

LOG ENTRIES

23



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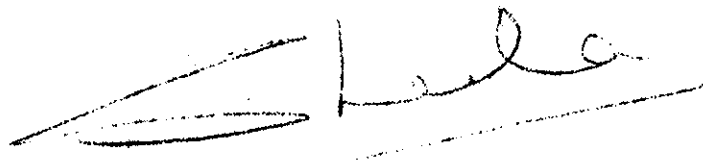
Hello everyone, and welcome to Log Entries 23.

This issue seems to have turned out as one with a) very short stories (they all looked much longer in manuscript, give you my word!) and b) a lot of episode-linked stories. And only the one that won the competition was actually an entry - all the others were sent in earlier! I'll be printing more of the competition entries at a future date.

There are also two creative responses, both to Valerie Piacentini's story Lost and Found. We like getting creative responses, you know. It seems to be a fairly common response in the States, but we're only just starting to get it over here. (We've also had two creative responses to Variations on a Theme; we'll be printing both in Variations on a Theme 3, due out this summer.) A creative response can be a continuation of the story, the same story told from a different point of view, a poem trying to capture the mood of the original - any sort of idea that rises from reading the original.

Next issue is going to be 'long story' time - I've got stories by Audrey Baker and Susan Meek lined up for it, and doubt that there'll be room for very much else!

April 1979



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MALFUNCTION by Christine Leeson

CAPTAIN'S LOG, Stardate 1304.10. We are on a mission to the globular cluster in Hercules to study the variable star Phelone. Phelone has a period of six days three hours and its absolute magnitude varies between 3.4 at its faintest and 1.1 at its brightest. It is a yellow supergiant.

"How long before we reach Phelone, Mr. Spock?" asked Kirk.

"Approximately two days, sir," replied Spock. "When we arrive it will be at its coolest, so we can safely land on the one planet the system contains. However, after ten hours Phelone starts to increase in brightness and surface temperature. We will be safe on the planet's surface for little more than the ten hours."

Kirk looked at Phelone on the viewscreen. It was one of the brightest stars there.

Two days later the Enterprise moved into the Phelone system. The star was a fiery yellow and seemed to glower angrily at the tiny ship.

"Readings on the planet, Mr. Spock," asked Kirk.

"It is a small Mars-type planet," replied Spock. "Mass approximately 0.896 Earth normal, atmosphere mainly carbon dioxide with traces of oxygen."

"Right," said Kirk. "Mr. Spock, we'll beam down with Dr. McCoy." He called the transporter room and McCoy on the intercom and told them to stand by. Within a very short time the three men met in the transporter room, the Captain bringing breathing equipment and Spock bringing scientific instruments for his study of the star and how it affected the planet.

"I oughta warn you, Captain," said Scott seriously, "the transporter has been actin' up lately and I'm no' sure how she'll function, though she should be all right."

"Thanks for the warning, Scotty," said Kirk, struggling with his breathing mask. "Maybe it would be better, though, if we beamed down one at a time to reduce the load."

"I'll go first," said Spock, "to give you time to adjust your breathing equipment, sir."

"Right, Spock," said Kirk, still struggling. First Spock, then McCoy, beamed down.

Kirk stepped into the transporter and Scott proceeded to energise. As the Captain dematerialised, the transporter exploded! A dismayed Scott ran to the intercom.

Meanwhile, Kirk materialised on the planet in a state of collapse. He lay on the cracked and burned earth in a daze, then the pain started. It began as a tingling in his left arm and ribs, then became a burning agony. Kirk opened his eyes, wondering where Spock and Bones were. He looked in all directions. The sky was a deep pink colour and the land from horizon to horizon was reddish brown and rocky. There was no sign of Spock or McCoy.

Meanwhile, Spock and McCoy were standing on the surface of the planet wondering why the Captain was taking so long to beam down.

"You'd better call the ship, Spock," said McCoy.

"Spock to Enterprise. Come in, Enterprise."

"Enterprise. Scott here, sir. I'm afraid the transporter just exploded, and..."

"The Captain?" enquired Spock.

"Isn't he there, sir? I was beaming him down when the transporter blew -- he was just dematerialising."

If Spock was worried he gave no physical evidence of it. "Then he must have materialised elsewhere on the planet's surface. Proceed to scan, Mr. Scott."

"Aye, sir," replied Scott. "Though with all the infra-red you star's puttin' out I doubt if we stand much chance of findin' him."

"Even so, Mr. Scott, we must try. Spock out."

"Spock, we don't have a cat's chance in hell of finding Jim, even if he is down here," snapped McCoy.

"What has a carnivorous quadruped belonging to the feline species and a place assigned by primitives as being the opposite of utopia got to do with finding the Captain?" asked Spock in perplexity.

"Damnit, Spock!" growled McCoy. "Sometimes for all your Vulcan brains I think you're thicker than the proverbial two short planks!" Then he relented. "I'm sorry, Spock. It's just that I'm so worried about Jim being down here alone, possibly hurt."

"If he is here, Doctor, we will find him," said Spock grimly.

Spock proceeded to set up the scientific equipment for taking readings on the star. "Come on, Spock!" said McCoy. "We've only got ten hours or so to find the Captain. Leave all that till later."

"'Later' may be too late, Doctor," said Spock. "I intend to put the equipment on automatic. This small computer -- " he held up a device " -- will take down all the data we require about the effect of variable stars on their planets. It should increase Starfleet Command's astronomical knowledge greatly."

"Astronomical knowledge nothing!" snapped McCoy. "Haven't you got one iota of feeling in that Vulcan brain of yours? Jim's missing, and all you can talk about is astronomical knowledge!"

"Doctor, I am as concerned as you are about the Captain, but I still have our mission to consider," replied Spock quietly.

"I know, Spock, I know," replied McCoy. "You've got orders to follow. I'm sorry."

Spock made a few adjustments to the equipment, stood up and said, "Now I suggest we use our tridorders to see if we can get a fix on the Captain's position."

McCoy, who was pacing restlessly up and down at once produced his medical tricorder and after consulting it, said, "I'm not receiving any life form readings indicative of Jim. What are you getting, Spock?"

"No life readings except our own," said Spock.

"I wonder where Jim is," said McCoy.

Kirk was still lying on the ground where he had materialised. Slowly, he sat up and looked around. His spirits sank. Desolation everywhere... He took out his communicator with his right hand, ignoring the agony in his left arm. His spirits sank even further; his communicator was damaged beyond repair. He now had no way of calling Spock and McCoy or the ship. The ship, he thought. The transporter must have malfunctioned. That would explain what had happened. Scotty had said it wasn't functioning perfectly.

Kirk decided to stand up and walk until he found Spock and McCoy. In his terrible condition he did not stop to consider the odds against his ever

finding Spock and the Doctor. He stood up and walked unsteadily towards the eastern horizon. Flecks of sweat stained his breathing mask. The gigantic yellow disc of Phelone continued to shine. He walked on.

Meanwhile, Spock and McCoy were still searching.

"Doctor," said Spock, "I have an idea which may prove successful."

"What is it?" asked McCoy, his interest caught.

"If we were to form a mind meld so that our two minds are functioning as one, we may be able to reach the Captain." Spock hesitated, embarrassed. "We are both very close friends of his and if we project our concern perhaps it will reach Jim and let us know where he is."

McCoy was silent for a moment, then he said, "You know I agree, Spock."

"Very well, Doctor. I will just call the ship first - Spock to Enterprise."

"Enterprise; Scott here, sir."

"Mr. Scott, have you been successful in your attempts to repair the transporter?"

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Spock. It's givin' us no end o' trouble. Have ye found Captain Kirk?"

"I was about to ask you the same question, Mr. Scott. However, Dr. McCoy and I are going to form a mind-meld and scan the planet together. We will report later. Spock out."

"We'd better begin, hadn't we, Spock?" asked McCoy, disgusted with himself for feeling nervous.

They became aware of each other's thoughts. McCoy was surprised again at the gentleness of Spock's mind under the impassive surface. Their two minds met and merged; fleeting images passed through their brains. They proceeded to scan the planet.

Jim Kirk was now approaching delirium as he proceeded to walk along, dragging one foot in front of the other.

"Spock, Bones!" he shouted hoarsely. He fell and lay on the ground. His thoughts spun round and round sickeningly. He almost lost consciousness when a voice sounded.

Jim, we are here.

This is it, thought Kirk. I'm psychotic now, hearing voices that don't exist.

No, Jim, came Spock's voice. *We have formed a mind-meld and we are projecting our thoughts over the planet's surface. We are looking for you.*

Are you hurt? asked McCoy.

"Yes, my left arm is broken I think, and some ribs. I can't breathe very well, and I'm so thirsty..."

What is the nature of the terrain where you are situated? asked Spock.

"What... Oh, mainly rock and red dust, rather Mars like. The sun is so damned hot, Spock, I can hardly breathe."

Try taking deeper breaths, Jim, advised McCoy, *and lie as still as you can.*

We must be fairly near to each other, said Spock, *as the terrain is similar where we are situated.*

It's also daytime, put in McCoy, *which means we must be in the same hemisphere.*

That is perfectly obvious, Doctor, said Spock, *as even a malfunctioning transporter would probably keep us close together. Captain, try to describe everything you can see to me - the position of the sun and all the other facts.*

"The sun is in the east," said Kirk. "I can't give you the exact position in degrees. There is a range of small hills about one and a half to two miles in the west."

The sun also appears in the east to us, said Spock, *and there is a range of small hills as described by you in our east. There is a possibility that we are looking at the same range of hills from a different vantage point, so we will proceed towards them.*

"Hurry, Spock," Kirk said weakly.

Spock and McCoy continued to project concern and friendliness to Kirk as they hurried towards the hills. It was a long journey. Twice McCoy fell in exhaustion and Spock ordered him to rest, but McCoy refused. "If you can make it, you pig-headed Vulcan, then so can I," he growled. He looked into Spock's eyes, seeing the concern for Jim and himself that was reflected there.

Kirk still lay on the ground, too weak to move or do anything except anxiously scan the hills, looking for two friendly faces. Only the strength of Spock's mind kept him conscious. His pain was growing worse, despite Spock's attempts to deaden it.

Spock was becoming tired. The endless trek over wilderness and the heat were beginning to have their effects.

They reached the hills eventually; they now had two hours in which to find their Captain. McCoy, given strength from Spock's mind, somehow found the energy required to pull himself up the hill. Spock meanwhile climbed so far and then stood on a loose rock which gave way under his weight. He fell down the hillside. Luckily he only fell about fifteen feet, or the results would have been much worse.

McCoy ran to him and checked him over with the medical tricorder. "You've broken your left arm, Spock, and received a nasty cut on your forehead. Call the ship."

"Spock to Enterprise."

"Enterprise. Scott speaking."

McCoy snatched the communicator away from Spock. "Scotty, is the transporter repaired? If so, beam Mr. Spock up at once."

"I must find the Captain," said the Vulcan.

"The transporter will take about half an hour to be in full workin' order," said Scott, "so I'm afraid I canna beam anybody up or doon for at least that."

"It seems I must remain with you, Doctor," said Spock.

"In that condition, too," clucked McCoy.

"Thank you, Mr. Scott," said Spock into the communicator. "I'll be in contact later."

Kirk was looking up at the hilltop. Then, two small figures appeared at

the summit of one of the hills. No, it can't be, thought Kirk. I hope I'm not dreaming.

No, Captain, came Spock's voice. *We are here.* They hurried down to him.

"Jim, it's a miracle you're still alive," said McCoy, running his tricorder over him.

"If it wasn't for you and Spock, I wouldn't be," said Kirk. "Spock, you're injured too."

"It is of no concern, Captain," said Spock.

The beeping of the communicator interrupted them. "Scott here. The transporter is now in full working order. The star is due to start brightening within the hour."

"Right, Mr. Scott," said Kirk weakly.

"Captain Kirk!" exclaimed Scott. "It's good to hear ye, mon!"

They beamed up to the ship. In the transporter room, three orderlies waited to take Kirk and Spock to sickbay, under the eagle eye of McCoy.

"Take us out of the system, Mr. Scott," said Kirk after they had beamed the scientific instruments up. Then he and Spock both fell asleep.

LOST AND FOUND by Susan Meek

I continue as I did before;
Command the Enterprise
But none of them have realised
That I am dead inside.

No more the trust, the quiet care,
The things that made a life worthwhile.
Life only an existence
Since I lost the soul akin to mine.

The adventure, the dreams, the Starship,
The things that meant so much,
Without him here to share it all
The dreams have turned to dust.

I walk now on this wretched world,
The place he lost his life.
The pain of returned memories
Stabs deep inside me, like a knife.

No-one else could take his place
Or even understand.....
But then I hear a whispered voice
And see an outstretched hand.

Heart leaps as recognition dawns,
My mind spins round, and then,
I kneel to take him in my arms
And become whole again.

The above poem is a creative response to Valerie Piacentini's story 'Lost and Found' in Log Entries 18. We have a further creative response to this story in Mariann Hornlein's 'The Valley of the Shadow' on P 46

THIS SIDE OF PARADISE... by Josephine Timmins

It was fortunate that the journey to Starbase 27 was not a long one. Conditions on the Enterprise were a little cramped now that she was carrying 150 colonists from Omicron Ceti III as well as her usual crew. Not that anyone was complaining. In fact the colonists were saying very little; they were subdued and dejected. Obviously their sudden release from 'paradise' and an uncertain future were having a very sobering effect on them.

Captain Kirk might have felt a twinge of sympathy for them if it hadn't been for the fact that he'd come so close to losing his crew and his ship. The thought of what had nearly happened was still enough to give him cold shivers.

Perhaps the worst thing of all was the speed at which Spock had succumbed to the spores. The success of a mission had so often depended on Spock's strength, will-power and resourcefulness. This time he'd been the first to go down. The episode was over now, but Kirk would be glad when the Omicron settlers were someone else's responsibility.

Down in sickbay business was quiet for Dr. McCoy and Nurse Chapel. The colonists were so healthy their effect on the work-load was negligible. However, they did have one visitor, a lovely but unhappy-looking blonde girl who walked in and asked shyly if she could have something to cure a bad headache. Christine Chapel murmured sympathetically and mixed something in a glass. The girl drank it, smiled her thanks, and left.

As they watched her go, Christine said, almost to herself, "What a beautiful woman!"

"Spock certainly thinks so," answered Dr. McCoy. "You know, for a man who's not interested in women, he certainly knows how to pick 'em!"

Christine almost dropped the glass she was holding. "I beg your pardon, Doctor. What did you say about Mr. Spock?"

McCoy looked surprised. "I thought you knew. That's Leila Kalomi - Spock's old flame."

Christine put down the glass with a shaking hand. "Dr. McCoy - I don't know what you are talking about. Will you please explain?"

"Come to think of it, I didn't see you around when all the fun was going on," McCoy commented. "What were you doing in your new-found, happy relaxed state?"

"I was -- never mind what I was doing!" cried Christine. "What's all this about Mr. Spock and that girl?"

"All right," said McCoy, taking pity on her. "It seems Spock and Leila Kalomi knew each other years ago. There was something between them - at least, she's been in love with him ever since, though I don't suppose Spock would admit to anything.

