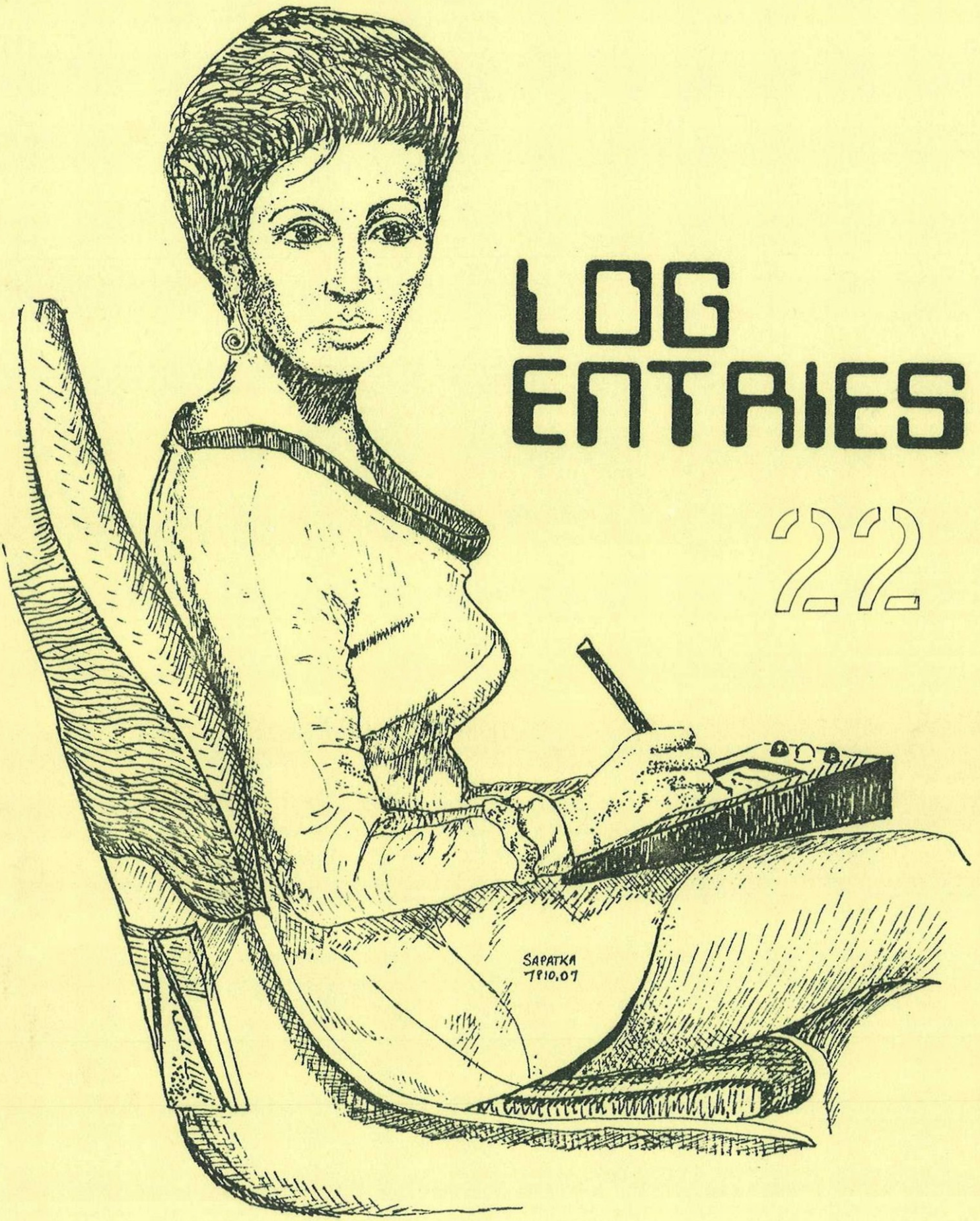


LOG ENTRIES

22



SAPATKA
7P10.07

CONTENTS

And the Stars Call Out	by Susan Meek	P 3
McCoy... About Spock	by Gladys Oliver	P 6
Overture	by Jean Barron	P 7
A Solution to the Problem	by J.A. Clarke	P 8
New Chance	by Ann Neilson	P 17
Music of the Spheres	by Simone Mason	P 18
Compulsion	by Meg Wright	P 37
Hidden Truth	by Ellen Kobrin	P 45
The Garden	by Elizabeth Sharp	P 46
Heart of Steel	by Rita Oliver	P 54
Forbidden Thoughts	by Crystal Ann Taylor	P 55

Artwork

Sandy Sapatka Cover, P7, 45
Richard Gardner P2
M Allsebrook P10
A Mason P22,33

A Solution to the Problem was the winner of the competition in N/L 31
Richard Gardner's drawing was the winner of the artwork competition.

Editor - Sheila Clark
Assistant editor - Valerie Piacentini
Typing - Sheila Clark
Proofreading - Valerie Piacentini
Printing - Janet Quarton
Collating - Sheila Clark, Valerie Piacentini, Nicola Moore, Alison
Rooney, Peter Grant.

A STAG Publication

STAG Committee - Janet Quarton (President), Sheila Clark, Beth Hallam,
Sylvia Billings, Valerie Piacentini.

Log Entries 22, price 80p within the U.K., is put out by the STAR TREK Action
Group and is available from
Sheila Clark
6 Craigmill Cottages
Strathmartine
by Dundee
Scotland

Foreign rates - \$2.50 (£1.25) surface, \$4.00 (£2) airmail including postage.
Dollar cheques, please add \$1.00 to total order to cover bank charges.

All rights are reserved to the writers and artists. Anyone wishing to reprint
any of the material herein is asked to obtain permission in writing first. No
attempt is made to supercede any rights held by Paramount, NBC, BBC, or any
other holders of copyright in Star Trek material.

Hello again.

As I sit here, on the night before Christmas, I keep getting the feeling that I'm going to be haunted by the ghost of Star Trek stories yet to come... We've had a busy year, and next year looks as if it's going to be just as busy - apart from the usual six (at least) issues of Log Entries, we have two novellas ready to go to print, Simoné Mason is well on with a sequel to Vice Versa and Valerie and I are just about finished the first draft of Variations on a Theme 3... and the first 10 pages or so of Variations 4 have also been written. The schedule - tentatively - is, Tomorrow is Another Day by Lesley Coles, out in April; As New Wine by Meg Wright in June; Variations on a Theme 3 in August and Vice Versa 2 in October, but of course anything could happen between now and those dates; in other words they might make their appearance earlier than scheduled!

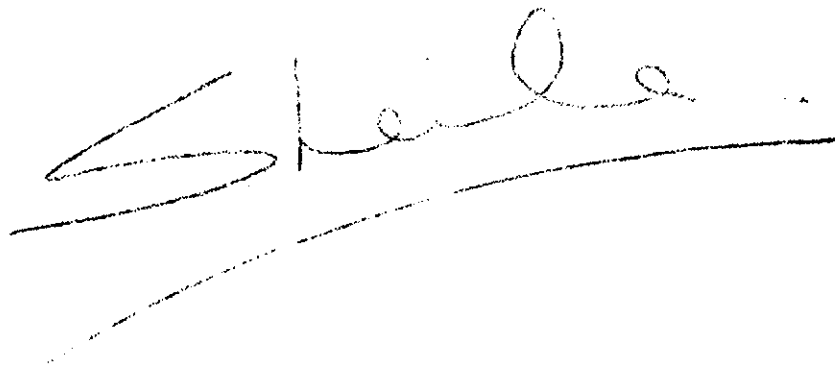
I don't often quote letters that I get, but I think this one is worth it. 'One thing intrigues me - you put out zines quite frequently and you state you are not a typist. As a secretary I spend a great deal of time typing so I appreciate the work involved. This means I have a vision of you, permanently chained to your typewriter!' - How right you are, Lesley! Fortunately, some years ago - before I ever heard of Star Trek! - I took a correspondence course in touch typing, which helps - although it would also help if I had the remotest idea of which is my right hand and which my left - I keep hitting the keys with the correct finger of the wrong hand... (When Janet is navigating for me on some of our trips around the country, she usually says 'My way' or 'Your way' to make sure I don't pass the proper opening while I work out which is right or left...)

We've got a good selection of stories laid on for next time, mostly rather shorter than we often print. These include a creative response to Valerie's story Lost and Found in Log Entries 18 by Mariann Hornlein - the story told from Spock's point of view. I think you'll enjoy it as much as Valerie and I did. Mariann, incidentally, says, 'Can anyone write a real Spock-bonker just for me?' - well, how about it - surely there's someone out there apart from Chris Hall who writes Spock-bonkers - Chris is tied up completely just now getting Tricorder 6 ready for the Midicon on March 31/32, so she can't help!

Once again we've had to get a winning illustration printed, and again we're selling the extra copies for 30p (\$1.00) including postage.

And I think that's about enough from me! Enjoy the zine.

January 1979

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lesley', written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

REFLECTION.
"THE NAKED TIME"

• RICHARD GARDNER #8 •



grumpy. One hand reached up to push back a wayward lock of sandy hair from his forehead, while the other reached out to close the window.

"Yes, sir. Right away, sir." The voice was teasingly respectful. "Anything else you require, 'George'?"

'George's' hand reached under the bed and brought out a shoe, which, considering his state of sleepiness, was aimed at his tormentor with remarkable accuracy. With the ease of long practice, the younger brother expertly dodged the projectile, and jumped into his own bed, grateful for the warmth of the sheets.

"Night, Sam," he called across the room.

"Night, Jim," came the muffled tones of his brother, who was burying his head once more in the pillow.

The boy shut his eyes, snuggling down in the sheets. He found himself succumbing to their warmth, sleep sneaking in to tangle the thoughts flying around in his bright, active mind.

Tomorrow... make a tape for Dad. Hope he isn't away too long this time... ask Mom if he could put the picture of the Starship on the bedroom wall... Tomorrow... try out for this year's school baseball team. Have to train hard if they were going to make him Captain again this year... Captain... Science paper tomorrow... have to work hard on that... would need it if he was gonna get into the Academy some day... Academy... Starship... and the stars...

He twisted his head round to take one last look at the night sky through the window. But the spell of drowsiness was becoming stronger than that cast by the stellar bewitchment.

Some day, he thought, as the tendrils of sleep wrapped around him, drawing him in into its warm comfort, I'll go...

Some day...

* * * * *

The boy was quite aware of the fact that he should be sleeping. Or if not sleeping, then at least his mind should be engaged in some more logical activity such as reviewing tomorrow's lesson, or in meditation.

Instead, he was looking at the stars.

But first, as was his practice, he used his knowledge and keen eyesight to find the exact spot in the heavens where one particular star shone.

It was not, to the naked eye, a particularly significant star. Sol had never been a rival for the glories of her stellar neighbours. It did not shine very brightly in Vulcan's sky, just as the sun of his own world, 40 Eridani, did not attract much attention in the skies of Earth.

Sol. His mother's star.

He corrected himself mentally. Giving a personal pronoun to a stellar object was not logical. But then neither were the inhabitants of the major planet of the sun he had tried to personify.

Was standing here watching stars logical? his ever-questioning mind asked. It was, in as much as the process helped to sharpen his powers of observation and perception. Besides, he reflected, further mental review at the present time of the lesson his class had been told to prepare for tomorrow would serve no logical purpose.

The parts of the logical constructs from Surak's Book of Reforms were in the old High Vulcanir, and were one of the most difficult set so far in this year's timetable, fully testing both the mnemonic and rational capacity of

the young students. Spock had learned his with careful dedication, and he doubted if some of his classmates were half so proficient in the Constructs. But even if he gained highest honours in the class tomorrow, there would be some who would never be convinced.

He gave the equivalent of a mental sigh. Even though he had undergone the Kahs-wan, and strove every minute of the day to be a Vulcan, there were some who would always regard him as 'the son of the Terran woman', 'the halfbreed'.

Logically, it should not matter... Purposfully he stopped the inner self-examination and turned his attention towards the stars.

The night was very clear, and the stars' light glorious. Even though he knew them to be only collections of hydrogen and other elements in the process of nuclear fission, it was difficult sometimes not to think of them as jewels scattered with careless abandon on an inverted black bowl...

The Vulcan night, in contrast to its fiercely hot day, was somewhat chilly. A slight breeze blew over from the garden, bringing with it the scents of the K'Schrana flower and the other desert blooms that grew there, along with the strange fragrances of the few Terran flowers his mother had, it seemed at times, persuaded to grow by the sheer force of her personality.

The thought of the dual nature of the garden turned his thoughts inward again.

Curiosity. Was it, he wondered, in fact an emotion, or just a state of mind? If it was indeed an emotion, then it was the only one that was actively encouraged in Vulcan society. The only one of the feelings bound up inside him that he could openly express.

And was this strange longing that came over him when he looked up at the stars only curiosity?

All those strange worlds, different people, the scientific discoveries waiting to be made, the information waiting to be gathered, the new experiences to be tried... He wanted to experience all of this first hand, instead of from books or tapes, to sate the need of his ever hungry mind for new knowledge...

Was this desire a legacy of his Human or his Vulcan side? He searched for an answer. Vulcan or Human? Both, or neither? In questions of identity such as this, there was no one to turn to for advice, because he was unique. And in this, as in all other aspects of personality, alone...

Perhaps out there, in the stars, was... self-fulfilment? Would he be able to find himself there in a way he was unable to do on Vulcan?

He arrested the direction that track of thought was leading him in. His father would not approve. Sarek would believe that any Vulcan who could not find inner peace on Vulcan was not truly a son of his.

Even so, his eyes were drawn back to the sky.

"Spock! Spock, don't you know what time it is?"

The boy turned at the sound of his mother's voice. "Indeed, mother. It is eleven point... "

Amanda chuckled softly to herself, both at her son's literalism and at herself for momentarily forgetting the innate Vulcan time sense. "What I mean is, it's very late. You should be asleep."

"Yes, mother." The boy came away from the window, and climbed obediently into bed. His mother watched as he shut his eyes, and exercising the Vulcan disciplines at which he was becoming so proficient, sank into a light trance.

She stood for a moment, simply watching him, resisting the impulse to settle the bedcover, to tuck him in as she had done in days when he was younger. The image of the way she had seen him just a few minutes ago came to her mind. A boy, tall for his age, somewhat spare despite all her efforts to 'feed him up',

eyes turned up to the stars; a very solitary figure. Solitary, she thought, in her memory unfolding scenes from his earlier childhood, even in a crowd of his contemporaries. Alone in a way she had never been when growing up on Earth. But then she remembered also the sense of wonder in his eyes as he had looked up at the stars. That was something she recognised from her own youth. How for hours she could look up at the stars and dream...

With a small smile, very soft and tender lighting her face, she crossed the room. Smoothing one corner of the sheet back, she looked down at her son. Perhaps the trance was not very deep yet, for it seemed he muttered very softly, in Vulcan,

"Some day... not alone... some day... "

Suddenly Amanda had a strange feeling she knew what her son's destiny would be. Quietly she crossed to the window, looking up at the sky.

And the stars shone down, silent but waiting.

* * * * *

Sleep, Starchildren,
And dream your dreams
Of alien worlds
Of infinite challenge
Of voyage and adventure.

But sleep now
Safe in the cradle of home;
For it is not yet time
To meet your destinies.
Sleep -
For the stars will still be waiting.

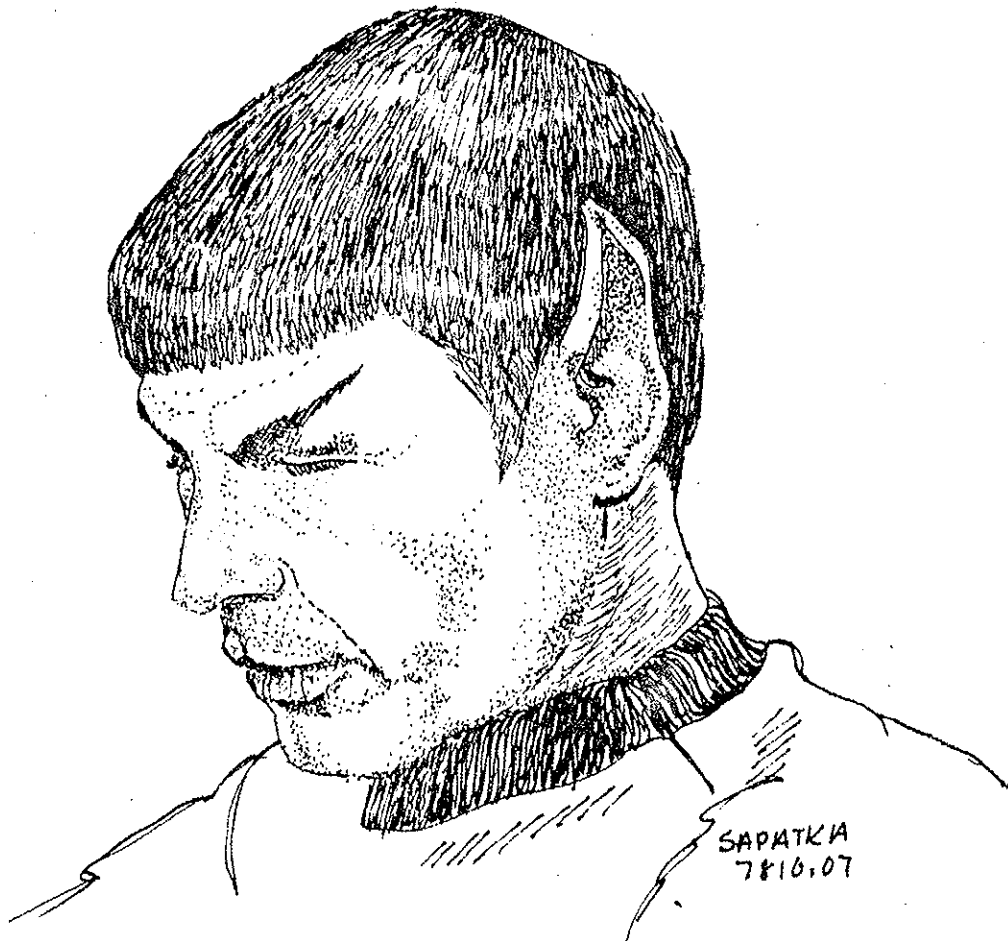
McCOY... ABOUT SPOCK by Gladys Oliver

I know him... I think,
This Vulcan, staid and calm.
I, a Doctor who ever seeks
For the saving and healing balms.
I sometimes have a verbal sling
At this Vulcan's logical brain,
But sarcastic wit cannot shake him,
So I am calm again.
The shell he hides in, I know -
But the Devil still prompts me to test...
And once again the Vulcan comes out of it the best.
I want to know him better,
But I hide behind a cruel tongue -
And then grieve for the lateness
Of a friendship still unsung.
So now you know, Vulcan,
You ever twist and curl my mind
With your ever cooling logic -
And once again I am unkind.
But strangely - I think you know me, Spock,
All the words I leave unsaid;
I believe you see the friendship
That must always go unread...

