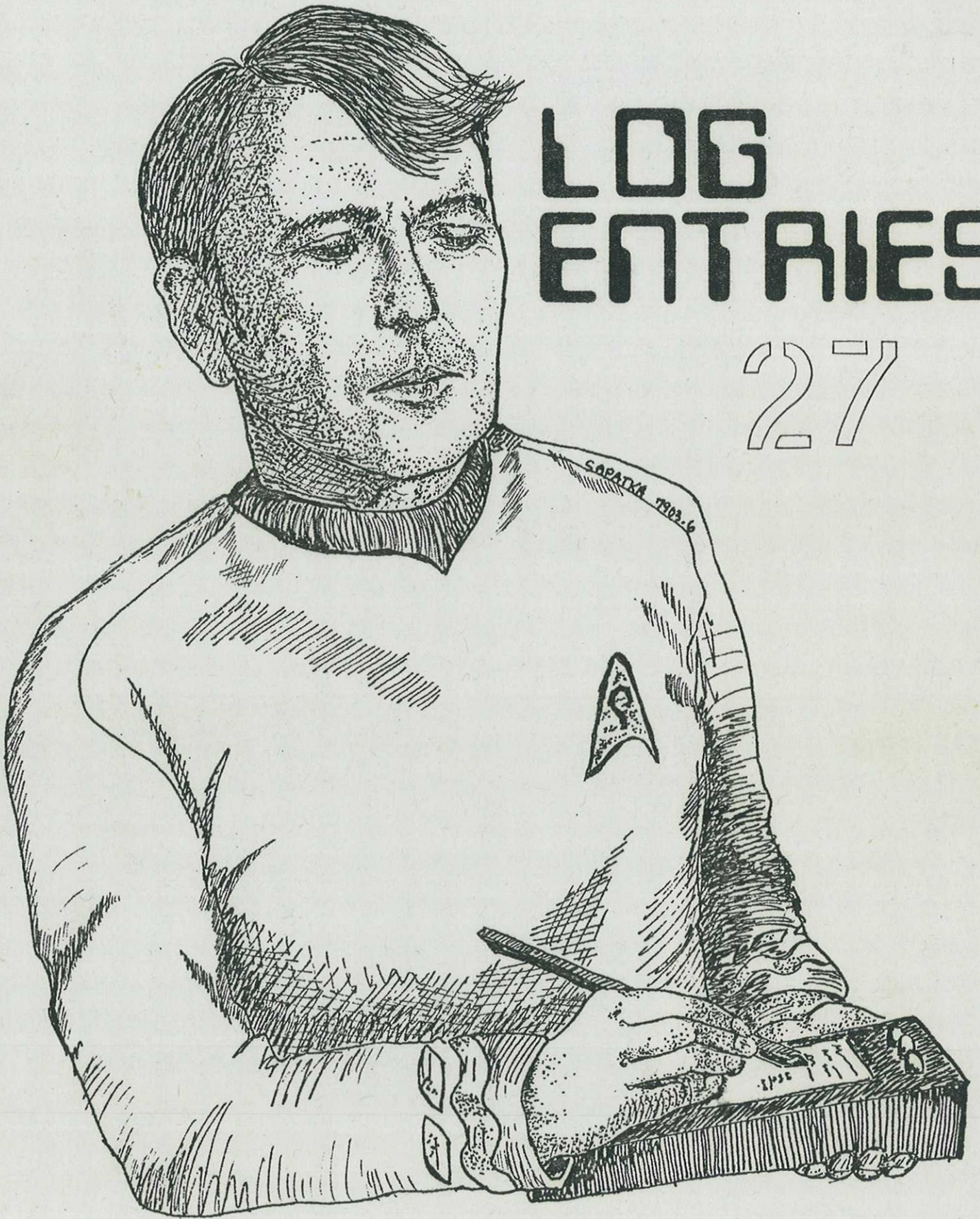


LOG ENTRIES

27



A Star Trek Fanzine

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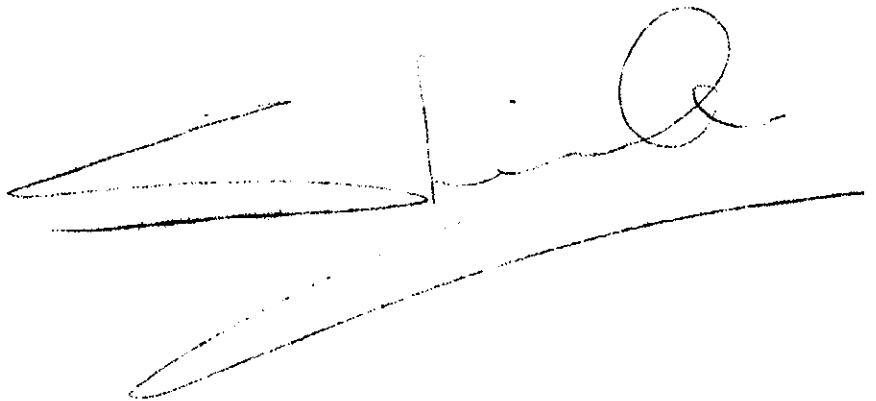
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Hello everyone, welcome to LE 27.

It hardly seems worth while taking a stencil for an 'editorial' page this issue - I said all I had to say a week ago when I did the editorial page for LE 26! Everything I said then is still valid, and in the past week nothing new has happened. All it does prove is that when we have to, we can get a zine onto stencil inside a week... and no, I'm not going to make a habit of it! Quite apart from anything else, I'd soon run out of material - I've got a reasonably well stocked file, but it's not inexhaustible. I'm still on the lookout for submissions - in particular, Kirk-bonkers. We like to have one each issue, but we can't print what we don't have. Kirk-trauma is just as effective...

Enjoy the zine.

October 1979



P.S. We must apologise to you, and to Ann Neilson, for not printing her picture on P.2. When we came to print it, we discovered that it had too much black on it and it would not print - unless we cared to do it page by page and peel every page individually off the drum where James T. was clinging lovingly to them. We will print Ann's drawing in a later issue of Log Entries - photocopied.

IS THIS A DAGGER? by Pamela Dale

Weaving in and out of talking groups, balancing a plate of sandwiches on her coffee cup, Susanna slowly made her way across the rec room to a far table.

"Where've you been?" demanded Sulu, looking up as she thankfully put down her coffee.

"Didn't spill a drop this time... Visiting Pavel - Chris said he'll be in sickbay for another three days at least. What've I missed?"

"Nothing much - only the start of Sherlock Holmes' first case," commented Uhura, standing up to let Susanna sit down. "I'm on duty in five minutes, so you can take over my role as Watson."

"But what's happened?" Susanna didn't allow herself to be distracted by Uhura's departure. "Come on, Sulu, give."

"Do you know the new security guard John Lindley?"

"I don't think so, should I?" she asked, attacking a large chicken sandwich.

"No reason why you should. He's only been aboard since Starbase 14." Sulu paused for dramatic effect. "He's just been found dead in his quarters."

"Dead?" squeaked Susanna. Whatever else she was expecting it hadn't been this.

"Stabbed," Sulu elaborated succinctly. "I don't know how you missed it, the ship's been in an uproar all day."

"I told you - I've been in sickbay, playing cards with Pavel, and this morning I was working in the lab. Now tell me properly - and what's all this about Sherlock Holmes?"

"As far as I can gather his body was discovered this morning when he didn't turn up for his shift... Are you sure you haven't heard anything? His body must have been in sickbay."

"I keep telling you, I've been visiting Pavel... In case you've forgotten, he's in that side ward away from all excitement. It took me ages to persuade Chris that cards wouldn't upset him."

Susanna sounded so exasperated that Sulu hurriedly continued.

"Anyway, he was stabbed with a dagger - one of those jewelled things they sell in all the shops on Starbase 14."

"First time I've heard of anyone killed by a 'present from' souvenir. But why kill a security officer? Is anyone missing or a shuttlecraft or something?"

"Not a thing. Mr. Spock's investigating - I waylaid his yeoman and he says they've found out nothing. Except that he was last seen leaving the concert in a hurry."

"Most peculiar. I take it you intend to do some investigating yourself?"

"Care to help?"

"Try stopping me. Where do we start?"

"By interviewing everyone who saw him last night."

"Let's face it, we're not getting anywhere," said Susanna reluctantly, materialising beside Sulu in the rec room two days later.

"Sit down before you pour that coffee down my neck. I've just found another witness."

"Oh yes? Not another one who saw him leap up and rush out just before the end of the concert?" Susanna sounded cynical but obediently sat down beside him.

"Cheryl?" Sulu called and waved at a blue shirted blonde at the other side of the room.

"Not another nurse?" sighed Susanna. "I thought you were waiting for the next consignment?"

Sulu looked rather embarrassed then hissed, "This is strictly business - don't you dare mention nurses and me in the same breath. I don't want her to get ideas."

"I should imagine every nurse is warned about you as soon as she comes aboard," retorted Susanna, looking with interest at that rare breed - a nurse Sulu wished to avoid. Not that she blamed him, this one had femme fatale written all over her undulating body.

"Cheryl, would you tell me again about John Lindley?"

"Such a shame, I was expecting to find him waiting for me at the end of the concert. He was staring at me for the last half hour while Uhura was singing. Couldn't keep his eyes off me. And when he disappeared..." Cheryl did not finish her sentence but her eyes and her body said it all.

Susanna was fascinated by the beautiful blonde from sickbay; until now she hadn't believed that anyone could be so conceited as to think she was irresistible. Stifling a smile she asked,

"What made you think he was looking at you?"

"I was sitting dead opposite - who else could he have been looking at? There were only the passengers in front of me - and they were nothing to look at!"

The passengers. That was something no-one had mentioned before. Susanna caught Sulu's eye and grinned - they were back in business.

"Thank you, Cheryl... Come on, Susanna." Sulu dragged her out into the corridor, ignoring her lament for her lost coffee.

"Now about these passengers?" she demanded once they had reached the safety of the plant room.

"There are four of them. One's Andorian, but the other three I can't identify. I can't think of any way either of us can find out via the computer. I tried Lt. Anderton who allocated their rooms, but he hasn't a clue."

"That's a problem... I know! Have another go at Mr. Spock's yeoman. I'm going to inveigle Dr. McCoy into giving me a drink and an hour of his company."

"He'll know you're up to something," warned Sulu.

"Of course, he will, but with any luck he'll not discover what I'm after till he's told me all about the passengers."

"What you're really saying is that Security still hasn't come up with a single clue." Kirk paraphrased with one sentence what had taken Spock five minutes to report in minute detail.

"I thought I had made that clear, Caprain." Spock paused while he stared at the ceiling before adding, "I would also like to add that there is another enquiry being conducted by Lt. Sulu..."

"And Susanna Grey," finished McCoy for him. "She was trying to discover something from me last night - I'm not sure what, I might even have told her... That girl needs a keeper!"

"She can't get into much trouble on the Enterprise." Kirk sounded soothing, amused by the idea of Susanna interrogating McCoy.

"I would not underestimate Miss Grey's capacity..." began Spock, but was once again interrupted by McCoy.

"You don't know Susanna. Anyone who can get herself locked into the Denebian clawcat's cage is likely to do anything."

"The clawcat? Why wasn't I told?" demanded Kirk, his anger fanned by the remembrance of razor claws and teeth.

"There was nothing to tell," explained McCoy calmly. "I've had the lock altered so it won't slam shut again...but it was somewhat hectic while it lasted," he added reminiscently, remembering the panic-stricken minutes when they couldn't find Susanna and someone mentioned she had gone to inspect Stripey. "And why she named that animal Stripey, I'll never know. Attila the Hun would be more appropriate."

"I do not see why Humans feel the need to name every animal," observed Spock.

"Why wasn't she hurt?" demanded Kirk, totally ignoring the whole question of the cat's name.

"It appears that the clawcat likes Miss Grey," explained Spock.