Anyway, when they met again in Sandoval's colony, Leila showed him the spores and Spock was the first to be affected. Hey presto! Love at second sight! Hearts and flowers all the way. The Captain found him swinging from a tree shortly afterwards."

Christine felt sick. "That's disgusting," was all she managed to say.

"I quite agree," said McCoy. "It wasn't a pretty sight."

"Don't joke about it!" she cried. "That woman deliberately reduced Mr. Spock to a state like that - like a love-sick adolescent, because she couldn't get him any other way! If she had any decency at all, if she really appreciated the kind of man he is - how could she have done it?" Christine was white-faced and furious.

"Calm down, Nurse," McCoy said quietly. "You can't blame Leila for acting

as she did. She was possessed by the spores - she wanted him to be happy. It wasn't long before we were all in the same state. Spock was just the first, that's all."

"I'm sorry, Doctor." Christine tried to recover her composure. "It's just that I don't like to think of Mr. Spock being humiliated in such a way."

"It didn't seem like humiliation at the time, Christine. Anyway, in Leila's position, wouldn't you have done what she did?"

"No. Well... I don't know. It's impossible to say." She stopped, confused, and Dr. McCoy patted her shoulder.

"Well, it's all over now. Mr. Spock is back to normal like the rest of us." To himself he thought And he'll continue to ignore your feelings and your loyalty, just as he's always done.

As soon as she was off duty, Christine set off to look for Leila Kalomi. She had no idea what she was going to say to her, but she needed to talk to her. She eventually tracked Leila down in a crowded recreation room. She was sitting with a group of her people, but taking no part in the rather listless discussion that was going on.

"How's the headache?" Christine asked. "You should have found a quieter place to sit in."

Leila smiled sadly. "It's much better, thank you. Yes, it is noisy in here, but the ship is so big and I wasn't sure where I would be allowed to go."

"Come with me," Christine invited. "I'll take you on a guided tour."

As they explored the ship, Christine found her resentment towards Leila lessening. She was still indignant about the way Spock had been treated, but Leila was obviously suffering and, as a nurse, all Christine's instincts were to give help and comfort. However she could find no easy way to bring up the subject, and Leila herself made no mention of Spock.

Suddenly the matter was resolved for them. As they approached the turbo-lift, the doors opened and Mr. Spock stepped out and started walking towards them. Shocked, the two women stopped dead. Mr. Spock hesitated only for a second, then controlled himself. With a slight bow and the greeting, "Ladies," he acknowledged their presence and then strode briskly away.

When Christine finally breathed out, she found Leila gazing down the corridor after his retreating figure, with the expression of a dog abandoned by its master. She took the girl's arm and gave it a comforting squeeze.

"You're an old friend of Mr. Spock, I believe," she said softly.

"Not really. We were colleagues once, that's all." Leila looked sadly at the nurse and then said, "Do you know what happened between Spock and me down on the planet?"

"Yes - I've been told a little about it," Christine replied, and then, "I know how you must be feeling - I'm rather fond of him myself."

Leila didn't seem to find that surprising. She said simply, "Then you know how much I've lost."

The corridor was filling up with people. Christine found a small storeroom nearby and led Leila into it before replying.

"I know what you've lost, but how long do you think it would have lasted, anyway?" As Leila stared at her, puzzled, Christine went on. "Mr. Spock's state of euphoria - you surely don't think it would have continued for ever?"

"Why not?" demanded Leila. "We were under the influence of the spores for three years. We thrived on them - just as they thrived in us. It should have

gone on indefinitely."

"For ordinary people, yes." Christine was flushed and excited by what had occurred to her. "But Mr. Spock is not an ordinary Human being. His mental superiority is incalculable and he lives for his work. He must always be thinking, researching, striving. How long do you think he would have been happy to stagnate in your colony -- to sit under the trees and watch the flowers grow?"

Leila was agitated. "He wouldn't have had any choice -- his mind would have been so relaxed and contented he wouldn't have questioned anything. He was really happy, Christine, happy to be alive and in love."

Christine said quietly, "And is that the man you fell in love with years ago -- a mindless innocent, incapable of thinking beyond his day-to-day existence?"

Leila gave a shuddering sigh. "No, of course not. But when I was affected by the spores I would never have thought of that."

"Well, I can't prove it," said Christine, "but I don't believe those spores could have kept Mr. Spock under control for ever. His mind is too sharp. Sooner or later he would have fought his way out of the trance and realized how empty life was."

"Then he would have died," said Leila. "The spores kept us safe from the Berthold radiation. Without them, and with no means of getting back to the ship, he would have died."

"Then everybody would have lost him," said Christine, "so perhaps things have turned out for the best."

"Yes. Perhaps they have." Leila looked suddenly tired, but some of the misery had gone from her face. "Could we go back now, Christine? I could use some sleep."

Christine Chapel was on duty when the Enterprise docked at Starbase 27 and the Sandoval colonists were beamed down. She didn't see Leila again, or witness the parting between Spock and the woman he'd loved so briefly. Not that she would have minded -- she had killed her own jealousy and found peace of mind for a while.

THE LONE VULCAN by Gladys Oliver

Why do you stand alone?
 Why do you look with eyes so void?
 Are you aware that life is ticking by.
 With a persistant easy sigh?

The time will run away like water --
 Will you let it trickle on?
 Won't you even once try to understand
 The complex Human song?

It is rather wonderful!
 The joys, the tears, the loves, the fears!
 Our emotions give us freedom
 Over long frustrated years!

Yet...to be like you, so calm.
 Loyal as any Vulcan son;
 Perhaps we are the ones with eyes so void --
 Expressing all...yet meaning none!

THE OUTING by Sally A. Synjala

Jim Kirk stared out the viewscreen and allowed himself a brief escape from the cares of command. The winking spheres of light presented a lovely picture. A scene one could become enmeshed within. It had been a long mission. For a while he had thought Spock had been killed within the creature that had claimed the Intrepid and all her crew.

That weight had been lifted from his shoulders when the shuttlecraft had made her presence known and Spock was back safely on board the Enterprise once more. Even McCoy had let some of his feeling show. Kirk knew the gruff retorts Spock and McCoy exchanged were more of a friendly nature than an antagonistic one. It is only people we like that we allow so to tease us.

Still, it was good to see the open caring that McCoy had managed to let slip through to the surface. Spock with all the barricades let some of his feeling show every so often. Kirk knew Spock was concerned about McCoy's ability to survive the journey into the amoeba-like creature. Yet the Vulcan would never admit openly to such caring. He would merely point out he was the 'logical' choice and losing a Chief Medical Officer would be detrimental to the ship's well-being.

The decision had been difficult to make. How do you choose which of your friends is to die? That was the decision that had been his. It would have been so much easier to have piloted the craft himself, but Spock was right as usual. The Captain had to stay with his ship. Spock was better suited to endure the physical hardships that would present themselves and the logic of command had to take over from the emotion of feeling. Somehow all had managed to survive intact and it felt good to have the gentle banter back on board. He had become used to the constant argument of logic versus emotion. After all, they were but a reflection of the battle that goes on within each Human, as well. It was easy to see how one side would find constant fault with the other.

The next step would be for some well deserved rest on an uninhabited Class M planet. A few days' shore leave with no cares to bother the mind. Kirk had even managed to convince both Spock and McCoy to join him on a camping expedition. Perhaps some of the feeling that had started to emerge would surface once more. Kirk smiled at the thought... 'The interfering, brash Captain once more trying to turn things out his way.' Well, if that was considered interference, he was all for it. Maybe his two friends could openly recognise the warmth buried beneath the surface. At least it was worth a try.

Chekov broke his reverie by announcing the planet was within scanning range. Kirk returned to command and ordered the Enterprise into a standard orbit around their private retreat.

Scotty was called to the bridge and put in command until a week from then again saw the three officers back on board the Enterprise. Scotty would lead the starship on a routine mapping mission while Kirk got some much needed rest before once more assuming the responsibility for his ship.

It was a stoic-looking Vulcan and a mischievous medical officer that greeted Kirk as he entered the transporter room.

"Well, Gentlemen, are you ready for some good recreational sport? I have heard the streams here abound with the most delicious trout in the Galaxy. Hope you have brought your fishing poles along."

"Captain, why would anyone want to lure a defenseless creature to its demise when there are fruits and berries to provide the necessary nourishment?"

McCoy, with a barely suppressed gleam in his eye, retorted, "Oh, Spock, you don't know how to enjoy yourself. There's nothing like being able to catch your own supper and cook it over an open fire. Why, back on Earth, we used to take camping expeditions like this all the time. Purely delightful for the soul."

The trio beamed down to a planet unspoiled by civilised development. The streams ran crystal clear and the air sparkled in its purity. The smell of cedar and wild flowers greeted them. The warm afternoon sun cast its warming rays onto their shoulders. An idyllic day on a delightful world. The Enterprise left orbit and the three were alone for the next week. Kirk was looking forward to these few days of rest.

A spot was found to pitch a tent for shelter should the weather turn on them. Once the campsite was set, each man set off in a different direction to seek some measure of solitude to help ease the tension just past.

The sun was starting to set and the horizon was a mutation of color. The brightness of day was giving way to the softer colors of twilight. The gentle pinks showed the lush forest in perfect contrast. Kirk sat down at the base of one of the trees to watch the night slowly creep in.

The night. The time when the sharpness disappeared. The time when softness and emotion were allowed a freer rein than the clear silhouette of day allowed. The thought flowed through Jim Kirk and soon he had found the measure of peace he had hoped to find on this planet.

With the darkness now claiming hold of the planetside, Kirk felt it time to retrace his steps back to camp. Letting his night vision guide him, he was startled at the beauty the night had to offer. The black outlines of the trees against the softer gray of the sky. A pure delight for the senses. If only he could be allowed such feelings more often...

Knowing the others would get anxious if he tarried too long, Kirk hurried his steps back to camp. He felt tired, so tired. He thought it must be a delayed reaction to the duty just past. During a crisis, the Captain can never let his fatigue show. Only when all is once again quiet can the physical and emotional stress present itself to be soothed away. His head hurt, too. Tired, that's what it must be. A good night's sleep under the stars would do him a world of good.

Spock and McCoy were already at camp when he arrived. They looked and asked him why he had taken so long and was everything all right?

"Everything's fine now. Just got a little lost in the beauty of the land. Now let's see what we can do about some warm food to soothe the soul and invite some good sound sleep to set in."

The three ate in companionable silence from the rations they took down with them. Tomorrow would be soon enough to start foraging for food. Today, they were all quite content to partake of the reconstituted fare.

Kirk was feeling quite tired and the pain in his head hadn't yet diminished so he was the first to turn in for the night. The stars overhead seemed a perfect canopy under which the trio could sleep so all three sleeping bags were unrolled in the open, leaving the tent empty.

For the first few hours, Kirk slept well, then he became restless. Both Spock and McCoy were wakened by his tossing and calling out in his sleep. McCoy was the first to reach him and went to shake him into wakefulness. Touching the flesh, he detected the presence of a fevered state, not merely a troubled dream as he had at first suspected. At once he began muttering under his breath for not having had the foresight to bring along a complete medical kit. The only medical equipment he had on hand was the tricorder which could register basic readings, but not enable him to effect treatment. Jim Kirk was quite delirious and Spock had now joined McCoy beside the Captain. The two finally managed to rouse Kirk into consciousness. It was obvious he was very ill. No tricorder was needed to register that information. He was complaining of headache and weakness, as well as uncontrollable chills which sent his body into spells of unstoppable shivering.

McCoy left Kirk in Spock's care to see if there was ANYTHING they had

brought down with them that might help the Captain. Spock was as worried as McCoy about his Captain's welfare. A sudden spasm relieving Kirk of his evening meal didn't help to end Spock's worry. He gave a supporting hand and then gently eased Kirk back to a prone position when the convulsive seizures had passed.

McCoy was returning when he saw Spock hold Kirk with care and compassion trying to ease some of the pain his Captain and friend was experiencing. McCoy felt he should not intrude on such an open gesture of caring on Spock's part. He would kid him about his nonfeeling, but he had seen enough moments like this one to know there was at least a spark of caring beneath that icy surface and he didn't want to let Spock see him. That he felt would cause too much embarrassment for the Vulcan to face. So he waited until after Kirk was lowered back to his sleeping bag before he returned.

"Spock, how is he? I managed to find a few aspirin, but that's about all we managed to bring with us. I also tried to contact the Enterprise, but she is out of communicator range so I guess we will have to make out for the next few days until she returns."

"The Captain is experiencing some discomfort. Perhaps if you would let him take a few of those tablets, it might help."

McCoy administered two aspirin to Kirk and watched as he fell into a fitful sleep. He also watched Spock. He seemed to be rooted to the spot. McCoy got the feeling the Vulcan would sit there all night, watching and waiting.

"Doctor, if you wish to get some rest, I will attend the Captain. Vulcans require less rest than do Humans and it is only logical that you rest so you will be fresh for the morning and will be better able to care for the Captain."

McCoy could see the lie beneath the surface. Spock was fatigued. He had been through a harsh ordeal and had almost not returned alive. Yet Spock had to be allowed this one thing. Somehow the Vulcan needed to be close to Jim and be sure nothing further added to his illness.

"Perhaps you're right. If Jim should need anything, let me know. Also try to give him two of those aspirin tablets every four hours. They might help to keep the fever from getting any higher and might help to bring it down a bit. Spock, I don't think it's anything serious. Just a virus that fatigue and stress let gain a foothold in his system."

"Thank you, Doctor." Spock realised McCoy was trying to ease his mind and he was grateful for the expression. Somehow he sensed McCoy was just as soft inside as was he. The gruff exteriors with the warm openness of this starship Captain being the pull that allowed the caring and feeling within to seek the light of day.

Each knew how deeply the other cared and each, because of that knowledge, let the facade of not knowing continue. It would be too painful and too frightening to openly admit to such a friendship that had managed to form between the trio. The life of Starfleet personnel was too hazardous to let that feeling come through. It was too easy to have tomorrow see one or the other or even all three caught in some danger from which there would be no escape. Yes, it was far better not to openly acknowledge what was in the soul. Somehow Jim possessed the ability to bring it to the surface, but only he had the openness and the rare gift that allowed others to show themselves without fear of rejection and condemnation. Without his warmth to draw their spark of caring into the conflagration of feeling, it would remain buried and hidden for ever.

Both McCoy and Spock were learning to let their barriers down some. Each knew how deeply the psyche could ache and each was reluctant to allow any more hurt to penetrate. Yet within this group of three they could lower those fences and allow some feeling to creep out. This friendship was what each looked to as the fortress allowing him to continue. It provided the needed nourishment and the strength to face what must be faced.

Spock tended Kirk all night. The fever ceased to rise and by morning Kirk's state had managed to stabilize. The pale ashen face that greeted McCoy in the morning was enough to let the doctor know there was a long way to go before Jim would be on his feet once more. The uncontrollable shaking continued to rock his body and let all know the virus had taken a firm hold and did not want to leave the warm breeding ground of this body too quickly.

McCoy berated himself for not at least having taken a few antibiotics along. They would have helped more than the aspirin would. Also the warmth of sickbay would be better in preventing the disease from staying too long. The planet was not too cold, but the nights did bring along a chill with them that was not helping.