OVERTURE by Jean Barron

Darkness was mine,
And solitude,
All that life had taught me to expect...
Until you came
Bringing light
And friendship
In the palm of your outstretched hand,
Offering your world
While I clung to mine,
Secure from hurt,
Afraid to trust,
Imprisoned by my loneliness.

You smile and wait,
Understanding
The Human need in this Vulcan heart.
I reach out
Slowly,
Hopefully,
And find my hand warmly clasped.
You have been lonely -
I feel that now;
But you had the courage
To reach first -
A gentle overture to friendship.



A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM by J.A. Clarke

It hurt to move, but nevertheless McCoy did so. It was either that or he stayed where he was and got burned to a crisp. Smoke was billowing up all around him, flames licking the walls and ceiling of the small shuttlecraft.

He staggered forward, groping blindly in the smoke. Jim and Spock, he couldn't see them. They had been at the controls when... he stumbled over a body. Spock's. Coughing, almost choking, he knelt beside the still form.

"Spock! Spock!" He bent his head to the Vulcan's chest to listen for a heartbeat. To his relief, it was beating at its normal rapid pace.

The figure began to stir.

"Spock, hurry! The shuttlecraft will explode at any moment! We've got to get out of here!" McCoy began to pull the Vulcan to his feet.

"Doctor, I am quite able to move, thank you. Have you located the Captain?"

"No. I've only just found you. He must be up by the controls." McCoy coughed violently again and wiped his streaming eyes.

"Not wishing to lose your valuable services, Dr. McCoy, I suggest you vacate this vessel immediately. I will bring the Captain."

"No, he may be hurt. You might need a hand."

"Very well, come. Although I suggest we move with haste."

McCoy was right. Kirk was slumped over the controls of the craft. Obviously he had been attempting to pull the little craft out of her dive, and had almost succeeded when they had hit the ground.

Spock gently pulled him back upright, and wished he hadn't; for Kirk let out a groan of agonised pain which he tried to suppress. As far as Spock could see, there was blood running from Kirk's mouth and from a jagged cut over his forehead.

The floor trembled beneath them. Time was running out. Spock lifted Kirk none too gently into his arms and went to the exit. McCoy pressed the emergency release so that Spock was able to get out; then turned and groped for his medical pouch and tricorder, and the emergency supplies. They didn't appear to want to be found, and McCoy began to feel desperate. They would prove essential if Kirk was badly wounded.

Suddenly there was a muffled bang and the control panels at the bow of the craft burst into flame, forcing him back. It was then that he spotted the two straps of the pouch and tricorder. Quickly he leaped forward and grabbed them, the emergency supplies, and ran for the exit and cover.

McCoy kept running until a totally unexpected tackle from Spock brought him down heavily, and just in time too, for the shuttlecraft blew up in a spectacular hue of red, yellow and even blue flame.

It was only when the flame died down that Spock allowed McCoy to rise. "I must apologise for my clumsiness, Doctor. I hope I have not injured you, but I observed that the shuttlecraft was about to explode, and that you could have been harmed by the blast."

"It's all right, Spock, honestly." McCoy swallowed. At any other time he would have made some cutting remark, but he put it down to the fact that he must have been more shaken than he realised. "Right, where's Jim?" he managed to ask. "He didn't look too good in there."

"No. I believe he is more seriously injured than we anticipated. Come, this way, Doctor."

Spock led McCoy around a number of large boulders into a small clearing.

Kirk was lying sheltered from the wind; he tried to struggle into a sitting position as they approached. McCoy literally dropped the equipment he was carrying and rushed to Kirk's side to prevent him from rising any further.

"Whoa, there, Jim, take it easy!" Gently the doctor lowered him down again, trying to ignore the tight expression on his friend's face.

"W-what happened? I-I remember... "

"Don't talk," McCoy ordered. He looked critically at the cut on Kirk's forehead. Probably concussion, and the wound needed the spray applicator; but that wasn't his main worry. There was blood coming from Kirk's mouth. Too much blood. And, as if to emphasise the fact, he began to cough. To McCoy's horror, fresh blood appeared on Kirk's lips.

"D-did we... is Spock... are you... "

"Shut up, Jim, for goodness sake! We're both safe."

"I-I can't see... "

"He's over there." McCoy jerked his head in Spock's general direction. "Spock, come on over." He did so, to stop Kirk from trying to rise again.

"As you can see, Captain, I am quite well. It is you we wish to check." He dropped McCoy's equipment down beside him.

"I-I'm all right; just bruised, that's all," Kirk mumbled, but his features tightened involuntarily in pain again. McCoy and Spock glanced at each other.

"Spock, pass me my scanner. Right, let's see what we can find." McCoy ran the scanner over Kirk. It whirred and clicked and hummed. McCoy frowned and put it down. "Medical tricorder, please."

Spock handed it to him. McCoy switched it on and studied the scanner display. Temperature up, brain activity erratic - that was probably concussion - lungs... McCoy frowned again. Blood pressure down, pulse irregular, respiration uneven. He put the tricorder down and placed a hand on Kirk's forehead. It was cold and clammy; then how could his temperature be up? A bad feeling was beginning to make its presence felt. Gently, he felt Kirk's ribcage. Kirk flinched violently and choked off a scream of agony.

"Just bruised, eh?" McCoy mumbled, and reached for the tricorder again. He opened the lower compartment and withdrew a surgical knife which he used unceremoniously to rip Kirk's shirt open up the middle. As he carefully laid the two halves aside he became aware of Spock beside him almost stiffening with horror. McCoy swallowed once or twice, and continued steadily.

"H-how bad, Bones?" Kirk asked in an almost inaudible whisper. His breathing was rasping and shallow.

"I - I haven't finished yet," McCoy stammered. He was staring at the ugly bruising that continued below the ribs. It clearly indicated what was wrong. "This is going to hurt," McCoy said. Gingerly, he felt the ribs under the bruising, then moved down to the stomach area. Kirk screwed his eyes shut, and concentrated on biting back a scream of pure agony. McCoy pulled the two halves of Kirk's shirt back over him and reached for the emergency supplies.

"H-how bad, Bones?" Kirk managed to ask again.

"W-ell, you've got some bad bruising there, Jim. I won't lie to you, it's bad. There are three broken ribs. You must have hit that console pretty hard when we crashed. Still, it's nothing I can't fix," he finished; but silently added, 'if I've got the medical equipment I need.' Aloud he said, "You just lie quietly while I sort out what I've got."

He rummaged around in the emergency supplies and brought out a thermal blanket which he spread over Kirk, then he picked up his equipment and moved off a little distance. Spock followed him.



"You do not lie very well, Doctor! The Captain... "

"One of those ribs has punctured the right lung. That explains the blood coming from his mouth. The bruising below that and the general symptoms all point to a ruptured spleen. He's bleeding internally."

"I see."

"Spock, I've got to know, how long have we got until the Enterprise finds us?"

"We will not be missed for 3.34 hours; then a search, taking into account Mr. Scott's ability for - "

"How long?"

"Approximately 5.7 hours, Doctor." Spock noticed McCoy's grimace. "What is wrong?"

"I can't be sure yet, but if Jim's bleeding at the rate I think he is, he'll be dead in four and a half hours at the most. I may have to operate."

"How long can you wait?"

"Maybe three hours, if that. I don't want to do it, not here on this god-forsaken planet. I've no blood plasma for one thing, and he'll lose a lot more blood before I can close that rupture. Blood pressure's dropping already. I just hope I've got enough medical equipment to do it, that's all."

"Then I suggest you look, and stop wasting valuable time."

McCoy opened his mouth and closed it again. What was the use? He couldn't really blame Spock. It was probably his way of saying that he was worried about Jim too. He sighed and turned to the supplies to see what he could salvage.

To McCoy's horror there wasn't much. Spock helped him spread out the equipment available. A spray applicator, scanner, two hypos, one scalpel, bone setting laser, sonic separator, trilaser connector, 10ccs of sterilite and melanex, and an emergency surgical knife. Then there was the other thermal blanket and a supply of bandages. The rest of the emergency supplies consisted of pre-heated food packs, salt tablets and water.

McCoy returned to Kirk and made another check. There was no change.

"How long, Doctor?" Spock asked quietly.

"Four hours still, maybe four and a half."

"That still leaves us approximately one hour short. You have no choice but to operate. If you do not, the Captain will die before help arrives."

"Operate!" McCoy exploded loudly - too loudly, for Kirk moaned and stirred slightly. McCoy continued in a whisper. "This - " he indicated the few pieces of equipment before him " - is all I have."

"There is insufficient medical equipment to do the operation?"

"Well, no, Spock. There's just enough, at a pinch. It's not that that's bothering me now. It's this." He held up two vials that held the drugs for the hypos. "Melanex. I've only got 12ccs. I need 20ccs to do the operation. This is only an emergency surgical kit. It's not for prolonged surgical procedures. I could start the operation but Jim'd start coming round before I finished. He couldn't stand that kind of pain; and the shock would probably kill him!"

Spock stood thoughtfully, then said slowly, "Either way, Doctor, Jim will die; but I concur that you could save his life."

"I couldn't! I can't work that fast! How can you expect me to operate on your best friend - and mine - when he'd wake up half way through?"

McCoy turned away feeling helpless and frustrated. Jim, lying there dying,

and he, McCoy, had the equipment to save him; but he couldn't use it because he was 8ccs short of the minimal dosage of the vital anaesthetic and neural paralysers.

The next few words from Spock froze McCoy into immobility. "I may have a solution to that problem, Dr. McCoy." The statement was spoken quietly and matter of factly.

McCoy whirled round. "How?"

"I may be able to divert the pain of the operation away from the Captain to myself by using the mind meld."

"May be able?"

"It would depend on the Captain's willingness to co-operate."

"Spock, you couldn't! The pain would be - "

"You remember what happened on Deneva, Doctor?"

"Of course I do. But - "

"When the creature invaded me, there was pain also when I did not obey its wishes. I was able to master that. If the Captain co-operates I will be able to master the pain of the operation. In any case, we have no choice. I suggest you inform the Captain that you are going to operate, and prepare yourselves."

McCoy's mind was in a turmoil. "Spock..." he began, but he couldn't continue. The Vulcan was staring at him impassively, his face a total mask. McCoy turned blindly away, determined not to show any weakness to the Vulcan, so as not to embarrass him.

Slowly he went to Kirk and knelt beside him. Kirk's pain-filled eyes stared back into his own.

"W-what gives, Bones?" he managed to ask between laboured breaths. McCoy felt a pang of indecisiveness hit him as he studied the scanner readings again. Kirk was here, alive - just; in pain, but fighting. If McCoy operated he'd be in more pain; but if Spock could help and could keep the shock at bay, Kirk could make it. It would mean having to act as nurse as well as surgeon. There would be no help, and it would make the job longer. It all rested on Spock. If he could take the pain. If. A big word. But... was it too much for him to give? Was it right? In a way, yes, for McCoy knew that they would both willingly give their lives to save James Kirk if necessary, as he would for them.

"Er, Jim; I'm going to have to operate. You're bleeding internally and I've got to stop it."

"T-then what's the problem?"

"Er - Spock is going to meld with you about half way through the operation. You have to know this so that you will be ready for him unconsciously."

"Meld? Why?"

"I haven't got enough anaesthetic. You'd wake up before I finished. Spock will divert - "

"No! No! He can't!" Kirk began to struggle, trying to sit up. "I'm all right! Don't let him, Bones! Please don't!" Kirk collapsed in pain, almost writhing with agony. "Don't... please... not right... fair... "

"Jim! Lie still! Jim, please!" McCoy had to use all his strength to keep his injured friend from doing further damage to himself.

Spock arrived and helped him force Kirk down.

"It's no good, Spock. He won't let you. I can't do it, it's no good. He won't let you suffer for him!"

"If you do not operate, you immediately sentence the Captain to death. If

you proceed with my aid I calculate the chances to be -- "

"Don't you dare! Spock, can't you get it through that thick Vulcan skull of yours that I want to save him? Dammit, he's my friend too! Do you think I'm enjoying watching him suffer like this? Why can't you let that blasted Vulcan mask slip for once and try to feel like we feel for once in your life?"

"Doctor, it seems to me that we have had an argument on this subject several times before now. I would have thought that you would have had some understanding of Vulcan philosophy by now, so I shall put it down to your being concerned for the welfare of the Captain. Thus there is nothing further to discuss. I suggest we prepare the Captain for the forthcoming event. That is all."

And with that, Spock got up and walked a little way off to meditate and prepare himself for the forthcoming ordeal. McCoy watched him go, too stunned at first to move, then slowly he shook himself, picked up the scanner and pulled back the thermal blanket.

The ugly bruising was spreading. There wasn't much time left. He passed the scanner over Kirk's chest. Vital signs were falling; breathing was becoming laboured. It was now or never.

Kirk gripped his arm weakly. "Don't let him do it, Bones. Please!"

"I've no choice, Jim. Time's running out. I either operate now, or you'll die! Do you hear me, Jim? I've got to do it. Spock says he can take it. He wants to help. He's your friend, let him help you. You'd help him somehow if your positions were reversed."

Spock turned and looked at McCoy, but he ignored him. He knew Spock had been right; he just hadn't wanted to admit it.

"All-all right, Bones... I... I guess you know what's best." Kirk closed his eyes and tried to relax, but he couldn't because of the pain.

McCoy stood up and spread the other thermal blanket out beside Kirk. He nodded to Spock, who helped him move Kirk on to it. They tried not to cause him too much pain, but even the slightest movement seemed to send waves of agony sweeping through his body. Spock positioned himself beside Kirk's head while McCoy collected his equipment.

Nervously he picked up the hypo and administered the drug. Kirk's eyes flickered open at the touch and he stared into the Vulcan's impassive face. McCoy noticed then how young Kirk seemed; not appearing at all the experienced veteran Starship Captain with a heavy responsibility of 430 people on his shoulders, but a young frightened man, injured and in pain, needing help, friendship and love. He watched as Kirk slowly gave in to the drug, his eyelids becoming heavy. He forced them open once more.

"Sleep, James Kirk," a voice seemed to be saying in the far distance. It was soothing, and Kirk obeyed, willing to let the pain subside as his body became numb. Sleep....

McCoy looked at Spock, who nodded. It was now or never.

Again McCoy glanced at Spock, who was holding the medical tricorder.

"He is still unconscious, Doctor," Spock said for the umpteenth time.

McCoy felt like mopping his brow, but that was out of the question. Kirk was still bleeding. It had stained the blanket, McCoy's hands, his clothes, and it was still flowing; but now he was almost there. He glanced at Kirk's face. There was no change there. It was a little grey and the breathing was worse.

"Spock, can you prepare a hypo for the tri-ox compound and administer it. His breathing is becoming very laboured."

"Affirmative, Doctor. How much longer?"

"Half an hour or so; I don't know, Spock. I just wish they'd hurry up and find us!"

"It may relieve you to know that we are now twenty minutes overdue."

Was that all? It felt like hours. "Scanner reading."

"Pulse erratic, respiration steady, body temperature down, lung capacity down, heart activity low, blood pressure 80 over 60, still dropping, neural activity... up 5 points. He's beginning to come round."

"Damn damn damn! I was hoping to spare you too much, Spock. You'd better move in when you think fit."

"I will do so. Neural activity up 7, rising quite rapidly. I'm afraid I will not be able to assist you any longer, Doctor."

"I understand, Spock, just get in there will you, before he comes round, or he'll die of shock."

Tentatively Spock placed his long slender fingers on the appropriate places of Kirk's face and gently probed. As he expected, there was no activity on the surface. He probed deeper, gently easing his way in.

McCoy looked on nervously. He noticed the scanner reading on the tricorder; neural activity increasing. Kirk would be conscious any moment. He returned to his work.

Kirk slowly started coming to his senses. He was vaguely aware of a pressure on his face. What had happened? Slowly, he began to remember. The shuttlecraft, diving out of control, throwing them unexpectedly from their seats. He had managed to grab the controls, and manually tried to pull the little craft's nose up. Slowly, oh so slowly, she had responded. Just as they had been about to make it, that cluster of rocks had appeared and the craft had caught her underbelly on them. Pain... Spock's voice, his hands carrying him to safety, out of the craft... burning... pain... time... McCoy telling him he had to operate... Spock... No... no... He groaned, his head moving in denial; then suddenly pain, pain that seemed impossible to suffer hit him. A scream was wrenched from him, then, just as swiftly the pain subsided, even before he could writhe in agony. It was still there, like a knife, but it was tolerable. Pressure, on his face; and in his mind, a presence. He opened his eyes. a blurred outline was leaning over him, but he knew it was Spock. The presence in his mind was Spock also. Weakly he reached up and grabbed the Vulcan's wrist.

*Spock... no... *

Spock reached through the red mist. *Together, James Kirk. We are as one, as we have been before.*

*Spock... no... *

Together, Jim. Bear... and conquer the pain. Share, triumph over pain.

McCoy stared in horror as Kirk screamed that once, then fell silent. Spock's face was creased with lines of agony and concentration. It was horribly fascinating. Kirk was partially conscious and was lying quietly while McCoy was trying to finish the operation. He saw Kirk grab Spock's wrist.

'Don't break the contact, Jim! For God's sake, no!' McCoy screamed inwardly. 'It's just a little longer. I've just got to close up now. Hang on!'

He glanced at the display again. Neural activity was wild. They were both feeling it then; McCoy realised. Sharing it, bearing it out. Perspiration was running from both of them. Spock was trembling with the effort.

'Hurry, Enterprise. Please hurry!'

Waiting. It was unbearable having to sit here and just wait, but there was nothing McCoy could do. The medical tricorder's display was serving as an

emergency beacon. As soon as the Enterprise entered orbit she would pick up the signal.

The wound was closed. Kirk was still alive, but that meld was draining him and Spock. If the Enterprise didn't arrive soon he could lose both of them. Both? No, not that. Kirk would never forgive him if the Vulcan died because of...

A familiar humming sound. McCoy turned slowly, hardly able to believe...

"Dr. McCoy! At last. Mr. Scott was going to - "

"Give me that blasted communicator quick!" McCoy exploded. He jumped up, ran to Security Officer Garrovick and snatched it from him; successfully smearing blood on him as well. "McCoy to Enterprise, give me sickbay. Emergency! I want 20ccs of melenex, now! This second!"

"Yes, Dr. McCoy," Nurse Chapel said, coolly efficient as always, but this time failing to calm McCoy's shattered nerves.