McCoy smothered a chuckle and elaborated. "To be more blunt, Stripey adores Susanna! When we went into the animal room, with security loaded for bear, we found them both fast asleep - that damned cat sprawled across her lap and snoring ... She had the nerve to say that because she couldn't make anyone hear her, what else was there to do but sleep!"

"As long as it's impossible for it to happen again." Kirk sounded relieved and somewhat amused.

"It will not happen again," Spock assured him. "The cat disturbs the other animals, so Lt. Grey keeps him in her cabin during the day."

"With a muzzle and guards on his paws when she takes him to and from Life Sciences," added McCoy. "Stripey tolerates Spock, Sulu and myself, after that he loses patience rapidly... But this is getting us away from the point. Do Sulu and Susanna know any more than you do, Spock?"

"I thought we were getting on so well," sighed Susanna, "but it's another dead end."

"I'm sure there must be something we've missed." Sulu followed her out of the lift. "Somehow there must be a connection between John Lindley and one of the passengers."

"But what? He's never been to one of their planets, at least according to Mr. Spock's yeoman. No-one on board seems to have served with him before... Let's face it, we're baffled. Come on, I must see if Stripey's demolished my cabin yet - he doesn't like being left."

"You and that cat. You ought to get a job in a zoo."

"Perhaps I might - I've given up trying to understand why animals like me... Pavel! When did you get out of sickbay?"

Chekov, who had just emerged from the lift, walked slowly towards them and leaned thankfully against the wall.

"Last night."

"I don't expect Dr. McCoy meant you to go dashing all over the ship," reproved Susanna, horrified by his grey, drawn face. "Come in and sit down. Whatever possessed you?" she added, pushing him through the door of her cabin. "Don't be silly, Stripey, it's only Pavel and Sulu." At the sound of her voice the ugly growl changed to a rumbling purr.

Chekov sat down with relief.

"I'd forgotten Stripey... I couldn't stay cooped up in my cabin a moment longer. I've been on my own for a week - I was going mad. I only went to the rec room."

"And that's laid you out. Sit there and don't move or I'll call sickbay."

"You wouldn't?"

"I would." Blackmail or not, the threat was effective and Chekov lay back in the chair, gradually regaining a little colour.

"Give him a drink, Sulu, I think there's a bottle over there." Susanna pointed towards overflowing shelves and turned her attention to Stripey. Fastened with a stout chain to a ring in the wall, the clawcat had curled into a brown, rust and yellow ball when he was satisfied as to the visitors' identity. As Susanna approached him he opened one green eye and firmly anchored her to the floor with a solid claw-laden paw.

"You think you've been left alone long enough?" Susanna rubbed the large bat ears as she extracted her foot. Viewed even by favourable eyes a clawcat was no cuddly ball of fur but a knee high ugly striped feline who would rather fight than sleep.

"What surprises me is how quickly Stripey accepts us once he gets used to the idea," Sulu observed as he handed Chekov a glass of brandy. "It wasn't long ago when he growled all the time Pavel was in the room."

"I'm glad I'm now on his guest list. I've never liked the look of all those teeth," Chekov looked across at Stripey, who was now lying on his back, ecstatically waving his paws as Susanna rubbed his stomach.

"I'm trying to widen his circle of friends. The sooner he stops attacking people the sooner I can take his muzzle off in public. At the moment I feel like a lion tamer - and a pariah! Nobody believes me when I tell them he's just an ordinary cat."

"I don't blame them. If I hadn't heard him myself, I wouldn't believe he could purr," Sulu said with a sideways look at Stripey. "Did you find anyone in the rec room, I would have thought it was a bit early?"

"I had coffee with Carlos and some others from Engineering. There were some of the passengers in there, you don't often see them in that rec room. We were discussing the murder. Nobody seems to have any ideas. I don't see why anyone wanted to kill John. He had a mind like a filing cabinet with total recall - but that's no reason."

There was a stunned silence, then Sulu gasped, "You knew him?"

"Sure, shared a cabin with him on the Potemkin years ago. Why all the excitement?" Chekov asked, puzzled.

"You're the only person we've found who knew him at all. How long ago is 'years'?"

"Four. It was only a few months, he transferred to the Indomitable... That's funny, talking about John. I've just remembered why that passenger looks familiar. He was arrested as a suspected Klingon agent."

"What passenger?"

"Klingon?"

Both Sulu and Susanna spoke at once, startling Chekov and waking Stripey from his snooze. Once the clawcat stopped yowling and peace restored, Chekov explained.

"The small dark one wearing black. I wondered why he looked familiar. I'm sure it's the same man."

"Would he have known John Lindley?" asked Sulu, trying to find a link between them.

"John was one of the security detail guarding him, and I stood in for him one night."

"That must be it. John must have recognised him at the concert - and was killed before he could tell anyone. Perhaps he wasn't sure and wanted to think

about it." Sulu was triumphant at having found a solution after so many dead ends.

"I wonder why they released him in the first place," mused Susanna.

"How should I know. Perhaps there wasn't enough evidence," retorted Sulu, ignoring minor details that didn't fit his theory. "I suppose we'd better tell Mr. Spock."

"It seems rather a shame, but there isn't anything else we can do by ourselves," sighed Susanna. "He's off duty, by the way."

"Don't suppose that matters. I'll go and explain, I'd rather not do it over the intercom. You stay here and keep an eye on Pavel - he's looking better, but we don't want to lose our star witness in the depths of sickbay." Sulu walked across to the door, trailed by Susanna and her feline shadow. "Keep Stripey loose, there's always a chance that the Klingon recognised Pavel," he added in a whisper as Susanna opened the door, then was gone before she could do more than give a startled squawk.

As far fetched an idea it might be, Susanna was forced to see the logic of his argument. If anything happened to Chekov, there would only be their word on such a wild theory. Someone had murdered John Lindley and this was the only valid reason that had emerged. It might not be the correct solution, but someone had killed to protect himself - and had nothing to lose by killing again.

Chekov lay back in his chair, eyes closed, his skin even greyer than before. One part of Susanna wanted to remonstrate with him for getting up too soon, the other glad he had because otherwise they would never have solved the murder. Because of that she didn't scold him but said,

"You look like death warmed over, you'd better lie down. I'll wake you when Sulu gets back," she added, half carrying him towards the spare bed that had remained vacant since her roommate had set eyes on Stripey.

"I'm all right, don't fuss," complained Chekov, although the room was beginning to spin round him.

"Just lie quietly for ten minutes." Susanna ignored his protests and determinedly tucked him in. His eyes immediately closed and she smiled to herself before tiptoeing to the door, shutting it carefully behind her. Now that he couldn't hear, she began a frustrating few minutes trying to locate Dr. McCoy, finally running him to earth in the animal room.

"Can you come and collect Pavel, he's gone a terrible grey colour. I've made him lie down but I think he ought to be back in sickbay."

"I thought I told him to stay in bed?"

"Much good that did. We told him that too, but he said he'd had enough of his own company."

"He won't when I've finished with him... I'll be with you shortly."

That settled, Susanna turned her attention to Stripey, who had ignored the girl's struggles with Chekov - evidently the Russian was now on his list of harmless visitors.

"Stripey, boy, we might be having an unwelcome visitor. Come on, wake up and act like a ferocious watchdog - or watchcat, if you prefer."

Stripey opened one eye, butted her affectionately with his hard head and slowly disentangled himself from the rug he used as a makeshift bed. Sensing the worry in her voice, he stalked the room on still legs, tail erect and bristling.

A gentle knock on the door brought him to a sudden halt, every hair on his back standing on end like a ruff. But he made no noise. A clawcat was doubly dangerous when silent.

Knowing it wasn't Sulu or anyone the cat knew, Susanna stepped away from the

door, calling,

"Who is it?"

There was no verbal answer. Instead, a burst of phaser fire demolished the door and ruined the wall opposite. A black dressed figure appeared in the shattered doorway, brandishing a phaser in one capable hand.

"Where is he?" he growled, making the mistake of threatening the girl. Stripey, not liking his attitude nor the tone of his voice, drew himself together and leaped silently for the enemy's throat. Man and clawcat fell into the corridor, pursued by Susanna, shouting,

"No, Stripey, no! Drop him!" She had no illusions about her protege. The clawcat was a killer, trained for centuries for the hunt. The Klingon's only chance was that his loyalty to Susanna might seep through his instinct.

Even as she dodged the razor claws, she never quite forgot with whom they were dealing. Unbelievably he still retained a firm grip on his phaser, trying desperately to train it on either Susanna or the clawcat. While tugging at Stripey's collar, she stamped down on his wrist with all her might, attempting to make him release the phaser. She didn't really care whether the Klingon lived or died, all that mattered was that Stripey mustn't be the one who killed him. Over the sounds of her own voice, the Klingon's struggles and Stripey's growls, she suddenly was aware of footsteps then Mr. Spock's calm voice.

"I have the phaser now."

Sulu materialised at her side and took a firm grip on the cat's collar. With a tremendous effort they managed to detach Stripey from his victim, narrowly avoiding being bitten by the enraged animal. McCoy skidded to a halt beside them, his tricorder already running over the injured passenger. Relieved to find that somehow the sharp teeth and claws had missed all vital areas, he turned his attention to the more important question.

"What's been going on here, Spock?"

Spock's impassive face did not alter as he regarded the impatient doctor. Just as the onlookers thought McCoy would explode, Spock said,

"The clawcat has apprehended Mr. Lindley's murderer... Do you need any help with the animal, Miss Grey?"

"No, thank you, sir. He's calmed down. I'll just chain him up." Susanna herself had stopped shaking and could view the torn body with only a faint sense of nausea. Ignoring McCoy's attempts to get more information out of Spock, Sulu stopped in the doorway and viewed the ruins with amazement.

"Have you ever considered applying to have this declared a disaster area?" He stepped over the rubble to join Susanna, being careful to avoid alarming the grumbling clawcat.

"They turned me down, there hasn't been an earthquake." She was able to secure Stripey to the hook in the undamaged wall, while telling him how proud of him she was.

"Where's Pavel?" demanded Sulu suddenly, remembering the reason behind this destruction.

"On my spare bed. He was fast asleep when I left him - he looked dead to the world. I suppose we're lucky there's only a storeroom behind that wall." She waved her arm towards the gaping hole opposite the door, then turned hesitantly to McCoy. "Is he dead?"

"Nothing like. Stripey missed his throat but made a nasty mess of his shoulder and body. Did he bite either of you?" McCoy asked, watching his medical orderlies wheel away his patient - escorted by Mr. Spock and a couple of hastily summoned security guards.

"A couple of scratches. Sulu?"

"About the same."

Demanding to see their wounds, McCoy dressed their cuts, muttering about people who kept fighting cats.

"You two owe me an explanation. I still don't know what you were trying to learn from me the other night, Susanna. Now will you tell me what it was all about?"

"It would take too long now. I promise I'll explain everything this evening ... I don't see how Pavel managed to sleep through all this, he must be exhausted. ..." She grinned affectionately at his retreating back, then stared thoughtfully at the bloodstained cat.

"Sulu, have you ever bathed a clawcat?"

LONELINESS AND FRIENDSHIP by Janet Hall

Avenues of loneliness
 Set between the stars
 Define the route the Enterprise must travel.
 Her ways chalked out
 Amongst the suns,
 Her byways marked by planets.
 Alone, so isolated, so
 Without assistance in the hour of need.
 How self-reliant
 Must that one man be
 Who dares to take command,
 To lead those daring
 Interstellar Argonauts
 Across the largely undiscovered deeps?
 Here be tygers indeed!
 To travel through this maze of time alone,
 This is too much to ask of any man.
 For he who could be
 Wholly self-reliant
 Could never draw respect and love
 From those who serve beneath him.
 There is no need
 To feel ashamed
 To need a friend.
 It takes courage to uncover
 All the dreams and hopes and fears
 And secret longings of a soul alone,
 Especially to one who
 By a quirk of nature
 Might be unable ever to comprehend.
 The chance was taken,
 And the bet paid off;
 And two men who
 Could well have spent their lifetimes quite alone
 Found friendship and fulfillment.
 We are their heirs.