McCoy and Spock took turns through the days and nights that followed, tending to Kirk's needs. They worked in the harmony that only friends can muster. On the day before the Enterprise was scheduled to return, Kirk's fever seemed to break. He was able to take some bland nourishment and retain it. The shaking stopped and he could see the strain on the faces of his two friends.

"You two look as if you are the ones who have been sick. Don't you think it's time you get a little rest yourselves? I promise to go right to sleep and not disturb you for a few hours."

The trio settled down for some much needed rest before the Enterprise beamed them back on board.

Finding himself back on board his ship and confined to sickbay, Kirk once more looked up to find Spock and McCoy at his bedside.

"Doctor, I presume this only goes to show how limited your medical ability is. It would seem the rattles and incantations of your ancestors would have been of as much use as... "

"Well, Spock, I didn't see that computer brain of yours all that useful either. It did not think to bring along any antibiotics or other supplies that might have come in handy."

Kirk smiled and knew that all was well and he was home once more.

A MOMENT OF WEAKNESS by Gillian Catchpole

Down in the darkened passageways we walked,
Round every corner the threat from slaughterous shadows,
Where in the silence lurked a beast
Who stalked with death the depths of her domain
And cried revenge for murdered children.

From our earliest of days,
The wonders and delights arising from diversity
Are fundamental to our Vulcan core of thought.
Life which is so easily destroyed must be preserved,
Precious is its infinite variety.

Searching separate tunnels,
Jim stared as glowing rock dissolved to beast,
Stood waiting ready for the rush
That blurred the stillness with destruction.
Controlled by an emotion
That raged in a moment of utter weakness
Stronger than the principles I'd long held true,
All thoughts of peaceful capture disappeared.
Respect for life dimmed, unimportant,
As shamed before all Vulcan I urged him on to kill.

STRATEGIST by S.M. Stephenson

Captain James T. Kirk felt more than ready to leave the bridge. The changing of the shift was the most exciting thing that had happened during the past watch. He stepped down from his command chair, turning wearily to his CMO.

"Bones, it's been a long day."

"Jim, boy, y'all look like you could use a drink." McCoy put a hand on his friend's arm and steered him into the lift. "Come on down to my office. I've got somethin' for you."

"Best deal I've had in hours."

Once in the CMO's office Kirk plopped down into a chair, leaned it back against the wall and closed his tired eyes.

"If I have one more report to read and sign tonight, I think I'll scream," he grouched. In the background he could hear McCoy rattling glasses and pouring the 'something'.

"Drink this." A glass was placed in his hand.

Jim Kirk stretched with contentment, blindly raising the glass to his lips, and sipped.

"Gaagh!" he spat, pushing away from the wall. "What in hell is this stuff?"

"That's your Amberlyne Fever vaccine. And with the amount you just spilled on my floor I'm goin' to have to top that glass off for you again, Captain." McCoy grinned at the look of sheer disgust on his friend's face.

"Dr. McCoy, that was a rotten thing to do."

"I told you I had somethin' for you. Not my fault if you thought of a different somethin'," McCoy laughed. He held up the pharmaceutical bottle. "Now bring that glass on over here so I can fill it up again."

Kirk gave the CMO a long hard look before holding his glass out for the necessary refill. "I should have you keelhauled for betraying the trust of a poor unsuspecting patient!"

McCoy smiled. "You can't do that, Captain."

"Why not?" James T. was the picture of affronted innocence.

"A starship does not have a keel," the doctor answered smugly.

"I'll have Spock order one in the morning! For when we stop at Starbase 6."

The Captain grimaced as he caught a whiff of the bilious green liquid in the small glass. "Oh, brother! I think I'd rather have the shot."

"No, you wouldn't." McCoy poured two glasses of brandy.

"Why not, Bones?"

"It was a bitchin' shot." He paused as Kirk looked up from the glass unconvinced. "Well now, I can whip it up in the lab if you insist...but you're goin' to feel mighty foolish standing alongside your command chair for the next three days!"

"That bad?"

"That bad." McCoy rested his arms on his desk, a brandy-filled glass in one large hand. "Now Jim, why don't you just be good and drink that down like a big boy?"

The Captain of the Enterprise sighed in resignation preparing himself for the task ahead.

"My doctor back home used to give me a lollipop," he said seriously. Taking a deep breath he swallowed the vile potion in one gulp.

"Gee, I'm awful sorry, Captain." McCoy smiled broadly, offering a glass of brandy to chase after the vaccine. "I'm just plumb outta lollipops today. You gonna put me on report?"

"I might settle for a nice blonde nurse," Kirk managed after a soothing swallow of the brandy.

"Dr. McCoy," Nurse Chapel spoke from the open doorway, "I've finished up in the lab."

The two men stared at each other for a second, then burst into glorious laughter.

Nurse Chapel looked from her Captain, who was slapping his thigh, to the doctor, who had his head down on one arm while he pounded the desk with the other, to the open brandy bottle.

"We can talk in the morning," she sniffed, turned on her heel and left.

One week after leaving Starbase 6, First Officer Spock stepped onto the bridge of the Enterprise with a puzzled expression on his face. He descended the steps and crossed to the command chair.

Kirk looked up from a particularly dull report on Lab Equipment Maintenance Schedules, grateful for the interruption.

"What is it, Mr. Spock?"

"As you may know, Captain, I was requested by Dr. McCoy to report to Sickbay because various of my immunizations required renewal. After the good doctor had finished pumping an assortment of his usual noxious potions into my body, he presented me with this."

Spock's right hand revealed a brightly colored disk on a small stick.

"McCoy said that you, sir, would explain the significance of this gift," he added.

Captain Kirk stared at the object in Spock's hand.

"That's a lollipop. Bones gave you a lollipop!"

The bridge crew tried in vain to hide their laughter at Spock's bafflement.

Kirk pushed the report aside. "I think I feel slighted," he commented to no-one in particular. Hopping out of the command chair he charged towards the lift.

"Hold the fort, Spock," he said over his shoulder. "I'll be in Sickbay."

"But, Captain," Spock protested, "you have not explained..." He held up the lollipop.

Kirk paused, eager to leave the bridge. "Oh, yes. Well, ah," he glanced around, "ah... Lt. Uhura will explain it to you."

He disappeared behind the closing doors.

"Incredible. Absolutely incredible," Spock muttered, staring at the turbolift.

"What is, Mr. Spock?" Uhura asked.

"Dr. McCoy stated that the Captain was also due for a booster. It was his belief that if I requested an explanation of this object, the Captain would immediately head for Sickbay, whereas if such a request to report for a booster was made by the doctor himself, the Captain would successfully find reasons to delay until the end of watch.

And now, Lieutenant, about that explanation..."

Spock stood looking at her attentively, waiting to be educated on this most curious facet of Human behavior.

Uhura took a deep breath and began. "Well, Mr. Spock. It's like this... "

* * * * *

An earlier version of The Strategist was published by the Michigan State University Star Trek Club in their zine Second Millenium.

REFLECTIONS by Susan Meek

You sit now, at your station,
Impassive, analysing data from Psi 2000
And I, the efficient Starship Captain
Commanding. No longer mourning
The lack of beaches.

Yet not long ago
We stood before each other
Souls bared
Seeing each other's deepest secrets --
I am glad it was you
And no other.

When I think back now
On those agonizingly revealing moments
I remember most vividly
The loneliness.
Yours, in your half-breed existence,
Mine, the necessary isolation of command.

You said you were ashamed
To call me 'friend'.
I understand now
Better than ever before
The struggle, the price of
Your separateness.

It need not always be this way
For I have no shame
In calling you friend.
Let me in --
Let me banish the loneliness.

Let me teach you
There need be
No shame.

McCoy: You'd better find out the injured Security Man's name so we can notify his family.

Christine: He says his family know his name, thanks.

* * * * *

Kirk: Where's my stylus?

Rand: Behind your ear, Captain.

Kirk: Come on, can't you see how busy I am -- which ear?

IN DARKNESS by Susan Meek

Pain. There was nothing but pain.

It seemed to burn, white-hot in his veins. In every part of him, for the creatures reached into every fibre, every sinew, every nerve he possessed.

They wanted control. Of him. Of this ship. Of every intelligent inhabitant of Deneva or whatever stood in their path. But they must not be allowed to win. For the sake of the ship, for...Jim, he must resist.

"I am a Vulcan. There is no pain."

But, undeniably, there was. Pain...that seemed to divide him, not only into Vulcan/Human but splintering his personality into many little parts that could not resist its onslaught...

But perhaps worse than the pain was the presence of the alien mass-mind inside his own, threatening to destroy every shred of the privacy and control that were the corner-stones of his life and sanity.

The craving for release overpowered even that which he had felt when his body had burned in the plak-tow. And the ordeal of the Klingon mind-sifter seemed almost easy compared to this insistent plea for obedience.

It wanted to own him, to have him do its bidding... It was...taking over... It was...

Unreal. Gone. He realised suddenly that the creature had not disappeared because of his control, but because it had been destroyed. The whole thing had been only a memory, a dream...

His eyes opened, to meet...blackness. Absolute, total black. For a moment, a jolt of fear shot through him, the instinctive fear in all creatures of daylight to places of darkness, of primordial black. Then he remembered why. Earlier that day McCoy had shone what seemed like the light of a thousand suns in his eyes, but had only in fact been the facsimile of one. The creature had gone, leaving him free - but also blind.

He was a Vulcan. Such...fear was not proper. With the use of logic, this could be accepted and controlled.

Even so, a slight shiver ran involuntarily through his body.

A hand reached out to cover his, and squeeze it reassuringly. Even before he heard the voice that softly whispered, "It's all right," he knew whose the touch had been.

"Captain?"

"Yes, I'm here. It was only a dream. It's all right..." Jim Kirk's voice was very low, very soothing, very comforting... He should not of course as a Vulcan need comfort but even so, he could not truthfully deny that here in the darkness that touch brought a certain...security. Instinctively, he turned his head towards the sound of Kirk's voice.

As he saw Spock look up at him, Jim Kirk turned his head away. He found he was shivering a little, the same small shiver of horror that had run through him when he first saw Spock step from behind that screen...

As he turned, his gaze fell upon the figure of his nephew, lying on a nearby couch. Peter was, thank God, all right now, only sleeping off the after-effects of the creatures' attack, as Spock had been doing until a few moments ago. He felt relief at the sight but also pain. The boy was very like Sam.

Yes. It had hurt to lose Sam, hurt so very much; but to lose this one... who had become a very special type of brother to him in the years they had served together...

Steeling himself, he turned back to face Spock. Not that it really

mattered, he thought bitterly, what expression showed on his face, Spock couldn't see it anyway.

During the hours that he had watched Spock struggle with the alien creature, Kirk had feared it would be death that would part them. In fact in some ways death might have been easier than this. For Spock's blindness would part them just as surely. Unless McCoy could find an answer, it would probably mean a medical discharge for the Vulcan. There could be no room in Starship service for someone with his disability. What could he do? Go back to Vulcan, perhaps? Whatever happened, it would mean Spock leaving the Enterprise, the only home he had ever really known, and leaving...him.

The realities of the situation, of course, had to be faced up to, but not ...just yet. Tomorrow was soon enough. He had persuaded McCoy to let him stay beside the Vulcan tonight. "He shouldn't wake up alone in the dark," he had told the doctor, trying to avoid the guilt-stricken look in McCoy's eyes. Another problem that would have to be faced...

Kirk shut his eyes, trying to imagine the sensations. No, it was impossible, for he knew that any moment, he could simply open his eyes and return to the world of the sighted...

"How is the decontamination progressing, Captain?" Spock's voice was weary but still managed to convey that characteristic crisp efficiency.

"Satisfactorily, Mr. Spock," his Captain said, trying to match the business-like tone. "The ultra-violet satellites seem to have done their job pretty effectively. There are landing parties down on the planet now. There's nothing for you to worry about."

Still the First Officer, even here, Kirk thought. How can I command this ship without him by my side?

For a moment despair threatened to overwhelm him, as he looked into those dark, sightless eyes looking up into his. No, he thought determinedly, I've got to stop thinking like that!

Where there's life there's hope. I won't give up on him, not until everything's been tried...

Touching as they were, Spock felt the undercurrent of Kirk's thoughts, more in an empathic than telepathic way; first the misery, then the fierce determination and hope. A rather illogical hope, considering the odds... But somehow, through the comforting touch, it transmitted itself to Spock.

"Captain...?"

Kirk saw the lines of exhaustion on the Vulcan's face. "It's late," he said quietly. "McCoy said you should get as much rest as you can. Go to sleep."

Obediently, Spock shut his eyes. Kirk looked down, aware that he was still holding the Vulcan's hand.

They were, at least, still together.

And together, they had always been able to face anything.

Spock opened his eyes for a moment. Darkness, only darkness, for the rest of his life. Black, unyielding... He was a Vulcan. And there was nothing in this darkness of which to be frightened, only his own fears, which were purely of the mind and could therefore be controlled...

And besides, Jim was here, and he would stay, as long as he was needed. He was a Vulcan... He should not need it... But the very knowledge of that close presence was like a golden beach, shining in the dark place where he now dwelled.

And that presence stayed, ever close to his side, until the alternate darkness of sleep claimed him for its own.

HIC EST..... by Meg Wright

(based on an idea by E. Wright)

"Hic!"

The unmistakable sound came from behind Kirk's right shoulder. He stopped the involuntary swing of his chair at its conception, since Vulcans don't get hiccups; someone else must have taken over at Spock's station. He completed the checked movement to find Spock alone at the library console. Kirk allowed himself the luxury of an unseen flared eyebrow and swung himself back again.

"Hic!"

Chekov's head was turning now; catching Kirk's eye he bent hurriedly over the navigation console once more, casting a surreptitious glance at Sulu as he did so. The helmsman was watching the main screen rather too carefully. Chekov remembered the cold gleam in the Captain's eye and felt his rising chuckle subside.

"Hic!"

This time it was Uhura who giggled, covering it with a hasty cough. Kirk got up from the command chair and went up the steps to Spock's station.

"Everything all right, Mr. Spock?"

Disastrously, the Vulcan opened his mouth to reply.

"Hic!"

The convulsion was clearly so painful that any desire to laugh left Kirk. "Try holding your breath while you count to twenty, Spock."

There was silence for a short while as every other member of the bridge crew held their breath in sympathy.

"Hic!"

Spock let the breath go and began again.

"Hic!"

The First Officer frowned, concentrating on the muscles of his diaphragm. Vulcans do not have hiccups, the mind controls the body.

"Hic!"

Startled, he met Kirk's eye. "I seem to be unable to control the spasms...pasms, sir," he said reluctantly.

"Cross your arms across your chest and pull your earlobes," Uhura suggested sympathetically.

Spock shot her a devastating look, spoilt only by yet another explosive

"Hic!"

"Try it," Kirk said.

The Vulcan turned his gaze upon him. Et tu?

Kirk shrugged. "It might work. Try it."

Patiently, Spock did as he was told.

"Hic!"

"Stand up and put your left little finger on your right little toe and your right little finger on your left little toe," Sulu suggested.

The Vulcan suppressed a withering glance. Humans seemed to have the most illogical remedies for the most illogical of complaints.

"Hic!"