"Come on, hurry!"

Nurse Chapel materialised in less than thirty seconds. No sooner had she done so than McCoy snatched the hypo from her hand, ran to Kirk and pressured it in. Chapel stared in horror when both Kirk and Spock screamed together, then seemed to relax. Spock keeled over, gasping for breath, shaking with the strain of maintaining the meld for such a lengthy period of time.

Nurse Chapel went over to McCoy. Realisation was beginning to dawn as to what had been going on. Numbly she handed her medical pouch to McCoy who administered 10ccs of stokaline to Spock.

"W-what was that, Dr. McCoy?" he managed to ask.

"Just something to get your strength up. How do you feel?"

"How is the Captain?"

"Out cold." He stood up. "McCoy to Enterprise."

"Scott here, Doctor. What's been happening? Where's - ?"

"Please, Scotty not now. I want a stretcher ready in the transporter room, and tell M'Benga I want a unit of blood for the Captain. We'll be ready to beam up in 30 seconds. McCoy out."

He turned to face Spock, who had risen to his feet and was bending down to pick up Kirk in his arms. Garrovick rushed to give him a hand. Thirty seconds later they materialised thankfully in the familiar surroundings of the transporter room.

Spock and Garrovick gently laid Kirk on the stretcher and M'Benga quickly set up the blood unit. The transporter chief debated whether to faint or not when he saw the condition the three were in. He didn't realise that they were all covered in one person's blood - Kirk's.

McCoy had a good look at Spock and himself when they reached sickbay. He hadn't realised they were so filthy. Apart from being covered in blood, their faces and uniforms were dirty and black.

"I think, Dr. McCoy, I'd better see to Captain Kirk. It'll take you hours to get cleaned up," M'Benga said, looking critically at them.

"I guess you're right. Now, the fourth, fifth and sixth ribs are broken, and the fifth has punctured the right lung. I wasn't able to touch that. He also ruptured his spleen, but I managed to close it. I want you to check that the seal has held because conditions were bad down there. It may need to be resealed, as I only had one skin grafter."

"I don't know how you managed it, Leonard."

"Neither do I! O.K. If you'd like to start. I don't know what else is wrong. I couldn't do as much as I liked, so you'd better go carefully. Chris," this to Chapel, "give him a hand please."

"Yes, doctor."

"Spock, go and get cleaned up."

"I will do so, Doctor, and I recommend that you do the same."

"You'd better get some sleep. That meld took a lot out of you."

"I will rest when I think fit, Doctor. Now if you will excuse me, I will go and change."

"That damned Vulcan!" McCoy exploded as Spock left and Scott entered.

"Dr. McCoy! What's been happening? I've been worried half to death!"

McCoy gave a large sigh and collapsed into a convenient chair. "I did something today I never want to do again. And that's operate on a man without enough anaesthetic. I'm telling you, Scotty, it was hard, especially when it was Jim."

"How did you... how did he...?"

"Spock joined with him in a meld and diverted the major part of the pain, although he was still in agony while I was operating. I was worried when Jim grabbed Spock's wrist. I thought he was going to break the meld. Thank god he didn't or he'd have died right there and then from the shock. I had to operate, otherwise Jim would have died two hours or so ago."

"How's the Captain now?"

"I don't know. M'Benga's with him. I just hope he's got enough strength left to pull through. God, I'm tired, but I must stay. I must know."

"Take it easy, Dr. McCoy. Let me know as soon as you find out. I'll be on the bridge. I guess the report can wait."

"You're damn right it can!"

McCoy went and cleaned himself up, and treated a couple of minor burns he discovered. The next two and a half hours were spent pacing up and down his office whilst Spock sat quietly in a chair meditating.

Finally M'Benga appeared, looking tired and drawn. He sighed and flopped down into the nearest chair.

"Well?" McCoy demanded, going up to him and almost shaking him by the shoulders.

"Jesus, what a mess; I did it, but I don't know how. That repair you did was fine, though. I've got Christine watching him. Vital signs are far too weak. I've given him the works, but nothing's happening; and he's on his fifth unit of blood."

"What about that right lung?"

"It hadn't collapsed, but that rib did a lot of damage. You were lucky he didn't choke on you during that op. There was a lot of blood in there. All I can say is he must have hit whatever he hit pretty hard. When he comes round he'll be in pain, with all that bruising."

"May I?"

"Sure, Doc. He's your patient really."

McCoy went through, followed by Spock. The lights were down because of Kirk's head wound.

"O.K., Chris, go and get some rest," McCoy said to the tired nurse sitting by Kirk's side. She smiled thankfully and left.

Spock and McCoy stood quietly at the end of the bed. McCoy studied the diagnostic panel and shook his head. Kirk had saved their lives again when he pulled that craft out of the dive. It wouldn't be fair if he died. McCoy sighed and moved around to check the levels of the various units hanging on their supports.

Spock moved to stand by Kirk's head. Unconsciously he brushed a stray lock of hair away from Kirk's face. This man had taught him that emotion was not a bad thing, and had shown him its value. Yes, he did feel compassion for the man lying beside him, and only that man knew the whole truth.

McCoy watched the action with compassion. They had been through a lot together, and it added up to an unusual relationship - unique, even. He exited quietly. Let them have their moment of peace together. There was plenty of time now. All they could do was wait.

Spock sat by Kirk's bedside for hours, staring at Kirk sleeping peacefully. Vital signs had begun to rise, but Spock wouldn't be satisfied until Kirk opened his eyes.

It was then that he became aware of a change. Kirk was coming round. Spock got up quietly and called McCoy who arrived - almost - at a dead run.

They waited patiently, silently.

Kirk's head moved slightly; and then, very slowly, he swallowed. A little more time passed and his eyes slowly flickered open. He blinked several times and found himself staring into two worried looking faces.

"S-Spock... Bones..." It was no more than a whisper, but McCoy's face broke into a grin that threatened to split his face in half.

"Welcome back, Jim," he said feelingly.

Spock said nothing. There was no need to. They knew what there was between them.

"Spock... I do... believe... you're smiling," Kirk whispered.

"Me, Captain?" Spock asked, his eyebrows migrating in a northerly direction towards his scalp. "You must be mistaken. I never smile."

"Course... not, Spock. My... mistake... Sorry."

NEW CHANCE by Ann Neilson

What is this strange sensation?
 Is it the stirring of some emotion?
 It is not logical, therefore it cannot be
 And yet, when I look deeper sometimes I see
 What I tell myself cannot be there.
 A curious experience, but would I dare
 Step out from behind my Vulcan veil
 And let others see my private hell.
 No, my Vulcan heritage is too strong
 And my heart has lain hidden for so long.
 I made my choice many years ago
 And chose the Vulcan path, although -
 At night I sometimes dream
 Of what my life just might have been.

Scotty always called a spade a spade - until he tripped over one.

MUSIC OF THE SPHERES by Simone Mason

"Captain Kirk," said Commodore Mendez, "new orders are being transmitted for the Enterprise. Abandon your routine mission and go to Planet Alegnor, co-ordinates to follow, to assist the colony there. Strange messages have been received requesting assistance."

Another weird one! thought Kirk with resignation as he listened. The Enterprise seemed to get them all! "Any other information, sir?" he asked respectfully.

"Not much, I'm afraid, Captain. To tell you the truth, the messages sounded as though emanating from lunatics! Something about globes driving people mad and beautiful music being a menace. Could be collective insanity. Find out and lend all possible assistance. Good luck, Captain."

"Sounds like a job for McCoy," exclaimed Kirk as the screen went dark. "Don't you think so, Spock?"

"Possibly, Captain. If insanity is proven however, what caused it?"

"I see what you mean. A job for us, anyway."

Spock looked up the records on Planet Alegnor and reported, "The planet has a newly established colony, Captain, after the usual surveys reported it uninhabited and safe. It's an earth type world, nothing unusual about it at all."

"What about the colonists?"

"Nothing unusual there either, Captain."

"We'll just have to wait and see, then."

Establishing orbit around Alegnor presented no difficulties, but no answer was received to Uhura's attempts at communication.

"Spock, is everyone dead?" asked Kirk.

"Negative, Captain. According to sensors, the colonists are alive."

"Then we have no choice but to beam down and try to solve the mystery. Bones, have a medical team standing by should it be needed. The landing party will consist of Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy and myself, plus two security officers. Mr. Scott, you have the con. Do not beam anyone else down unless I order it."

"Aye, sir, and good luck."

They materialised on the outskirts of the colonists' settlement and McCoy took a deep breath. "Just like home, Jim! These people are lucky. Look at those trees, that river, the lake... beautiful!"

"Thinking of retirement, Bones?" laughed Kirk.

"Just the place for it!"

They entered the settlement, which looked deserted, but people could be working in the plantations. Spock led them to a central dwelling, larger than the others, where he detected the presence of colonists. They knocked on the door, then knocked and knocked again, to no avail.

"This must be a case of collective deafness as well as madness!" exclaimed Kirk. "We have no choice but to go in uninvited."

He tried to push the door open, but it was locked, so getting his phaser out he blasted the lock and they entered, only to be faced with a very normal scene of a few people working at repairing agricultural machinery while another sat at a desk writing. No-one looked up. They had not heard the blast! Kirk approached the man at the desk and touched his shoulder lightly, getting a

violent reaction as the colonist screamed and leaped up in a fury.

"I told you not to do that!" His fury was replaced by surprise, then relief and joy as he exclaimed, "You must be Captain Kirk! Thank God you are here!"

"Why didn't you answer our calls?"

"Just a minute, Captain." He shut the door and blocked it with a chair, then asked, "Can you hear music?"

Kirk looked at McCoy who had been unobtrusively running his scanner over the man. "He is all right, Jim, nothing wrong."

"I can't hear any music," assured Kirk, shaking his head. "Why should I...?"

The colonist took ear plugs out of his ears. "Good! Now we can talk. But first take these and use them if needed." Taking some ear plugs out of a drawer he handed them over to the officers.

"Why?" asked Kirk, baffled.

"In case we hear music, of course! I'm not mad, Captain, heed my warning! But let me introduce myself; I'm Venn, leader of this colony."

Kirk introduced his officers and asked again, "Why didn't you answer our calls? Don't you monitor your transmitter?"

"It was destroyed recently during an incident with the globes."

"You'd better put us in the picture."

"Yes, Captain. Did you notice the lake nearby?"

"Yes."

"One day, shortly after we settled here, luminous globes emerged from the water. They were beautiful, and music emanated from them, an ethereal haunting music which fascinated us. We assumed they were animals like birds or insects which can also produce sounds. No dangerous animals had been reported here, but we weren't too happy about these strange creatures, mainly when their music started disrupting our work schedule because people wanted to listen! Then a child went to the edge of the lake unnoticed and a globe was going to touch him when his father shot at it and they all disappeared back into the water. We decided that we had to investigate and discover once and for all if they were a danger; many of us were becoming uneasy at the strange effect their music had. It was acting like a drug and some of us were becoming addicted. I asked for volunteers and two colonists went and stood at the edge of the water when the globes reappeared. They reported that the music was even more beautiful than before. It seemed to fill their heads. Then one globe approached and they touched it with great caution. They might as well not have bothered with the caution - they both started screaming and ran back to us, their hands over their ears."

Venn stopped and shuddered, as though he could still hear the screams, then he added in a dull voice, "Both were hopelessly insane. There was nothing as could do."

"Any damage to their eardrums?" asked McCoy.

"No, Doctor, none. Their sanity snapped. Why?... Our doctor could not guess. Anyway, we decided to watch out and next time the globes appeared, to attack, make them retreat and perhaps leave us alone or move elsewhere, but it was no use... "

"What happened?" asked Kirk.

"We only have small weapons here, Captain, nothing like your phasers, assured as we had been that we had no enemies. Next time we heard the music, a group of four volunteers from among the unattached men attempted to scare the

globes. But once near the lake, the music must have taken them over because they dropped their weapons and listened entranced, exclaiming how beautiful it was. We managed to drag them away with difficulty, plugging their ears to stop further damage, but it was too late. They were like zombies, and still are to this day, mindless vegetables! Since then we wear ear plugs all the time and avoid the water areas. Fortunately we have a good well nearby."

"Why didn't you move elsewhere?" Kirk asked.

"We can't; not now, with all the crops planted! We would starve."

"The transmitter? Who destroyed it?"

"One of the shots went wild when we tried to scare the globes. Fortunately we had already contacted Starfleet to ask for help."

"A strange situation," reflected Kirk aloud. "Spock, how did the survey teams overlook these globes? They are usually very thorough."

"I may have the answer, Captain," said Vonn. "We chose this spot to settle because of its scenic beauty. The survey teams never stayed here, and the globes may only exist in this lake."

"Not if they are natives to this world," assured Spock. "However, a survey team would remain on the planet for a limited period and perhaps not long enough for the globes to appear. Some creatures are seasonal in their occurrence."

"You may be right, Commander," agreed Vonn, "but whatever happened, we hope you'll get us rid of these globes, Captain."

"We'll see what we can do," promised Kirk. "Have they continued to appear?"

"Yes, Captain, every evening before sunset, apart from odd times during the day. As we have ear plugs, we don't always notice. They have never made any move away from the lake area up to now. We have fired at them from a safe distance and they plunge back into the water."

"Do you hurt them?"

"I don't know, Captain."

"Hm... Bones, see if you can get anything from the victims, or do anything for them, then join us on the outskirts of the settlement, at the side of the lake, to decide what to do."

"Right, Jim. See you."

The doctor left, and Kirk added, "You may go back to your work, Mr. Vonn, it's our problem now."

"Glad to hear it, and the best of luck, Captain," replied Vonn with feeling, putting his ear plugs back in.

On the outskirts of the settlement, Kirk watched the sparkling water of the lake reflecting the sunlight and asked, "Well, Spock, any ideas?"

"No, Captain, I have no data apart from Vonn's report."

"Speculations?"

Before he could answer, McCoy joined them and reported, "The colonists' minds snapped under stress, Jim, nothing physical. I see little hope of recovery, but have had them beamed aboard for further tests."

"These things are definitely a threat," reflected Kirk. "What are they?"

"Until you capture one, Jim, who can tell?"

Kirk turned back to his science officer. "Spock, your speculations?"

"They could be native to this planet, Captain."

"Really, Spock, of all the wild ideas... " protested McCoy. "If they were the survey teams would not have missed them, the planet has plenty of lakes and rivers."

"Did you mean native animals or native intelligence, Spock?" asked Kirk.

"Unknown, Captain, it could be either. They could also be an alien life form from another world. Speculations are numerous and futile at this stage."

"Yes, you're right," agreed Kirk. "It'll be sunset in about an hour, we may find some answers then."

When the sun started to go down, giving the water of the lake a shimmer of golden light, Kirk gave his orders. "Have ear plugs handy, all of you. At the slightest discomfort, put them in. Phasers on stun, we want to try to capture one of these things to know what or who it is. So I'll be the bait and go to the edge of the lake. No arguments, Spock, you and Bones will be busy with tricorder and scanner getting as much data as you can. Follow me with the guards at a distance of about ten metres. Use phasers when and if a globe comes near me and can be shot at over ground, not over water or we'll lose it. Is that clear?"

"Jim, what if more than one globe... "

"Only one or two should be in the lead, Bones, but it doesn't matter if we stun more than one."

"Captain," asked Spock, "if the phasers have no effect on stun... ?"

"Set to kill only if I'm in grave danger. Spock, you give that order by prearranged signal if necessary. No-one is to shoot to kill unless Spock orders it."

"One last question, Captain," said the First Officer. "May I have your permission to dispense with the ear plugs?"

"Because you can block... Yes, all right, Spock, you may find out something, but take care! Being a Vulcan does not necessarily make you immune... "

"I will be careful, Captain."

The doctor was busy setting his scanner and Spock drew Kirk aside unobtrusively. "Jim, may I suggest I link minds with you?"

"To protect me? No, Spock, data is what we need on those things and you are the one to get it, with McCoy. I'll be cautious."

The First Officer was looking at his Captain with a concern Kirk could detect, used as he now was to the Vulcan. "Look, Spock, if I do go berserk, you'll be needed to take over."

"Jim, you could become a mindless vegetable as the colonists did," murmured Spock, his dark eyes now clearly expressing their anxiety. Kirk could not help a shudder at such a prospect, but replied firmly,

"It's a risk I have to take, and my mind has been trained. It would be illogical for both of us to run the risk, Spock, don't you agree?"

"I have to agree, Jim, but... " He did not have to say any more. Both knew that what they dreaded most, the death of one, hung in the air between them. Kirk smiled and pressed the Vulcan's shoulder lightly for reassurance, then they joined McCoy and the others. It should not be long now.

"Take care, Jim," murmured the doctor as they saw the water of the lake ripple and form tiny waves. Then a number of luminous orange globes, about three times the size of a man's head, emerged slowly and the air was filled with an ethereal music which was a delight to the ear, a beautiful harmonious

sound flowing from the flame coloured orbs as they glided over the water in a graceful movement, like a ballet of sheer artistry which also riveted the eye.

"Ear plugs in!" ordered Kirk as he started walking to the lake and the others followed at the distance ordered, Spock slightly ahead should he have to signal. The two security guards had their phasers at the ready and Spock and McCoy were busy with their instruments as the First Officer murmured,

"Fascinating!"

This brought no comment from McCoy who could not hear it -- for once!

Kirk was now only a few steps from the shore and stopped, unable not to be entranced by the beautiful creatures. How could such beauty kill? But he was only too aware that appearances could be deceptive as he watched the globes stop hesitantly by the edge of the water.

After a few minutes, the Captain became a little impatient. No move was being made on either side, and they needed a globe... Perhaps he had to be listening... He decided to give it a try; he could put the plugs back quickly if he felt threatened by the music.