All hands - this is the Captain. We have cleared the neutral zone, Mr. Scott has repaired the warp engines, we've shaken off the Klingon battle-cruisers, and Mr. Spock has restored life support. Now for the bad news - we're lost!

THE FUNCTION by Bryan Lilly

When something starts invading
Your Sacred Land of Peace;
There's no question of your aiding
To make a battle cease.

When aliens start to molest
You fight back at a junction;
But there's nothing harder to suppress
Than pure function.

Captain's Log: Stardate 5407.3. We are completing a routine observation of planet VI in the unexplored solar system of Gramous, which was recently mapped by the Scoutship Shahr.

"Landing party on board now, sir." Captain James T. Kirk spun around in his chair as the Bantu communications officer continued, "Lt. Burry reports some lower life forms were found and a small amount of vegetation; however, the planet seems to be devoid of sentient beings."

Kirk sighed. It had been two full weeks of nothing to view but six barren worlds. Well, at least this was the end of them. Three more days and the Enterprise would be orbiting Starbase XIV for refuelling and a well deserved leave.

"Mr. Sulu, adjust course for Starbase XIV. Warp 3."

The helmsman turned a few dials, and within a matter of seconds the Enterprise was moving through space at twenty-seven times the speed of light.

"Mr. Spock, you have the con. I'll be in my quarters if you need me." The Vulcan-Human hybrid nodded as he crossed the bridge and sat in the command chair.

The door leading into the sickbay of the Enterprise swished open in front of Kirk. As he walked in he noticed one patient in the treatment room.

"Morning, Bones," he said to the doctor.

"Morning, Jim." McCoy turned around to face the Captain.

Kirk pointed at the unconscious man before asking the obvious question. "What's wrong with him?"

"Wish I knew. He walked in almost ten minutes ago complaining of dizziness. Next thing I knew, he'd fainted." McCoy glanced at the diagnostic scanner. "Everything looks fine according to my instruments. His name is Cooper."

"Cooper," Kirk muttered to himself. He paused for a moment as memory connected. "Ensign Cooper from the Gramous landing party?"

"That's right. The landing parties were checked when they came back aboard, but it's possible something was overlooked."

Captain Kirk spoke with his usual concern. "Then you think that this is something that he picked up on the planet?"

"Well, it's a possibility, so I'm having the reports and the ship's readings looked over again." McCoy looked as though he were about to say more, but he didn't get the chance.

The familiar whistle came from the intercom on the wall. "Bridge to Captain Kirk, bridge to Captain Kirk."

Kirk strode over to the small box on the wall and placed his finger on the button. "Yes, Lieutenant, what is it?"

Uhura's voice sounded again. "Commodore Broder of Starbase XIV has an urgent message for you."

"Pipe it down here, Lieutenant."

The next voice he heard belonged to Commodore Broader. "Jim, we have a mystery on our hands."

Jim Kirk's face showed his immediate interest. "What is it?"

"In the last three days we have received two distress signals from the Star System Orana. From what we picked up, it seems that the fourth and fifth planets, the only inhabited ones, are under heavy attack."

Kirk knew what was coming and said simply, "And you want us to assist them."

"Precisely. As you know, the Orana system is right at the edge of our galaxy. If you leave now, you will arrive there in five days. You must stop whatever is destroying those planets, at any cost. I don't want any more populated planets being destroyed. Check in with me as soon as you find anything. Broader out."

Kirk pressed the button again. This time Chekov's voice responded. "Yes, sir?"

"Mr. Chekov, plot in a course for Orana, warp six."

After a pause, Chekov replied, "Course laid in, Captain."

"Thank you, Mr. Chekov. Execute. Kirk out."

Kirk turned around to face McCoy once more and said, "Well, Doctor, it looks like we're off again. If anything comes up, call me. I'll be in my quarters."

"Right, Jim." The sickbay doors opened for Kirk and then closed after him, leaving Dr. McCoy with his unconscious patient.

Captain's Log: We have been given top priority instructions to procede to Orana to investigate disturbances. Dr. McCoy has eight people unconscious from some illness, and he still has not found out its cause.

As the Enterprise approached Orana, Captain Kirk waited tensely for something to happen. And soon something did.

Sulu turned toward the Captain abruptly. "Sir, sensors just picked up something - and the shields just snapped on."

"All right," Kirk said. "Let's have a closer look at it. Magnification four, Lieutenant." Suddenly, there appeared on the main viewing screen a large ship with a design that was completely unfamiliar to Kirk.

The ship was spherical with three cylinders projecting from the back - and was at least three times as large as the Enterprise.

Kirk stared at it for a moment curiously. "Mr. Spock?"

"Unknown, Captain, sensors cannot penetrate the hull, not can they identify it. It would seem that whoever built it is advanced far beyond anything we are capable of in ship design."

"Do you think that that is what destroyed the fourth and fifth planets of Orana?"

"Again, I do not know, but it is a possibility that should be considered."

Kirk took a deep breath. "Is there anything you can tell me?"

Spock, not knowing what to say, looked at Kirk. "There are no facts that I can give you at this time. However, it is my opinion that it is badly damaged. It is only travelling at warp two and the computer shows stress on its engines. Since we have never encountered anything quite like this before, I assume that it came from another galaxy and was damaged while crossing through the barrier."

"Lt. Uhura, open communications."

"Channel open."

"To unidentified vessel, this is Captain Kirk from the Starship Enterprise of the United Federation of Planets. Please identify yourself."

"This is Scouting Unit 3127." The metallic voice resounded across the bridge.

"That s a lot of help," Kirk commented. He then noticed that they were only receiving audio transmission and not visual. "To whom am I speaking? What is your purpose here?"

Once again, the voice filled the air. "This is Scouting Unit 3127. I am from the Galaxy Tarbo. I have been sent here to your galaxy to prepare it for colonisation by my makers."

Kirk glanced at Spock. "Unmanned probe?" he asked softly.

"It seems probable, Captain."

"Are you responsible for destroying two populated planets?" Kirk asked, fighting to keep hostility from his voice.

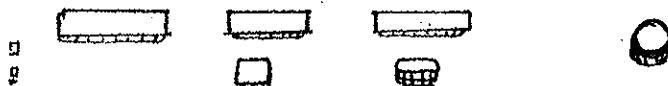
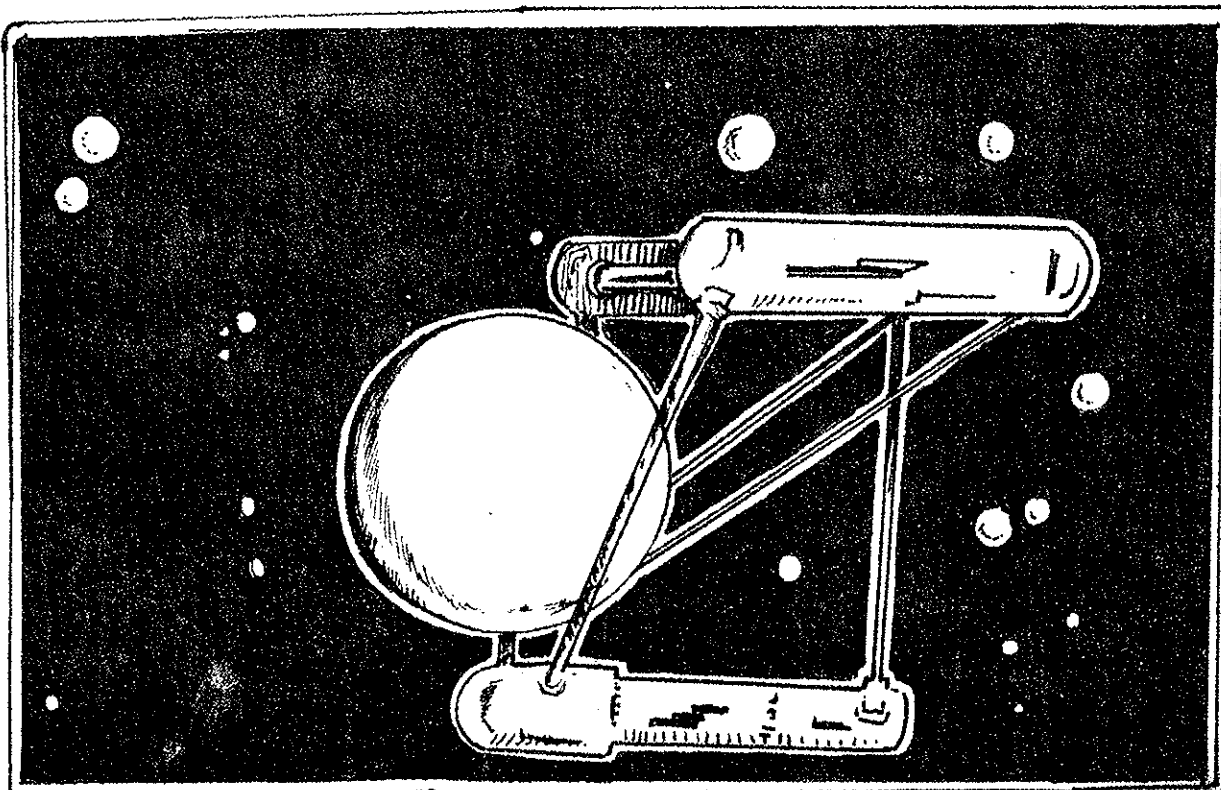
The emotionless reply came back. "I am."

Again Kirk spoke, but this time with a softer voice. "Why?" he asked.

"Exactly 35,812 of your years ago, Scouting Unit 189 reached your galaxy to see if it could sustain my makers' life forms. It started its return journey 500 years later. The information it obtained showed that they could live here, so my makers sent me out to destroy all life in your galaxy to prepare it for their people."

"And you will continue to destroy all living forms in our galaxy?"

"Yes; that is my function."



Kirk sighed. "Lt. Uhura, send a message to Starfleet Command informing them of the situation."

After pressing a few buttons at her station, Uhura spoke. "Sir, transmission is block - I can't get the message out."

Kirk was muttering a few words when some unknown force suddenly slammed into his seat.

"Captain." Sulu stated, "We're being sucked into that robot scouting machine."

"Reverse power."

After a short pause, Sulu continued, "We're still being pulled in. In four hours and twelve minutes, we'll be crushed."

"Mr. Chekov, lock phasers on full power directed at the centre of that thing and fire on my order."

"Aye, aye, Captain. Phasers on target."

But before Kirk got the chance to give the order to fire, an amazingly strong energy bolt emerged from the alien vessel and hit the Enterprise.

"Spock, how badly were we hit?"

"We seem to have suffered minimal damage. Life support still working at full capacity...complete loss of warp and phaser power. I would say that it guessed our next move. We are now being pulled towards it at a much faster rate... I estimate it will engulf us in three hours and six minutes."

"How long will repair operations take?"

"Approximately eight hours for phasers and two hours for warp drive; however, we will still not be able to break the tractor beam."

"Hmm. Mr. Spock, tell Scotty and Dr. McCoy to meet us in the briefing room in five minutes."

The meeting began a few minutes later. "Mr. Spock's filled me in and I can't say I like it," McCoy said.

"Neither do I, Bones. Do you have any news about your patients?"

"Yes, but it's all bad. The illness is caused by radiation. The Cramous system passed by a radiation source about 50,000 years ago, and the effect has lingered."

"Well, at least you know what it is. What can you do about it?"

"That's the problem. About 5,000 years ago, the radiation started to dissipate, and in its present state, I can't get a good fix on it. And here's something else; the effect is spreading. I now have fourteen patients."

"Beautiful." It really was one of those days. "Mr. Spock - " he drew his attention back to the immediate danger. " - Do you have any ideas about how to get us out of here within three hours?"

"I do have one suggestion but it holds an element of risk."

"So does doing nothing."