"Come on." Kirk was helping him to his feet. Surely he was not going to

insist upon... Inexorably his head was pushed down. A babble of conflicting advice filled the bridge.

"Right little finger across."

"No, the left toe, Mr. Spock."

"Hic!"

Thankfully, the Vulcan straightened up, carefully avoiding Kirk's eye.

"Drink out of the back of a glass," Chekov suggested.

The eyebrows lost themselves in the dark hair. "Mr. Chic...Chekov, a glass is normally cic...circular, how does one determine which is the back?" Spock enquired, dignity enfolding him like a cloak.

"Well, not the back, the other side," Chekov amended helpfully.

"Top...opologically, a glass has only one side, Mr. Chekov, kindly be more explicit."

"Well, sir, you stand up and hold the glass normally, only instead of drinking out of the part nearest you, you lean across and drink from the part furthest away," Chekov explained.

Seeing the Vulcan's glazing eye, Kirk suggested Uhura should send for a glass of water so the navigator could demonstrate the trick.

"Captain, I hardly thi...ink," Spock began.

"Painful?" Kirk asked solicitously as the Vulcan closed his eyes.

"No, sir," the First Officer replied, "illogical. Vulcans do not suffer from hiccups. Hic! I fail to understand why I am quite unable to control myself at this time." He closed his mouth firmly over another shattering convulsion.

"I had a friend at the Academy who used to swear by one remedy," Kirk said thoughtfully. He cast a swift eye over the bridge; the crew hastily bent to their tasks.

"Thank you, Gentlemen," Kirk said sweetly. "Come over here, Mr. Spock."

Still hiccuping, the Vulcan followed him to the turbolift entrance.

"Stand by the wall there, next to Uhura," Kirk told him, "and hold your hands above your head with your fists clenched." The Vulcan obeyed patiently. "I'm...uh...going to hit you in the stomach, Spock," Kirk explained. He swung an arm.

Uncharacteristically, the Vulcan doubled over. Stepping back to avoid him, Kirk trod heavily on the booted foot of the Yeoman emerging from the lift, receiving the contents of the glass she carried down the back of his shirt.

"A cold key down the back sometimes helps," Uhura said reflectively into the stunned silence.

"That's for a nosebleed," Kirk said curtly. "Take the con, Lieutenant, while I go and get a clean shirt. Yeoman, another glass of water, please - uniced this time!"

Dry and comfortable once more, he stepped out of the lift to find Spock bent forward over a glass, draining the last drops. The floor seemed a little damp. He lifted his head and Kirk waited expectantly.

"Hic!"

Kirk sighed. "Sickbay, Mr. Spock."

"Really, Captain, it is not necessary... "

"You said yourself, Spock, Vulcans don't get hiccups, neither do they double over when they get swiped amidships. Sickbay, that's an order."

Spock was thankful not to pass more than three pairs of raised eyebrows on his way to Sickbay. He paused outside McCoy's office, listening intently to make certain the Medical Officer was alone. McCoy he could face, he thought, but his condition seemed guaranteed to bring out Nurse Chapel's mothering instinct. He slipped quietly inside.

"Hic!"

McCoy looked up, eyes creasing into a smile. "Why, Mr. Spock! Try holding your breath and counting to twenty."

"I have tried that remedy, Doctor," Spock said icily, "and every other suggestion made to me. They have all been unsuccessful. Hic!"

He compressed his lips tightly, and stared at McCoy, eyes daring him to laugh. The surgeon got up, grinning, and came round the desk to him, exploding suddenly into movement, hands waving under the Vulcan's nose, and emitted a loud yell.

"BLAAGH!"

He studied the blank face.

"Hic!"

"Oh well. Sometimes a sudden shock will do the trick," McCoy explained.

"It appears to have been ineffect...ectual," Spock said coldly.

McCoy placed his hand on the Vulcan's diaphragm.

"Hic!"

McCoy removed his hand, nodding slowly. "Abnormally slack," he said.

"For a Vulcan, I mean."

"Doctor, I was already aware that my muscles are no longer completely under my control..." Spock began.

McCoy waved him to silence. "You had your routine booster shots a day or two ago, didn't you?"

"You know I did, Doctor, since you insi...sisted on doing them yourself."

"Emmm," McCoy said reflectively. "I'd better give you a thorough physical."

He ignored the stormy expression and set about recalibrating the instruments.

At last he swung the couch, allowing Spock to step away from it. The Vulcan slipped his shirt back on, the spasms still shaking him from time to time. It seemed extraordinary how tiring such a simple thing could be. McCoy studied him sympathetically.

"Exhausting, isn't it?"

"Unpleasant," Spock admitted, a little grimly.

McCoy selected a hypo. "This should fix it." The hypo hissed and the two men held their breath. The silence lengthened.

"Doctor, I believe you have done it," Spock said at last.

"You mean you have," McCoy told him.

"Yes," Spock agreed. "I have regained control."

"It's as well we found out the problem the easy way," McCoy said, replacing the hypo. "It could have been a lot more serious. You had a reaction to the serum, a loss of muscular tone that wouldn't have affected a Human, but with

that supposedly superior Vulcan physique, it could have prevented your autonomous control over some vital function. Be thankful it was only something as undignified as hiccups!"

Spock surveyed him coolly. "Your primary treatment omitted something vital, Doctor. Should you not have been wearing your beads if you wished it to be efficacious?"

The sickbay doors hissed shut behind him.

Friendship is not merely grasping
 the physical act of taking,
 for friendship is not matter;
 you cannot see it,
 yet I can see it in you.
 You cannot reach out to it,
 touch it or feel it -
 yet I feel it.
 It is real. It sometimes hurts.
 It sometimes warms my inner being,
 my soul.
 Sometimes a word can, dagger sharp,
 pierce into me,
 or turn about and coax or comfort me.
 Sometimes a look can send a thought,
 speak volumes while a word goes unsaid.
 You deny it to yourself,
 but I have seen it in your eyes
 or lips that curl against your will.
 You leave when weakness threatens -
 your weakness Vulcan read.
 Humans are not so stern,
 not so harsh with themselves.
 How I wish sometimes
 when I am alone in my cabin -
 alone -
 you would share that hidden humour
 I so easily read
 with me.
 I will not tell.
 I cannot -
 for that you fear
 is also in me.

Janet Balch

A WORK OF FRICTION by Roo

A man made of iron who never rusts
 In a house built of ashes, on sand, on dust.
 Crying his limestone tears at night
 Becomes by and by a stalactite.
 He never sees that life is free
 Or the butterfly that he could be.
 For the limy cocoon which he has made
 Obscures his sight, and he is afraid.

FOR IF DREAMS DIE by Jean Barron

Kirk stared down at the body of the Security man lying at his feet and tried in vain to convince himself that there was no way he could have saved the man's life. Brenner had died, his skull crushed, when he and Ensign Lee had been caught in a rockfall started by one of the minor quakes that had been hitting the planet at intervals for the past twenty hours. Lee had escaped with a gashed hand but he was obviously badly shaken by the death of his companion.

"Mr. Spock!"

"Yes, Captain."

"I think we'd better get back to the ship. Conditions are getting more hazardous by the minute."

"Agreed, Captain. There seems little point in prolonging our stay. The scientific team located on this planet obviously had all relevant data with them on the ship when it was destroyed."

Kirk glanced round at the group of derelict buildings behind them. "You're probably right, Spock. Enterprise! Kirk to Enterprise!"

The reply when it came was so badly distorted that it took Kirk a few seconds to recognise Sulu's worried voice.

"What's happening up there, Mr. Sulu?"

"We're experiencing considerable difficulty with all ship's systems including life support..." The rest of Sulu's report was drowned in crackling static but Kirk persisted and was finally rewarded by a relatively clear channel which allowed him to speak to Scotty in the transporter room.

"We're beaming up, Scotty. Three of us - and Brenner's body. He was killed in that last quake."

"I'm sorry, Captain, but I'm going to have to take you one at a time. The star that's about to explode out there is giving my transporter circuits a lot of trouble. And the atmospheric disturbances on your little planet don't exactly help."

"All right, Scotty. Take Mr. Lee first. I'll leave Brenner's communicator on transmit so you can get a fix on him."

"Aye, Captain. Locking on to Mr. Lee's co-ordinates now."

The Ensign's form seemed to take an exceptionally long time to shimmer out of sight and it was a while before Scotty acknowledged his safe arrival on the transporter platform. The body of Brenner took even longer to disappear and there was an ominous silence from the ship.

"Scotty, what's happening?"

"It's no use, Captain. The transporter's out - I lost Brenner..." Scotty's voice was filled with horror but Kirk had no time to commiserate with him over the loss of a man who was already dead and beyond Human aid. There were more than four hundred living crew members to be considered.

"Listen to me, Scotty. You've got to get the ship out of here before this whole star system is blown apart - get as far away as you can!"

"But Captain, I can't leave you and Mr. Spock down there. You won't have a prayer."

"Scotty, I'm giving you an order - get out now!"

Scotty's acknowledgement was barely audible - a shocked whisper across the distance that separated them. "Aye, Captain."

The transmission ended and Kirk looked up to find Spock regarding him calmly. "Since we are to remain, Captain, I would like permission to complete

my examination of the scientific equipment here. Some of it is quite interesting."

Kirk shrugged, despairing of his First Officer's lack of emotion at such a time. Still, there was something unreal about this situation - the prospect of sudden death had been thrust upon them so abruptly. "If that's what you want, Spock, go ahead. I prefer to stay out in the open myself."

He watched the tall figure disappear into one of the abandoned laboratories, then leaned against a boulder and stared about him at the desolate place that was to be his last contact with this universe. He had faced death many times during his career and had always felt more anger than fear at its approach, anger at the thought of so many things yet to do that would never be achieved, so many places yet to be discovered that he would never see.

This time it was different - death had never seemed so close, so inevitable, and suddenly it was important that he should not face it alone. He straightened up and began to climb the gentle slope towards the settlement but, before he had gone more than a few yards, the sky darkened, the atmosphere became oppressively warm and the ground convulsed violently beneath his feet; there was a heavy rumbling and crashing sound close by but he was blinded by clouds of dust and was forced to crouch in the lee of a rock, waiting for it to clear.

When at last he could see, he got to his feet, looking for the cause of the noise - and a giant fist struck him squarely in the solar plexus!

He stared incredulously at the flattened ruin of the building which his First Officer had entered moments earlier. His legs no longer seemed to belong to him as he broke into a run, eyes searching frantically for a glimpse of blue among the tumbled blocks of metal and stone. Then he saw Spock lying face down near the partly demolished rear wall and scrambled over debris to get to him, ignoring the pain when a shard of broken glass pierced his arm. Something in the terrible stillness of the figure made him hesitate before he sank to his knees and carefully turned his friend onto his back.

There was no injury that he could see but neither could he find any signs of life, no heartbeat, no respiration, and not a hint of warmth in the outflung hands.

Although a moment ago he had faced the thought of death with a faint stirring of anger, now he felt curiously numb as he reached out to brush the streaks of dust from the tranquil face with a hand that was curiously steady.

"This is it, then, Spock...this is how it ends for us. I knew it could happen, but somehow I didn't think it would be so soon. Stupid, I suppose - we challenged the fates often enough and it's about time they won."

He continued with meticulous, loving care to smooth the dark hair, straightening the crumpled uniform and tossing aside the smashed tricorder on its broken strap. Finally, he sat back on his heels, regarding his handiwork with eyes that were beginning to burn with unshed tears.

"Was that fair, Spock - to leave me alone?"

He tried to speak lightly but his voice cracked on the last word and he struggled to maintain his self-control. Spock was dead.

But he didn't have to think about it - he couldn't. In a few hours, it wouldn't matter anyway - nothing would matter and he longed for that merciful oblivion. If he could just not think at all until the instant when the planet would disintegrate and end his utter loneliness.

As if taking pity on him, his mind began slowly to turn inwards, closing off painful channels of thought, shutting out his surroundings so completely that soon he was quite cold and empty, totally without emotion. Before long he had gone too deeply within himself to hear the shrill bleep of his communicator or, some time later, to see the group of men deposited on the planet's surface in a glittering cloud of golden particles.

When McCoy approached the unnaturally still figure and touched his shoulder, he was horrified by the blank incomprehension in the normally keen hazel eyes. Then he turned his attention to the supine figure nearby and began to understand why Kirk was so deeply shocked.

After examining the Vulcan's body briefly, he spoke into his communicator, then beckoned to one of the waiting Security men who acknowledged his order and went to stand by the First Officer. The transporter beam enveloped them instantly and they were gone, leaving McCoy to coax the Captain to his feet.

It was at that point that Kirk began to emerge painfully and reluctantly from his self-induced trance. He could hear McCoy but nothing he said made any sense and his own voice shook with agitation as he demanded: "What are you doing here? Why did you come back?"

"Come on, Jim. I'll tell you all about it when we get back to the ship."

"No!" Kirk was beginning to get angry. "I can't go back. Not now."

"Yes, you can." McCoy held firmly on to Kirk's arm as he tried to pull away. "You certainly can't stay here."

The desolation in Kirk's eyes was almost more than McCoy could bear but there was nothing he could say at that moment to comfort him and he gave the order that would take them back to the Enterprise.

Kirk struggled against returning consciousness; the dreamlike sleep of heavy sedation had protected him from reality and he knew, even in his half-conscious state, that nothing but bitter anguish waited for him if he left the security of this dark world where no demands were made of him, where he could forget that his whole existence had been cruelly torn apart. But awareness was already creeping over him as someone shook him gently.

"Jim! Jim, wake up."

He opened his eyes and stared up at McCoy. "What is it?" he asked dully.

"I need you in sickbay."

"Leave me alone, Bones. I didn't ask you to bring me here - just leave me alone."

McCoy persisted. "Come on, Jim. On your feet - or do I have to carry you?"

Kirk sat up wearily, vaguely surprised to find that they were in McCoy's office and that he had been lying on the cot that the doctor sometimes used when he had a dangerously ill patient in his care.

"What am I doing here?"

McCoy turned at the door and said deliberately, "I thought you'd want to be near Spock."

Grief was a sharp, physical pain in Kirk's chest and McCoy's careless words infuriated him. "Bones...!"

"Steady, Jim. Just do as I ask and come with me."

The door slid aside and McCoy waited until Kirk, still rigid with anger, walked through ahead of him into sickbay - and froze on the spot.

M'Benga was absorbed in checking the life support machine that encased the slender form lying on the nearest bed, while a blood transfusion unit slowly dripped green fluid into the patient's arm.

Kirk spun round to face McCoy, wild disbelief in his eyes. "But he's dead!"

"Would we go to all that trouble for a dead man?"

Kirk continued to stare at him and his voice dropped to a whisper. "I thought he was dead."

His blue eyes warm with compassion, McCoy took Kirk's face gently between his hands. "I know you did."

A look of dazed, incredulous joy began to dawn in the tormented eyes... then the Captain of the Enterprise put his arms round his Chief Medical Officer and wept on his shoulder. McCoy made no attempt to stop the flood, merely holding him until he regained control of his ragged emotions.

Across the room, M'Benga made a totally unnecessary adjustment to the transfusion equipment and gazed thoughtfully at the medical panel above the bed until McCoy's voice released him from his pose. "I'll take over now, Doctor."