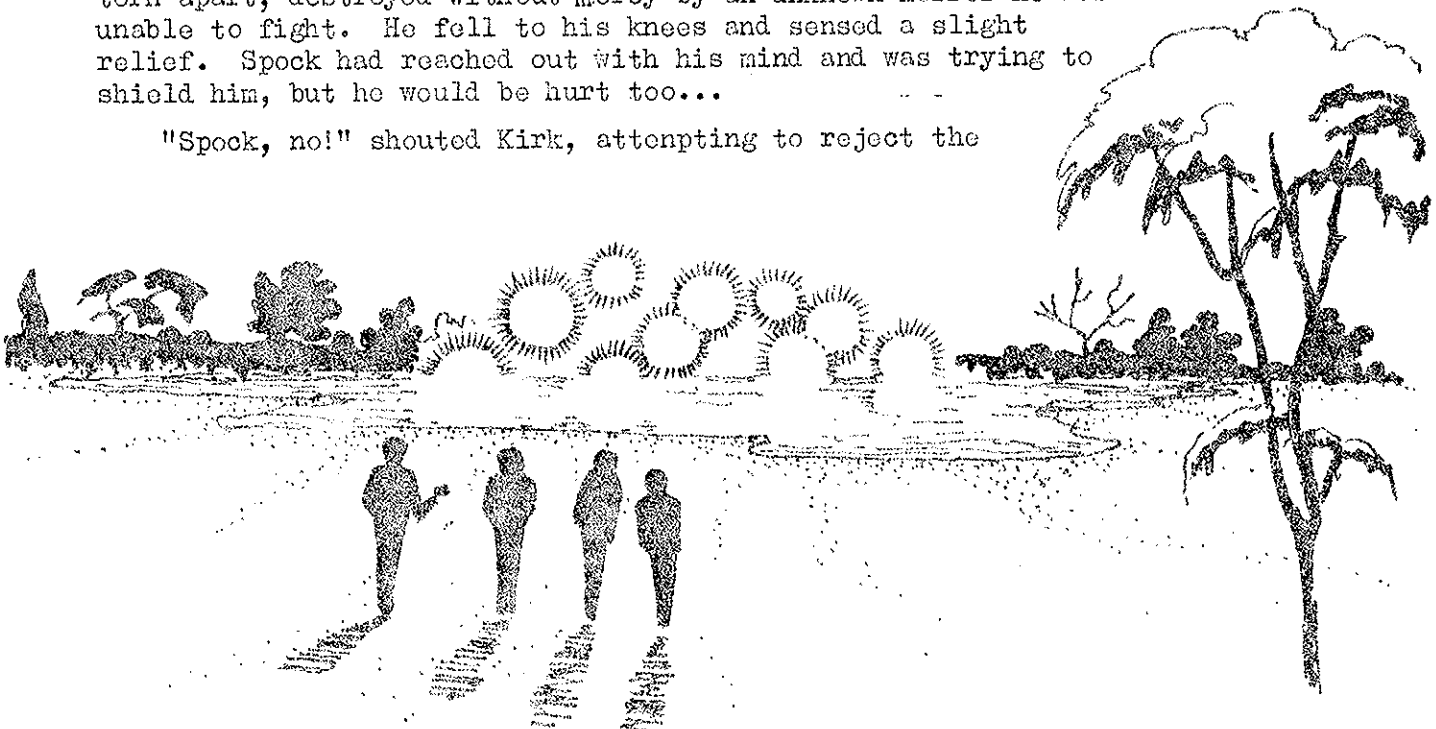
The sound immediately filled his head, soft and melodious. He had never heard anything like it! A wonder to the ear! A globe was now leaving the water to approach him, and Kirk stepped back a little more to lure it nearer the range of phaser fire. The globe followed very slowly and he heard the sound of the weapons, which made the globe waver, but without further effect it continued to approach him.

The Captain no longer stepped back. He did not want to. His mind, his whole being was filled with the urgent desire to meet the beautiful globe, merge with it in order to understand even more the beauty of the music he was drowning in, a drowning which held no terror, only acute pleasure.

He did not even hear the warning shouts from McCoy behind him. No-one, nothing existed any longer except the call of a music the like of which he had never heard before. He had to touch it, feel it...

Then the globe touched his outstretched hands and immediately the music became a cacophony of harsh and brutal sounds, a shrieking pitch of notes which tore at his ears, his brain, like a burning dagger. His hands went to his head as he swayed and screamed helplessly, his mind was being torn apart, destroyed without mercy by an unknown horror he was unable to fight. He fell to his knees and sensed a slight relief. Spock had reached out with his mind and was trying to shield him, but he would be hurt too...

"Spock, no!" shouted Kirk, attempting to reject the



Vulcan, make him get away from the nightmare or he would be trapped too... Then shelter appeared, a welcoming darkness where silence enveloped him and he sank into it as he lost consciousness, a merciful release from the pain, aware that Spock had opened that door for him to take refuge, so he was safe!

Behind him, when the phasers had no effect on the globe, McCoy looked at Spock absorbed by his tricorder and shouted, "Give the order, Spock, kill the thing or it'll kill Jim!"

The Vulcan shook his head, seized the two phasers from the hands of the surprised security guards and hurled them away. The globe was now touching Kirk. McCoy took his own phaser out and fired as Spock deflected the aim then took possession of the weapon and hurled it away also. The globe had fallen and was trying to get back to the water as Spock and McCoy ran to Kirk.

"Grab that thing, Spock," shouted McCoy, "while I see to Jim."

It was with disbelief that the doctor and the security guards saw the Vulcan pick up the globe very carefully, walk to the water and throw it in, where it disappeared from view, and the others also plunged back into the lake.

"Spock, you disobeyed orders!" exclaimed McCoy in anger, removing his ear plugs. "Jim is hurt, how much I don't know yet, and you... you help his attacker!" The Vulcan ignored him, busying himself with his tricorder, and McCoy shrugged and examined the Captain, getting more and more agitated. His face was white and his voice shook as he stated, "His mind is gone! He's nothing but a mindless... Spock, can you try to reach him?"

"Negative, Doctor. Too far... However, this is not the immediate problem."

"Spock, have you been affected by those globes? You stopped us from killing it, let Jim be hurt, and rescued the thing instead of capturing it. Why?"

"Because of the music, Doctor," replied the Vulcan absently, intent on the tricorder as he paced along the lake shore.

This is too inhuman even for Spock! thought McCoy in complete bewilderment. While Jim had collapsed unconscious the Vulcan had stood very still and done nothing apart from throwing the phasers away! Wasn't he going to get any reaction... "Do you realise," he said aloud in a deadly tone, "that if Jim does not recover, you'll have killed him?"

"I'd suggest that you beam aboard with your patient, Doctor," replied Spock in his usual cool voice.

"And I want you in sickbay for a check up, Spock - "

"Must you be illogical to the point of wasting time on healthy people, Doctor?"

After a furious look, McCoy gave up and beamed up with Kirk, hoping against hope that his verdict has been hasty and incomplete.

But further tests confirmed his worst fears. The Captain had become a zombie, staring at nothing, like the colonists before him.

After M'Benga has confirmed his findings, the doctor retired to his office and wept bitterly, a mixture of frustration at his inability as a doctor to help Kirk and rage at the waste of such a life for the sake of a globe, of all things!

When he had recovered a little from his grief, he called the bridge and Mr. Scott answered.

"Where is Spock?" asked McCoy in a ferocious tone.

"Working, Doctor. The whole science department and many of my lads are assisting him."

"To do what?"

"Build a new computer, I think."

"I don't believe it! Aren't there enough of the wretched things aboard?"

"I wouldn't know, Doctor. How is the Captain?"

"Hopeless. He might as well be dead," replied McCoy despairingly. "What's happening on the planet?"

"Security is keeping an eye on the lake to protect the colonists, with ear plugs and orders to make the globes retreat by stunning only."

"Where is Spock working? I'll have a word..."

"Orders are that he's not to be disturbed under any circumstances."

"We'll see about that."

McCoy ran to the main science lab where one of the scientists indicated a booth where the Vulcan was shut in. "He doesn't want to be disturbed, Doctor."

McCoy took no notice, and opened the door of the booth. The room filled with the beautiful music of the globes emerging from Spock's tricorder, but he stopped it at once.

"So you can't be without it!" exclaimed the doctor. "They have taken you over!"

Spock had got up and came out, shutting the door. "What did you want, Doctor? A crisis?"

"Don't you want to know how Jim is?"

"You already told me."

"Can't you help him?"

"I am not a physician, Doctor."

"Don't you understand he is as good as dead?" exclaimed McCoy in a fury. "There's nothing I can do!"

"Doctor, I have no time to spare for the hysterics Humans seem to enjoy so much; I find them particularly distasteful. You will leave this lab and not be admitted again."

Unbelieving, McCoy found himself in the corridor. A couple of guards arrived and took up position outside the door.

The doctor called the Chief Engineer to his quarters. "I'm going to relieve him of command, Scotty. Those globes have taken him over."

"Just a minute, Leonard. Who or what are those globes? What did you discover?"

"They are not life as we know it, and by their behaviour, they are vicious --"

"They may be aliens..."

"So? Is that a logical reason to let them get away with destroying Jim?"

"Spock is up to something, Leonard..."

"Then he should tell us! Why is he hiding? And he should try to help Jim!"

"You're right there, but can he?"

"He didn't even try! If he has been taken over, we are all in danger. Those things may want the Enterprise!"

This bothered Scotty. "They won't get her!"

"Spock must prove he is himself or I relieve him of command."

"Don't be hasty, Leonard. I don't want to be landed with such a problem..." But McCoy was not listening and had called the lab. It was only after several threats that he managed to get Spock out and into the room where Kirk was. The Chief Engineer himself was rather shocked by the First Officer's complete indifference to the sight of Kirk's vacant expression.

"As I said before, Dr. McCoy," stated Spock coldly, "I am no physician. There is nothing I can do here and it is highly illogical that I should have to waste time..."

"Spock, you must prove to us that you are yourself."

"No, Doctor. You are the one who has to prove your suspicions correct. Your illogical assumption is groundless and I have wasted five minutes..."

"Look, Spock," begged McCoy, trying to remain calm, "Jim may not live much longer. I've noticed a slow deterioration..."

"How long, Doctor?"

"Fifteen... sixteen days at the most and he'll be dead. Can't you try something? A mind meld?"

"Fifteen days," murmured Spock absently. "Thank you for the information, Doctor. I have no time to waste on trying a mind meld; you said yourself there is no mind there." He walked out and back to the lab to immerse himself in work once more.

McCoy tried and tried to do something for Kirk, but it was no use, and the doctor had to admit that Spock's words had been right, there was no mind there. Then he started to get a long line of patients arriving in various stages of exhaustion after working for Spock, who only released them from duty when dead on their feet. Within a week, the whole science department was tired out and had to be carried out of the main lab where Spock went on working relentlessly. All this made Scotty wonder if McCoy was right about the First Officer, who spent time playing music on his lyre which he had changed and adapted to a different range of harmonics for some reason of his own. The door of the lab was locked, no-one was admitted and no call was answered; the Chief Engineer was in charge of the ship.

Kirk's condition was getting worse as expected, and the only consolation for McCoy was that the Captain was in no pain.

The colonists on the other hand were getting impatient and Scotty had his hands full trying to placate them. They were threatening to contact Starfleet on their new transmitter if matters remained stationery. The Chief Engineer assured them that work was being done on the problem, but what work? He had no idea, and neither had anyone else. All that was known was that Spock had had a new computer built to his specifications and spent his time listening or playing music!

The doctor decided to leave him be until Kirk died, after which he would make it his business to have a reckoning with the Vulcan! Scotty for his part did not know what to think, and the fact that the First Officer was working non-stop without food or sleep indicated an urgency, but an urgency for what? Why was music so important? Is a weapon against the globes? Speculations aboard were numerous, but no-one knew the answer.

On the fourteenth day, Spock emerged from the lab at last. He looked haggard with exhaustion but his voice was clear and firm as he gave orders to Scotty to beam down some apparatus to a spot by the lake.

Then he arrived at the transporter with Kirk in a wheelchair and a surprised Scotty beamed them down as requested, only to be confronted by a furious McCoy a few minutes later.

"Why didn't you stop him?" he asked, rubbing his neck. "That Vulcan put me out just like that, without a word... What's he up to? Beam me down."

"I'll come too! I'm not too happy about these goings on."

But they couldn't approach Spock and Kirk. A forcefield protected a portion of the lake shore, inside which the Vulcan was busy with a new tricorder he had made, while Kirk, in his wheelchair, stared vacantly in front of him.

"Orders are not to interfere whatever happens, Doctor," reported the Security Chief. "We couldn't anyway, not with the forcefield... "

"That was the apparatus I was asked to beam down," murmured Scotty, baffled. "A forcefield generator. But why?"

Spock had his lyre and started playing, hesitantly at first, then with more assurance, and the globes appeared out of the water and floated to the shore.

Kirk was submerged in a warm darkness where there was no feeling of sensory deprivation, a darkness of silence and peace he had no desire to leave. He sensed someone near him with fear, who... He was relieved when he recognised Spock, but the Vulcan said urgently, "Come, Jim, it's time to go back."

"Back where? I don't want to go, Spock, please... "

"You must, Jim, and you would want to if you were yourself, but the music affected your mind. You must help me to restore it to your body. The globes will help now that they know."

"Where am I, Spock?"

"In my mind, Jim. But I kept you apart to leave you time to recover... "

"Yes, of course! That's why I felt so safe! Do I have to leave, Spock? Don't you want me to... "

"Jim!" interrupted the Vulcan with a distinct note of fear, "don't. You would regret saying it... I am now drawing you into my conscious mind and you'll remember everything and wish to return to your body. Do not fear the globes, and trust me."

Kirk did not resist the growing meld with Spock's mind and it restored all his faculties as he became himself again. "Spock, you're exhausted! Can I help?"

"You'll have to, Jim, I couldn't do it all. When the transfer is completed, with the globes' help... "

"Spock, how do I happen to be here?"

"Not now, Jim, there's no time. You'll find my new tricorder at the side of your chair. I have adapted it to absorb the globes' music before it reaches you and hurts you, and translate it into words. It should also translate your words into music for them, but it could fail - I didn't have time for enough experiments, so take care."

Kirk had the distinct impression that Spock was hiding something from him, but was distracted by the sight of a craft rising from the water - a typical flying saucer shape which settled gracefully on the shore. Although not large by ordinary standards, it was still about twice the size of a shuttlecraft. A round opening appeared and a large globe emerged and floated over to Kirk and Spock.

The Captain was not too happy when thin tentacles extended from it to touch their heads, but Spock murmured, "I won't let it hurt you, Jim, do not fear."

Kirk relaxed under the soothing mental reassurance from the Vulcan, the feeling of safety and security returning to the full and even the sound of the music did not upset him. It was slow and did not invade him this time, only touched his mind gently, a light and delicate touch which reminded him of Spock when reaching for the meld. He understood the Vulcan was somehow channelling the soft notes to avoid any hurt as he felt himself being pushed - or

pulled? He was not sure which - to the sound of a soft harmony he found pleasing and soothing; it radiated care and gentleness and a wish to help, and he followed it when Spock whispered, "Go now, Jim, it's time."

A part of Kirk protested and rebelled, wanting to stay in the so warm friendship... but he firmly pushed it aside, conscious of Spock's increasing tiredness and strain.

The wrench was painful though when he knew he had left his sanctuary, but it did not last and it was with relief that he sensed he was back where he belonged, inside his own body.

He put his head in his hands, trying to readapt slowly. It was a weird sensation to have to become accustomed again to something like his body, an essential part of him he had always taken for granted before. But there was something at the back of his mind bothering him, only he could not think what it was... or did he just miss Spock? Maybe that was what it was; each mind meld was somehow different, but the same when it came to the closeness, the sharing... But Spock had not shared fully, he had hidden something... He had to concentrate on the readaptation first, then think again.

McCoy and Scotty, powerless watchers of the strange scene and unable to understand what was going on, saw a haze form as the saucer rose again and plunged back into the water, and all the globes followed. It was then that Scotty noticed the forcefield had become inoperative.

"Ran out of power, I expect!" he murmured as they rushed to Kirk and realised that Spock had disappeared. "What on earth is going on?" he added.

McCoy also looked rather confused. "I don't know, Scotty. First I'll get Jim back aboard." He approached the wheelchair and murmured soothingly, "You must be tired, Jim, time for bed like a good boy!" using the terms he had come to apply to Kirk while he had to be treated as a child.

"What's the matter with you, Bones?" asked the Captain lifting his head. "What on earth are you talking like that for?"

"Jim!" exclaimed the doctor in disbelief. "You're here... "

"Of course I'm here!"

"You're all right!" gasped McCoy, running his scanner with trembling hands.

"Of course I'm all right! Spock... Where's Spock?" he exclaimed in alarm, getting up and nearly falling, his legs stiff after the long immobility.

"He was with you, Captain," replied Scotty, "but we didn't see... Perhaps the craft took him."

"What for? What do they want?" asked Kirk of no-one in particular, trying to remember... but he couldn't. His eyes fell on the tricorder and he seized it. "He told me I could use this to talk to the aliens! Scotty, can you see how it works?"

"He might not be able to live in that craft, Jim," said McCoy worriedly. "We know nothing of these aliens."

"Hurry, Scotty!" begged Kirk.

Having mastered the controls at last, Kirk called out to the globes, without success at first. He repeated the call, and it was rather odd to hear his voice transformed into a high note!

Two globes appeared at last but remained above the water ready to plunge back.

"Do you have my First Officer?" asked Kirk.

"Yes, Captain Kirk," was the short answer.

"Then I want his immediate release, or your act could be construed as another hostile... "

"Captain," interrupted one of the globes, the tricorder translating the music, "your First Officer is with us voluntarily; in fact, he begged us to take him."

"What are you talking about?"

"When we attempted to take your mind, he intervened and offered an exchange, his mind for your own, if we released your mind into his custody and helped to transfer it back after he had the chance to learn our language. He proved his good faith by helping the one you wounded, so we agreed and kept to the terms of the agreement."

So that's what you kept hidden, Spock! thought Kirk as he sat weakly in the chair, and now...

"How did he manage to communicate with you?" asked McCoy curiously.

"He used images, mental images he projected to us in a very simple way, and we understood and chose to trust him; he is different. But whether he'll be any real use to us... "

"What are you doing to him?" asked Kirk dully. "Torture?"

"Captain, don't you think there has been enough misunderstanding between our two species?"

"All the hostile acts were on your side!"

"No, Captain, hostility originated among your kind, and one of us was hurt by what you call a phaser. We are trying to reach an understanding and decision about your race... "

"Then you shouldn't use a Vulcan! You should use me!"

"It does not work with you, Captain, any more than it worked with anyone else on this planet."

"Look, we're talking now, communicating, so what more do you want?"

"Our way is different, Captain; words mean little, they may not be truthful. A mind on the other hand cannot lie, once isolated and joined to us."

"You mean you extract minds from bodies?" asked McCoy, appalled. "No wonder the colonists went insane!"

"But Spock... he was tired out, exhausted... How will he fare, Bones?"

"I don't know, Jim. If he's not strong enough for the inevitable shocks... it may kill him... or worse," he added in a whisper, his mind refusing to face the picture of Spock, mindless, as Kirk had been.

"Don't," begged Kirk, pressing his hands to his forehead and also trying to reject the picture of Spock as a mindless... "It's not fair that a Vulcan... May I come aboard your craft and see my First Officer?" he asked the globes.

"You may do so," agreed one of the globes, "provided you come alone and unarmed."

"It's a trap, Jim! They have Spock, now they'll have you... "

"Would you release him if I came?" asked Kirk, ignoring McCoy.