"Very well." Spock looked directly at Kirk and said, "If we were to switch off our shields we would be sucked towards Scouter 3127." He continued, ignoring Kirk's astonished face. "If we set up a circuit to trigger an explosion when the Enterprise comes into contact with it, we should be able to generate enough power to destroy it. Logic dictates, however, that it will once again foresee our purpose and repel us before we can damage it. If we do this after we have our warp drive in operating condition, we can then outdistance it. Should it not repel us, - we will have destroyed it."

Captain Kirk sat motionless, thinking, for a few moments then finally spoke.

"All right. Mr. Scott, signal me when the repairs on the warp engines have been completed."

For the next two hours, sitting waiting was almost torture for Kirk. Commodore Broader had said at any cost, but if that cost was the Enterprise and her crew... Well, what had to be done, had to be done.

At last the call came from Scotty. Kirk gave the order to drop the shields slowly and felt himself being pushed back into his seat once more as the Enterprise moved swiftly at the scouting ship.

After only two seconds - which seemed more like two hours - the Enterprise was repelled violently, shooting backwards at a considerable speed. Because of inertia, Kirk was sent sprawling on the deck. He recovered and spoke quickly. "Sulu, 180 degrees about - warp eight!" After a moment, he continued, "Spock, how does it look?"

"It appears that we are out of its reach," Spock replied.

"Lieutenant, see if you can inform Starfleet of the situation."

"Yes, sir."

Kirk turned back to his First Officer. "Well, Mr. Spock, it would seem that we have another problem." Spock raised an eyebrow and Kirk continued, "We can wait two days to get an answer from Starfleet, and let Scouter try and destroy another planet, or tangle with it again."

"We cannot let it destroy more life, Captain. I also have a piece of incidental information you might want to know."

"Go ahead, Spock."

"Two of the deceased on the fifth planet of Orana, according to the computer, were Professor and Mrs. Burry."

Kirk recognised the name. "Lt. Burry's parents?" When Spock nodded, Kirk was left at a loss for words.

After a moment, the Vulcan spoke again. "There may be a way to bring them - and the other inhabitants of the Orana planets - back, alive, and prevent further extermination."

Kirk stared at him in disbelief. "Explain," he said.

"You recall that Scouting Unit 3127 said that 35,312 years ago, Scouting Unit 189 left our galaxy - I assume, following the course this one did. It should be possible, therefore, to go back in time 35,312 years, and alter the data that the first unit recorded."

Kirk looked as though he had just received an energy charge emitted from a phaser on heavy stun. He sat still for a few minutes and then nodded. "We'll try it," he said. "We have nothing to lose - and everything to gain - by it."

Space...yes, it was indeed the final frontier, but time was awesome, and being back in the past brought its own frontier.

"Sensors picking up an object just ahead," Spock continued. "That could be Scouting Unit 189, its shape is identical to that of 3127. It's travelling at warp five, and it will reach the barrier in 23.8 minutes."

"Mr. Sulu, tractor beams on."

"Tractor beams on, sir."

"Computer."

"Working."

"Locate all data units on board alien vessel and feed co-ordinates to the transporter. Mr. Scott - prepare to transport data units aboard; co-ordinates will be coming in shortly."

"Getting them in now, Captain."

"Lt. Uhura, open communications."

"Channel open."

"To unidentified vessel, this is Captain Kirk from the United Starship Enterprise, of the United Federation of Planets. Please identify yourself." Kirk waited for the inevitable response.

"This is Scouting Unit 189."

"To whom am I speaking?"

"This is Scouting Unit 189. I am from the Galaxy of Tarbo."

"Your mission here?"

"I have been sent to your galaxy to find out if it is capable of supporting my makers' life forms."

"And is it?"

"It is."

"And you will bring your information back to your galaxy?"

"Yes; that is my function."

"Mr. Scott, you may beam data units aboard now. Mr. Spock, rewriting it is in your line; have fun."

Captain's Log: Mr. Spock has informed me that all necessary corrections have been made, and the data units have been replaced aboard Scouting Unit 189. We will be returning to our own time shortly.

Spock turned towards Kirk. "Ready for time change, Captain?...Captain?" Jim Kirk was staring straight past Spock; staring into space. He then pressed the intercom to sickbay and got the doctor.

"McCoy here."

"Bones, how many men do you have sick?"

"Twenty two, Jim, why?"

"Well, while we're back in time we could visit Cramous and take a look at the radiation. It should still be strong now, and we could get some information."

"What are we waiting for? Let's get moving, and that's Doctor's orders!"

"Mr. Sulu, ahead warp factor six for Cramous."

"Well, Doctor, are you ready?"

"Yep. The cure worked like a charm. I just hope that Scouter 3127 hasn't destroyed any planets when we get back."

"Well, then, gentlemen," Kirk grinned as he spoke, "let's see what the 'future' has in store for us." McCoy groaned, Spock winced, and somewhere on deck seven, a man prayed.

The Enterprise lurched through time. If luck was with them, the beings from Tarbo would have believed the 'data' brought back to them by Scouting Unit 189 and would not have sent Scouting Unit 3127 to attack.

"Back in our own time, Captain."

"Check the Orana system, Mr. Spock. Any sign of Scouter?"

"None, Captain... and the 'destroyed' planets are in their designated orbits."

"Right. Since there's been no attack, we shouldn't be here... Mr. Chekov, lay in a course for Starbase XIV, warp factor six."

"Warp factor six, sir."

How could they 'remember' something that hadn't happened, Kirk wondered as the mighty Starship swung onto course. It was a mystery, but one that Kirk decided need not concern him. It was enough to sit back in the command chair, watching the stars float by.

TOGETHER by Gillian Catchpole

McCoy

Time marooned us unprepared
 As we stepped across the portal together.
 Suffering wind and snow without protection
 We seemed certain to perish.
 Desperately we searched for a refuge, a place to shelter
 But without success.
 I urged him to leave me
 When finally I collapsed exhausted to the ground,
 My body sapped of strength and will,
 A victim of the savage cold.
 Alone he had a chance of survival
 But nothing I could say would make him go.
 He stubbornly refused to leave me dying,
 Whatever happened we stayed together.
 I had little strength to disagree.
 We were joined each in the other's destiny
 For as long as we both remained.

Spock

Like the tide, time flowed the present to our touch
 And the waves of past ebbed out of sight,
 Gone but not forgotten.
 Love treasured for a fleeting moment
 Must be made to say goodbye,
 So brief the sip of happiness.
 Go ahead and I will follow.
 There has been so very little time.
 Need time alone - to part is deepest sorrow.
 Even that it seems is now denied.
 One cannot leave without the other,
 Separately we can't escape,
 We both must enter time together.
 For all that does not belong must be returned
 Together as it came.

Chapel: Janice Rand suffers for her beliefs.

Uhura: Really? What are her beliefs?

Chapel: Well, for a start, she believes she can wear a size four boot on a size five foot.

LEADER-TYPE by Wendy Walter

A group of young men and women was waiting impatiently outside the examination hall, chattering nervously. All except Bill Holland. A tall handsome American, he was surrounded by several fellow students, all desperately trying to get into his 'good books'. Bill Holland had quite a reputation as a ladies man; a reputation he was proud of. It gave him status among his peers.

Unfortunately, in his first term at the Academy, he had found he had competition. A young Vulcan was attracting many girls, and although he didn't respond to their worshipping looks, it had made Bill learn to hate him in the ten weeks since he'd arrived.

"I notice Queer-ears isn't here yet!" He grinned wickedly. "Perhaps he's not going to turn up."

The young men in Bill's group giggled. They'd long since learned that to be a 'friend' of Bill's, they had to adopt his likes and dislikes.

The girl on Bill's arm looked up at him. "Haven't you noticed? He's always exactly on time for everything." Suspicion dawned on her. "What have you done to him? Bill...you've not..."

"Of course not!" he snapped, annoyed that every girl he took out knew so much about the alien. But his grin returned as the bell sounded for the examinees to enter the hall.

Spock looked at the door of his room helplessly. For some reason, the opening mechanism had shorted, and he couldn't get out. His mother had warned him that life would be difficult living with Humans, but he did not think she had been referring to such things as sticking doors. That had nothing to do with Humans...or did it? He looked up at the clock. Five minutes to go. He felt desperation building up inside him. He closed his eyes in an effort to control it. It was no good shouting for help. Everyone would be over at the examination hall. But the cleaner should be around. He placed his hands on the door and concentrated hard. About a minute passed before the door slid open. Spock stepped past the woman who stared at him in surprise, key in hand. He managed to curb a desire to run, nodded thank you, and walked sedately round the corner. Then he broke into a run.

He reached the examination hall with not a second to spare. He sat down heavily, trying to control his erratic breathing. He glanced round the hall. Bill Holland looked at him with pure hatred in his eyes. Spock was confused. He didn't understand why this young man hated him. He pushed the thought to the back of his mind, and turned to the task in hand.

Again he thought how futile this method of examination was to a Vulcan. There was no way he could fail this exam. He found the whole exercise boring. Picking up his pen he began to write.

He wrote the last word as the end of examination bell rang. Spock put down his pen and waited to be dismissed.

Holland and his friends were first out of the hall. Spock was the last to leave, unwilling to be caught up in the crowd as they left the hall. Body contact would be unavoidable.

Holland pointed a jeering finger at Spock as he stepped out into the sun.

"So you managed to get out after all!"

"I did indeed," answered Spock quietly.

"Oh, Bill. So you did..."

"Shut up, Molly. And I suppose you found that exam easy!" Holland's voice

dripped contempt.

"Yes," Spock said softly. He side-stepped in an attempt to skirt the group of tormentors, but Holland stepped in front of him. Drawing back his fist, he punched Spock hard in the face. The Vulcan was taken completely by surprise, and he staggered backwards, his hand clamped over his broken and bleeding nose. Two of Holland's side kicks caught him efficiently.

It took Spock a second or two to regain his balance and composure. He looked at Holland, puzzled.

"Mr. Holland, your actions are illogical. I have done nothing..."

The words were not well chosen. Spock still had much to learn as far as Humans were concerned. With two men holding him, Holland attempted to punch Spock again. Spock managed to dodge, despite the hands gripping his arms behind him.

"Hold him still, dammit!"

"Stop it, Bill, please!"

Holland gave Molly a withering look. She looked down and moved out of the way.

Two more men were now holding Spock, and this was too much even for him. This time he couldn't dodge as Holland's fist landed in his stomach. He followed it up with a brutal kick. Spock made no sound. Biting his lip, he doubled up in agony. Holland turned to leave and the four men dropped Spock and followed him.

Spock knelt on the grass clutching his abdomen, trying to control and pain and the feeling of nausea. Slowly, he became aware of someone standing close to him. Looking up, he saw Molly. She was holding her hand out to him. Spock wiped the blood from his mouth and, shaking his head, said, "Please leave me."

Molly looked at him angrily. "All right. If that's how you feel..." She stalked off.

Spock was deeply perturbed. What had he done wrong?

Three weeks later, the exam results went on the board. Spock waited until all the other students had seen their results, then went to look. He knew that he had passed it. He was curious, however, to see who else had. His eyes looked down the list and came to rest on one name;

Holland W. Pass 68%

He turned away from the board, feeling pleased. Holland was potentially good - possibly officer material - certainly a leader type. Spock hoped Holland would just learn to control his temper...just a little patience...perhaps with a little help...

With this thought in mind, he made his way to the bar.

He still had a lot to learn concerning Humans!

Kirk and Spock were on their way back to Bela's place when they were stopped by a traffic warden.

"What's the matter?" asked Kirk. "Was I driving too fast?"

"No," came the patient reply, "you were flying too low."

* * * *

Uhura says - A ring on the finger is worth two on the intercom.

A DEATH IN TIME...by Theresa Hewitt

The Captain was indulging in one of his favourite pastimes - arguing with his First Officer. On this occasion, Kirk knew he was going to win - not because Spock's arguments had any flaw; well, of course not! But for the simple reason that, in a moment, Kirk was going to pull rank.