M'Benga nodded to them both and left.

Hardly daring to breathe, Kirk approached the bed and reached out to lay his fingers against the Vulcan's temple to feel the rapid pulse beneath the warm skin. Watching him, McCoy felt a fleeting pang of something he dismissed at once as being unworthy of the affection he had for these two men.

Unable to take his eyes from the sleeping figure, Kirk asked, "Why didn't you tell me, Bones?"

"I couldn't, Jim. You believed he was already dead - and I had no way of knowing whether he would survive. How could I risk putting you through that for a second time?"

"But what happened? Why did he seem to be dead?"

"As far as I can tell, he sustained a heavy blow to the chest which fractured three ribs and ruptured the Vulcan equivalent of our spleen. I think he may have started a healing trance but couldn't prevent a massive internal hemorrhage. I had M'Benga stand by with a few litres of T-Negative and just prayed that we wouldn't be too late. There was no way I could operate until we were pumping in blood at a faster rate than he was losing it."

"You saved his life, Bones. Thank you."

McCoy looked uncomfortable. "He's not out of the woods yet."

Kirk looked round quickly. "But he will be all right?"

"Barring complications - yes, he'll be up and about in a few weeks." McCoy hesitated. "Jim, I'm sorry I had to let you go on thinking he was dead. I know you were taking it pretty badly - that's why I gave you the sedative."

"Don't worry, Bones, I appreciate what you did."

Considerably relieved, McCoy checked the indicators on the medical panel. "I think he can do without this now," he said and proceeded to remove the life support machine, leaving Kirk to draw the sheet up over the patient's chest.

Spock's eyes opened instantly and, taken by surprise, Kirk had no time to compose himself. The sight of his drawn features obviously worried the First Officer.

"Jim - you are unwell."

His voice sounded alarmingly weak and Kirk had to force a smile. "No, Spock - I was sick but I'm fine now. Go to sleep."

Spock obediently closed his eyes but not before directing a penetrating stare deep into the Captain's eyes and Kirk was left feeling oddly disconcerted. He avoided meeting McCoy's quizzical look until he was sure that Spock was asleep once more, then he said in a somewhat embarrassed tone, "Bones, you won't tell him, will you? You won't let him know how I behaved...earlier."

"What makes you think he doesn't already know?"

Kirk glanced down, a little disturbed to find that his hand was resting on Spock's shoulder. Then he frowned. There was no way Spock could know...was there?

"Very well, Admiral, I'll see that Commander Spock is here to receive your visitors but I must insist that he is not delayed more than forty eight hours. He should be on sick leave now and I will not risk his health unnecessarily."

Kirk snapped off the viewer and glared at the blank screen, still seeing in his mind's eye the bland features of Admiral Diaz as he made his 'request'. He began to pace back and forth, his mind working furiously.

Ten days had passed since he and Spock had been miraculously snatched from the tiny Darien planet after the inexplicable disappearance of seismic and atmospheric disturbances which had allowed Scotty to return and rescue the two stranded men.

Even since McCoy had agreed reluctantly that Spock could leave sickbay, the doctor had complained bitterly that the Vulcan was not taking things as easily as he should. In fact, most of his time was spent with the computer, studying the data obtained from the Darien star system. The fact that its star, which had been threatening for some time to explode and destroy its four planets in the process, had suddenly become undeniably stable was a mystery that had roused the insatiable curiosity of the Enterprise's Science Officer.

Eventually, Kirk had been obliged to confine Spock to his quarters with limited access to the nearest recreation room and with the strict injunction that he was not to tie in his cabin viewer to the main computer.

Although it was obvious that Spock found these restrictions irksome, Kirk was adamant. Even without McCoy's expert advice, he could see that the Vulcan was still extremely weak physically and needed plenty of rest if he was to regain his former strength.

Now, irritated by the knowledge that the plans carefully laid by himself and McCoy were to be disrupted, Kirk flipped the intercom switch.

"Sickbay." The voice was cool, efficient and female.

"This is the Captain. Please ask Dr. McCoy to come to my quarters." He moved to switch off, then changed his mind. "Engineering."

"Scott here, Captain."

"Scotty, will you get somebody to have a look at the thermostat in my cabin - it's not working properly and I'm getting slowly cooked in here."

"Aye, Captain. I'll send a man up right away."

"Make it twenty minutes, Scotty. Kirk out."

McCoy listened in silence as Kirk told him about the call from Starbase 6. It seemed that a team of Vulcan scientists had heard about the strange circumstances affecting the Darien star and they had requested permission to come aboard the Enterprise in order to study the sensor readings at first hand. As the First Officer was half Vulcan, Admiral Diaz had decided that he would be the ideal host and guide for the visitors.

"What about our plans? The three of us were going to spend a week by the lake."

"That'll have to wait, Bones. Unless you can certify Spock unfit."

McCoy frowned. "I could...but I don't know if I could make it stick. You know that crazy Vulcan - he'll kill himself trying to prove how fit he is just for a chance like this."



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"You could give him a deadline - forty eight hours, or else."

The doctor grinned. "Yeah, I could do that. I'll stay to make sure he obeys orders but I want you to go on ahead, Jim. You're looking tired and a couple of days' relaxation wouldn't hurt."

"I'm all right," protested Kirk but not too vehemently.

"There's no reason for you to stay, Jim. Half the crew will be on shore leave and there'll be maintenance teams from the Base up here. You know how you hate to see strangers running around your precious ship."

"You know just how to get to me, don't you, Bones? Okay, I'll go but I don't have to like it. Peace and quiet are all very well but I need my friends too."

McCoy turned back as he reached the door. "You ought to get the heating fixed in here."

"Yes," said Kirk absently, his mind on other things. "Scotty's sending someone up."

Spock received the news of his temporary return to duty with polite interest but Kirk knew that the Vulcan was eager to take advantage of the opportunity, not only to have access to the computer once more, but also to discuss the available information with his Vulcan colleagues.

"Of course, if you find the idea disagreeable, I'm sure I could persuade Bones to put you back on the sick list."

Perfectly aware that he was being deliberately provoked - try as he might, Kirk could not keep the glint of amusement from his eyes - Spock retained his composure. "I believe I am able to discharge this duty without undue strain upon my general health, Captain."

"I suppose the prospect of spending the next forty eight hours in the company of scientists is more attractive than going on leave with Bones and myself."

Spock looked as though he were about to protest but, when Kirk raised an enquiring eyebrow, he subsided uneasily.

Kirk was reminded of his own uneasiness when he had entered sickbay to find Spock fully conscious for the first time in four days. To his profound relief, the Vulcan had made no reference to the incident on Darien and Kirk assumed, gratefully, that that this was because he remembered nothing of what had occurred there. He had yet to come to terms with his own terrible sense of loss when he had believed Spock to be dead, and he was not quite ready to bring the subject out into the open.

During those four anxious days, he had haunted sickbay and, at times, had the distinct impression that only his rank saved him from being bawled out by an harassed CMO. The thought made him smile, then he became aware of the faint gleam of curiosity in Spock's eyes and coughed to cover his embarrassment.

"I think that will be all, Spock. I'll be leaving the ship in a few hours and I'll expect to see you and Bones in two days from now."

"I trust you will spend the time wisely, Jim."

"Don't worry. I intend making the most of this leave."

The man in the gold shirt made his solitary way through the spaceport and into the Starfleet depot where, after hand-print identification, he was issued with a service aircar and was soon being carried across lightly wooded countryside. Far from being soothed by the passing scenery, Kirk felt depressed and

began to wish that he had waited until the others were ready to join him. Then the air-car came to a smooth halt beside a white timber cabin and he went inside, trying hard to shake off his despondency.

It was much larger and more luxurious than he had expected. Usually, on this sort of trip, he liked to adopt a more primitive style of living, far away from the super-sophistication of life aboard a starship. This time, however, the prospect of a shore leave taken in civilised surroundings appealed to him - a fact which surprised him a little.

Just fifty yards away, the blue waters of the lake sparkled invitingly and, unable to resist its call, he dumped his luggage in the main living area and stripped off for a swim.

The water was cold and invigorating and he lost all track of time as he swam lazily on the surface, diving at last into the translucent depths to investigate the odd life forms below. Totally absorbed by the antics of these weird creatures, he almost forgot the need to breathe, and had to strike out hurriedly for the surface, suddenly aware of a creeping numbness in his limbs. He had obviously stayed in the water far too long.

Back in the cabin, he dried himself lethargically and prepared for bed, unable to face the thought of food. Dazed with fatigue, he went in search of the sleeping quarters. The first door he opened revealed a comfortable-looking bed and he crawled, shivering, between the sheets to fall immediately into a fitful doze.

When he awoke some time later, he realised that he was not suffering from a mere chill. His head ached abominably and each breath he took was a razor-sharp blade cutting through his chest.

At first, the pain was too great even to allow him to sit up and he had to fight to suppress a feeling of panic. If he could only contact the ship - Bones could tell him what medication to take - there had to be a medical chest somewhere in the cabin.

His communicator was with his clothes in the living area and, knowing that he had to get to it, he made a determined effort to sit up. The resulting pain made him feel sick and dizzy but eventually he was on his feet. His triumph was short-lived, however, for as he took a step forward, his vision blurred and his knees buckled under him, pitching him forward on to his face. A black, bottomless shaft opened in front of him and, in the last, terrifying instant before he plunged headlong into it, he called silently and desperately for help.

Hurrying round a corner on deck five, McCoy rebounded painfully off the hard-muscled figure coming in the opposite direction. Spock put out his hand to steady him. "You appear to be in a hurry, Doctor."

"Yes, I am. In the last hour, I've had six members of the crew collapse with a virus infection and I'm still trying to identify it."

"Is it serious?"

"Very, I've got three of them on oxygen and the others are almost at that stage."

"I am on my way to the shuttlecraft hangar now, from there I will be conducting our visitors to the computer room. Please keep me advised."

"Yes, I'll do that."

At that moment, the intraship system burst into life. "Dr. McCoy to sickbay! Dr. McCoy to sickbay! Medical emergency!"

McCoy departed abruptly.

Less than two hours later, he contacted Spock on the intercom. "I've

identified it, Spock. It's a form of pneumonic paralysis known as Van der Schaaf disease. Without the appropriate treatment, it's invariably fatal to Humans and some humanoids."

"And the treatment?"

"Serum. Admiral Diaz has sent up the limited supply held by his medical department and their laboratories are working on further batches right now. So far, I've only been able to inoculate my staff and sixteen confirmed cases. You'll be glad to know that Vulcans, even half-Vulcans, are immune - their blood carries antibodies."

"I am relieved to hear - "

"Spock!" McCoy flipped the intercom switch several times without result. "Spock! Are you all right?"

The intercom remained obstinately silent.

In the computer room, the senior Vulcan scientist left the microtape he had been studying to approach Spock who was staring blindly at the wall, his hands pressed tightly to the sides of his head.

"I do not wish to intrude..." he said hesitantly, "but I sensed - pain."

Spock's eyes focussed and his hands fell to his sides. "Not...my pain," he replied slowly.

"Your bondmate?"

"No - a friend."

If the older Vulcan was surprised by this answer, he gave no sign. "Is there anything I can do?"

"Thank you - no. But I must leave you to continue your work alone. Please excuse me."

"Of course."

As Spock turned away the door swished open and McCoy erupted into the room. "Spock! What happened?" Then as he looked more closely at the First Officer, "You look terrible. Are you sick?"

"No, Doctor. But I believe the Captain may be."

"Jim? What makes you think he's sick?"

Spock glanced at the Vulcan scientist who had reacted almost imperceptibly to the inference of a telepathic link between Vulcan and Human.

"I...cannot explain, Doctor. Please describe the symptoms of this disease."

Despite his obvious bewilderment, McCoy rattled off the information. "High fever for several hours, followed by severe chills, chest pains as the lungs gradually cease to function, rapid collapse and death."

"Mr. Scott tells me that the Captain complained of excessive heat in his cabin and requested that the thermostat be attended to. The maintenance engineer could find nothing wrong with the heating."

"Excessive heat? It was freezing in there, Spock!" McCoy's eyes widened as he realised the import of what they were saying. "Have you tried to contact Jim?"

Spock went to the door. "I made one attempt to advise him of the situation here but, since I could get no reply, I assumed he was indulging in one of his favourite pastimes - swimming. I may have been in error."

"You're going to him now," stated McCoy.

"You will bring the serum, Doctor."

"I can't, Spock, I'm still waiting for the main supply."

Spock's expression chilled McCoy's blood. "Then I shall go on and you will follow immediately the serum is available. I suggest you contact the Admiral at once - or collect the serum yourself."

Without waiting for a reply, Spock turned and left.

His world was pain, an iron band like a vice around his chest, a vicious hammering inside his head that made it impossible for him to open his eyes. He lay where he had fallen, too weak even to crawl to the precious black box on the other side of the door. All he could do was to concentrate on drawing one gasping breath after another. But the worst pain of all was knowing that he was dying alone, in a strange room and far from his ship.

A fresh spasm of pain caught him unawares and he began to cough, a harsh, dry cough that racked his body and masked the sound of the door opening, the footsteps that came swiftly towards him.

He was lifted in powerful arms and carried to the bed where he was wrapped in warm blankets, his head supported against a familiar shoulder. He knew it was Spock but, when he forced his eyes open, he could see only a grey mist - no colour, no shape, and he wept from sheer frustration.

"Please, Jim, don't. You will be well soon. Let me help you until Dr. McCoy arrives."

Slender fingers rested on his temples and presently he felt himself drifting as the pain began to recede. Then he realised what was happening and pushed feebly at the hands. "No! Don't touch me! It's too late!"

The cough tore at his chest again and Spock held him until the paroxysm passed. "Let me take some of the pain from you, Jim," he pleaded but Kirk shrank from him.

"I don't want you...to die too."

"You will not speak of dying! Dr. McCoy will be here very soon and he is bringing the serum you need."

"It's too...late." The iron band was creeping inexorably higher, squeezing the breath from his body but he was able to issue a last order before lapsing into unconsciousness once more.

"No mind meld, Spock. I...forbid it."

With a face that was carved from granite, Spock laid him down and moved away to send a terse message over his communicator. Then he lay down upon the bed and took the limp body of the Captain into his arms. An hour passed. In the darkened room there was no movement to disturb the stillness, only the rapid, shallow breathing of the Human and slower respiration of the Vulcan. Kirk lay motionless within the protective circle of Spock's arms, his head cradled against the Vulcan's shoulder. Presently, a breath caught in his throat and lost its frail fight for existence; his tortured lungs had given up their struggle. An instant later, Spock's breathing faltered and ceased as he followed his Captain into the unknown.

He was floating, free from pain and discomfort, in a warm, soft haven and he wanted to stay there forever but someone was speaking his name over and over, and finally, with a sigh, he opened his eyes. McCoy was staring anxiously down at him. "Jim, can you hear me?"

He wanted to answer but it seemed too much effort.

"Jim, do you know where you are?"

McCoy's worried expression made him struggle harder to remember. Then his memory flooded back. "Spock! Where's Spock?"

"He's all right. It's you I'm concerned about. How do you feel?"

"I'm fine. Tell me what happened. Spock was here, wasn't he?"