"No, Captain. Your assistance is of doubtful value as far as we are concerned, but it may help your officer."

"Is he ill? I am not a doctor, and Dr. McCoy... "

"We'll accept only your presence aboard our vessel, Captain. We know you are no threat to us."

"If you hurt Spock, I would not be too sure about that! thought Kirk fiercely, but his voice was calm as he said aloud, "I'll come alone and unarmed as asked. Do you want my word that your ship won't be attacked?"

"No, Captain, it's impervious to your weapons."

The globes disappeared. McCoy was not happy but Kirk silenced him with the simple words, "Do you expect me to abandon Spock?"

"If they kill both of you, Captain," stated Scotty with cold determination, "the Enterprise will have a go at that craft, I promise you that!"

"No hasty act of war, Scotty - take care, don't endanger the ship!" was Kirk's last order as the craft appeared and a long gangway extended from it to the shore.

The Captain went aboard and was relieved he was not too big for it. He could walk comfortably upright but was rather dazzled by the brilliance everywhere, although he could see no globe. The walls or partitions inside were made of a shining alloy reflecting brilliant light from the ceiling, and he even had to shut his eyes from time to time against the glare.

He arrived in a circular room which he assumed to be in the centre of the craft and was taken aback and shaken to be faced with a strange being... an orange humanoid about half his height, with arms and legs and pointed ears... and a vague resemblance to Spock.

"No!" he said, recoiling from the creature, fighting fury at such caricature of his elegant and handsome First Officer. He still had the tricorder, so the alien heard him and replied.

"I thought you would find such an appearance more pleasing, Captain. Welcome aboard my ship. My name is Aalst, and I am... I suppose the term 'Captain' is adequate... I'm Captain of this ship."

"Never mind the formalities, where's Spock?"

"Behind you, Captain."

Kirk whirled round and saw the Vulcan lying on a strange metal frame. His eyes were shut, he was bare to the waist and strange luminous discs had been placed on his body, while a glaring orange light shone above his head. The Captain ran to him and saw the tenseness of the hands gripping the frame as sweat shone on his face and chest, making him appear bathed in an orange glow from the light above. He had nothing to... In a rage, Kirk tore his own shirt off and wiped the Vulcan's face, asking urgently, "Spock, are you all right?"

The First Officer's eyes opened, but they stared unseeingly. "Jim... No, I'm dreaming... "

"I am here, Spock!" shouted Kirk, shaking him. "Can't you see me?"

"No... I can't see... the light... "

"Turn that light off!" ordered Kirk without hesitation, glaring at Aalst.

The alien complied. "It is meant to help him, Captain... "

"Help him like you helped the colonists, to become insane! Spock, can you see me now?"

"No... but it doesn't matter, I know you are here. Jim - Why? You shouldn't be here... They promised to take me only when I gave myself up... "

"I was permitted to come and wanted to. Did you think I would let you... Are you all right?"

"I'm trying to keep my promise, Jim, but it's difficult to adapt... I can see you now, the blindness was only temporary due to the bright light... "

"That's something anyway! What promise are you talking about?"

"You know that, Captain," said Aalst. "His mind was promised in exchange for yours."

"What is that mania of yours for minds?" asked Kirk in anger. "Don't you respect life, privacy? A mind belongs to its owner, not you!"

"We are well aware of that fact, Captain, and have no wish to take a mind permanently. It is just our method of communication, a direct straightforward way which is usually painless. Your species is... different. Once we have taken a mind into one of us, we release it again, and any exchange is two-fold, our mind is seen by the other."

"It is their way, Jim, a telepathic exchange taken to its logical conclusion," explained Spock. "It is alien... to me. No Vulcan mind is ever subjected to such a demand as the complete release of mind from body... I believe I could achieve mastery of the strain if I was not... exhausted... "

"Can't they let you rest?"

"They don't understand the concept... and there is some urgency... I sensed it but cannot see... Jim, you should leave, there is nothing you can do... I gave my word... "

"If I join you, Spock," asked Kirk without hesitation, "can we do it together?"

"You do not know what you are saying... Don't you remember what you felt when the globe touched you?"

Kirk remembered only too well and shuddered. Could he go through that again?... For Spock...

"Look, Spock, my mind, my body, have done nothing for many days, they are rested and strong. Can't I be your strength, alleviate your tiredness?"

"Yes, to a certain extent," replied Spock with hesitation, "but... the whole process could make you insane!"

"Couldn't it make you insane as well?"

Kirk read fear in the dark eyes he knew so well. The loss of his mind was the one thing Spock had always feared, and yet he had voluntarily agreed... "We'll be in this together, Spock."

"No, Jim! I can't let you follow my mind into possible insanity... "

"Bones would say you are selfish, Spock," smiled Kirk, hiding his emotion. "We have shared much up to now, and I want to share this. Whatever the outcome, we'll be together."

Spock did not answer, but their hands gripped each other's and Kirk read all the thanks he needed in his First Officer's eyes.

The Vulcan was trying to get up and Kirk helped him. "What are all those discs?"

"They were supposed to help me, as was the light, but it does not work."

Kirk removed them easily and was perturbed by Spock's need to lean on him. A soft bed appeared as though by magic and he led the Vulcan to it, then turned to Aalst. "Our two minds will merge and you can go on from there. No artificial gadgets, please, they don't work."

"Very well, Captain," agreed the alien. "Time is running out anyway. In about three of your hours, my people will arrive here unless I warn them not to, so further delay is not advisable."

Kirk lay down by Spock's side and responded to the gentle touch of the mind meld with the deep emotional thrill he could never avoid, and never wished to!

He felt further moved when he sensed how his mere presence alleviated Spock's tiredness, and the partial drain of his energy to help the Vulcan replenish his own made their minds the closer to face the possible ordeal.

"We are ready," said Spock to Aalst.

The Captain was relieved to see the alien was back to a globe shape as he glided towards them and hovered by their side. "I don't want to harm you," said Aalst's voice through the tricorder. "If you do not fear me and if you trust me, the process should be painless. The obstacles are in your own minds, the fear and distrust interfere and wreck the harmony, hence the destruction."

So it's our fault! thought Kirk a little resentfully as Spock answered, "We'll attempt to respond, Aalst. Proceed."

Many more globes had entered the room and the music started. The tricorder had been turned off.

Kirk sensed Spock taking a fierce grip on his mind. *Respond to the music as you wish, Jim, but eliminate fear and distrust. Think of this as a possibly fascinating experience; a contact with an alien mind should be.*

It's one way of looking at it! agreed Kirk as he felt the music submerge him again. He violently quashed any memories of previous events and concentrated on the link with Spock instead, enjoying the sensation of floating in space, being one with its darkness full of the stars the music evoked for the Vulcan. Such a void! The attraction to fall into it became strong and powerful. Blind instinct made Kirk recoil, and a shrieking note pierced his mind, but Spock blanked it out immediately and the Captain cursed himself and faced the void again with memories of his youth, when he had wanted to go to the stars. Well, the stars were out there in that void, and he had to go to them! Spock had shared that dream and joined eagerly. Together they found delight in exploring each other's reminiscences of that particular dream, dream of reaching the furthest star, another galaxy even, one day, by going through that void, and all the time a haunting music accompanied them, reflecting exactly the vastness of space and its stars.

Neither noticed or felt the gentle touch of the two tentacles emerging from Aalst. They were floating through that void to fulfil their dream, meet aliens perhaps... but they were alien to each other!

Don't you think it's illogical, Spock? I'm not alien to you and you're not alien to me!

I believe there are exceptions to every rule, Jim.

The music was still audible, soft and beautiful, but somehow following their mood instead of them following the music. Where were they going anyway in that voyage through the void of space? A bright orange star was ahead and they guessed it was their destination.

It's beautiful! sighed Kirk, *like a globe of flames! Such radiance!*

We'll be there soon. It should be a fascinating exploration. Then Spock's thought became urgent. *Jim, distract me, quickly! Part of my mind knows what is going on and I must blank it out!*

Kirk tried frantically to think; at such short notice, what could... Not women! Math problem? Not a hope. McCoy! *Spock, you should have told Bones I was safe, you know!*

*I didn't have time to explain, and he wouldn't have believed it, he is too emotional. Had he not been so, he would have worked it out for himself; I'm sure you would! Can you imagine the Doctor able to deduce... *

It's working! smiled Kirk to himself with delight as Spock continued to explore McCoy's illogical processes. Good old Bones is often useful!

The music was still with them, ethereal and soothing, as they touched the star. Kirk had a moment of panic; you can't touch a star! But Spock had anticipated this and assisted him in clamping it down. *We are touching it, Jim, therefore we can.*

Logic has its uses, thought Kirk as he agreed and they entered the orange star slowly, an alien star of such brilliance that it was just as well their minds only were involved, and yet it was pleasant to move through the dazzling light.

Welcome, Captain, Commander, they sensed Aalst's mind saying. *I am greatly relieved we succeeded at last. It may indeed have been due to the merging of your two minds. You may see what you wish, ask as many questions as you want. Truth only can be seen between us now.*

We could have talked through the tricorder, protested Kirk.

And we could both have lied, Captain. Communication is what we have wanted all along. We never met your species before and regret any harm done.

Where do you come from?

Another galaxy, Captain. We had to leave our home. Our sun went nova.

Why didn't you search for another in your own galaxy?

We couldn't, Commander. Stars in our galaxy have an element which gives out deadly radiation. Such radiation is normally harmless to us in small doses from any star there, but when our star went nova, we could not escape in time, and received an overdose of the released radiation which made any extra amount, however small, deadly to us. We had no choice; we had to leave our galaxy or perish, hoping that in another galaxy the stars would not contain that element. Here, they do not. We now have to find a new world to settle on.

But this one is taken... Didn't you see the survey team?

There was no-one here when we landed. Then small groups of beings did arrive, and we remained hidden, not certain of their purpose. They departed, so the problem was solved, or so we thought; but then the others you call 'colonists' arrived. We guessed then they wanted to settle here too, and we had to communicate to discover whether our species and theirs were compatible and could co-exist. Our attempts failed; we did not know your minds could not leave your bodies without dying in the process.

Didn't you notice the strange effect your music had?

I can explain this, Captain, said Spock. *The music you hear is meant to make you want to merge with the globes, but Humans fear what they don't know or understand, and even well-hidden, that fear was enough to make the music into a dreadful sound which entailed madness.*

Because a mind, to us, is whole, without sections, explained Aalst further, *so any part of a Human mind could wreck the process.*

Thanks! exclaimed Kirk, rather taken aback. *Now I have to tell the colonists they engineered all the trouble!*

Our species is so alien to your own that we should perhaps have realised it and left, Captain, but our need is great! However, the main thing we have to know is the level of radiation you need to survive in strength and health.

Radiation? Radiation is deadly to us! exclaimed Kirk.

What kind of radiation do you mean?

*Ultra-violet radiation, Commander. We need a much higher level than exists here, but we have the means to remedy this by altering the atmosphere. However, if it should injure your species... *

Am I right in assuming that you have aboard your ship an artificial radiation source?

Yes, Commander. We have to submit to it regularly or we die.

I registered it from the lake shore, and the level is lethal to both Vulcans and Humans, said Spock quietly.

And we've been exposed! exclaimed Kirk.

The level here is not high enough to hurt us yet, Captain, but long exposure to the globes would effectively kill us.

Your information is correct, Commander, agreed Aalst. *We have come to the same conclusion. We are a danger to your species and therefore we will leave.*

Both Kirk and Spock were taken aback by the quick decision to withdraw, and yet they could easily read the alien's sincerity.

*You were here first... * Kirk started to say, his sense of fairness already making him decide the colonists could be moved.

Yes, Captain, interrupted Aalst, *but it is your galaxy. We have been studying your minds and see that most races here are more or less similar to yours, unable to have any prolonged contact with us. No matter how long it takes us, we have to find a world among species we are no danger to, or we would be faced with everlasting isolation.*

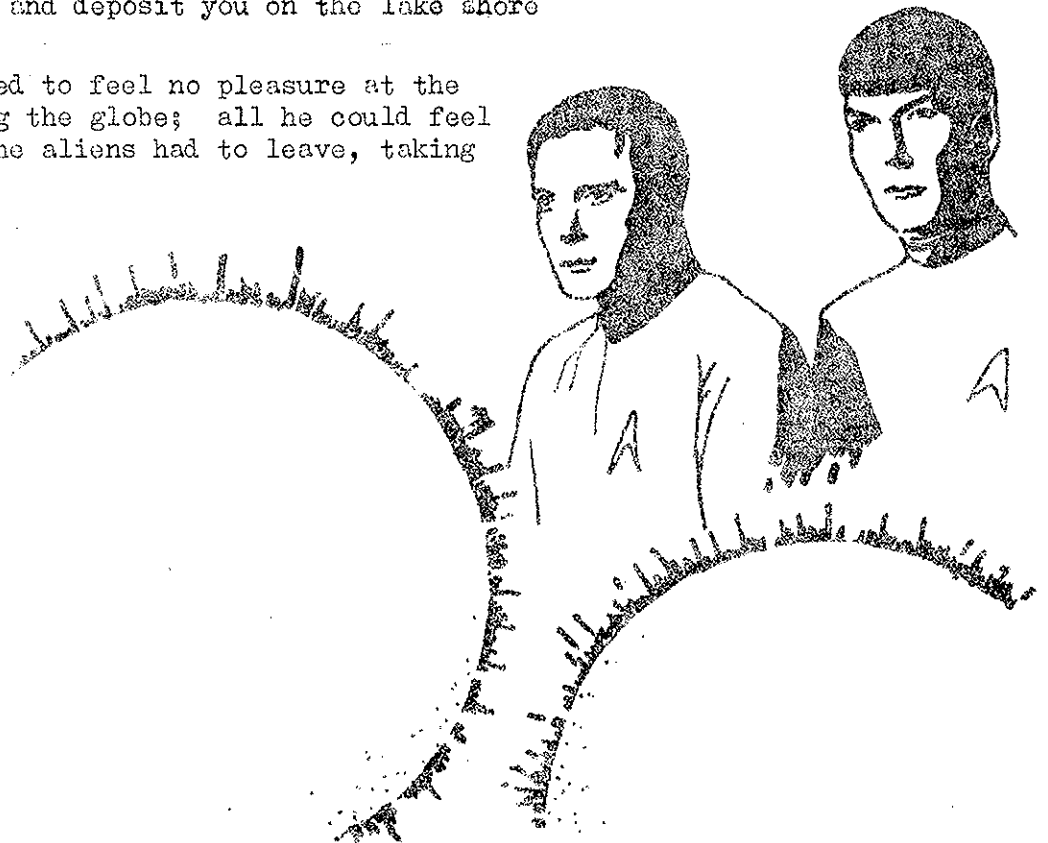
Logical, agreed Spock, *although the incompatibility between our races is regrettable. Your language is the most beautiful it has been my privilege to study.*

Thank you, Commander. You call it 'music', but 'singing' would be a more accurate term, it is our voice... However, it is not important. We have already signalled our people not to stop in this galaxy. Our quest is not finished; we must move on. We are grateful you don't resent the involuntary harm we caused, and it will make us more cautious in our future contacts with aliens.

Must you leave so soon? asked Spock with a distinct tone of regret. *Your science, your culture... there are so many fascinating subjects... *

We agree, Commander, and regret it also, but we are too alien for anything of ours to be of much use to your species. We'll now restore you to your bodies and deposit you on the lake shore as we leave.

Kirk was amazed to feel no pleasure at the prospect of leaving the globe; all he could feel was sadness that the aliens had to leave, taking



with them the beautiful language which could do harm, but also bring such delight!

It was with relief that McCoy and Mr. Scott saw Kirk and Spock emerge from the flying saucer, then the craft hovered and the music filled the air. McCoy hurriedly reached for ear plugs, but Kirk stopped him.

"No, Bones, they are only saying goodbye. Listen, it's our last chance!"

The melodious sounds hurt no-one, only filled them with wonder and beauty, and as the soft harmony became a whisper and finally vanished when the craft rose into the air, Kirk murmured,

"May you find a home soon!"

Explanations had to be given all round and Starfleet informed that the crisis was over, after which McCoy insisted on the usual check-up - exposure to radiation was not to be taken lightly!

Once the doctor was satisfied they were in good health, Kirk and Spock left the sickbay together. The Captain was very thoughtful, a thoughtfulness Spock respected as he walked silently at his side.

Kirk stopped at the door of his cabin and turned to his First Officer. "Spock... There is something I have to ask... "

"Yes, Captain?"

"Are mind melds dangerous?"

The Vulcan visibly paled and stepped back as though struck. "No, no, Spock!" protested Kirk. "I meant dangerous for you!"

"I don't understand."

"Let me try to explain. When I was in your mind, after you rescued me from the globe, I felt safe and didn't want to leave... You were afraid of the thought, afraid that I would stay with you. Why?"

"It is not important, Captain," replied Spock, his typical Vulcan impassivity an impenetrable mask even to Kirk's practiced eyes.

"Oh no you don't!" exclaimed Kirk with impatience, startling a crewman going by. The Captain resolutely took Spock's arm and pushed him into his cabin, locking the door. "Now, Spock, out with it!"

"Captain, I would rather not discuss the matter," said the Vulcan, his eyes pleading for escape.

Kirk was bewildered. "Spock," he said gently, "I have to know, or how do you expect me to feel next time we have to meld?"

"Mind melds are not dangerous for me, Captain, I assure you. May we please leave it at that?"

"No, we can't!" protested the Captain, upset by the refusal to answer. "After what we shared, Spock, I never expected... such reticence, so it must be significant - but of what? I'll find out if I have to... to... "

"To do what, Captain?"

Kirk sat down wearily. What, indeed? There was no way he knew of making a Vulcan talk... What was Spock hiding from him? He had never come across this before... didn't his First Officer trust him?

"All right, Spock, you win," he said in a dead voice, his eyes reflecting his hurt as he looked up at the impassive mask, then looked down again helplessly. Unconsciously, he had used the one weapon the gentle Spock was very sensitive to, his hurt. He heard steps and assumed the Vulcan was leaving, then was startled to feel a hand on his shoulder. Looking up, he saw Spock sit on the

desk facing him, his eyes concerned and vulnerable.

"Jim, I regret... I regret that you noticed, and I find it difficult... It may upset you."

"No more than I am now, Spock. What is it, for God's sake? Don't you see I'm worried sick? Why were you afraid of my wish to stay with you in a meld?"

"Because," replied Spock in such a low voice that Kirk barely heard, "I was afraid of being unable to refuse."

Kirk gasped and stared, his voice unsteady as he stammered, "But... but... we can't..."

"I said it would upset you, Jim, but I understand your words then were due to your recent ordeal, so there is no need for you to be embarrassed."

