captain's career as a Starfleet Commander."

"How?"

"I believed the Captain's life to be in danger. His wound was badly infected, his temperature perilously high. When he questioned me about his condition, I... could not lie. I told him that, to save his life, I would amputate his arm."

McCoy became briskly practical to cover up his feeling of shock. "If Jim was out of his mind with fever, you could hardly expect him to understand why you had to make that decision."

There was naked, inconsolable pain in the Vulcan's eyes although his voice was quite steady. "So I reasoned, Doctor, and I believed that, when recovered, he would forgive me for refusing to accede to his request that he be allowed to die. He has not done so."

McCoy frowned. "That's not like Jim. He'd have done the same in your place."

"Perhaps, but since Starfleet is his entire existence... "

"Is it?" asked McCoy, but he ignored Spock's enquiring look. "How did you manage to clear up the infection? Did Svoura's doctors treat Jim?"

"No. I had no way of knowing whether Consul Svoura was indeed the man I supposed him to be. The Klingons brought his name into their conversation with monotonous regularity to convince us of his complicity and I was not prepared to anticipate his arrival. Fortunately, since the Klingons had every intention of keeping the Captain alive, I was able to obtain medication for him."

"What was it, d'you know?"

"Only that it was a substance developed by the Haderans. Venn swallowed some in my presence and I felt justified in administering it to the Captain."

"How much did you give him - and how often?"

"Ten drops in water, eight times in all. After that the Captain seemed to be out of danger and I discontinued the treatment."

"I'm going back to my laboratory to do some research. I'll let you know if I turn up anything. In the meantime, I suggest you get out of that uniform. It's a disgrace."

Spock glanced down at his grimy shirt and began absently to pull it off over his head. His bruised shoulder had stiffened up considerably and McCoy's eagle eyes saw at once that he was moving unusually slowly.

"What's wrong? Let me look at you."

Resigned and indifferent, Spock tossed aside the shirt and submitted to a cursory examination. "Hmmm... no bones broken. I'll take a closer look at it in Sickbay."

On this threatening note, Spock was left to his own devices.

Kirk woke with a start to find McCoy looking down at him with a distinctly odd expression on his face. Gathering his hazy thoughts together, he muttered, "How did I get here?"

"Don't you remember?"

Kirk frowned. "No." He looked around him hampered by his heavily bandaged arm in its alloy frame. "Where's Spock?"

"Do you really expect Spock to be hanging about every time you get yourself half-killed?"

Kirk grinned disarmingly. "Yes."

The glint of mischief in his eyes was irresistible and McCoy couldn't help but smile although his features grew stern again immediately.

"Jim, why do you refuse to let Spock touch you?"

"Have you been drinking, Bones?" demanded Kirk suspiciously.

"No, I haven't. Answer my question."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Then I'll tell you."

McCoy spared no detail in describing Spock's humiliation in the transporter room and Kirk's face went the colour of parchment. "Bones!"

"All right - so you feel bad. Do you have any idea of what Spock's going through at this moment?"

The sick look in Kirk's eyes told McCoy the answer and he relented at last. "I'm sorry, Jim. I had to be sure I was right and that you really didn't have any idea what you were saying or doing. While you were in that cell, you were given a drug to clear up the infection. It worked fine, but I ran some tests on it and on the blood samples we took from you."

"With what result?"

"It's an antibiotic all right, but taken frequently over a short period, it has a cumulative effect - that of a minor hallucinatory drug. Something in your mind triggered it off."

"I remember... "

"Yes?"

"When I woke up to find Spock there, I remember thinking... " Kirk dried up under McCoy's searching look as he recalled exactly what he had thought. He continued with an effort. "I was afraid he would find out how weak I was - the gallant Starfleet Captain who folded up when things got rough!"

The bitter self-contempt in Kirk's voice moved McCoy to indignation. "You had a right to fold. With your arm in shreds it's a wonder you stayed conscious at all."

"Anyway, all I knew was that I couldn't let him touch me - or he'd read my mind... "

"That must have been it. Once the drug started to take effect, it grabbed that thought and exaggerated it out of all proportion. You became obsessed with keeping Spock away from you even though you couldn't remember why."

Kirk lay in silence for a moment, then he said in a puzzled voice, "Why didn't Spock realise something was wrong?"

"He believes you have a good reason for feeling the way you do."

"And what's that?"

"What did you do when he told you that you might lose your arm?"

"Well, I guess I raved a bit. I don't remember."

"He thinks you remember only too well."

Kirk started to reach awkwardly for the wall intercom. "Where is he? In his quarters?"

"You'll have to order him to come."

"Nonsense!"

McCoy shrugged and pressed the appropriate button on the intercom.

"Spock." The voice was a splinter of ice.

"Kirk here. I'd like to see you in Sickbay, Spock."

"I am at present off duty, Captain."

"Make it an order," whispered McCoy.

Kirk hesitated, then snapped in his best martinet style, "That's an order, Mr. Spock. Kirk out."