"Yes, he was here. You weren't hallucinating. He's lying down in the next room."

"He's not sick?"

"No. His Vulcan blood makes him immune to what you've had. He's just suffering from exhaustion. I'll have you know, the two of you gave me the shock of my life when I walked in here. You were both clinically dead - not a pulse or heartbeat between you! Fortunately, it could only have been for a few seconds and by using just about everything I had with me, I was able to bring you both out of it."

"But why Spock? You said he wasn't sick."

McCoy looked surprised. "Didn't you know? He was mind-linked with you. It was only his strength that was keeping you alive for a time but even he couldn't fight the lung paralysis and when you went..."

Kirk's eyes were blazing with fury in his paper-white face and, ignoring McCoy's restraining hands, he pushed back the sheets and got out of bed. "I want to see him - now!"

"Jim! You can't mean to wake him. He's been through enough for one day. When I told him you were alive, he just crumpled."

The anger faded a little. "I ordered him not to use the mind meld. I didn't want him to run that risk."

"So he disobeyed you. Put him on a charge."

Kirk tried to smile at this absurdity but, somehow, his facial muscles refused to comply. "I want to see him, Bones. Please."

McCoy knew when he was beaten. "All right, but don't chew him out. He doesn't deserve that - even if he did threaten to kill me if I didn't get here in time."

"Spock said that?"

"Well - not in so many words, but I knew what he meant."

More affected than he cared to admit by this evidence of Spock's fiercely protective attitude towards him, Kirk tried to concentrate on tying his robe but without a great deal of success.

"Sit down, Jim. I'll send Spock in. Of the two of you, I'd say he was in slightly better condition."

Kirk obeyed without a murmur, not even protesting when the mildly astonished doctor ran his mediscanner briefly over his chest before going to wake Spock. The First Officer entered a moment later with McCoy grumbling at his heels. "Might have known he wouldn't be asleep. Never did know how to take orders."

"So it seems," agreed Kirk in a tone so dry that the Vulcan stiffened defensively. Kirk put up his hand in a soothing gesture. "All right, Spock. You disobeyed my order and saved my life. What can I say?"

"It was Dr. McCoy who was instrumental in saving your life, Captain. He brought the serum."

"Then I'm grateful to both of you. Thank you. What I would like to know

is how you discovered I was sick. You weren't supposed to join me for another two days."

"You'd better ask Spock," said McCoy blandly.

"Spock?"

The Vulcan met his enquiring gaze without embarrassment. "You called to me."

There was a moment of complete silence as Kirk attempted to absorb this statement. "How...?" He cleared his throat and began again. "You couldn't have heard me."

"You did call."

"Yes, but you couldn't... What did I say?"

"Your exact words were 'Spock, help me. I need you.'"

"You did hear me."

"I believe I said so, Captain. You were in considerable pain at that time."

"You felt that too?"

"There are times when I cannot help being aware of certain strong emotions when your mind unconsciously sends out signals - pain, anger... "

"And fear," added Kirk bluntly. "I was afraid - of dying alone."

"There is no shame in that, Jim."

"No?" muttered Kirk. "Would you have been afraid?"

Spock's voice softened. "I was afraid, Jim - until you came."

Kirk jumped visibly. "You knew I was there?"

"I was always aware of your presence."

Colour flooded into Kirk's ashen cheeks. "But why didn't you say, or do something?"

"I could not. I knew that I was close to death, too close to maintain a healing trance. If it had not been for you, I believe I would have lost my meagre hold on life. Your grief sustained me and strengthened my will to survive. Could I have done less for you?"

Kirk could not answer that simple question, his heart was too full, and it was McCoy who came to his rescue. "Now that you have the answers to your mysteries, how about solving my problem, Spock?"

Without taking his eyes from Kirk's face, the Vulcan said, "I shall endeavour to do so, Doctor. What is your problem?"

"Just this - how did we pick up Van der Schaaf disease on the Enterprise? We haven't made planetfall in three months and this disease incubates in days."

"But we have made contact with a planet, Doctor - the Captain and I were on Darien's third planet only eleven days ago - and it was there that the Captain contracted the virus."

Kirk looked indignant. "I contracted it?"

"Yes, Captain. There were several culture jars in the building which collapsed during the final tremor and you may recall cutting yourself on broken glass."

"You didn't say anything to me about a cut, Jim!"

"It seemed too trivial to worry you about, Bones. I cleaned and put a spray dressing on it. I didn't give it another thought until Spock just mentioned it."

"That'll teach you to do your own doctoring. Perhaps you'll remember in future that I'm the one who decides what's trivial and what isn't!"

"Yes, Bones," said Kirk meekly, but he could not hide the sparkle in his eyes and McCoy snorted in disgust before heading for the door. "I can see it's no good talking to you right now. I'm going to catch up on my sleep."

When he had gone, the two men were silent for a moment. Then: "I think you should get some rest, Jim."

"Spock... "

Uncertain of what he wanted to say, Kirk paused and looked helplessly at the Vulcan. Spock smiled faintly and shook his head, his eyes telling Kirk more clearly than any words could: 'Do not question it. The mind-link exists - that is all we need to know.'

Kirk smiled and extended his hand and Spock grasped it in a warm, firm grip. "Sleep well, Jim."

"If I don't, I have an odd feeling that you'll be the first to know."

MIND-LINK by Gillian Catchpole

A touch almost too subtle to perceive,
 A flowing light vibrating softly on my mind,
 Loosening thoughts to the gentle insistence of link.
 *No need to fear,
 Barriers felt will not be violated.*
 His reassurance echoes round my mind
 Until he knows I am again relaxed.
 Thoughts pour in, shared in easy exchange,
 Accepted, as are my own,
 Acceptance warm without rejection.
 Mind-link deepens in response.
 *I have encountered a barrier,
 I withdraw without intruding,
 Your privacy is maintained.*
 Soothing waves flow calm across the tension.
 *No, I am not shocked by the wish to hide,
 In every life there is reason for regret,
 Who can condemn when the shame is theirs?*
 Far away a hint of decision
 Then thoughts lie bare and unprotected.
 Awareness descends and slowly surrounds
 As barriers I never knew existed
 Melt down in open honesty.
 Fragile memories, hesitantly offered,
 Tinged with pain, become my own.
 Asking only understanding,
 The contact is frail with fear of rejection.
 I answer the only way I can.
 I let fall the barriers in my mind,
 Unveiling memories I would have concealed,
 Ignoring the thought, *There is no need.*

Riley: Thanks for playing my accompaniment, Uhura, but I get the feeling you don't like my voice.

Uhura: Kevin, I've played the black notes and the white notes - but you're the only person I've ever heard who sings between the notes.

TRANSPORTS OF DELIGHT by Tina W. Pole

"I don't like it, Jim. I don't like it at all..." McCoy grumbled as he stood looking at the newly-erected transporter booth which stood in the centre of his outer office.

"There's got to be technical advancement, Bones...science doesn't stand still."

"Yeah! Well I don't care...you know how I feel about the main transporter system, and now this. What do we have to test it for?"

"Because we are the Enterprise. Now come on..."

"As long as you come with me."

"It's only designed for one."

"Maybe...but two have been able to use one before."

"I know - but Bones, I refuse to appear on the bridge locked in a tight clinch with you."

"You go first..."

"Well - all right." He stepped cautiously onto the platform. "See you on the bridge, then." He pressed out a sequence of numbers on the booth's wall control panel and shimmered out of existence. A minute later the intercom in McCoy's office sounded.

"Bones, I made it. It's working just fine, all of them are - the whole bridge crew have arrived in one piece."

"Ah well, as it's working so well, I don't really need to come to the bridge anyway..."

"Dr. McCoy, get yourself up here on the double! That's an order!"

McCoy swore stealthily under his breath.

"What did you say?"

"I'm on my way...Captain."

"Oh - Dr. McCoy..." Christine Chapel stood in the doorway.

"What is it, Nurse? I'm in a hurry, I've got to...to... Christine, dear..."

Christine looked at him suspiciously. "I just wanted to tell you that the turbolifts aren't working."

"Ah! Yes, I know about that, m'dear, they're experimenting with the inter-ship transporter system, in fact I was just about to try out this one here... and I need your assistance."

"My assistance? The control panel's on the inside of the transporter booth, Doctor."

"No, no, not that kind of assistance, the...er...Captain's asked me to see if it'll transport two people at the same time."

"Why? It's only designed for one."

"Don't ask questions, Nurse," he said, grabbing her arm before she could leave. "Come on, he's expecting me - er, us."

"Doctor..."

"What?" McCoy asked as he closed his eyes and held on to his head nurse.

"The control panel."

"Ah, yes." He stretched out his free hand and stabbed out the number.

"What's this?" a gruff voice said in McCoy's ear, "some kind of test to see

how many can fit into one of these...?"

McCoy opened his eyes and found himself staring into the Captain's.

"Jim, what are you doing in... "

"I was transporting myself to the bridge - Doctor," Kirk said as he pulled free of McCoy's and Chapel's bodies and struggled out. "Next time you're using it make sure the booth is clear."

"B...but you'd already transported!" McCoy stepped out followed by Chapel. They were on the bridge, but the bridge was somewhat different, the bridge crew looked...

"Oh no!" moaned McCoy. "Not again."

"Doctor! Doctor, what is it? What's happened?" Christine whispered as she looked around with big eyes, especially in Spock's direction.

"I said I didn't like it," McCoy said as he took her arm, "and trust something to go wrong the minute I use it."

"Doctor?"

"Let's go back to my office," he said as he steered the nurse in the direction of the elevator. "I'll explain on the way down."

"The turbolift is not operational, Doctor," the bearded Spock said from where he sat observing the Doctor and the Nurse.

"Drat! And I'm not keen on using that contraption again..."

"Then let's use the stairs," Christine suggested as she glanced over in Spock's direction again.

"I would advise against it, Doctor," Spock said as he stood up and walked over towards them, "especially as you do not appear to have your bodyguards with you."

"Bodyguards?" Christine echoed. "What is going on here?"

"That is precisely what I would like to know, McCoy...Chapel," the Captain said as he turned his chair towards them. "What are you doing on the bridge anyway?"

"Er...you...I...we were testing the intership transporter."

"That's a very lame excuse, McCoy," Kirk said as he rose. "The transportation booth has been in operation for the past three months. All tests have been carried out."

"For three months?" Christine said in disbelief as she stared at the Captain and at his strange uniform. "But we only started using it this morning!"

Kirk put his hands on his hips and sighed. "What are you two up to? Is this some kind of psychological 'war' you're waging against us?"

"N...no, of course not, Captain," McCoy stammered. This was more than his nerves could stand.

"Well, get the hell off this bridge!" Kirk shouted, "before I throw the both of you into outer space!"

"Yes, Captain - we're going." McCoy pushed Christine into the transporter booth and quickly punched out a number - any number.

"Where are we now?" Christine asked as they appeared in a very unfamiliar transporter room. "And what was all that about?"

"I don't know where we are now," McCoy answered as they both stepped down into the room, "and as to that - that was our alternate universe."

"Alternate universe?"

"Yes, don't you remember, I told you about it after the Halkan mission."

"Oh, yes... so that's why they looked like that. I must say Mr. Spock looked very - "

"Christine..."

"Sorry. What are we going to do now?"

McCoy walked towards the outline of a door. "Find out where the blazes we are."

The doors slid open, but not because he had approached them. Two Romulan Centurions stood in the doorway, weapons drawn, looking anything but friendly.

"This is getting worse," McCoy grumbled as he took several paces backwards. The two Centurions stepped smartly apart and saluted as the Commander marched in.

"Dr. McCoy," she said in recognition, "of the U.S.S. Enterprise."

"You!" McCoy stared in astonishment at the female Romulan Commander.

"However," she looked at Christine Chapel, "I don't recall you... "

"This...this is my head nurse, Christine Chapel."

"Nurse Chapel," she acknowledged. "And - " she turned back to McCoy, " - what are you doing here?"

"I wish I knew."

"We do have ways of extracting such information, Doctor. Wouldn't it be easier on her - " she nodded in Christine's direction, " - if you told me?"

"Now look here, leave Chris out of this."

"Ah! You are concerned about her then."

"Of course."

"Then you will tell me what you are doing here."

McCoy groaned. "I'm having a nightmare, that's what."

"There are no Federation vessels in this vicinity, how did you manage to come on board?"

"The transporter..." Christine started to explain.

"Impossible," she said. "Unless of course... How very interesting. You have developed a long range transporter."

"It wasn't a long range transporter," McCoy said. "It was the flamin' intership one!"

"Intership?" She shook her head. "Guards, take them to the detention room."

"Doctor," Christine whispered as she grabbed his arm, "jump on the transporter, it's our only way out."

"But how...?"

"I don't know - let's just..." The Centurions were advancing on them. Doctor and Nurse, somehow avoiding the phaser shots which followed them, leaped onto the transporter platform and disappeared.

"It's getting crazier and crazier!" McCoy muttered as he lay in the grassy glade staring up at the beautiful blue sky above them.

"Where are we now?" came Christine Chapel's questioning voice.

"Will you stop asking me that question!" he exclaimed as he struggled up into a sitting position and glared at the nurse who was sitting next to him, looking around in wonderment. "How the hell do I know?"

"Oh!" Christine burst into tears. All the jumping around and changing of scenery were beginning to get on her nerves.

"Oh darn! Look, I'm sorry, Chris." He slid his arm around the sobbing nurse. "All this hopping around and getting nowhere is getting me down... shhh! there..."

"So that's what you're up to the minute my back is turned!" an angry female voice said.

"Eh?" McCoy looked up to find Yeoman Tonia Barrows, all rigged out in mediaeval dress, looking down at them. "After all, it's my shore leave as well as yours... "

"Tonia... Tonia Barrows..." McCoy said, looking up at her in surprise. "What are you... ?"

"You don't have to explain," she went on to say, "I can see you've got no time for me." And she stalked off.

"Doctor...Tonia Barrows left the ship well over two years ago!"

"I know, I know." He climbed to his feet, and helped her up. "It just doesn't make sense. Nothing makes sense. Come on."

"Where?"

"I don't know... "

"Oh - look!"

"What?" He turned around and followed her pointing finger. There, standing in the middle of the glade, was a transporter booth.

"Well, I guess we might as well give it another go - we might get home eventually." They both squeezed into the transporter again and McCoy punched out the only number he could recall - the bridge - crossing his fingers as the transporter went into operation.

"At last! Where on earth have you been, Bones?" Kirk said as the two of them arrived on the bridge of their Enterprise. "And honestly, was it really necessary for you to take Ms. Chapel along as well?"

"Jim," McCoy said as he and Christine stepped joyfully out, "Jim, you'll never believe it."

"Believe what?"

"The journey we've just had in that thing!"

"Why, what did you do? Press the wrong number and end up in Engineering?"

"Nothing as simple as that. No, firstly we ended up on the I.S.S. Enterprise."

"I.S.S....? Ah. Bones, you're pulling my leg."

"No, honestly, Captain, it's true," Christine said as she looked at their Spock to make sure he was the real one.

"Yeah! And then there were Romulans and lastly we ended up on that shore leave planet and I saw Tonia Barrows!"

"Ms. Barrows left the ship two years, three months and six days ago," Spock was quick to point out.