Kirk shut his eyes to remember better the renewed thrill and emotional satisfaction each mind meld brought, and the renewed feeling of dismay and sadness as each meld ended, as well as the sanctuary he had found in Spock's mind when nearly driven insane. To leave had been a wrench, as though something was being torn from him, something - or someone? Someone who mattered so much...

He took a deep breath and surfaced from his thoughts, opened his eyes and smiled into the dark eyes watching him so worriedly. "I meant what I said, Spock. Do you wish me to say it again?"

"No!" Spock nearly shouted, getting up and retreating towards the door, forgetting it was locked.

"I have heard of the permanent mind link, Spock," continued Kirk softly. "Is that what we could have?"

"No! Please don't..." murmured Spock with a distinct note of fear in his voice as he sat down weakly.

It was Kirk's turn to sit on the desk facing him and put his hand on his shoulder. "I did not wish to distress you, Spock. I'm only trying to understand... Being Human, I'm at a disadvantage where telepathy is concerned. If we both want a permanent mind link, why should it upset me? What's wrong with it?"

"You... you wouldn't mind... ?"

"No, I would appreciate it very much, Spock. You of all people should know that I would never lie to you."

"I know, Jim."

"Then go ahead, let's have it."

To Kirk's renewed bewilderment - mixed, he privately admitted, with some relief - Spock smiled. "No, Jim, not now."

"Why not? Now is as good a time as any..."

"You don't understand, Jim. It'll come naturally now that I am aware you want it too... As we share each mind meld, the closeness will increase and the permanent link will establish itself. How soon or how long is impossible to determine, but I will not hasten a process which is alien to you."

"So you could hasten it!"

"Yes, Jim, it's easy for a Vulcan, but for a Human..."

"I see. Why didn't you want to tell me?"

"I had no right to mention an alien process I was not sure you sensed, Jim, and my own wishes should not influence you."

"Logical as always! What would have happened if you had come to want

the permanent link and I had not?"

"Nothing."

"Then thank God I did!" smiled Kirk with emotion as he squeezed Spock's shoulder briefly and released it. His friend would never have asked... Friends who gave and never asked were rare indeed, thought the Captain, turning away to hide the suspicious brightness of his eyes.

He heard the Vulcan get up and turned back, now master of himself, and said thoughtfully, "Each mind meld closer and closer... I'm looking forward to the day, Spock."

"So am I, Jim." Spock smiled back as someone knocked on the door.

Kirk automatically said "Come," and a bump followed by a swear word were distinctly heard. The Captain released the lock hurriedly and was relieved it was McCoy nursing his nose.

"What are you two up to behind locked doors? Some plot behind my back no doubt! And if it fails, I'll have to pick up the pieces! I wish I had been with you in the globes' craft, though..."

"But you were, Bones, in a manner of speaking," smiled Kirk.

"Was I?"

"Indeed, Doctor. Your illogicality came in most useful!" assured Spock.

"It did, did it? Let me tell you, Spock, that sarcasm doesn't suit you and is hardly logical..."

"Out, both of you!" shouted Kirk in mock anger.

"Out you go, Spock, you upset Jim."

Kirk burst out laughing as Spock raised one eyebrow, said the inevitable "Illogical," and left.

"I mean it, Bones," repeated Kirk. "I want to rest."

"All right, but before you push me out, there is one question I want to ask."

"Get on with it, then."

"All those mind melds you have with Spock, Jim - are you sure it's safe?" Kirk started, but immediately made his features blank as McCoy exclaimed, "So you thought of it too?"

"No, Bones, I never thought for one second that I was in any danger with Spock."

"Then why did you react...?"

"Forget it, Bones. You don't believe Spock would hurt me either."

"Not knowingly, no, Jim, but telepathy isn't Human..."

"Shame it's not!" sighed Kirk, thinking that if it was, the permanent link could be made immediately.

"You are becoming too Vulcan, Jim!"

"Am I? Or is Spock becoming too Human? It'll be interesting... Out, Bones; for the third time, I want to rest!" He pushed the doctor out unceremoniously and McCoy frowned at the shut door. They were up to something!

Oh well, he thought philosophically as he returned to sickbay, if it is something beneficial to both, so much the better. If it is something detrimental, I'll know about it sooner or later, when they ask me to pick up the pieces!

COMPULSION by Meg Wright

Mary Gordon stared down at her husband's body slumped across the ruined radio. The room was very still now that the mob had gone; only the arhythmic tapping of a broken shutter cut the silence.

Awkwardly she put out her left hand - her right arm hung uselessly at her side, the shattered bone gleaming whitely among the torn flesh - and touched his head gently; the blood was already hardening. She drew a long, shuddering breath.

How long was I unconscious? she thought, panic flooding her. Perhaps they will come back again; or maybe John's message got through and someone will come to help us. The thought drove her into action. Ignoring the pain of her bruised body she left John; there was nothing she could do for him. Now she must follow the plan she and John had decided on when they had worked out the risks to be taken.

She crossed to the tiny store-room. She must have energy to help her get as far into the mountains as possible. Too small a distance and her body might well be found before it was sufficiently unrecognisable as alien. She tucked a few capsules into a pocket and lifted an oilcan. Opening it was a nightmare business but it was done at last. Carefully she poured the contents around the radio and over the body of her husband, closing her mind to the inevitable result of her action - there was no time for sentiment now. Sighing for the use of a servicable phaser she took the primitive firelighters from the shelf, cursing her one-handedness as she struggled to draw the head across the striking surface. It was done at last and she dropped the small flame into the oil; the blaze almost caught her clothes before she stepped back clumsily.

"Goodbye, my darling," she told John. "I'm on my way to join you very soon."

She crossed to the small window and looked out; no-one was in sight. The door creaked as she opened it cautiously and she paused, wondering if any of the infuriated mob were still waiting for either of them to emerge. There was no sound and the heat inside the room was becoming unbearable. The longing to stay with her husband grew, but she knew that she must go, that she must not be found. If only she could be certain her body would be completely destroyed she would stay, but she dared not take the risk.

Once outside, she no longer hesitated but ran, swift as a hare, across the short grass and upward to the mountains.

Peace on the bridge.

It can't last! Kirk thought, relaxing in the command chair. Things are never quiet this long.

"Captain!" Uhura's voice. Urgent and incisive. "An S.O.S. from Kassler. The preliminary survey station is under attack!" She swung round in her chair. "Message is repeating, sir. I don't think he had time to hear my acknowledgement."

"Plot in a course, Mr. Chekov." Kirk came upright. "How far away are we, Mr. Spock?"

"Approximately thirty-six point four hours at warp 6, sir. We seem to be the nearest vessel."

"Tell Starfleet we're on our way."

McCoy lifted enquiring eyebrows as the landing party assembled in the transporter room.

"Where's your shadow?" he murmured in Kirk's ear. "It's not like Spock to let himself be left out."

Kirk grinned. "Haven't you noticed that he tends to stick out in a crowd, Bones? This is only a preliminary survey team, no contact has yet been made. We keep out of sight and don't draw any attention to ourselves. Ready, Scotty?"

"Aye, sir, ye've got the place to yourselves."

"Energise."

They materialised beside the burned-out remains of the small hut. Chekov studied his tricorder. Kirk looked around him. The view was spectacular. Behind him the mountains rose, gaunt and snow-capped, ahead the lower slopes fell away in grassy meadows smothered with yellow flowers. Only the mauve/turquoise colours of the sky told him it was not Earth.

"Sir, there are traces of only one body inside the hut. Two persons are on record in the team, John and Mary Gordon. The body is male, there is no sign of Mary Gordon."

"Thank you, Mr. Chekov. Anyone else around?"

Chekov swung the tricorder round. "Down there in the valley, sir, there's a small village. Nobody else near, sir. Wait a minute - yes, there is one reading up there in the mountains, sir, but..."

"What is it?"

"Something odd, Captain. The reading is confused. No, I see. Sir, it's ... no, it's Human. It could be Mrs. Gordon, sir."

"Well, we can't beam her up until we're sure," Kirk said grimly. "How far away is it?"

"About six kilometers, sir. Assuming she left when the fire started - that was about thirty hours ago - she hasn't got very far."

"Thirty hours? Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then it wasn't the fire that destroyed the radio," Kirk said. "Gordon sent out the call six hours before that. We'd better see if we can find her."

"She may be hurt," McCoy said. "Six kilometers is no distance in thirty hours. Why didn't she wait for us?"

"She can't have known the message got through," Kirk told him. "Check that reading, Mr. Chekov. We'll get Scotty to beam us closer."

McCoy touched his arm and pointed. "Someone beaming down, Jim."

"I gave no order," Kirk growled. "Who is it?"

"Bet he's got a logical reason," McCoy grumbled as a familiar figure took shape.

"Mr. Spock, I left no order for you to join us," Kirk said. "Your explanation had better be good, you're putting the Prime Directive at risk coming down here."

Spock made no sign that he had even heard. As though he were alone he walked past them and towards the mountains. McCoy's mouth came open.

"Spock!" Kirk yelled. "Where do you think you're going?" The tall figure did not break his stride.

"Come on!" Kirk set off after him. His communicator beeped. "Damn. Get after him, Chekov, and tell him I want him back here. Kirk here."

"Sir." It was Scott, sounding harassed. "Mr. Spock just beamed down. Kyle tried to stop him, but he gave him a neck pinch and left."

"We've seen him, Scotty. Any idea why?"

"No, sir. He didn't speak to anyone. Uhura says he just got up and left the bridge in the middle of watch."

"All right," Kirk said although it was anything but. "We'll deal with it here. Kirk out."

He set off, motioning McCoy to follow. "What do you make of that, Bones? Has he been showing any signs of strain recently?"

"Huh?" McCoy was incredulous. "No," he added shortly. "As far as I know he's been acting quite normally - for him."

"Well, he's not at the moment. Look."

McCoy rounded the rock behind Kirk and broke into a run. He bent over Chekov, scanner out. "Nerves temporarily paralysed. He's been neck-pinched, Jim. He'll be round in a minute."

"Stay with him," Kirk ordered. "I'll go after Spock."

"Be careful, Jim!" McCoy yelled after him. "That Vulcan packs quite a punch, remember."

"I remember."

Kirk caught a glimpse of blue up ahead and ran. The Vulcan was walking swiftly and steadily onwards taking no notice of Kirk's shouts and eventually he gave up calling and concentrated on running. When he caught up he slowed to a walk and fell in beside Spock.

"Well, you haven't just come for the walk, Spock. What is it?" No response. "Spock, what's the matter with you?"

The Vulcan walked steadily on, eyes fixed ahead of him, face blank and immobile. Kirk lost his temper.

"Mister, you've gone as far as you're going. We stop right here, and that's an order."

Well, he hadn't really expected it to work. He grabbed at his First Officer's arm and was knocked aside by a massive punch to his jaw. He rolled to his feet and closed in again, not relishing a fight with Spock but resigned to the apparently inevitable. Luckily Spock seemed more bent on keeping steadily along his chosen path rather than on disabling Kirk and was generally content merely to roll Kirk aside each time he attacked. Realising this Kirk settled for a flying tackle to the Vulcan's knees and brought him crashing to the ground. Having got him there he hung on grimly... only to find himself being pulled along as the Vulcan continued to drag himself singlemindedly in the same direction. Bruised and battered, Kirk held on, wildly yelling the Vulcan's name. It seemed that Spock's strength would never give out.

"Hang on, Jim!" That was McCoy's voice.

"I am hanging on!" he yelled back, "but I can't stop him!"

Boots pounded across the grass, there was the hiss of a hypo and Kirk was no longer moving. He relaxed his grip tentatively; the legs remained still. Thankfully, Kirk rolled over and sat up. His right side felt as though he had been through a mill and his right tunic sleeve and trouser leg were shredded. Numerous grass cuts stung along his leg and arm. He looked across at Spock. The Vulcan's fingers were torn and bleeding from dragging them both.

McCoy hauled out his medikit. "Why I ever bother to patch you two up I don't know," he complained. "You'd better have a shot, heaven knows what you've picked up with all that dirt."

Kirk submitted to the hypo, crawled over to Spock and lifted his head. "He's still out cold, Bones."

"Well, of course," McCoy replied with satisfaction. "When I knock someone out they stay out."

"What's wrong with him? He took no notice of me until I tried to stop him. Even when I got him down he still kept going in that direction. Why?"

McCoy shrugged. "That's where Chekov reckoned Mary Gordon is."

Kirk gazed ahead. "Even if he was making for Mary Gordon, why?"

"He's coming round. Maybe he can tell you."

Spock sat up, hands to his stomach. "I feel nauseated," he said thickly. "Dr. McCoy must have been tending me."

"Well," Kirk said, "you seem to be back with us again, Mr. Spock. Where were you off to?"

Spock had taken in his surroundings by this time and his bony face came as close to bewilderment as Kirk had ever seen it. "Spock, if you dare to say 'Where am I?' ... "

"It is quite obvious to me that I am on Kassler, Captain. What I do not understand is how I got here."

"You beamed down," Kirk told him. "You abandoned your post while on duty, assaulted the transporter chief and beamed down against orders. Since when you have assaulted a fellow officer, assaulted your Captain and were finally overcome by the single-handed bravery of Dr. McCoy." McCoy smirked. "Have you anything to say, Mr. Spock?"

Spock considered this conscientiously. "No, sir."

"Don't you remember any of it?" Kirk fingered his bruised jaw. Spock's eyes followed his fingers and then fell to his own knuckles. "It was a right-hander," Kirk told him helpfully.

"Assaulting a fellow officer is a very serious offence," Spock said soberly.

Kirk nodded. "So your reasons had better be good, Mister. When we know what they are."

"When you two have quite finished fencing round the subject of whether or not you're likely to put him on a charge," McCoy broke in, "there's still the problem of Mary Gordon. We have to find her, Jim, always supposing that is her up there. And why should Spock be going in the same direction?"

"Could be coincidence."

McCoy snorted. "It could be. But I doubt it, and so do you."

"Has Mrs. Gordon disappeared?" Spock asked.

"Yes. We found John Gordon's body in what was left of the survey hut. It had been burned down. Mary wasn't there. There's a solitary reading out that way that could be her."

Spock frowned. "But these preliminary survey teams are under the same prime directive as we are, to die rather than allow primitive races to learn of their origins. Surely they would have had suicide capsules for use if everything else failed."

"She might not have had the courage when it came to the crunch," Kirk said quietly. "You never know until it actually happens. I, for one, would not condemn her for that. She may have chosen to hide, hoping that Gordon got a message through and that we would find her."

"The locals were obviously het up about something," McCoy pointed out, "or they wouldn't have been under attack. At least she was doing the right thing by getting out of their way."

"We're talking in a vacuum," Kirk said. "We need two answers. Where is

Mary Gordon and where was Spock going in such a hurry. And while I'm asking questions, where is Mr. Chekov?"

"I sent him back aboard, Jim. He was still pretty shaky. That must have been some pinch Spock gave him. I had to give him a shot to pull him out of it. Scotty has a replacement standing by for you." McCoy got up and held a hand out to Spock. That the Vulcan accepted his help was a certain sign that he was not feeling a hundred per cent fit.

"We'll get Spock back on board," Kirk said, "and then we'll carry on looking for Mary Gordon."

"No!" The word seemed wrenched out of Spock. "I must... carry on."

Kirk gave him one startled look. It was totally unlike Spock, such a stickler for discipline, to offer such a contradiction. "Mr. Spock, you are not fit to carry on, and furthermore, you should not have come in the first place. Your presence here is a potential problem for us all. You must return to the ship."

"No!" It was almost a cry of pain. "I have to go on." As though jerked by a string he began to move towards the mountains, eyes once more fixed straight ahead.

"Stay with him for the moment," Kirk said abruptly. "Don't try and stop him." He flipped open his communicator. "Scotty, maintain a constant fix on Mr. Spock and if I give the word, beam him up at once. And be prepared for trouble, have M'Benga standing by in case you need to use restraint. Kirk out." Bones, see if you can find out what's wrong."

McCoy paced behind Spock, scanner held out. "Never could hit a moving target," he grumbled. "I wish you'd stay put long enough for anyone to work. And don't walk so fast, either!" he added, beginning to run to keep up with the long-legged stride.

In spite of the seriousness of the situation Kirk could not repress a grin at the two of them trotting along like a pair of puppies around a racehorse.

"Strong indications of alpha waves," McCoy panted, frantically studying the joggling instrument. "Jim, he's in some kind of telepathic link-up."

"Well, at last we've got something to work on," Kirk said thankfully. "Check up and make sure we're still alone, Bones. We don't want any of the locals to see him!" He took out his communicator once more. "Scotty, get someone to check the records on Mary Gordon. See if there's any record of telepathic abilities."

"Aye, sir."

"Dammitall," Bones complained. "I'll have to stand still a moment, I can't get an accurate all-round reading like this." He paused, trying to get his breath and take the reading as swiftly as possible, then sprinted to catch up again. "Just the one reading up ahead," he reported, "but getting faint, Jim. Whoever it is they are in some kind of trouble; if we don't get to them soon it'll be too late. And we're being followed. Readings show a group of the villagers coming up the hill to the survey hut. They'll be able to see us soon, unless we can get Spock to get a move on."

"You were wanting him to stand still a while back," Kirk reminded him. "Come on, Spock, we have to hurry." He got a couple of paces ahead of the striding Vulcan and began to run. Spock increased his speed and the panting McCoy followed gamely behind them. The going was getting more difficult, grassy slopes giving way to patches of bare rock and loose stones, a treacherous surface for running fast. As they topped the rise and descended down the steep side of the next valley McCoy lost his footing in their headlong gallop and came rolling and bouncing past Kirk with muffled yells of agony, before coming to an abrupt stop against a large rock.

Kirk slowed down with difficulty and knelt beside him. Spock paid no heed

to either of them but kept relentlessly on. Kirk watched him go out of sight among the rocks and turned his attention to McCoy. The doctor was sitting up, his hands moving over one leg.

"It's broken, Jim. I guess I've got no-one to blame but myself. I was trying to save the tricorder."

"Idiot!" Kirk said forcibly. "You know perfectly well that can stand up to any amount of bashing around." He grabbed at the instrument and checked it swiftly. "They must have seen us, Bones, they've not stopped at the hut." He whipped out his communicator. "Get us out of here, Scotty, on the double. Have a medical team standing by."

As the transporter room settled around them he dragged McCoy off the platform. "Now get Spock up here quickly. M'Benga, get ready with a tranquilliser shot, we may need it. Don't let him get at the console, Scotty, he may try to beam down again."

The next few minutes were hectic to say the least, but once the inert figure of Spock and the protesting McCoy were taken off to sickbay, Kirk had time to gather his thoughts again.

"Anything on Mary Gordon, Scotty?"