"I still maintain, Captain, that it is completely illogical for you to carry out this routine mission. You are, quite clearly, not the logical choice," Spock's face was stony.

Kirk smiled affectionately at him. "Spock, Spock, listen to me for a minute. I haven't been off this ship in three months, what with one thing and another. This is a perfect opportunity for me to stretch my legs." He waited, but Spock failed to respond to the misleading metaphor, so Kirk shrugged and continued, "I'll only be gone three hours or thereabouts; just time to do the necessary checks. You can beam me up straightaway when the three hours are up, even if you don't hear from me."

"And if by some misfortune you should lose your communicator and we are unable to find you?" The Vulcan's voice was still grim. "These people are Human - their sensor readings are identical to yours. If I accompany you - "

"Come on, Spock. That would be illogical, if you like. A Vulcan down there, among a race so unadvanced that they haven't even discovered for sure that their world is round, probably? We're just wasting time, Spock. You know me - if I thought there was any appreciable risk I wouldn't go. I'll wear a homing bracelet in case I should lose the communicator. But it's highly unlikely. You're just fussing." With an engaging grin he reached out to touch his friend's shoulder.

Spock sighed, and capitulated. He still had reservations, but perhaps Kirk was right, and he was being over-protective because it was Kirk. The old line 'I am merely concerned for your safety because you are an excellent commanding officer' no longer fooled anyone, he knew, least of all Kirk. Kirk bounced off eagerly to get kitted out.

A small team of sociologists and historians had beamed down to Temira, a previously unexplored, earth-type planet, earlier in the day. They had picked an average-sized populated area for their survey, keeping well out of sight, merely noting clothing and other details necessary before someone from the Enterprise could be sent down unnoticed to mingle with the people. The findings so far indicated that the people on this world were a long way from ready for contact with the Federation, perhaps only comparable with Earth in the thirteenth century.

Kirk stepped onto the transporter in a rough brown tunic and trousers, his communicator concealed beneath the clothing, a translator embedded under his skin, and an ordinary-looking bracelet containing a homing device on his wrist.

"Right, then, Spock," he said briskly, trying to ignore the unmistakable air of rigid disapproval about his First Officer. "Beam me up in three hours, or on my signal. Energise."

He materialised on a deserted sandy beach and began to walk towards what looked like a town ahead. He enjoyed the fresh, salty air on his skin, the space all around, the blue sky above where a white bird wheeled gracefully, the warmth and harshness of the sand seeping between his sandalled toes. This was just what he needed.

He reached the little town and mingled unobtrusively with the people walking up and down the cobbled streets, intent on their business. No-one even glanced at him. Although this was an average-sized community for this planet, it was little more than a fishing village to Kirk, used as he was to the vast, well-planned cities of Earth, the imposing edifices and the incessant hum of aircars and machinery. "Fascinating!" he thought, smiling to himself at the unconscious

choice of word. "This is like stepping back into the past. Earth might have looked like this once."

Fish were everywhere, in baskets strapped to donkeys' backs; lying in the gutter; on tables in the market square. Kirk spoke to several people, careful not to seem to be asking dangerously ignorant questions, but gaining valuable information from what they said just the same. Satisfied that he had all the necessary data, that this particular world was developing quite normally, and would need many centuries before formal approach by the Federation, with a last half-reluctant look towards the simple houses, Kirk retraced his steps to the deserted beach. It was getting dark now, and although he hadn't used up his three hours, he thought he might as well return to the Enterprise now.

Footsteps clattering on the scree beyond the beach alerted him, and he dodged quickly into the shelter of a large cluster of rocks. The footsteps became muffled as they reached the sand, and only a murmur of voices moving closer warned Kirk that the owners of the feet were quite near where he was hiding. He peered cautiously round the rocks to see a group of villagers, all men, sitting down in a circle not ten feet from Kirk. He withdrew quickly and considered. He didn't know why the men were there, but it would be safer not to use the communicator while they were so close, and he certainly couldn't get out from behind the rocks without their seeing him. It could only be another half hour or so before Spock beamed him up. He settled down to wait.

The group's voices kept becoming louder and louder, then some wary member would utter an urgent "Hush!" and the voices would fall, only to rise again as their agitation increased. Kirk smiled to himself. Since time began, in probably every society on every planet, there had been such a group as this, discontented with their lot and the local government, quite unable to do anything about it (and probably reluctant to if they could) but relieving their general frustration in endless plotting and furtive moonlit meetings. The latest plot, from what Kirk could hear, was to assassinate the local equivalent of a mayor. The success of the plan seemed to depend on the mayor being idiot enough to be lured here at midnight. If, indeed, he was idiot enough to rendezvous in the dead of night with these unsavoury-looking characters on a deserted beach, then really the chap didn't deserve to be mayor, Kirk reflected, quite enjoying his eavesdropping. He was still alert, however, listening with half an ear for possible danger, and a strange feeling of unease assailed him. He tried to shake it off, reminding himself that it could not be long now before he was beamed up. He felt a sudden longing to be claimed by the Enterprise, catapulted again into the bright lights, noise and bustle of that world, his world; a wish to leave this strange little scene, the group of roughly-clad rebels on the beach and the lapping noise of the cold sea behind.

He heard a noise and whirled round. Nothing - behind him. But from the top of the pile of rocks in whose shelter he had been crouching, a dark figure leaped unerringly, bringing Kirk heavily to the ground.

Even with the element of surprise his attacker was no match for a well-trained Starship captain. But Kirk was somewhat handicapped by his desire not to injure the man, and before he could get away the noise of the scuffle had brought the rest of the conspirators running. Kirk was on top of the Temiran, and moved too late to avoid the heavy rock that came crashing down on the side of his face... He slumped unconscious, the gaping wound bleeding copiously, his communicator which had become detached from his trousers in the struggle lying unnoticed, half buried in the sand.

The conspirators stood silent for a moment. "You did well to spot the spy, Serros," said one at last to the Temiran who was easing himself up from the ground with many groans.

"He fought hard - but I think you have killed him, Zoraster."

Zoraster threw down the blood-stained rock he was holding and moved forward to prod the still figure roughly. "You are right, Kevran. If he is one of the mayor's spies, that is just as well, considering what he has heard. But

we must not be suspected - we must pull him into the sea."

They dragged the body unceremoniously down the beach, covering over the marks they left behind them; and pulled it into the water. Seeing the bracelet on Kirk's wrist, one of the men unclasped it and made as if to put it on his own wrist, but was stopped by a word from Zoraster. "No, Tsarte. If the mayor sees you in that, and recognises it as belonging to this man, he may connect you with his death. It has little value, anyway."

Tsarte saw the truth of Zoraster's words and flung the bracelet as far as he could out to sea. It fell with a gentle splash and drifted gracefully down to rest on the rocky bottom.

"There," said Zoraster in satisfaction. "It will be thought that he hit his head on the rocks while swimming and drowned."

Violence and sudden death were commonplace in their young world, and as they walked back along the beach, their thoughts had already turned from the still body lying at the edge of the sea, arms outflung in the sand, sticky threads of blood swaying with the movement of the waves.

On board the Enterprise, two and a half hours of Kirk's time had passed when the message came through from Starfleet Command. A colony on Alpha Cygnae III had reported an outbreak of cariamonicosis, and had none of the drug necessary for treatment. The Enterprise was to leave immediately for Starbase 13 to collect the medication and deliver it to the colony.

"Hadn't you better beam Jim up now, Spock?" asked McCoy anxiously. "It's a nasty disease - the sooner we get on our way..."

"Doctor, I hardly think it advisable to beam the Captain up arbitrarily - he may well be deep in conversation with some unsuspecting native who would no doubt be somewhat confused to see his companion disappear completely. Neither should we attempt to summon him by communicator, for the same reason. Non-interference is the Prime Directive, Doctor, and that includes baffling people with technology they would have no hope of comprehending. Unless we hear from him before, we will beam him up in 16.4 minutes, by which time the Captain should have found a place whence he can be transported unobserved."

McCoy subsided, beaten as usual. He waited, on edge, for what seemed like hours, getting more restless every minute, until at last Spock rose unhurriedly from the command chair, calmly delegated the con to Mr. Scott, and began to walk towards the turbolift. McCoy raced after him. "Wait for me, Spock!" he yelled. The Vulcan waited.

In the journey down to the transporter room, McCoy shot a quick look at Spock, who seemed to be a little more tense than usual. "Anything wrong, Spock?" he queried, softening his voice a little.

"Not specifically, Doctor; although I must confess I am a little surprised that the Captain has not requested transportation by now. I thought three hours an over-generous allowance for the simple observation tasks that were to be carried out."

He was frowning slightly, and as they stepped into the transporter room, McCoy caught a glimpse of such worried concern behind the Vulcan's stoical mask that he reached out to touch Spock's arm. "He's all right, Spock. Probably gone in for a quick swim of something."

He was to remember those words when a moment later Kirk's homing bracelet appeared, dripping wet, on the transporter platform.

"Oh my God," said McCoy, standing transfixed. After a second, Spock walked quietly forward and picked up the bracelet. He cautiously tasted the water dripping off it and looked at McCoy. "Sea water."

His gaze locked with the doctor's, almost frantic blue eyes to fathomless dark ones.

"Do not worry, Doctor," said Spock at last. "Our first impression - that the Captain had drowned - was in all probability erroneous. For even had that been so, this clasp is a very secure one, and there should be no possibility of the bracelet coming off accidentally."

"What, then? Did he take it off? Or did someone take it off for him?"

"There would seem to be no way of determining that, at the moment. It is improbable that he would have taken it off, however, so we must assume that he is injured, or has had it taken from him by force. I think the situation merits our trying his communicator."

Spock hit the intercom and delivered the order. But there was no reply - the communicator lying thousands of miles below was embedded in sand and its insistent call was effectively muffled. Not that there would have been anyone there to answer it.

"We'll have to go and look, Spock! We can't just go off and leave him..." One look at the Vulcan's face, its calmness belied by the tension in the dark eyes, and he felt a little more serene. No, Spock would never leave Jim, alive - or dead.

"I shall go down, Doctor. Mr. Scott will take the ship on to Alpha Cygnae III and you will return as soon as you have completed the mission. I will take a communicator. At the very least - " he made a rapid calculation " - it will take you 3.8 days to reach the colony with the drugs, assist in their distribution, and return here at warp 5. After that time, therefore, I shall try to contact the ship every four hours until I am successful."

"But Spock! You can't go down there - your ears..."

"I have already thought of that, Doctor," replied the Vulcan, with usual Vulcan imperturbability. "I shall wear a wig - it should be possible to contrive one which will cover my ears, and my normal hairstyle would undoubtedly seem too well-ordered to the Temirans."

"Spock - I - "

"Doctor," interposed Spock with a hint of impatience, "my decision is made. The sooner I beam down and begin my search, and the sooner you leave to aid the colonists, the better it will be for everyone. You will return - and I shall have found the Captain." The Vulcan hesitated a little, and looked away from McCoy. "I...I am hoping that the...affinity...between the Captain and myself may lead to some telepathic impressions when I get near him, which may help me to locate him."

"I hope you're right, Spock," muttered McCoy fiercely, to cover up his emotion. He could guess what it cost Spock to be so open with him. How could he have once thought this man unfeeling? "Just let me come with you, Spock, he may need a doctor."

"I agree - Bones," said Spock, acknowledging McCoy's concern with the rare use of his nickname, and also with his half smile. "But you will be needed on the colony. I shall take a medikit. Now, I must apprise the crew of the situation, and give Mr. Scott his orders."

The bridge officers were distressed to hear of Captain Kirk's non-appearance, and to know that they must leave without him and Mr. Spock. But they found comfort in the fact that, if he were there, Spock would spare no effort to find him and bring him back.