He leaned back against the pillows and closed his eyes, wondering how he was going to apologise to a man who did not recognise the need for apologies. Soon he heard McCoy say gruffly, "Come in, Spock", and he opened his eyes quickly to see the subject of his thoughts standing on the threshold, looking neither at him nor at McCoy. To the undiscerning eye, he might have seemed his usual cool, remote self but Kirk had the chilling feeling that one wrong word from him would shatter his brittle exterior. Could no-one else see how shockingly vulnerable this man was, despite his air of complete self-possession? He glanced across at McCoy and saw that he too was afraid to speak lest he destroy the Vulcan's fragile self-control.

Kirk took a breath. "Spock."

"Captain?" The reply was carefully formal.

"I'm sorry."

The aristocratic head turned slowly towards him but the eyes were fixed on a point somewhere above Kirk's head.

"You have some cause for regret, Captain?"

"You know I do. I humiliated you in front of half the ship's crew."

"An exaggeration, Captain."

"Nevertheless, there was no justification for what I did."

Spock lowered his gaze and, for the first time, Kirk saw how badly he had hurt his friend. There was nothing he could say but Spock read in the clear, hazel depths of his eyes, a silent plea for forgiveness.

"The truth is," said McCoy, "he was out of his mind and you were partly responsible."

Incredibly, the arched brows remained perfectly still.

"I'll leave Jim to tell you all about it while I go next door and take a look at my burns cases."

Several seconds passed before the two men realised they were alone.

McCoy took his time checking the medical readings on his peacefully sleeping patients, glancing occasionally through the observation window where Kirk had begun speaking earnestly to his First Officer who listened politely but without relaxing his military stance. Even from a distance the desperation on the Captain's face tugged at McCoy's heart for he knew only too well how stubborn the Vulcan could be. Presently, Kirk stopped talking and, having tried unsuccessfully to sit up alone, held out his hand for assistance. The Vulcan made no move to take it.

When McCoy walked back into the room it was to hear Kirk say quietly,

"Help me, Spock", not realising that these were the same words he had gasped out as he lay in agony in the cell.

With a sharply indrawn breath, Spock moved to the bedside and allowed Kirk to place an arm about his shoulders while he lifted him into a sitting position - and if his powerful arms lingered a fraction longer than was absolutely necessary before he stepped back, there was no-one to remark on it. McCoy was far too busy assuming his professional mask.

"Now that everything seems to have been explained to everyone's satisfaction, I'll take another look at that shoulder, Spock."

Kirk watched with interest as Spock stripped to the waist and submitted with unusual patience to the doctor's ministrations.

"How did you say this happened, Spock?"

"I did not say, Doctor. However, if it serves any medical purpose - I was knocked from the pilot's seat in the shuttlecraft."

"Fascinating!" murmured McCoy. "That would be about the time Jim was injured, wouldn't it?"

Spock appeared to consider for a moment. "Approximately, Doctor."

"Quite a coincidence, don't you think?" asked McCoy, his blue eyes wide with innocence.

"Indeed, Doctor," agreed Spock, not unaware of the expression of open curiosity on Kirk's face.

He was saved from further provocation by the appearance of an attractive young nurse with coffee-coloured skin, huge liquid brown eyes and an oddly wary attitude. Wilting a little under the combined stares of three pairs of masculine eyes, she said quickly, "Dr. M'Benga has asked me to change your dressings, Doctor."

"Oh - thank you, Nurse. I'll be with you in a moment. Wait in my office, please."

"Yes, Doctor."

The door had no sooner closed behind her when something clicked in McCoy's mind. He looked at Spock. "That voice sounds familiar. Spock, was that the one...?"

It was the Vulcan's turn to pretend innocence and he did so magnificently. "I don't believe I understand you, Doctor."

"Never mind! I'll find out for myself."

Kirk watched McCoy disappear into his office. "What was all that about, Spock?"

"I think the Doctor has some research to catch up on, Captain."

"Oh?" Kirk waited but it was obvious that Spock was not going to enlighten him further.

"Well, I'm glad we got our problem sorted out, anyway."

"Yes, Captain."

"Will you stop calling me that! You don't still bear me a grudge, do you?"

"I have never borne a grudge, sir - Jim. It was not the nature but the fact of your rejection that... troubled me. I regret that I was too precipitate in my evaluation of your motives. And yet - this ship does mean more to you than anything else."

"Does it?" Kirk was smiling, a fact which made Spock frown.

"Dr. McCoy made the same observation earlier this evening. I do not grasp its significance."

"Spock! You haven't explained what happened in the shuttle. What was it that threw you across the cabin?"

Kirk's eyes were alight with mischief but Spock remained deceptively solemn. "Are you able to play chess, Jim?"

"Yes, of course. I've got one good arm."

"Excellent. I shall arrange to have a set brought from the recreation room."

"Spock... " said Kirk suspiciously.

"If you win, I will tell you how I came to sustain my injury. If I should win, however, I shall look forward with considerable interest to discovering what it is that could possibly mean more to you than your command of the Enterprise."