"Lt. Jansen has been checking, sir."

She was taking too long about it. Kirk went to the intercom and jabbed at the button. "Jansen, what have you got on Mary Gordon?"

"Sir, the record seems to be incomplete."

"Incomplete? But that's impossible."

"Yes, sir. But the records of parentage are missing and the physiology file is incomplete. I don't understand it. I've been checking through the system but the computer hasn't come up with anything."

"Have the records been tampered with?"

"If they have, it's been done by an expert. As far as I can tell the record was entered this way. If Mr. Spock could check it over, sir, he might be able to see how it was done, he has an A-7 classification."

"Keep working on it yourself for the moment, Lieutenant." He thumbed the switch and swung round. "Scotty, we've got to find out if that solitary reading is Mary Gordon, and find out quickly. Get a fix from the tricorder reading and beam me down there. If it is her we'll get her on board and find out just what is going on around here."

Scott set him down in a rocky defile close to the life reading. "She's on your left, sir," he reported, "surrounded by rock. I guess in some sort of cave."

"I see it. Stand by."

Kirk climbed the rocks to the dark opening and ducked inside. There was a scuffle of movement up ahead and a small whimper of pain.

"Mrs. Gordon?" He peered into the gloom. "It's all right, no need to hide any more." He was taking one hell of a risk; if it was not Mary Gordon he would have to think quickly. The dim shape was visible now, one hand going to its mouth. Instinctively Kirk dived and grabbed at the wrist, forcing the hand down. The crushed capsule lay, wine dark, in the palm of her hand.

"That's not necessary now, Mrs Gordon," he said gently. "I'm from the Enterprise, you're quite safe."

"No, you must let me..." she said desperately. "I want to die here, no-one will find me."

"They're on your trail now," Kirk said. "Scotty, beam us up."

In the clear light of the transporter room he could see how badly she was hurt. Her face and legs were one mass of bruises and the broken arm hung at an obscene angle, the green blood caked around the open wound.

Green blood! It was going to be M'Benga's busy day!

"Vulcan," McCoy snorted. "I might have known it. Nothing but trouble... "

"I am not Vulcan!" Mary Gordon almost shouted it. "I am Human!"

"Mrs Gordon, you have caused a considerable amount of trouble up to now," Kirk said grimly. "Outwardly you appear to be Human, I agree, but you cannot deny that you have Vulcan ancestry. I want to know how you managed to get yourself into a survey team for a humanoid planet in the first place, how you falsified Starfleet records, and how you sent my First Officer berserk, and I want straight answers."

He wasn't going to get them it seemed. "I am not Vulcan," she persisted. "I have never considered myself to be Vulcan. My grandfather came from Vulcan but my mother was pure Terran."

"It happens," McCoy confirmed. "It's rare, but it happens. But she passed Vulcan genes on to you all the same and you must have known it. After all, you can't go through life without noticing your blood is a different colour."

"It is the only thing," she persisted. "Physiologically and psychologically I am Human. I have no other Vulcan characteristics at all. I never wanted to be Vulcan either, not after all my mother told me about her childhood. It was dreadful; we all tried to help her forget."

McCoy looked gleefully across at Spock, but refrained from sarcasm. The Vulcan looked as though he was suffering the worst sick headache of his lifetime. He decided to let it pass - for the moment, anyway.

"Mrs Gordon, whether or not you consider yourself totally Human is beside the point," Kirk said patiently. "No doctor would have passed you for the team once he had examined you."

"But he did," she insisted. "I went through all the usual tests. I didn't expect to get through them, I admit, but I wanted to go with John so badly. When I passed we could hardly believe our luck, and we decided that if anything went wrong I must get out and die somewhere alone where I wouldn't be found."

"Naive as a couple of babies," McCoy said bluntly. "You must have known that we would have to find you somehow."

"You have put many lives at risk," Kirk said sternly, "and so far your answers are most unsatisfactory. I want much more information on how you managed to falsify Starfleet records to the extent you have."

"I believe I can offer some explanation, Captain."

"Spock?" The Vulcan hesitated. "Well, out with it, man."

"If I may put a question to Mrs Gordon, sir." Kirk nodded impatiently. The Vulcan turned to Mary Gordon. "Are you aware that you have a very high degree of telepathic ability?"

"No!" She was emphatic. "I have no telepathic ability at all. I told you, I am not Vulcan."

"Other races have telepathic abilities as well," he told her. "Some Humans are also born with the talent. I suspect that you have unconsciously suppressed it all your life and that you were unaware of it on a conscious level. However, you have demonstrated your ability to force others to do what you wish. When you hid yourself away you told yourself that you wished to die, but you were

transmitting a call for help so powerful that it reached me on board the Enterprise and I was forced to respond to that call to the exclusion of everything else. I have never experienced such a profound... invasion... of my mind."

"And you think that she influenced the examining doctor, Spock?" Kirk demanded.

"I am sure of it, sir. If she wanted to be with her husband then she would let nothing stop her. The doctor would never have known that his findings and his report were inaccurate."

"It's not true." Mary Gordon was shocked. "It's simply not true. How can you say such things about me?"

"Mr. Spock is not accusing you," Kirk said gently. "He merely states facts as he sees them. It's hard for all of us to 'see ourselves as others see us', but Spock is very good at making us take a long, hard, new look at our most deeply held convictions. Believe me, we've all had to adjust our way of thought a little since we met him."

She stared hard at Spock, eyes hard and angry, then her expression changed to bewilderment and finally to fear. "It's true... I never felt that before. You... you were reading my thoughts."

"No." Spock shook his head. "I have cultural blocks against invading another mind unbidden. You were reading my thoughts, testing my willingness to say what you wanted to hear."

"Yes," she whispered. "You are right. I always do that and... people are always helpful. I thought that... I was lucky, and really, I've been having my own way all my life?"

"In effect, yes," Spock said soberly.

"That attack on the survey hut," Kirk reminded them. "Why couldn't she have prevented that?"

"I wasn't in the hut when they attacked," she said slowly. "The women had asked me to go down to the village... but I knew something was wrong... that I had to get back to John. They were all screaming around the hut and throwing rocks and spears. I was hit several times before they stopped, then they all ran off and I went inside and found John dead. Then I fainted." She bit her lip, clearly close to tears. McCoy caught Kirk's eye and shook his head. Kirk took the hint, and rose.

"We must let you rest for now, Mrs Gordon. We can go into this more fully when you are recovered... How's the leg, Bones?" he asked, when they reached McCoy's office.

"Sore," McCoy said succinctly. "Spock, you'd better let me give you a headache pill."

"No, thank you, Doctor. I have no wish to add an upset stomach to my problems."

"Gave you a headache, did she?" Kirk grinned. "Well, women affect us all differently, don't they, Bones?"

His First Officer ignored this. "Doctor, Mrs Gordon has the most powerful mind I have ever encountered. She should be taught how to use the ability properly or she will be a potential danger to everyone she meets."

"Well, I can't do anything, Spock, she'll have to go to Vulcan..." His voice died. "Spock!" he said accusingly.

"Precisely, Doctor," Spock said blandly. "You will have to spend several weeks extolling Vulcan culture."

"This I have to hear," Kirk told them both, affectionately.

HIDDEN TRUTH by Ellen L. Kobrin

Three times you said it to me.

The first, at Dr. Korby's frozen planet.
Just to tell me, I know,
That I was speaking to an android, not to you.
But still, it hurt.

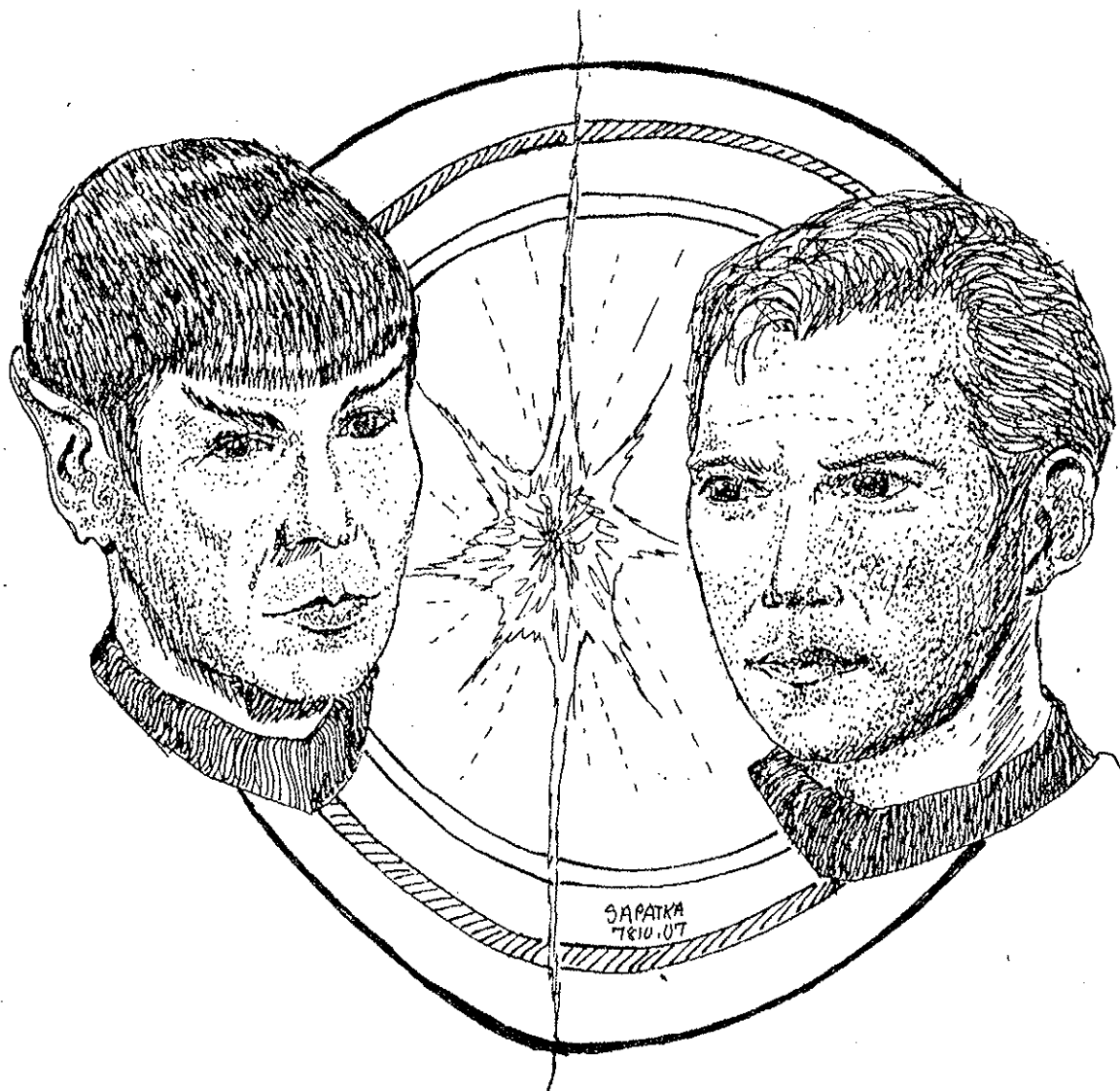
The second, at Omicron Ceti.
Just to release me, I know,
From the influence of the spores.
But still, it hurt.

The third, when we warred with Klingons on the Enterprise.
Just the sentiments, I know,
Of an alien life-Form. Not yours.
But still, it hurt.

Half-Human.
Halfbreed.
And with such venom in your voice.

I know these are not your feelings.
I know you had good reason.

But still - it hurts.



THE GARDEN by Elizabeth M. Sharp

The Garden was big, long, wide, tall, green - but above all, exceptionally beautiful. To stand in the centre of The Garden was to stand in a dream. To hear the tall trees crash together like waves on the shore, to smell the green wet grass, to hear the music of the birds and the buzzing of the insects and to see the flowers blend their fire into an ocean of colour, was a privilege beyond words - granted to few men in the universe. For this was a private dream, to be experienced and loved alone.

Perhaps not quite alone. There were the birds, the animals, the insects, the trees and plants - a universe of life in three square miles. And then, of course, there was Sarah. Sometimes he wondered if Sarah ever experienced anything - for love, she did not. But if she was capable of experience or joy, then The Garden was there for her as well. Even for Sarah.

The planet turned below the Enterprise like a giant, elliptical slug. Smooth and regular, it appeared featureless, but sensors told a different story. Pitted with mountains and valleys the smooth appearance was the thin, cloudy atmosphere. Not normal clouds, however, they were of orange dust, gradually settling after the Season of Winds. The Season of Winds lasted three Earth years, to be followed by the Season of Sun, a further seven years. Then the cycle began again, and the year was complete. The planet of Vilcossa took ten Earth years to orbit its giant sun once. On the edge of the galactic arm it was lonely, abandoned and desolate. Not the sort of place a man would choose to live and work. And yet one man had done exactly that. Professor Frank Baxter had lived on Vilcossa for eleven Earth years and had seen the seasons complete their cycle once.

McCoy, quite naturally, was intrigued. For a man who loved people and company, the idea of a man living in complete isolation on a planet at the edge of the galaxy was almost beyond belief. Medical scanner in hand, the doctor waited in the transporter room, quietly contemplating the warped personality he would find in Professor Frank Baxter. To live on a planet like Vilcossa for eleven years, a planet whose air and environment were unsuited to Human life, seemed to McCoy a sentence worse than death. Yet here they were, in orbit, waiting to meet the man who had voluntarily done exactly that.

The door opened, and McCoy peered out through the visor of his space suit. He hated wearing it, but knew he would hate the alien environment more if he did not. Forty five minutes in the thin air and heat was about all a Human could expect survive on the unprotected surface of Vilcossa. A Vulcan could manage about two hours. Certainly no more...

Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock entered together, followed by Lt. Uhura and Security Officer Keller. Spock went to the doctor at once.

"Did someone check your suit?"

McCoy groaned. "Scotty checked it. Anyone would think I was incapable!"

The Vulcan took his place on the transporter in front of McCoy. "In matters such as these, Doctor, you are incapable."

The surgeon glowered. "Jim, tell your First Officer to keep quiet before I thump him one."

Spock turned, wearing what was for him a look of pure incredulity. "Dr. McCoy, at this moment I have not got the time to show you how. Perhaps if you remind me in about four hours I may be able to teach you how to fall."

Kirk turned towards the doctor but the words died on his lips as he saw the smile of pure enjoyment on McCoy's face. Sometimes it was difficult to tell whether they were serious or merely playing at it. This was definitely one of their more playful moments. He turned his attention to the chief

engineer who waited patiently at the transporter controls.

"We'll acknowledge our arrival, Scotty, but once inside Professor Baxter's research station we will be screened and unable to contact you. You will hear from us again when we have completed our business and returned to the planet's surface. If you don't hear from us in four hours, come and get us."

The engineer nodded. "I understand, Captain. Good luck."

Kirk smiled and nodded. He glanced round the landing party again for one final check. The figures, almost unrecognisable in the bulk of their space suits, waited for his order. He gave it.

"Energise."

The transporter room wavered, vanished, was replaced with sand, rock and red sky. The scene was one of utter desolation, steep cliffs reaching for the glowering alien sky and long endless sand stretching to the distant horizon. A quick glance told the Captain everyone was safe. Their arrival was acknowledged.

Spock scanned the horizon, his eyes more used to this type of terrain than his Human companions'. It did not seem so alien to him - different, perhaps, but not alien. The tricorder hummed to itself.

"Readings confirm the sensor scans, Captain," said Spock, snapping off the tricorder and replacing it over his shoulder. "The air is very thin and can sustain Human life for about thirty minutes to one hour. It would be a very uncomfortable existence."

And that, thought Kirk, is an understatement.

The sand was heavy and drifting, with a scarcely audible rumbling from the dying wind. The heat was almost visible through the visors of their suits. McCoy cleared his throat. "What do we do now, Captain? Go and look for Baxter?"

Kirk shook his head. "We are to be met. We received a radio message from a woman called Sarah. She will meet us here."

The doctor studied the Captain for a moment, feeling almost let down. "I thought he lived alone."

"Yes," said Kirk. "So did we all."

"Well, I hope she doesn't take long," said Uhura. "It's not exactly the nicest place in the galaxy." They all nodded their agreement. But their patience was soon rewarded. With a sudden flash of light on metal, Sarah appeared before them. Small, round and very blue, Sarah spoke with a soft feminine voice laced with humour. Whether she actually felt that humour was a different matter entirely.

Sarah was a mark four mobile computer.

"Good morning, gentlemen and lady," said the robot. "I am so glad you have arrived safely. Professor Baxter is most pleased to welcome you to the planet Vilcossa." She trundled forward, her caterpillar tyres finding no difficulty in crossing the drifting sands. Standing before them she was about the size of a seven-year-old child. A small barrel-like tube was her body, and her head was square. On the top of her head was a small light which was not working. Spock wondered as to its function.

"If you will follow me, I will take you to The Garden. Professor Baxter is looking forward to meeting you." She turned and carried on down the sand dune. Clearly she expected them to follow her as she did not look back. Kirk nodded to his people and they followed, all eager to see this mysterious garden.

When they saw it, it was breathtaking. A huge domelike structure rose out of the desert and gently nudged the red, shifting clouds. The sunlight played along the edges of the transparent dome, revealing two sharply defined edges.

Beyond the transparency lay The Garden. Spock took readings.

"The atmosphere is entirely satisfactory within the dome," he reported. "The dome extends for three square miles and at its highest point is approximately one mile high."

The unit Sarah turned her head without moving her body. "The height allows complete freedom for the larger species of trees to grow."

Kirk nodded. "Professor Baxter is famous for his interest in plant specimens. All of which," he added to Spock, "makes this business especially upsetting." The Vulcan agreed silently.

Inside the dome they removed their suits when told it was safe by the robot. She waited for them to finish and made no movement as The Man entered The Garden. He stood silently watching them and was pleased in the delight they took in his Garden.

It was Spock who saw him first. "Professor Baxter?"

They all looked up. The Man nodded. "That is correct, Mr. Spock. May I welcome you all to my home." He was tall, and looked younger than his years allowed. He should be about forty nine but looked no more than thirty. Kirk stepped forward.

"I am Captain James Kirk. May I know how you knew the name of my First Officer?"

Baxter smiled, his eyes glinting. "Your First Officer is known and has a good reputation among scientists, Captain Kirk. Much more than one would expect from a Starfleet officer. He will go far in science - if he survives Starfleet."

Kirk decided he did not like this man. He didn't know why. It wasn't just the remarks about Starfleet. It was something much more subtle than that. Perhaps living alone all those years had made the man less than agreeable. He decided to reserve his judgement. Politely he introduced the rest of the landing party.