"I know that."

"It's all true," Christine said, looking from the First Officer to the Captain and back again. "There's something wrong with it."

And then, as if to prove their point, Chief Engineer Scott appeared in the transporter booth. "Boy, am I glad ta see ye," he said as he staggered out

onto the bridge and looked around in relief. "Ah've jist had a terrible experience in that...that thing. Captain, we've got tae stop using it, there's something wrang."

"You see, Jim!"

"I see, Bones. Lt. Uhura, make an announcement - until further notice all intership transporters are suspended from use. Mr. Scott, you'd better get the turbolifts back into operation."

"Aye, sir - with pleasure!"

"And Scotty - what exactly happened to you?"

"The Enterprise - she was blown tae smithereens. Ah thocht ma end had come."

"Mr. Spock - what do you think has happened?"

"I can merely speculate, Captain, but from the evidence I gather that the Doctor, Nurse Chapel and Mr. Scott were held in transit for a short time and during that time their minds drew on previous experiences and created what they think they saw."

"Say that again?" McCoy said.

"But I saw the same as Dr. McCoy," Christine pointed out, "and it was so real."

"Must have been because your molecules were all mixed up with mine..."

"Well, whatever happened, shouldn't have," Kirk said. "It looks as if getting this intership transporter together is going to be a longer job than they thought."

"Well, as long as it's not in my life time," McCoy said as he headed for the 'good ol' turbolift'. "Come on, Chris, let's get back to the sanity of the sickbay. After all - " he turned and grinned at Kirk, " - I'm a Doctor, not a guinea-pig!"

ORGANIC CHEMISTRY MADE EASY by Roo

Last night I dreamed an acetylene tree
Had grown outside my door.
Its fruits were rich, ripe triple bonds,
And substituents galore.

You may well not believe me
Although I tell no lie
Its triple bonds were made of
Two sigmas and one π (pi)

I picked some juicy molecules
And several reactions tried,
E.g. on adding water
I produced acetaldehyde.

Again I took acetylene
And added HCl

I got dichloroethane -
Now wasn't that just swell?

I'm very glad I found that tree
A-growing in my garden,
For who like me has got a tree
That's purely hydrocarbon?

THEY by Gladys Oliver

I cannot comprehend this noise - this drilling confusion - this echoing of their shrill communications in the quietness of my home.

Who are they?

Why are they here?

What are they burrowing for? They do not seem built for tunnelling.

What are they building? Strange noises fill my ears and my senses... they are not pleasant.

Why are they carrying parts of my home away? Had they asked I would gladly have shared my walls with them.

They burrow deeper. They seem greedy...and what need of this strange rock which I have in plenty. Why do they need it?

They have come closer...the noise is but feet away. Surely they will not break in here! The caverns outside are full of what they seek.

Do they know of me? Wish to harm me? Or any of mine?

I do not wish them harm. They are not pleasant to look on...but I will tolerate them if they leave me alone. After all, I am not greedy, my house is big enough until the time arrives.

They come closer!

Noise...so much noise!

Why do I feel this strange disquiet? Correction, FEAR - a coldness is entering my fiery limbs. It is such a DREAD coldness...

I must hurry back.

Something is not right. There is a tightness in my heart.

Hurry. Hurry to the Chamber - oh, dear life, hurry, hurry - quickly!

No...

NO!!!

Too late. TOO LATE!!!

Pain. Anguish. Oh, pity...pity...PITY them!

WHY?

I have not hurt them.

Oh, pain! My heart is cracking! Stop...stop... I beg thee - STOP!

But no - the destruction goes on; they do not heed me. Look! They are carrying them away! AWAY!

Please stop! How can I reach you? How? HOW?

Listen!

Here is one. I will ask - no, beg him to consider - to stop...STOP!

The scream! Dear life, the scream!

What is this? He is no more? Confusion!

It is dead. Oh that I should have killed! I did not know they were so very vulnerable - so unprotected.

They seek me, hunt me! They are destroying, destroying. Life. Life will be gone. Gone.

Stop!

I feel... What do I feel? Anger? No. YES! Avenge. Avenge the children, my dear un-lived children. They murder them, don't give them a chance to live... I will avenge them...

See. See how easily they die. See. SEE!

I'm blinded! Searing light has found its mark. They can protect themselves.

Pain - searing pain! I hurt, I hurt...and dear life, I do not wish to live now. They have destroyed my purpose. Let me die. I want to die. Let me escape this torment - this torture of seeing the Ages...the Babes...destroyed for ever.

I will take one last one with me. What use my life now? All gone...gone. They have hurt me...and I no longer wish to understand the ugliness which is them. I am weary, cannot win now. To die - to have peace. Peace. To not see the mutilated unborn...

Just one more - one more! But the pain, the pain. I weaken, weaken.

But wait! Where is its fear? It does not shy away from me! It has seen my wound...I can sense its pity.....For me?

It does not fear me...and I am weary...

It begins to talk. I can understand it vaguely. It seems different from the rest. I can clearly sense its compassion now.

"So you can be hurt?"

Yes - hurt, hurt. But no more; they have done it all - my heart is slowly emptying. I seek only peace...bottomless, endless. To rest in the chamber of the Dead... Why did they come and destroy? Why?

It is coming down to my level, and is joined by another creature, who has good cause for his concern. His leader is but inches away from me - I could strike now...but cannot. Why more destruction? Why destroy each other? All we love - could have loved had they not come...even the un-lived had a right to try for life - didn't they?

The new one comes nearer. It is raising its weapon - I await my death. It will be pleasant, giving me rest from this tearing anguish and pain.

It hesitates on a spoken word from its leader - for the first one is its leader. Is there hope? A sudden light invades my heart, I feel compassion all around me. This one will listen...this leader. But how? How?

Perhaps...

'NO KILL I'. It smokes and burns at its feet...and yes! Dear life, it almost kneels before me, wanting to understand, But how? It finds the way.

"Let my friend touch you," it asks. I can lose nothing; I become still.

Its companion approaches me...touches... It is not unpleasant. Feelings... gentleness...soothing...we are one... Then -

"PAIN...PAIN...IT IS IN TERRIBLE PAIN!"

'It'? I begin to understand. The touch was fleeting, but I saw the truth; they did not comprehend that I was life also; they did not know they murdered. They are like me, fearful, unsure of what is not understood.

Hundreds of unborn are dead because we could not understand - and the ones I shattered that belonged to them - their grief is as great as mine.

It comes forward again. There is a third being now, it also touches me...

What is this?

I heal!

How? How? I cannot understand.

I am here again in your mind. Please try to understand, we meant no harm.

You are gentle...not like the others.

I am one of them, as is my Captain.

Captain? Yes, I can see... He is above them - he would not kill for lust.

We hold life sacred.

Then why my children? The last of the Ages, who were entrusted to my care.

Why?

Forgive us. There can yet be life.

But not for those others destroyed - the ones that I destroyed.

No.

Forgive me. Go to the Chamber of the Ages. Walk carefully in the Vault of Tomorrow. The thing you search for is there.

I am soothed. My pain is diminishing; the third creature is gentle - I heal.

That is our wish.

But what of the others? I hear anger and pain - and noise.

He will make them understand the wrong we did you.

Yes; yes, I see the truth in your words. In time I will become accustomed to their ugliness. Beauty, after all, is life...in any form.

He is gone.

I sense the growing understanding from the others, the horror of what they had done. I sense their confusion, uncertainty; I can understand also their grief, can't I?

The children will survive now - my children.

The 'Captain' prepares to leave - I will miss him...and he who has been in me.

He stoops before me, the one who has stopped all this needless destruction, the one who has given us back the future.

You must leave?

"This will not be goodbye; I will see you again."

I am glad; but I feel strangely lonely as he rises once more to his full height.

"Until we meet again." He makes a strange sign with a limb to his forehead. The other one stoops to me, gently touches me.

Peace and long life.

I shall know both now, thanks to your Captain and leader. Give him my thanks for my life.

Jim Kirk understands already. The touch is gone. Sadness.

Farewell, Jim Kirk - farewell! The strange echoing steps slowly depart.

I am once more alone...and once more I have this blessed silence. I am more thankful than I can say. Soon I will have company - of my own kind - and I shall have to teach them how to live alongside these strange, vulnerable creatures of the surface. It will give me pleasure, and a new purpose. Yes; in time I will become accustomed to their strange shape. Their company might even be good.

I - Horta - look forward to it!



THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW by Mariann Hornlein

The Vulcan stood rigidly before the large desk, gaze fixed on the far wall, seemingly oblivious to the angry questions hurled at him by the Klingon commander. His calm face and expressionless eyes gave no indication of the nausea from the disruptor beam; the pain from hands tied cruelly tight behind his back; or the discomfort of a lacerated shoulder.

"...Enterprise is leaving! Kirk knows that you are alive. I told him myself! Yet he leaves without even attempting to rescue you! Why do you remain stubborn? He has clearly demonstrated how little esteem he has for you!"

Not a twitch of muscle revealed Spock's sudden inner relief. He had barely had time to rescue Jim from the Klingon trap before the rapidly approaching enemy vessel came into range. The Enterprise alone had no chance against the now overwhelming odds that orbited Helotia. Yet, he had expected Jim to attempt the impossible; obviously Starfleet had ordered the ship to leave, and for that he was very grateful, even though he fully understood what obeying such an order had cost Jim, and what it might now cost him.

A fist hit the side of his face, staggering him backwards. "Talk, damn you! If only I had a mind-sifter, you'd talk!" Kelath gestured towards a subordinate. "Take him out of here, Kelt, and get me some answers!"

Spock was dragged away, his captors roughly jerking him off his feet whenever he tried to walk. He went limp, forcing the guards to support the full weight of his body. He concentrated upon setting his mental barriers against what he knew was coming.

Agony tore through him; nausea ripped apart his insides; he lost consciousness again and again to be shocked awake by torrents of freezing water. The barriers held firm, blocking out most of the pain and he remained silent, impassive as if the torture were happening to someone else.

He was taken back to the office and dumped onto the floor where he lay gathering strength. A familiar voice cut into his fading consciousness, jolting him into full awareness.

"...Enterprise is returning, Kelath! Commander Spock..."

"The Vulcan is dead."

"...Spock..."

The Vulcan almost flinched visibly at the pain, the grief, the overwhelming loneliness in that one word. Kelath stood over him, kicking him onto his back. "I've been recalled and you'll come with me. Kirk may take Helotia, but he won't find either of us here."

Within minutes Spock was aboard a swift cruiser, shivering in a cold, dark cell. He realised that he would have to adjust his metabolism to this low temperature or he would die.

And die he would not do; not as long as he had the choice. He would not break, and as long as Kelath did not have a mind-sifter, he would remain alive. Somehow he would escape - or be found - and then the agony he had heard in Jim's voice would disappear.

Hours passed. Kelt came and he was taken to sickbay where he was stripped, strapped onto a hard, diagnostic bed, and his injuries roughly but efficiently treated. He wondered why, and decided he would rather not know.

The treatment was concluded, but he was not released. He lay on the hard surface, immobilised by the restraining straps, while the Klingon vessel raced towards its unknown destination.

Spock was a very private person. Few had ever seen him even minus a shirt and only Starfleet medical staff had ever seen him naked. He lay in the main

sickbay, exposed to the curious stares of all who entered. Kolath visited often, attempting to get some response through crude remarks and painful probing. He was spoonfed a thick meat broth which made him nauseous, and his one attempt to refuse was answered by the liquid being poured down his forced-open mouth to the accompaniment of loud jeers and laughter. His body was treated as though he were unconscious; the intimate touches making him writhe in shame.

He could do nothing except ignore the Klingons, so ignore them he did. He summoned every ounce of Vulcan will and kept all emotion from showing in face or eyes.

Eventually they arrived at their destination; the ship went into orbit and Spock was released, taken down to the planet's surface. A roughly built camp, swarming with half-dead humanoids engaged in various tasks, met his eyes. He was given a filthy pair of shorts and told to put them on. He obeyed, preferring not to think about where they had been.

Kolath laughed. "You are on Swire, a slave planet, and here you stay until you die. Perhaps, after your death, we shall send your body to Starfleet! The fools believed me, they think you dead! You shall mine dilithium crystals. Perhaps one that you find will power the ship that destroys the Enterprise!"

He was given a pick and shovel; an iron fetter was placed around his ankle, the other end attached to a ring set in stone, and directed to work. The ore was hard, difficult to break loose; the work exhausting. Most of the slaves were required to work twelve hours out of the twenty-six-hour day. Spock was forced to work eighteen hours, and received only one meal for each of the other slaves' two. The first time he ate the rancid, dirty mush he was immediately ill, but soon ate as avidly as the other slaves, ignoring the thick scum and crawling white grubs.

Time ceased to have any meaning. Day and night blended into digging, shovelling the broken ore into waiting carts, only to dig again. Whenever his work failed to satisfy one of the guards he would be whipped until green blood ran freely. A favourite punishment was a hard kick to the lower abdomen, doubling him in two and bringing him to his knees. Occasionally he was forced to dig for thirty-six hours straight.

He had been given a thin, blood and pus-stained mat but had chosen instead to sleep on the bare ground. When his work was finished, his chain would be released from the ring and he would be led like an animal to the slave compound where he was chained to the wall. Often he hurt so badly he could not sleep, and then the memories came to haunt him. He would huddle close to the wall, shivering in the cool breeze and dream of the good times. He was a child again, running into the safe, loving haven of his mother's arms. He climbed a dozen trees with Leila and kissed Zarabeth over and over again. He exchanged sarcastically affectionate jibes with McCoy and played numerous games of chess with Kirk. Jim... The memory of his Captain, of the pain he had heard in his voice, kept him alive.

The rains came and he worked in a sea of mud, shaking with the cold of the driving wind. He grew ever thinner, hunger cramps soon giving way to a constant ache. His hair grew long, matted with dirt and sweat, and...he survived.

The other slaves avoided him, afraid of his alien appearance, his stoic refusal to show pain and the obvious disfavor in which he was held. Loneliness pressed in like a living thing; he ached for the sound of a laughing voice, the gentle comfort of strong hands, the understanding glance of hazel eyes. And the memories turned to dreams, nightmares of pain and terror in which he saw Kirk die in a hundred different ways. Always, the end was the same. He would be found, released, brought to Kirk and reach him just in time to see the twinkling eyes dim and close. He would cry out, begging Kirk not to die... 'I have never told you...you must know...I love you, my brother...you must not die...' and he would awaken, shaking with terror, desperate, unsuccessfully trying to clear his mind of the illogical, tormenting visions.

He saw Kelath often. The Klingon commander seemed to blame him for the defeat of Helotia, and took every opportunity to cause him suffering. The Klingon seemed to particularly enjoy treating the Vulcan like some kind of animal pet. He would have a ring put around Spock's neck, and force him to follow on his hands and knees as he inspected the slave compound. When the inspection was finished, Spock's hands would be tied behind his back and Kelath would brutally beat him until he fell unconscious to the ground.

Days became weeks, weeks months, and still he survived, kept alive by sheer strength of will. He could barely walk, often digging the ore on his knees, and felt his teeth growing loose in their sockets. When chained, he would sit for hours, gazing into space with glazed eyes, waiting to die. Something deep inside him refused to give up and he would start again.