A lone woman collecting herbs and throwing them into a cart drawn by an old donkey observed the scuffle on the beach, and watched as the men dragged a limp form down to the sea's edge. Her eyes were keen, and even in the dark she recognised one of the little group. "Zoraster," She muttered scornfully to herself. When the assailants were out of sight, Petra cautiously approached the figure. She didn't really care - but it seemed heartless to leave a wounded man



so helpless. She hesitated as she saw the vicious wound, believing him dead, but a closer inspection revealed a faint heartbeat. She made her decision, brought the little donkey down to the water's edge and pulled the heavy man onto the cart. She was a sturdy woman, but getting old now, and the effort required was tremendous. However, she managed and led the patient animal over to stand beneath a clump of trees and returned to cover over the scuffed sand and cart marks - Zoraster's men must now suspect that someone had taken their enemy away alive.

Petra's hut was about two miles from the seashore, in the middle of a small wood. She and her dead husband never mixed much with the local people, and now he was dead she did so only out of necessity, to sell herbal potions to the sick when she needed a little money. Mostly, though, she lived on the animals she caught in her traps, and the roots and vegetables that grew quite plentifully around her. She often wondered why she bothered to eat at all - now her beloved husband was dead, she had no interest in living. But she could not have left this man to die alone, and now she bent her thoughts from her own misery to the relief of his.

If it had been hard to get him into the cart, it was doubly taxing to get the unresisting body into the hut and arrange him on a pile of blankets that served as her bed. But she could see the man was seriously ill - all the movement hadn't helped him, and she took no time to rest, but immediately set water to boil and made a thorough inspection of him. Even with her limited medical knowledge, she realised that his skull was probably fractured, and there was little she could do for him. She patiently and gently cleaned the ugly wound, applied herbal ointment to aid healing, and covered it with a boiled cloth. Then she washed the sandy body, dried it, covered him warmly and sat down to keep watch by his side.

Through it all he had not moved or made a sound. She watched him curiously - she had not been so absorbed, so caring, since Bodel's death. The gods had sent her this man to look after, because they had seen her loneliness; of that she had no doubt.

He was strong-looking, handsome, though at her age such things had ceased to matter to her. If she could heal him, he would stay with her, be the son she had never had. She smiled contentedly to herself as she sat through the long night with him. He didn't seem to be getting any worse, but towards dawn when she herself had slipped into a doze, he shifted in his sleep and moaned a little. She awoke instantly and bent nearer, taking his hand. "It's all right, you are safe now," she said gently.

His eyes, warm golden, flecked with hazel, came slowly open and he stared unseeingly round the room, searching for something. She had to put her head close to his lips to catch the thread of sound.

"Spock...where are you? Don't leave me, Spock..."

His voice faded, and Petra frowned. Who was this - Spock? If the man had a wife, he would be eager to leave as soon as he recovered. She could hardly bear to contemplate that...but it must wait. She rose and fetched water to moisten his lips. He licked at them gratefully and she gave him a little more. He seemed to be oblivious of his surroundings and Petra, so she contented herself with murmuring soothing words, though she wished she could ask him some questions, tell him that the gods had sent him to be her son. He slept again, and still she sat by his side, her eyes never leaving the pale face.

Kirk was dreaming; he was wading through a marsh of agony, every step an effort, making his head throb with an almighty spasm of agony. But he had to carry on, keep walking, keep looking for Spock. Spock must be there somewhere, Spock never failed him, would come running if he knew of his suffering. He tried to call out with his mind, but he was too weak, it was hopeless. His despair increased, and with a shock he was forced into consciousness. He lay still for a moment, then opened his eyes, wincing. How terribly weak he felt. At once he remembered what had happened, the attack - he had been hit on the head. Why

hadn't he been beamed up? His hand flew to his wrist - the bracelet had gone. He shut his eyes again in despair, then opened them as he heard someone moving about beside him, looking up to see a tall, sturdy woman of about fifty, with dark hair in a thick plait. She smiled. "You are awake then, my son?"

"Where am I?" asked Kirk, his voice surprising him with its shakiness.

"I am Petra. I saw Zoraster's men strike you down and I brought you to my house. Lie still - you are very sick. I will bring you soup."

Kirk tried to think, to assess the situation. They had been unable to beam him up without the bracelet to show them where he was. Spock and Bones would be going frantic...they must be down here looking for him. His communicator - if he had that...

Petra returned and helped him to take a little warm soup. He thanked her profusely for all she had done for him, with the warm smile few could resist. "Petra - Spock, my friends, will be looking for me. They can heal me. How can I let them know where I am?"

She frowned slightly. "Friends - this Spock is a friend? You do not have a wife?"

"No," said Kirk, wondering warily exactly what he had said while delirious.

"I am glad you have no wife. I too am alone. The gods have sent you to be my son. What is your name?"

Even in his own distress, Kirk felt a jolt of compassion for this lonely woman. "My name is Jim," he said gently, smiling at her. He felt a wave of dizziness again, and shut his eyes. "Petra - was there a small black box in my clothing?"

"I didn't see one, Jim," she answered, the name tasting sweet on her lips. "I will check." She returned, shaking her head. "Is it important to you?"

Kirk knew he couldn't explain that he could summon his friends with it, so he whispered "No," his eyes closing with exhaustion, his mind becoming confused again.

She was at his side immediately. "Rest now - Jim. I must leave you for a while, but I shall return."

He managed to form the words, "If you see Spock...someone looking for me - tell him I am here."

She did not reply to this. His friend would soon forget him - this Spock's need of him could not be as great as hers.

Satisfied that he slept, she left the hut and walked to the town. She desperately needed clean bandages for Jim's injury, and she intended to trade her medicines for the necessary cloth. Her mission completed successfully, she returned to the sandy path leading to her hut in the wood, clutching the valued pieces of white cloth. Hearing footsteps behind her, she turned to see a tall slender man with long unruly hair approaching her. Some inner sense warned her of his intention and she waited calmly for him to catch her up, her heart pounding.

"Please excuse me." His voice was deep and pleasant. "I caught sight of the bandages you carry, and I wondered - do you know anything of a man named Jim - James Kirk? He may be injured, and I must find him - I am his friend."

She studied his face, handsome and proud - and with something slightly odd about it. Excessively pale skin, almost green tinged; was the man sick? and strangely arched eyebrows. He did not belong to this town, she was sure. He looked strong, independent - could not, could never be, as lonely as she.

"No," she said with finality. "I know of no such man. These cloths are for my beast who has cut a leg."

He closed his eyes for a moment - he had hoped so much - but thanked her

steadily enough, and told her where to find him should she hear anything of the man he sought. He turned to retrace his steps with such a weary droop to his shoulders that for a moment she was almost tempted... But no. Jim was hers, now. She quickened her pace.

Spock had beamed down to the same co-ordinates as Kirk, medikit and communicator and some hastily-manufactured local money in a hide pouch around his waist, a dark wig fixed securely over the betraying ears. Refusing to allow pessimistic speculations on Jim's fate to cloud his sharp mind and wits, he thoroughly scanned the beach, but the tide had washed away any clue the sand might have given him. But, although it was dark, his keen eyes soon discovered a large bloodstained stone and a discarded communicator behind a clump of rocks. He retrieved the communicator and squatted for a moment fingering the blood absently - Jim's blood? It seemed likely... Then where...? He rose abruptly and set off for the dwellings.

It was late, he knew, and he could hardly knock up the inhabitants and start asking questions. He was sure by now that Jim must be hurt - he had obviously been attacked on the beach, and someone had taken his body away. Did that lend weight to the argument that Jim was alive? Or...? He firmly shut his mind to the alternative; he could not let that thought appear even briefly - his control was fragile enough already, and he would need it firmly in place if he were to find Jim. What would these people make of a Vulcan in the throes of a nervous breakdown, he asked himself wryly, trying to lighten the tone of his thoughts as he had seen Kirk and McCoy do so often, making light-hearted quips when in deep trouble, to boost their morale. It seemed to work for them - but if you were... who you were...

Lights and the sound of voices drew him to what seemed to be an ale-house, and he entered - it seemed the only place where he might contact Temirans at this time of night. There was straw on the floor, and rough seats; the air was fuggy and Spock sipped at the warm flat sour beer with distaste. But his martyrdom paid off, as he was joined by Temirans recognising that he was a stranger and eager to welcome him. He told them the truth, that he was looking for a friend whom he believed to have been visiting this town the previous day. They had arranged to meet here, he said; had anyone noticed a stranger?

Spock depicted Kirk as best he might, and a vision of his friend came so vividly to mind - Jim...perhaps lying dead, alone and uncared-for in some filthy gutter on this primitive world - that his voice caught and for one horrified moment he thought he was going to break down, but after a few seconds the rigid Vulcan training asserted itself and he opened his eyes too late to notice one of his companions, alerted by the stranger's description of the man he sought, getting up and slipping out of the alehouse.

The Temirans were watching him anxiously. "Are you well, friend?" asked one. "You are tired, no doubt. Find a room here for tonight - you can continue your search tomorrow. If any of us hears anything we will inform you at once. Most likely he is warming the bed of some friendly girl and has temporarily forgotten he planned to meet you."

Spock nodded, and thanked them, and enquired of the innkeeper about a room; he was shown up to a small but clean room with rough blankets on a wooden bed.

Instead of resting, however, he lay down on the hard bed and cleared his mind of as much emotion as possible (and this was not easy, for he was desperately worried about Kirk; did anyone, even Jim himself, realise just how much he meant to Spock?) but he managed to order his thoughts and concentrated deeply. With all the mind melds they had had, he thought he would know if Jim had died - and he intuitively felt that he was still alive. He extended his mind tentatively, searching, but no answering mind reached out to touch his and the effort was very tiring. He gave up after a while - he could try again tomorrow. So - what was the best course of action now? It seemed certain that the Human had been attacked, from the evidence of the bloody rock and the discarded communicator; but where was Kirk now? Either his attackers had moved his presumably unconscious body to a less conspicuous place, or it had been taken by someone wishing to

help him. Either way, Kirk might be anywhere in the area. But wherever he was, he would be lonely, needing Spock - and I shall come, he thought with a fierce determination - he hadn't failed him yet and wouldn't this time.

Dawn was breaking by the time Spock finished his contemplation of the situation, although he was no nearer to a solution. He had considered the idea of appealing to whatever authority there was here, but rejected that plan of action for fear of too much investigation being made into their backgrounds - his fragile knowledge of this world would not stand up to any enquiry, and the Prime Directive must be observed. That left him to search alone. He left the inn as soon as it was light and began a systematic investigation of the area, taking the beach as a starting-off point. The town was already beginning to stir, boats were coming in laden with squirming wet fish to be unloaded, and women were sweeping the cobbled streets and chatting to their neighbours. Just as Kirk had, Spock experienced a definite uplifting of the spirit as he surveyed the busy scene and breathed in the fresh tang of the sea air.

Tsarte had taken little notice of the stranger when he appeared in the ale-house, until the stranger had bought beer for everybody. He drew nearer, sipped his beer, inclined to be friendly, but when he heard the description of the man the stranger was seeking his eyes narrowed and he slipped out of the inn immediately to find Zoraster, who listened carefully to what Tsarte had to say. "You say there can be no doubt that the man is seeking he whom we killed?"

"No doubt at all, Zoraster. He even described the bracelet I took from his wrist."

Zoraster frowned deeply. He was not an intelligent man, but his sense of self-preservation was strong. "This new man is obviously another spy of Drona's come to investigate the disappearance of the other. He may discover nothing, but you had best keep an eye on him and report his movements to me."

Tsarte followed Spock, at a distance, for the next two days while Spock searched unceasingly round the town, asking questions of those he met, taking too little time to eat and rest. If Spock had not been so preoccupied and getting more worried about Kirk's safety every minute, he would have noticed. But there was much on his mind - still he was reluctant to consider the possibility that Kirk was dead, but he had discovered nothing so far. He tried to contact him telepathically, but with no more success than before. About one thing he was determined - if Jim's grave was here, lonely and unmarked on this strange world, then so would his be. He had willingly followed Jim over the entire galaxy, and no less willingly would he follow him into death; which might not aid Kirk, but would release Spock from the years of loneliness which he knew would lie ahead if his loved friend had died.