Introductions over, Baxter led them on a conducted tour of his establishment. An exobiologist, he lived here to study the various life forms in this section of the galaxy. With the aid of one scout ship and Sarah, he was able to explore the few worlds that held life in this arm of the galaxy. Although the worlds were few, the life was plentiful.

As the life in The Garden was plentiful.

"Professor Baxter," asked Uhura, "do you have life forms from many of the local planets here?"

Baxter nodded. "As you know, Lieutenant, the planets in this solar system are all lifeless. There are one or two life forms on Vilcossa, but not many. In the neighbouring systems, however, there are several planets with very interesting life forms." As he spoke, a small squirrel-like creature darted before them, then scurried away. They stood in the Garden, in a clearing surrounded by trees. In the distance was a lake of clear, sparkling water. It was extremely beautiful.

Baxter cleared his throat. "I am somewhat perplexed, Captain, as to the nature of your visit. It is not often that Starfleet bothers with me."

Kirk nodded. "Yes, I had better explain." He paused, wondering how best to tackle this. Somehow it didn't seem so easy any more. "Professor Baxter, you are in a very isolated section of the galaxy. The Klingon Empire is a frequent visitor here."

Baxter nodded. "I have seen their ships occasionally."

Kirk frowned. "Yet you have not reported that? I find that very strange, Professor."

Baxter smiled. "I have been here eleven years, Captain. I do not require anyone's help."

Kirk sighed. "Perhaps not, sir, but my orders are that you get help. The Klingons have filed a claim to this planet. They wish to mine the various minerals under the mountains. I have been ordered to remove you for the moment in case of any-- difficulty."

"Difficulty? What do you mean, Captain, what difficulty?"

"What the Captain means, sir," said Spock, "is that it would be embarrassing if you were held by the Klingons as a hostage against the Federation. That is a distinct possibility."

Baxter looked from one to the other. "I see. I am to be taken from my home and my work, with no choice."

McCoy spoke. "But surely, Professor, you deserve the break. Eleven years in isolation is a long time for any human being. You are long overdue for leave."

"Dr. McCoy, I do not require a 'break' as you put it. This isn't just my home -- it's my life, and I will not leave it. Even if the galaxy crawled with Klingons I would not leave it."

"I am sorry, sir," said Kirk. "I don't think you understand just how serious the situation is. You will be given other facilities to carry on your work and the robot -- " he nodded to Sarah " -- is more than capable of maintaining your station here."

Baxter exhaled deeply, and turned away from them. "It is you who do not understand. I do not belong with other people. I belong here, with my Garden, my animals and my robot. There can be no other company for me." He turned to face them. His eyes glowed deep silver. "Do you understand me now, Captain Kirk?"

And looking deep into those silver eyes, Captain Kirk understood.

Spock and Kirk involuntarily drew back a pace. In those silver eyes they beheld the vision of Gary Mitchell, godlike, destructive -- all powerful. The dangers were immense if this was what had happened to Baxter, and they both knew it. The other three had not known Gary Mitchell, although they had read the report. They were more curious than their two senior officers.

Kirk weighed his words carefully. "You went to the edge of the galaxy?"

Baxter nodded. "It is not far away. At the time I had not read Mr. Spock's excellent report on the 'God Phenomenon' that struck your ship, or I would never have trespassed near the galactic edge. However, it is done. I suggest you leave this world, Captain, for my temper has become somewhat short."

The Captain nodded. "But what am I to tell Starfleet? They must be told something." He caught the warning in Spock's eyes too late. But perhaps Spock was wrong. He was always overcautious.

But not this time. Kirk forgot that Spock was seldom wrong in a matter of judgement. Baxter's eyes seemed to deepen in their glow, till it extended to his entire body. He seemed to have the power to hide his affliction, or blind you with it, depending on his mood.

"You will tell no one, Kirk, do you hear me? I don't want the curious, the inquisitive, coming here, disturbing my peace, my work. Perhaps you need a demonstration of my ability."

The young security officer grabbed his phaser, unsure as to Baxter's intention. Kirk held up his hand. "Forget that. It won't work."

Baxter pointed to Spock and McCoy. "Put your suits on."

They looked at Kirk for confirmation. Reluctantly, Kirk nodded. They donned their suits. Without any word or gesture from Baxter, the two men disappeared. Kirk leaped forward.

"Where are they?"

The Professor looked at him, unsmiling. "Just a little experiment, Kirk. It's what I'm liable to do to Human mortals. They are outside, about seven miles from here. As they each have only one hour's oxygen it will be interesting to see which one, if either, makes it back here alive. That is, assuming they even know which direction to follow." And Baxter disappeared into the air.

They were locked in The Garden. There was no way out till their host decided to return. But for Spock and McCoy the situation was even more hopeless. In this rocky, sandy environment, Kirk knew seven miles in one hour was impossible.

The sand stretched endlessly in all directions. McCoy stared hopelessly, knowing instinctively they must be very far away from The Garden. He looked over at Spock. "Do you have a communicator?"

Spock shook his head. "The tricorder has gone as well. He's left us nothing except the air."

"But what are we supposed to do, Spock? Provide entertainment for him?"

"Perhaps," agreed the Vulcan. "Perhaps not, but I think we are expected to find our own way back to The Garden. If I am not mistaken, it lies in that direction." He pointed.

"How do you know that?" asked McCoy.

"From the direction of the sun, if nothing else," Spock started to remove his suit. McCoy stared in horror.

"What do you think you're doing?"

"We are a long way from The Garden. Obviously I do not know exactly how far, but it is a good distance. With my air you will have two hours' supply before you have to depend on the planet's atmosphere. You will survive about half an hour in that." The heat hit his face the moment he removed the visor, but he did not reveal his surprise to the doctor. Carefully he extended a tube from his suit and attached it to a fitting on McCoy's suit. A gauge fell and was still.

McCoy sighed. "Do you realise what you have just done? You can't survive in this environment."

Spock shook his head. "I can manage two hours. That may be long enough to get us where we have to go. It may not. It will give you extra time, if you need it. If we both kept our suits, you would certainly die. This way we both have a chance."

McCoy bit his lip. He knew Spock was right, but he didn't like it. "We'll give it a try. We may not be as far away as you think. But Spock, if you get into any difficulty, you let me know at once. Do you hear me?" The Vulcan nodded but did not reply. Carefully they set out across the sand.

It was hard going for the sand was deep. McCoy rarely took his eyes from Spock's face although he said very little. Spock had given up a lot in giving him his air and McCoy did not want to waste it in talking.

After half an hour, however, McCoy was beginning to note the effect on Spock. Sweat ran constantly down his face and his breathing was short and rapid in an effort to get some air from the thin atmosphere. McCoy desperately wanted to help yet he knew Spock would refuse.

Suddenly Spock stopped. Leaning against a rock for support he asked, "Did

you hear something?"

McCoy shook his head. "No, I heard nothing."

After a moment Spock said, "I heard something. Keep your eyes open."

The Doctor fished in his front pocket, normally used for keeping small tools in, and produced a mask. "Spock, it can be fitted onto my suit. Just take a couple of breaths - please, Spock."

But the First Officer shook his head, and with determination, walked on. McCoy followed with disapproval.

Five minutes later the dark shape appeared over the edge of a rock. Spock, usually so alert, was occupied with the effort of putting one foot in front of another, and trying to breathe. He did not see the creature even as it poised to pounce. McCoy got a brief impression of a huge lizard, perhaps the size of a fully grown elephant. It was airborne and heading straight towards Spock. With no time even to call out, McCoy launched himself in a desperate effort to get to the Vulcan before the lizard did. He made it - just barely.

They fell heavily together against a rock. The force of the impact knocked out of Spock what little breath he had. McCoy looked skyward knowing they could not hope to fight the creature once it landed. All he saw was dust and rock. Where the creature had landed the ground had mercifully swallowed it, leaving a deep crack in which the lizard was embedded. Its death cries reached up and over the edge. McCoy sighed in relief as Spock struggled to sit up unaware of the death he had missed by a mere second. He heard the creature's cries and its frantic thrashing which sent clouds of dust to the surface.

"What was that?" he asked between gasps.

McCoy reached into his pocket and produced the mask. He spoke while he worked. "That was the noise you heard five minutes ago. A large lizard-like thing. It's a wonder it could live out in this desert." The mask was attached to a tube that led directly from McCoy's suit. Turning a dial, he held it out to Spock. Realising the Vulcan would not take it himself, he reached over and held it to Spock's nose and mouth. Reluctantly Spock took three deep breaths then turned the dial on McCoy's suit and detached the mask.

"That was a mistake," he said. "I've got another hour and a half to go yet. You should let me get used to it. Besides, it's just a waste. It won't make much difference one way or the other."

The doctor snorted. "It would if you sat for five minutes or so. What's five minutes' oxygen between friends?"

At that last remark Spock almost smiled. "It will make a big difference to you when your air runs out, as you will no doubt discover." Stiffly he got to his knees. McCoy followed, noting that Spock had made no mention of the fact that by the time his oxygen ran out Spock himself would be dead.

An hour later they were still walking. Spock stopped fairly often but over the last hour he seemed to have achieved a certain rhythm. They could not walk very fast, but it appeared that Spock was in some way adapting to the lack of air. McCoy knew it to be temporary however, an advantage of his Vulcan physiology, and said nothing. There was always the possibility that the Vulcan was fighting against showing any discomfort in an effort to prevent McCoy from wasting any more of his oxygen. It was a battle that would soon be ended, for he knew Spock couldn't hope to keep it up much longer.

Even so, when the end came it was totally unexpected. Spock simply stopped walking, and leaning against a boulder, he stared into the distance. His heart pounded in his ears like a drum and his blood roared like so many waterfalls in his brain.

McCoy felt totally helpless. He knew his friend had given up - that this was as far as he would go. Yet what could he do? There seemed to be no way

out. Moving to Spock's side, he gripped the Vulcan's arm as if in some way he could transfer some of his energy by simple touch. Spock's eyes looked deep into his and he shook his head once. Looking back to the horizon he pointed, and McCoy followed his gaze into the distance. The sight of the sunlight glinting on the transparent dome nearly made him weep. Spock had come so far, but not quite far enough.

"It is about forty five minutes' walk from here. Your oxygen will run out in about twenty five to thirty minutes... so if you go now... you should make it." McCoy waited patiently while Spock tried to drag some air into his lungs. After a few moments he continued. His voice seemed strangely empty - even sad. "I am only half Vulcan... I never had... two hours."

A sudden thought struck McCoy. "Forty five minutes, Spock! You could have the oxygen that's left. I could probably manage for forty five minutes."

Spock shook his head. "That would slow you down. I cannot travel... you could not survive an hour. McCoy... please go on... don't waste any more time."

That was it, thought McCoy. Spock wanted him to go on without him. How could he possibly go, yet how could he stay, knowing Spock could have survived if he had kept his own oxygen? He could have reached the dome with little difficulty after an hour's good air. Yet Spock had given his air away in the hope that he, Leonard McCoy, could reach safety, even if he himself died. The thought was too incredible for words. How could he just walk away from him?

The answer came in the form of Spock's collapse. He fell forward in the sand and lay still. McCoy went to him and found he was still breathing. Still his lungs fought for life although they too would soon give up. Removing the glove from his right hand McCoy touched the Vulcan's face and was shocked at the heat of his skin. In his cool insulated suit he had not imagined such heat.

A voice inside his head seemed to speak to him. /It would be a simple matter to go now. The Vulcan could not possibly know he had gone. Why not just leave? Why did he linger?/

McCoy listened to the voice and it horrified him. Spock had made a gamble for both their lives and had lost. Would it not be fitting for both of them to die here? Yet Spock's last request had been for him to continue - to reach the dome. Should he deny him that - and waste Spock's sacrifice? The turmoil in his mind was sickening. The image of the dome in the distance beckoned to him, adding to his torment. Kneeling in the sand McCoy bent forward, his head in his hands, and cried desperately to himself,

"Oh God, help me! Tell me what to do!"

And from the distant Garden, Professor Baxter answered.

The air before McCoy thickened - solidified. Such a tiny object, it could only have come from Frank Baxter. At that moment it meant more to McCoy than anything in the universe.

Desperately he grasped the communicator in his hands and flicked it open.

Uhura paced the concrete path. Somewhere above her a bird sang. They had walked the half mile from Frank Baxter's laboratory to the perimeter of the dome hoping for a way out, but had found none. Sarah had watched, unconcerned, unfeeling, as she trundled about her business. The three prisoners had found no escape.

Still Kirk searched, although all hope had long since left him. It had been three and a half hours since he had seen Spock and McCoy vanish before his eyes. Spock would have been dead thirty minutes to an hour - McCoy even longer. The entire experience was a nightmare. A nightmare Kirk knew would never end.

There was a buzzing, like a sudden swarm of insects, and Frank Baxter appeared. His body was aglow with silver light that seemed to extend around his head. A mutation, Kirk reminded himself. This is what Mitchell would have become had he not met his death.

Perhaps Frank Baxter could die, even at this late stage of mutation. Kirk toyed with the idea as he stared at the man who had sent his two friends to die in the hostility of an alien world. Baxter looked straight at Kirk, a slight smile about his lips.

"Do not even consider it, Captain. I could blot your life out where you stand."

Kirk bit his lip. It took all his inner strength to stop himself from rushing at Baxter in his anger. Spock would not have approved of such illogic.

The 'god' spoke, his voice deep, resonant. The three Humans found themselves listening intently, despite their hatred of the man.

"This demonstration is over. You will be allowed to return to your ship. I think you will agree, Captain, that I am better left alone."

Kirk stepped forward. He would have his say, come what may. "To think that you - a man of such wisdom and learning - could have mutated into such great evil. You're not a god. You're something less than the gutter. To think you could get pleasure out of watching them die. I presume you did watch?"

"Oh yes, Captain Kirk, I did. And very instructive it was. I am very impressed. Now I almost wish I had let you watch, but half the fun is in your not knowing where they were or what happened to them, or what their end was. But you would have been proud of your friends' futile struggle for survival. Now you may go. The screens surrounding The Garden are gone. You may now contact your ship. It has been a pleasure, Captain, which must never be repeated, for your sake." And he was gone.

Kirk reached for his communicator but didn't quite make it. A tingling sensation covered their bodies and the whine of the transporter enveloped them. The Garden with its vast beauty and hidden secret vanished, to be replaced by the familiar landscape of the transporter room. It took Kirk only a moment to realize what had happened. The Enterprise must have been waiting, ready to pounce as soon as some sign of the landing party was found, and when Baxter took the screens away...

"Hello, Jim. You took your time."

Kirk couldn't believe it. Stepping down from the transporter platform he went over to McCoy and touched him. Only then did he allow the smile to break over his face. "It is you! How did you get here? I thought you were dead!" His face suddenly clouded over. "Spock?"

McCoy stepped back. Kirk saw for the first time what Uhura and Keller had already seen. The Vulcan First Officer sat at the transporter controls, silently watching his Captain's arrival. He looked tired, but as Kirk came over to him he rose from his chair. Scott hovered in the background but had not been needed. Spock had beamed the landing party up himself.

Kirk motioned for Spock to sit down again, which he did. He instinctively knew that the Vulcan had been through a lot and he turned to McCoy. "Is he all right? I can't ask him - he'll tell me he is, even if he isn't."

But Spock answered for himself. "I am quite well, Captain. Rather tired, nothing more."

McCoy smiled and came over to them. "He's saved both our lives, Jim, and he's been through a lot. But he'll be O.K.. As it turned out, it wasn't the lack of air that defeated him - it was the heat. Like he says, he's just tired."

"All the same, that's quite an admission coming from you, Spock," said Kirk.

Spock nodded. "It's the only admission you're going to get," was the First Officer's reply.

Later on that evening, in the tranquillity of Spock's quarters where the two Humans had ushered their tired companion, Kirk asked the question foremost in his mind.

"Spock, Bones, why did Baxter let you live? And why is he content to live in that backwater?"

"The professor has had time," said Spock. "He has adapted to his 'affliction' in a way Mitchell never could. It may just be a different temperament. Baxter is the quiet, reserved type. Whereas Mitchell..."

"Was an extrovert and a showoff," finished Kirk. "I think I see what you mean, Spock. Different people would react to the 'gift' of godhood differently. But can we trust Baxter to stay put? What if he decides he has had enough and comes out to meet us poor mortals?"

"And that, Jim, is a question you will ask yourself many times. It was your decision to say nothing to Starfleet. It was a command decision - one that had better be right."

And Kirk knew that McCoy had spoken the truth. The command decision must always be right.

Life was very unfair sometimes.

HEART OF STEEL by Rita Oliver

Born of steel and alloy,
 And the blue-print plans of men.
 I am a ship, a ship of space,
 Just a vessel... but then again... ?
 Sometimes I think I'm more than that,
 I can't be just a hunk of steel!
 I am sure I am alive,
 If I am not, why then do I feel?
 There is a hum and a bustle within me,
 They're awaiting orders, awaiting him,
 The one who thinks he protects me!
 My foolish, faithful Jim.
 Though my poor Jim is lonely,
 It shall not always be,
 You see, he has a friend there,
 I often wish it were me!
 For though this shell is made of ore,
 These men, they are my heart,
 My brain, my soul, my blood
 Coursing through every part.
 So there is life within this lonely ship,
 This vessel made of steel,
 I'm not sure if it's quite proper,
 But this ship has begun to feel...

As Reiley said - half a loaf is better than no time off at all.

FORBIDDEN THOUGHTS by Crystal Ann Taylor

Your hazel eyes betray a myriad of expression,
 As you seek to share your pain and joy,
 Your face lights up with that teasing smile,
 As you reach out to touch my life.
 I feel a rush of warmth inside -
 I must resist...

I am Vulcan.

I can not...

Vulcans do not feel.

Your nudges at my soul are impossible to ignore,
 When you confide in me your doubts and problems.
 Your reliance on my strength and support
 Generates an empathic response inside.
 I feel your loneliness in your command vigil -
 I must resist...

I am Vulcan.

I can not...

Vulcans do not feel.

How can I maintain logic day by day,
 When you look to me for confidence?
 How can I sustain distance and indifference,
 When you vibrate with excitement and eagerness?
 I feel my control slipping -
 I must resist...

I am Vulcan.

I can not...

Vulcans do not feel.

I don't understand the cracks you've made,
 In the hard armor that hides my Human half.
 For eighteen years, living among Humans,
 I've never betrayed my Vulcan self.
 And now your enthusiasm affects me -
 I must resist...

I am Vulcan.

I can not...

Vulcans do not feel.

Since the day you came to take command,
 In this short time, one by one,
 You tear the barriers that shield my inner self,
 Lay open dormant impulses to your friendship.
 Your love, compassion, understanding touches me -
 I must resist...

I am Vulcan.

I can not...

Vulcans do not feel