What am I - in your mind's eye
That you should follow me
I, a mere man - nothing special that I can see
Yet I command your loyalty.

Who am I - within your eyes
That you should put your trust in me
I a Human, you Vulcan
Worlds apart - one glance can see
Yet by your choice - you stand beside me.

You do not know - what can I say
I have no words - Would words explain
What is between us?
Are you not content to have it so unquestioned
- Forgive me - yes - you have the right to know.

Through all the days and long and weary years
I stemmed the tide of rising thoughts and lonely fears
And stood alone.
All wild spun dreams and hopes of younger freer days,
Were walled and locked within
Away from prying and the mocking gaze.

Then you came - one man
Who with no thought of age or creed
Swept away the wall, released the fears
And under the cascade of bitter years and mental pain
Stood firm.

You saw me as I was
Neither scornful or uncertain was your gaze,
You looked at me and saw beyond
This ill facade - the face I hide
Then offered hand and heart.
I stand anew.

Jayne Turner.

A PROBLEM SHARED by Meg Wright

McCoy stowed the last of his gear with relief. He hated unpacking worse than packing and to do it immediately was a sternly-imposed self-discipline. The task done, he permitted himself the luxury of a mental pat on the back and, with a rueful inward smile at his own present need for simple tasks and rewards went off to his new Sickbay.

He found himself searching his memory for his head nurse's name - he must overcome this new lack of concentration before it leaked over into his professional duties - Chapel, that was it, the forename would come later. Comfortingly, the impressive list of qualifications following her name was still vivid in his mind. Someday he'd have to take an interest in why such a highly qualified woman had chosen a nursing career in Starfleet - for the moment he'd stick with his own problems.

He asked for a few changes to suit his own working methods, nodded his thanks to Nurse Chapel and left, intending to go to his quarters and send a final tape to Joanna. Cynically, he wondered why he bothered; her mother would return it unopened, he was certain of that, but there were things he needed to say to erase some of the bitterness of the last few years.

He'd barely settled at the desk when the door buzzer went.

"Sorry I wasn't free to welcome you aboard, Doctor."

McCoy's eyes flickered to the braid on the gold sleeve. Captain? This ... boy? He got to his feet.

"Sir!"

"Sit down, Doctor, sit down. It makes me uncomfortable when people keep loaping to their feet. I gather you've been to Sickbay. Everything to your liking?"

"I doubt it," McCoy said gruffly. "Never for longer than an hour or so, anyway."

Kirk grinned. "We've got a healthy crew, at least," he said comfortably.

McCoy frowned. "I see we have a Vulcan on board - I've been doing some cramming. I don't know more than the basics of Vulcan physiology."

Kirk's grin deepened. McCoy looked at him suspiciously.

"Uh... I wouldn't cram too hard, Doctor. Mr. Spock is half Human. I've heard Dr. Piper complain he never knew where he was with him."

McCoy grunted, sourly contemplating the prospect before him. Well, he'd wanted greater challenge. It seemed he would get it sooner or later. He hoped it would be later. His eye fell on the blank tape on the desk - maybe he should leave the old problems and concentrate on the new.

Kirk followed his glance. "Last minute messages?" he said sympathetically. "I'll leave you to get on with it. If you can spare the time I'd like you to join the First Officer and me for dinner in my quarters."

McCoy picked up the tiny spool and swept it into a drawer.

"I'd be pleased to, Captain. There's no point in wasting my time on messages that won't be heard."

Kirk heard the underlying bitterness and eyed his new Medical Officer consideringly.

"Can I help, Doctor?" he asked gently, touched by the unhappiness in the older man's vivid blue eyes.

McCoy smiled cynically. "Not unless you know a way to get a message

past a determined woman, sir."

Kirk's gaze had taken in the hologram on the desk, the blue eyes of the young girl, so like those that faced him.

"Your daughter?" he said softly.

McCoy nodded, not intending to elaborate, but somehow this young man's compassion was almost tangible. "Her mother has custody of her. I didn't fight it. I thought it better to get right away, but..." He broke off.

"There are still things that need saying?"

McCoy nodded wordlessly, remembering the unhappiness and sense of betrayal in Joanna's eyes when he had left the house for the last time.

"I... just walked out of her life," he said harshly. "Sarah will send the tape back like she did the last one -- there's little point in sending it."

"Send it to her school," Kirk said quietly. "They'll see she gets it."

The blue eyes lit with sudden hope. "You're right, of course," McCoy said gladly. "It was so obvious I couldn't see it."

"It always helps to share a problem," Kirk told him. "Make your tape, and then come and have a drink."

MORE THAN FAITH by Ann Neilson

There is no price that can be placed
 on a friendship such as theirs,
 that remains steadfast throughout the years.
 Even though they come from different worlds
 they are more close than brothers,
 and each has shown his readiness
 to give his life for the other.
 With undying loyalty and trust
 that will endure long after they are dust --
 forever side by side they stand,
 each, the other's Thousandth Man.