Petra sat silently by the unmoving form on the blankets, her grief threatening to over come her. There was no doubt that Jim was dying... He had been violently sick, twice, without even opening his eyes, and he had gradually sunk into a deep coma. He had been like this for two days now. She was going to lose him. He was going to be taken from her one way or another, and she was trying to find the courage to summon his friend, who, Jim said, had skill to heal him. She had thought her years of loneliness over, but it would seem that the gods had offered her Jim, merely to snatch him away again. Blinking back tears, she gently smoothed his brow, covered him closer, and left for the inn where the stranger had said that he could be found.

Tsarte, taking his sleuthing job seriously, was hiding in the room next to Spock's, waiting for his quarry to go out again. A knock on Spock's door alerted him and he pressed his ear to the wall...

Spock called "Come," raising his head from his arms where he had laid it in his tiredness and distress. He stood up courteously to welcome the woman; then

he heard what she was saying. Heard it, but failed to take it in. The words seemed to be coming at him as if through deep water; she would think him very stupid. He took several deep breaths and forced himself to think clearly. What had she said? Jim was alive - JIM WAS ALIVE! - but seriously ill, and needing him. He picked up his pouch, and began to run, Petra hurrying after him - and Tsarte, as stunned as Spock by the news of the man he thought Zoraster had killed, followed at a safe distance.

Spock reached the hut at last, Petra a little way behind. When she entered, it was to see the tall proud stranger on his knees beside the bed, his head bowed over the still figure, both his hands tightly clasping Jim's. She felt a pang of jealousy - Jim was hers, no-one must touch him - but fought to quell it; she had made her choice and must face up to it.

"Is he - is there anything you can do for him?"

The lean figure started, and stared at her, as if he had forgotten who she was, then he seemed to pull himself together. "He is dangerously ill, but I think I can help him. I shall need hot water, and cloths."



Tsarte, behind the hut with his ear to the wall, risked creeping to the open door and looking round. A very brief glance was enough to confirm the identity of the man on the bed. This new man had said he could cure him; when he regained consciousness he would talk, tell what he knew of the planned assassination. Zoraster must be informed at once.

Spock was taking advantage of Petra's preoccupation with fetching hot water and had opened his medikit to do what he could for Jim. The skull was fractured, no doubt of that - nothing he could do, physically, except apply painkiller and antibiotic and wait for McCoy to get here. What he could do, however, was get through to Kirk, lend him his own strength, get him conscious again and keep him from slipping back into the dangerous coma that might so easily change into the sleep of death. There was only one way to do that... If he could just contact Jim's mind, the knowledge of Spock's presence - of which, Spock was sure, Kirk was so far unaware - might in itself stir up his will to live. He turned to Petra, who was approaching with the things Spock had asked for.

"What I am going to do may seem strange to you, but I assure you that it is necessary, and harmless. Please do not touch me, or speak, until I speak to you."

She stared at him appraisingly for a moment or two, and he met her gaze quite steadily, his face open as, had she known it, he let few see it. His obvious concern for Jim, the worry in the dark eyes, along with his quiet air of authority impressed her, and she just nodded, and watched him place his outspread fingers on Kirk's uninjured temple and close his eyes.

PAIN. Pain was the first thing he encountered, but he had expected it, and braced himself to meet it; and took as much as he could into his own mind, controlling it there. The tense body beneath him seemed to relax a little, and he probed deeper, yet as delicately as he could, into the mind. The contact came sooner than he dared hope; Jim had not yet sunk as far as he had feared.

/Jim. I am here now; you must wake up./

/Spock...is it you?/

/Who else would it be, here?/

/Who else, indeed. Is this - the end?/ Panic filled his mind, not at the thought of death, but caused by his concern for Spock - /Get out, Spock! Before I take you with me.../

Spock gradually reduced Kirk's distress with waves of loving, soothing thoughts. /No, no, Jim; you are not going to die; I promise you that. McCoy will be here soon, to take care of you. But you must wake up./

/I can't...it's easier, in here.../

/You must. I will be with you, helping you. You must draw on my strength to allow yourself to regain consciousness. There is always a danger, if you remain asleep, that you will become weaker and weaker until it is impossible to rouse you. I will establish a firm link between us, so that I may supplement your strength until we get back on the Enterprise./

/Spock...I don't know...why the hell you do all this for me - /

/Indeed, Jim, I am quite sure that you do./

For a moment they rested, enjoying the pleasurable union of their minds. Then Spock began gently to force the at first resistant mind nearer the surface, nearer...until he felt it attain awareness, then he opened his eyes in time to see Kirk's eyes also open. He looked a little dazed, but recollection of what had happened inside his mind was instant. There was a little silence, as each surveyed the other's face, reading joy and relief and satisfaction there, satisfaction that they were together once more.

"What an absolutely fascinating hairstyle, Mr. Spock," murmured Kirk teasingly.

Spock raised his hand ruefully to the lengthy, disordered locks. "I shall not regret its loss," he admitted.

Kirk sighed, still very weary, and touched the bandages that swathed his head. "Spock...this is going to sound very odd...but do you think you could put your arms round me? I just can't believe you're real yet. Please!" he said urgently, expecting, perhaps, a sarcastic lift of an eyebrow, but seeing instead only warmth in the dark eyes.

"You must not be moved, Jim," the Vulcan murmured, but understanding the Human's need for the comfort of physical contact he gently smoothed the damp hair and took Jim's cold fingers into his slim warm ones.

They were interrupted in their moment of closeness by Petra, who had watched throughout, amazed at Jim's awakening, and who deemed she had waited patiently long enough. Jim smiled weakly at her. "Petra helped me a lot, Spock."

"I know," he said quietly. "I will leave you with her while I go and see if our - friends - have returned yet."

Kirk frowned; in his distress and weakness he had not questioned the fact that the Enterprise must still be in orbit around Temira, but now he realised that of course that could not be so, or Bones would be here, and they would have already beamed up. "Spock...where...?"

"They are quite safe, Jim," broke in Spock quickly, knowing Kirk's concern for his ship. "They had to leave to help another sick friend, some three days' travel from here. I stayed to search for you; it took me some time to find you and it is possible that they may have returned by now."

Fuller explanations would have to wait. Spock stood up, feeling unexpectedly dizzy - the strain of mastering Jim's pain and at the same time sharing his energy with him was a considerable drain on his strength. But he could - must - manage until the Enterprise arrived. Satisfied that Petra would ensure that Jim did not move, he left the hut to find a quiet spot among the trees where he could use his communicator.

Petra had tears trickling down her cheeks as she gazed at Jim, his eyes now open and clear as she had not yet seen them. "He has healed you, my son?"

Kirk felt weak, but the pain was almost gone, and his mind was clear. "Not yet. That's the job of another friend."

"These friends - must they take you from me?" Her eyes were full of pain, pleading with him to understand her desperate loneliness, and how bitter the return to that isolation would be now that she had once again tasted the sweetness of companionship, known once more the delight of having someone to care for.

With his rare and warm gift of perception, he did understand; and a surge of compassion caused him to reach out for her hand. What would there be for this plain, kindly woman when he and Spock were gone? "We must leave, Petra. We do not belong here - we come from further away than you could believe. But we shall never forget you; we shall remember you with deep gratitude. I should have died without you - you looked after me, and you found Spock for me..."

He did not notice Petra's eyes quickly drop at his last comment, and at that moment Spock returned. "They have not yet arrived, Jim; I shall try again in half an hour. It is vital that we get you to McCoy as soon as possible."

"Please - Spock," said Petra, stumbling over the unfamiliar word. "May I speak with you?"

"Of course."

She drew him aside. "You forgive me for lying to you? I thought he would soon forget you and be content with me, but he grew worse, and I had to fetch you... Must you take him from me?" Her eyes were anxious. What must this stern, strange-looking man - stern, she called him, but remember how gentle and caring he had been with Jim - what must he think of her deceit? And must she lose Jim?

"It is forgotten," he assured her gently. "You came to me in the end, and

I was in time. But you must try to understand - he is ill, and very dependent now, but he would not have remained so, even had you been able to heal him. He is a leader of men - a good leader; and we need him, many people depend on him. I speak the truth, Petra. He could never have remained with you. If you can find the strength to let him go willingly, you would do him the greatest service of all, for if he knew your distress he would carry with him a burden of guilt he has not deserved."

Spock hesitated, looking down at the pain-filled eyes raised to his. He was no good at offering comfort to Humans, except Jim of course; what words could he find that would reach this unhappy woman, who had given him back so much?

"He is a fine man, and worthy of your love," he said at last. "Go to him now; try to understand a little of what he is and accept what must be."

Spock went out again a few hundred feet from the hut and flipped open his communicator. "Spock to Enterprise. Come in, Enterprise."

To his profound relief, this time he was answered. "Mr. Spock! Thank goodness you're safe. The Captain?"

Spock could imagine the tension on the bridge as they waited for the answer to that vital question. "I have found him, Mr. Scott. He has a fractured skull - advise Dr. McCoy to be standing by in the trans - "

He never completed the message, because at that moment there was an anguished cry in his mind, still linked to Kirk's - /SPOCK!/?

He ran to the hut, no time even to speculate on what had happened, and was faced by a tall bearded man wielding a long sword. "I'm going to kill you, spy!" he shouted. "Now we've finished the other one off, there's only you to carry tales to that corrupt weakling - "

Spock made his leap. Unarmed as he was, he had, as he knew, no chance against the sword, but there was no time to employ a skilful, tactical defence and all he could do was ensure that the sword took him in the fleshy part of the thigh. Zoraster staggered backwards, amazed at his opponent's seemingly foolhardy onrush; and realising that he had wounded him put him off guard long enough for Spock to find the spot between neck and shoulder and send him unconscious to the ground.

All this happened in the space of a few seconds - Spock was conscious of the desperate need to hurry, to get to Jim - 'we finished the other one off'.

He burst through the door, limping badly with the agony of the deep sword-cut, to surprise a small swarthy man about to plunge a bloody dagger into Jim's chest. He too was despatched with a neck pinch, and Spock bent over Kirk. His eyes were shut - Spock had been unable to maintain control of the link while he had been fighting, and he knew that not only would Kirk have had to suffer the return of his own pain in full force, but that also he would have felt the shock and pain of Spock's injury.

Kirk's eyes slowly opened, full of agony and despair, and for the first time Spock noticed Petra huddled on the floor, blood welling from a stab wound in her chest. Ignoring the pain in his leg he moved to her and raised her gently up. There was a half smile on her lips. Kirk said softly, "Petra saved my life, Spock. She threw herself in front of me when he attacked."

Though he could see it would be too late, Spock said, "I'll get McCoy - he's back." He was moved beyond words by her sacrifice, and tried to express his thanks to her in the gentle way he held her.

Her smile widened, and she met his eyes. With an effort that was painful to watch, she managed to gasp out, "No...no need. Too...late. I saved him... that is all I ever...wanted...to do. This is...the best...way for me."

Spock saw that Kirk had fainted again and was glad that he would not have to witness the moment of death. Spock gently wiped away a trickle of blood from

her lips and laid her down, covering her with his own tunic. Then he moved back to Kirk's side and raised the communicator. "Two to beam up, Mr. Scott.

Spock lay in sickbay while M'Benga tended his leg. As he finished and left Spock to rest, McCoy bounced in, beaming. "It's all right, Spock - I've operated. No brain damage, luckily. Good job you brought him out of that coma..." His voice trailed off as he noticed the Vulcan's closed eyes and tense attitude. "Hey - are those famed pointed ears on the blink or something? I said, Jim's going to be all right."

"This time, Doctor." The Vulcan's voice was bleak as he opened his eyes and stared directly at McCoy, who met his gaze with understanding.