Then - the Klingons raced through the compound, shouting at each other... silence...and Spock caught a glimpse of red, strangely out of place in this dark place. He looked up and found himself staring in total disbelief at James T. Kirk, deep in conversation with an Andorian commander. Kirk shook his head angrily, turned away, and Spock reached out, trying to croak Jim's name. He crawled forward until the chain stopped him and reached out a desperately clutching hand, grabbing Kirk's ankle.

The Captain bent, started to remove his fingers, and fear lanced through him.

"Jim...help...me..."

He lay unmoving, face down in the dirt, unable to raise his head, frozen in fear and hope. A choked cry and he was being turned over, lifted, held with warm strength. His head was pillowed on a broad shoulder and he was safe in his Captain's arms.

A sharp command, and footsteps thudded away. He was gently rocked, incoherent sounds whispered into his hair. Someone came, and he recognised McCoy's voice, gruff with concern. Jim's hand gently brushed back his hair, caressed his face, and McCoy's voice blazed with joy.

He could not take it all in, and didn't bother to try. Nothing mattered except...he had survived and was held in the haven of warm love. The arms shifted; fear clutched at his heart; he was held securely again and being lifted. The chain held him fast; a phaser...and Jim rose, cradling him close. Pain lashed through him; he tried to bite back a cry, but felt Jim's arms tighten in anguish...and he floated on gray clouds of nothing.

Sounds, smells, feeling filtered through the clouds. McCoy's rough voice, barely masking a deep concern; Christine's exclamation; gentle hands washing him...and Jim's hand holding his tightly. He floated, and gradually grew afraid. Was this just another dream? Would he awaken to find himself back on Swire? He whimpered slightly, forced his eyes open...and looked into the happy, worried face of his Captain.

A tiny voice reminded him that he was Vulcan...calm, control...impossible! He was too weak, too exhausted, too afraid...too happy. He reached out, seeking reassurance that this was, indeed, reality. His hands clutched weakly at broad shoulders as arms encircled him and drew him into a close embrace. He trembled with weariness and reaction, hiding his tears in Kirk's shoulder as Jim whispered low words of comfort and reassurance. "Shhh...you're safe...you're with me...no-one will hurt you now...you're with me..."

He gradually stopped trembling and Kirk laid him back on the pillow. He touched Jim's face with violently shaking fingers. "Jim? You are here? This is not a dream? I am alive...with you?"

Kirk's voice shook nearly as much as his own. "No dream, Spock, You're alive...with me...and McCoy says you'll be all right."

The terror of the nightmares returned, overwhelming the part of him that

still cried out for logic and control. He held fast to Jim's arms and the words tumbled out incoherently. "I dreamed...you died...I could not tell you...I never have..."

Fingers stilled his lips. "I'm here. Tell me now."

Spock hesitated, cringing slightly with Vulcan shame, but the power of the remembered nightmares was too strong. "I...love...you...my...brother."

His eyes dropped; for a moment there was silence and he started to shrink away, then was held close in Jim's arms. "Oh God! Spock...I love you, also! I almost lost you...never lose you again...never let you go..."

The arms tightened; he was laid back down, his hands held carefully in Kirk's. Jim smiled rather unsteadily. "McCoy'll kill me if he sees you this upset. Rest, Spock. I'll stay here. We can talk later; we have all the time in the world."

Spock tried to respond, but his eyes were too heavy. He dreamed he was back on Swire; Klingon guards were whipping him, and they all had Kelath's face. He could see his Captain chained to the wall. Another Kelath was approaching Kirk holding out the dog collar for him to wear. He tried to get to Kirk, but the multiple Kelaths held him...laughing...

He was being gently, firmly, shaken. "Spock! Wake up! Spock! You're having a nightmare." He opened his eyes, saw Jim and McCoy, the terror left and he slept again without dreams.

He slowly became aware of his surroundings; the subtle smells and sounds of sickbay. Someone...Jim...was holding his hand. He mentally assessed himself; he was clean! It amazed him that he had never really appreciated how good it was to be clean before. He next noticed that he was free from pain. He was stronger than before - the rest and the intravenous feeding he could tell he had received had helped but he was still very weak and knew it would be many days before he was fully recovered. He remembered his first awakening with a flush of shame, then mentally shrugged. His Vulcan mask hadn't hidden anything from Jim for years; and pretense between friends was almost as bad as a deliberate lie. He opened his eyes and found Kirk watching him intently. Their eyes met and he read his own happiness reflected in Jim's.

Kirk glanced down at the hand he held and one finger traced the clearly delineated bones. "Starfleet ordered me to leave. I should have disobeyed... I should have..."

"Done exactly as you did, Jim." Spock shifted slightly and Jim helped him into a more comfortable position. He accepted his Captain's help gratefully, but wanted to turn the conversation away from Swire. "What happened aboard the Enterprise? Who was the Andorian commander you were speaking to?"

Kirk stiffened slightly. "Sheron. Starfleet sent him to replace you. As if anyone could do that!"

A strange feeling as of a shadow's wing touching him came over Spock. "Has he not performed his duties well?"

"Oh, sure. He's pretty good. In fact, any other ship would probably give their eye teeth to have him." Kirk touched a bruise on Spock's throat. "I missed you. I...thought you were dead."

The shadow faded in the light of Kirk's obvious affection. Spock tightened his fingers around Kirk's hand. "I know. I was in Kelath's office when he told you."

Christine entered, carrying a tray with plomeek soup and hot tea. The Captain rose, smiled down at the Vulcan, and left, promising to return soon. Christine helped him eat, chattering gaily, and a yeoman came in and cut his hair. He gravely thanked each, then tried to sleep, knowing he needed rest to recover.

Impossible. During Christine's gay chatter the shadow had returned, and this time he had recognised it. The Andorian First Officer was excellent; he knew Jim was going to request Starfleet to reinstate him - and he wanted that desperately. But...no matter what excuse Jim gave, such a request would damage Sheron's career badly, perhaps beyond repair...and he could not allow that to happen.

He tossed restlessly. He knew how he would feel if he had to leave the Enterprise; knew how Jim would be hurt...but could find no solution.

A hand fell lightly on his arm. "Hey, what's this? You're supposed to be resting! What's wrong, Spock?"

He stared up at McCoy, anguish clear on his face. "Commander Sheron."

The doctor slowly nodded. "I wondered who would be the first to see that complication, you or Jim. I don't know what to say; God knows I don't want to lose you again! Whatever you decide, I'll support your decision. Now, please try and rest."

Spock looked his gratitude and tried, unsuccessfully, to obey. He sensed the Captain's presence and gathered what little strength he had gained since his return. He had to remain calm, logical... He looked up and his heart contracted painfully at the look of undisguised affection on Kirk's face. They spoke quietly for a time about the past, then Kirk asked how he should go about getting Spock reinstated.

Kirk's anguished reaction to his statement was very painful to the Vulcan, almost shattering him completely, but he managed to speak calmly, decisively, and Kirk soon agreed he was correct...but insisted that the next few days, until they reached the Starfleet hospital with the badly injured slaves, was theirs.

McCoy entered, and they turned to greet him. The doctor instantly saw that a decision had been reached, and took Spock's hand in his, laying his other hand on Kirk's shoulder. There was a long moment of silence, then McCoy abruptly turned and left.

Kirk's hand rested lightly against Spock's face. "How can I let you go? I'll have the Enterprise, Bones, Scotty...but you'll have no-one! How can I let you go out among strangers who won't understand you? How can I let you be alone again?"

Spock's heart skipped a beat at this new evidence of Kirk's complete understanding; he felt humbled at the way Kirk put aside his own anguish to think of him. The moment threatened to become maudlin, and Spock was relieved when McCoy bustled in, pushing a stretcher before him.

"You're off the danger list, and I need this bed for someone who's really sick! Jim, help me move him to the stretcher."

Both Vulcan eyebrows soared at McCoy's speech. They stayed up as McCoy rambled on, pushing the stretcher out of sickbay, down the corridor, and onto the turbolift. "All you really need is plenty of rest and a lot of food. You can get those anyplace! Besides, I can't have Jim cluttering up my sickbay all the time!"

He dizzily wondered what this was all about. McCoy never let him leave sickbay before he was completely recovered; quite often kept him much longer than necessary. He understood when McCoy wheeled the stretcher into the Captain's quarters and he saw an orderly smoothing the sheets on a newly erected hospital bed.

The orderly left to wait outside and Jim carried him to the bed. McCoy scowled at them fiercely. "Now no high jinks, you two! No sitting up to all hours talking! Spock needs plenty of rest, Captain, and I'll hold you responsible if he doesn't get it."

"Bones."

McCoy stared dumbfounded at the gently smiling Vulcan.

"While I was captive on...Swire...I dreamed...of those whom I missed... I missed you. Thank you, my friend."

The doctor seemed oblivious to the tears that streamed down his face. He attempted to smile, cleared his throat, and stamped out, shouting for the orderly to "help with this confounded stretcher!"

Kirk gazed at the closed door, a slight smile on his face. "He's a good friend." He glanced down at the Vulcan and his eyes narrowed slightly. "You're white as the pillowcase!" He drew the covers up, tucking them in around the thin shoulders. "Rest now. I'll be here."

Spock relaxed, accepting Jim's ministrations with warm gratitude. It was very good to be taken care of in this way. He closed his eyes and slept. When he awakened he found Kirk sound asleep in a nearby chair. He studied the Captain's face intently, memorising it against the loneliness to come. He frowned slightly at the new lines on Kirk's face, at the gray hairs mingled with the auburn. Kirk was too young for gray hair! He suddenly visualised infrequent meetings, each time shocked at the change in an aging Kirk, until... No! He refused to think about that day when he would be truly alone again. Yet...he had to face the fact that when he left the Enterprise in a few days he might never see Jim again. Starfleet was not the safest life, nor was Kirk exactly known for staying out of trouble. He resolutely pushed the thought aside, knowing even as he did so how futile the action was.

He looked around the familiar room and his gaze fell upon a chess board with a half completed game by Kirk's desk; a lyrette hanging on the wall.

"I couldn't pack them away."

Spock turned his head towards Jim, deliberately dropping his habitual mask. "Please keep them, Jim. I will have no use for them, except when we are together."

The day passed quietly. Christine came in with trays of soup and other Vulcan concoctions that Kirk pretended were horrible-looking. The Captain left once or twice, to check on ship's status and 'be nice' to the Andorian First Officer, but stayed in the room with Spock most of the time. They talked quietly and started to complete the unfinished chess game.

Someone signalled for entrance, and Sheron came in in response to Kirk's summons. Spock looked at him curiously, careful to keep his seething emotions under careful check. He had never really met the Andorian before... He stiffened in startled wonder when he realised Sheron was requesting transfer off the Enterprise to return to his home planet.

But why? The Enterprise was the top assignment available! He heard Jim start to question the Andorian, and tried to listen quietly, but could not completely restrain a sigh compounded of sheer exhaustion and desperate hope.

Kirk was by his side immediately, removing the chess board and settling him back against the pillows. Jim told Sheron to meet him in the briefing room, and the Andorian left.

Spock grasped Jim's hand tightly. "Jim, did you hear? He wants to go... and that means... Oh, Jim, I can stay!"

Kirk gently reassured him and told him to rest, then left to seek the Andorian. Spock's eyes snapped open as the door closed behind Jim. How could he possibly sleep with this uncertainty hanging over his head? He shifted restlessly growing more and more uneasy as the minutes dragged by. What was taking so long! Had the Andorian changed his mind and Jim was afraid to tell him?

The door opened and Jim rushed in, grasping Spock's cold hand in his. "He is leaving, Spock! He knows why I won't request him to leave, and feels he would be hurting us in the same way if he stays, so he's using compassionate leave as

an excuse. You're going to stay, Spock! You're going to be First Officer aboard the Enterprise again!"

Four days later, Spock woke, stretched lazily, and started to lever himself out of bed. McCoy had allowed him up for three fifteen minute periods yesterday; today he could be up for thirty minutes at a time. His glance fell on a nearby chair, and he stilled in wonder. On the chair was a neatly folded pair of black trousers; in front of it a shiny pair of black boots; next to it, hanging on a hanger, was a new dress tunic of blue with commander's gold braid on the sleeves.

He rose, rather unsteadily, and slowly, carefully, proceeded to dress. How often during the past months had he wondered if he would ever see this uniform again.

"Now you look like you're really back, Spock."

The Vulcan looked up, eyes shining with unspoken gratitude as Kirk perched on the side of the bed. "Sheron is beaming down to the base in a few minutes. I thought you'd like to say goodbye."

Spock nodded and followed Kirk down the corridor, trying to maintain his habitual mask at the delighted greetings of passing crewmen, the broad grin on Kirk's face.

Sheron was waiting for them when they entered, and the goodbyes were brief and very sincere. Spock knew he owed this Andorian more than he could ever repay and tried to express his feelings without a great deal of success. Sheron sparkled out of view; Spock turned to leave when the door opened and Kelath entered, escorted by two guards.

Spock stiffened, unable to stem the fear that raced through him at the sight of this person responsible for so much pain and humiliation. He felt Kirk move close, but the Captain remained silent.

Kelath stared at him. "So you live, Vulcan! A shame. I had hoped you would die before Kirk found you!"

The Klingon made a threatening move towards him, and Spock barely restrained an instinctive step backwards. The guards restrained Kelath and hustled him over to the transporter platform. Suddenly the Klingon looked defeated, and Spock mentally compared their positions. If he ever returned to his home, he would be imprisoned, because the Klingon government had publically disowned him. On the other hand, he, Spock, was home, welcomed, with those he cared for...and the fear drained away, never to return.

They left the transporter room, entered the turbolift, and Spock arched an eyebrow questioningly. "How did you know I feared Kelath?"

Kirk smiled at him. "Every time you used his name, you hesitated. And... the nightmares...you spoke his name... I felt your fear."

Spock sighed and leaned wearily against the wall. The final piece of the long nightmare was gone, defeated by the understanding and compassion of a friend.

Kirk's arm went around his waist, supporting him as they walked slowly down the corridor towards the Captain's quarters...and passed the door. Spock looked enquiringly at his Captain but Kirk's face revealed nothing.

They stopped before a long-familiar door, and Spock felt his heart beat illogically faster as they entered the quarters of the First Officer. He looked around in aw'd wonder. There were his books, the lyrette, the few wall hangings from Vulcan...

"Willing hands can do a lot in a short time, and I'm not the only one who's glad you're staying." Kirk guided him to his bed and made him lie down. "I thought you'd want some privacy as you get better. And...the First Officer of the Enterprise belongs here, in these rooms." Jim smiled happily. "Welcome

home, Spock."

As he looked up at his Captain, Spock felt a deep contentment steal over him. Indeed, he was...finally...home.

A FRIENDSHIP by Susan Meek

Loneliness. An aching void
That filled two souls. Mutual need.
These were the foundations.

Common interests. New experiences
And dangers. A lifestyle shared.
These were the things that helped it grow.

Differences that complemented. A common striving
That allowed unique perception.
These were the things on which it thrived.

A caring that knows no limits,
An understanding that needs no words.
These are the results.

A friendship, blossoming
Through the fullness of time
Into love.