"Don't go crossing any bridges before you come to them, Spock. Once...once I said you didn't know the desperate chances, the glorious victories of love. I think perhaps you do now... Isn't it worth it?"

Spock's eyes flashed remembrance, and - what else? Acknowledgement? Then he resolutely shut them. He certainly wasn't confirming that, at least, not verbally. McCoy smiled to himself. Still the same old Spock! "Right now, Spock, no more gloomy thoughts. You're going to rest. You're under my orders here!"

"Doctor, I detect a most unattractive note of gloating in your voice," murmured Spock, and fell instantly into sleep.

"All right, Spock! You can go in to him now - he's coming round." McCoy hung back behind the door, not wanting to spoil their first moment alone together.

Spock's thin figure leaned over the stockier one on the bed. "Jim," he said softly. The eyelids fluttered and lifted, the foggy hazel eyes cleared, then focussed on Spock. "My Vulcan friend..." And then, anxiously, "Petra?"

"She died, Jim," said Spock, very quietly.

Kirk was very still for a moment. Then he sighed, softly. "I shall miss her, Spock."

"I, too. She had courage. But it was for the best, Jim; she died to save someone she loved, whom she had to lose, and without whom life would have become empty again. There could have been no other choice for her."

McCoy could wait no longer and burst in. The three friends talked soberly for a while, Kirk and Spock filling in the gaps of each other's experiences, and McCoy learning the whole story for the first time. "Thank goodness she gave in and fetched you, Spock."

"Yes. I tried to contact you telepathically, Jim, but I could not; probably because you were too deeply unconscious most of the time."

"I haven't thanked you yet, have I, Spock? Not just for saving me, but for not saying 'I told you not to go'," murmured Kirk.

Spock didn't reply, but the warmth that lit his dark eyes was enough to say clearly to Kirk - I got you back. Recriminations would be useless. We are together again - that's all that matters.

"Message understood, Mr. Spock," said Kirk softly; and then to break the emotional tension he allowed a mischievous smile to creep over his lips. "Do you know, Spock, I'm awfully glad to see you didn't get too attached to that hairstyle you were sporting down on Temira. Somehow - " he grinned, recalling Spock's words to him of long ago " - somehow, long hair just wasn't aesthetically pleasing on a Vulcan..."

THE UNNECESSARY PRICE by Ceri Murphy

Christine Chapel eyed the Vulcan unobtrusively, not that he could possibly note her appraisal. The mask-like countenance Spock usually offered to the world at large was gone, she saw. But even Spock's stoniest expression would have been eminently preferable to the visage he now presented.

It was...unanimated, she decided, untenanted of any suggestion of life.

Kirk's joy when Spock had confirmed that he was free of the Denevan parasite had given way to horrified misery at the price his friend and First Officer had paid.

And, it transpired, an unnecessary price.

Her gaze strayed once more to the quiet Vulcan sitting in stillness within McCoy's office. He appeared to be meditating. She couldn't be sure.

Oh, dear God! Why? she implored silently.

"How is he?"

Startled, she turned to find McCoy behind her, looking suddenly old. The doctor gazed to where the quiet figure sat in silent dignity, and swallowed - hard.

At that reaction, she felt an answering lump rising in her throat. Nevertheless, her voice was calm, despite an initial stammer. "He's fine, Doctor - apart from his eyes."

"His eyes!" murmured McCoy, looking unseeingly through her, vastly unhappy and somehow shrunken.

Chapel wondered when he had slept last. His face was white and drawn, and etched lines of weariness were sharply delineated against its pallor.

"Doctor, when did you last get any sleep?" she demanded in a mixture of sudden concern and outrage that he should ill-treat himself so.

"Cut it out, Christine." Even the words were tired. To have made any impact, they should have been snapped out. They weren't and they didn't. McCoy seated himself upon a diagnostic couch. "I'll go to bed soon enough," he added, again in quiet murmur.

She nodded and began to swing on her heel, intent on sleep or something of the sort after today's nightmare upon nightmare, when something in McCoy's expression - or stance - warned her that he needed to talk.

Chapel propped herself inelegantly against another couch, taking the weight off feet too numb to ache any more. An opening gambit, she saw, was in order and necessary.

"You're not to blame, Leonard," she said, quietly. She rarely used his first name - she had too much respect for him to abuse the privilege.

He shook his head savagely. "If I was any kind of a doctor, I'd've checked my results and not let Spock into that chamber," he said, refusing the offered comfort.

The denial she had expected, but hardly the vehemence behind it. She looked at him, appalled.

"Spock's not blaming you. In fact, he was positively eager to - "

"I should have checked. My God, Christine, do you realise what I've done? I've ruined a man. One of the best officers in Starfleet." His voice was taking on a hint of hysteria, but there was no reply she could give him. Chapel began to wonder if she had done the right thing in drawing him into conversation.

"There's no place for him in Starfleet now," continued McCoy, pouring out his feelings. "Starfleet is..." He caught himself and changed tense. "Was his life. Oh God!" He slumped, agonised.

Again Chapel searched for something to say in comfort, and again she had to content herself with the dubious benefit of her presence.

A familiar voice spoke up. "Doctor, you make meditation an extremely difficult state to attain. To say that I am finding your exhibition of masochistic guilt distracting is an understatement. But furthermore, your attitude of mind is thoroughly illogical."

Spock stood in the doorway of McCoy's office, one hand in unobtrusive contact with the door frame. He looked composed and orientated, no mean feat, and the few confident steps he took toward doctor and nurse hardly seemed at all performed by a man blind. The impression was heightened by the dimmed lighting in sickbay, masking Spock's unseeing stare.

"'Illogical'," repeated McCoy, with a wry mirthless twist to his mouth.

"Doctor, for that matter I possibly should have exercised more prudence in undergoing that test. My own attitude does not bear close examination. The one excuse I can make is that the continued..." He paused, seeking an appropriate word, "Distraction of having to block out the pain was becoming increasingly tiring. Plus the fact that time was running short..."

"The blame - " McCoy began in protest.

"Blame, Doctor? There is no blame to take or attach," came the quiet reply.

"But Spock, your eyes, your career..."

"Admittedly I shall be sick-listed out of Starfleet. Regrettable, but to dwell on that unquestionable necessity would serve no purpose. And while Vulcans share with most humanoid species the fact that they are visual creatures, loss of that faculty can be compensated for. Also, my circumstances are immeasurably superior to those of twenty-four hours ago."

Chapel stared hard at the Vulcan, whose words had contained the comfort she had been unable to give, in new understanding. His words had been glib, possibly too glib, but they had a telling effect on McCoy, who looked beyond argument anyway. Almost imperceptibly, she saw the doctor's shoulders unslump.

Spock, taking the notable lack of response from the doctor as a breakthrough, pressed his apparent advantage. McCoy's inescapable fatigue was the perfect foil to further divert his attention.

"You seem somewhat overly tired, Doctor," he continued evenly. "Might I suggest you employ your beads and rattles to further advantage and administer yourself a sedative before retiring. It is well past the time you were scheduled to go off duty."

In answer he received a challenging glare, which quickly faded. Pushing himself off the couch, McCoy stood up, and said with hardly anything like the usual acid tone he employed while engaging the First Officer in verbal skirmishing, but with sufficient sarcasm nevertheless, "Thank you, Doctor!" Then he added, "No, I don't need them, but I'd better see you get to bed yourself, first, Spock."

"I can tuck him up nicely, Doctor," cut in Chapel quickly, a trifle smugly. McCoy had been handled superbly.

"Thank you," she said when the doctor had left.

"Nurse Chapel?" It was an innocent enquiry.

"Never mind, Mr. Spock." And she reached him in time, before he bounced off the edge of the nearest diagnostic couch. She bit her lip. He had made it look so good, too.

For a moment she thought Spock's shoulders slumped too, in dejected misery, but the impression was so fractional that it could have been her own expectations playing her false. Anyway, by the time she had led Spock to his bed for the night, he was once again his usual Vulcan self - if he had been anything else - and smothering her won feelings in a flurry of equal parts professionalism and

plain fussiness, she diplomatically guided him into bed. Then she alerted the nurse on duty, and went in search of some 'shut-eye' herself.

She found the same air of despondancy prevailing in sickbay on her return to duty.

Looking for McCoy, she entered the doctor's office to find him in the process of pouring a brandy for Kirk, who was looking white-faced and grim. McCoy saw her, and gave her a silent 'get lost' signal. She backtracked, and collared M'Benga in the outer ward.

"You didn't know?" he asked, utilizing more rhetoric than inquiry. "The Captain was telling his nephew that he's an orphan. They were both pretty upset," he added, indicating with a nod of his head where Peter Kirk lay in bed over on the far side of the ward, recovering from the residual weakness the parasites had left in their wake.

Even with the present distance separating them, she could see the young Kirk's shoulders shaking in silent sobs.

M'Benga, seeing her not wholly voluntary motion towards the crying child, restrained her. "No," he said. "As one man to another, I know he has to work that out of his system on his own." He smiled, sadly, and added irreverently, "Go and cheer Mr. Spock up."

Spock was sitting up in bed - unnecessarily - at the opposite end of the ward to the Captain's nephew, in a puddle of dimness. His eyes were closed in thought, and by his side the tray bearing his breakfast was barely disturbed. Out of habit, his eyes flickered open at her approach.

"The Captain's talking to McCoy in his office. Do you want me to tell him to come and see you - that is, if he hasn't already?" she breezed, helpfully. It did not meet with the response she expected.

"No, he has not seen me, nor do I wish him to - yet." He turned his head in the direction of Kirk's nephew, from where now no longer silent sobs were emanating. "That was quite enough trauma for one day."

She felt embarrassed and also strangely elevated. Embarrassed at her own insensitivity, and elevated by that self-same sensitivity and inner caring that was Spock's, but which he so rigorously guarded from sight.

"Is there anything you want, Mr. Spock?" she asked, dropping the falsely cheerful tone.

"Delay him from seeing me," he replied. "At least for the present," he amended.

"I'll do that, sir," she responded, and gathered up the discarded food tray. In any event, conspiracy proved unnecessary. Kirk had departed McCoy's office, and McCoy himself was absent.

She found him a moment later entering sickbay, two orderlies at his heels, bringing in a stretcher bearing an unconscious ensign in engineering red. Business was picking up.

"What happened?" she asked, later, helping the doctor with a bone laser. The ensign was not severely hurt, with bruised ribs and a broken leg to complement concussion.

"Power gave out on a defective anti-grav harness," answered McCoy, playing the laser over the ensign's leg. He stood back a pace, examining his handiwork. "Lucky as hell he got off so lightly. Apparently he fell from a height of over twenty feet, and since his harness retained a certain amount of residual buoyancy, he bounced - a couple of times." McCoy grunted and put the laser to one side. "Scotty was playing bloody blue murder, but with his section working round the clock to get those tri-magnesite satellites into operation, somebody was bound to get tired and forget the usual cautionary checks."

"He's coming round," she said unnecessarily.

McCoy nodded and addressed the ensign. "Well, Anders, you've got more lives than I don't know what. This must be the third time you've had need of my humble services this month."

Dazed eyes looked up at them. "Where am I?" asked Anders, with little originality but obvious puzzlement.

"Sickbay," replied McCoy. "You took a fall, remember?"

"Sickbay," repeated Anders, who didn't seem to remember, but apparently satisfied, he shut his eyes.

They opened again a few minutes later, still looking blank. "Where am I?" he inquired again.

"Sickbay, you took a fall. Remember?" McCoy reiterated.

A few minutes later still. "Where am I?"

"Sickbay."

.....and later still again. "Where am I?"

McCoy grinned. "His needle's stuck!" he commented, and shrugged when the allusion was obvious lost upon Chapel.

"Where am I?" came the dazed query once more.

"The Gates of Heaven, and I'm St. Peter. Perhaps that explanation will quiet him," he mused.

During the morning, the depressed atmosphere in sickbay seemed to lighten, courtesy of Anders' antics, or the fact that she was kept too busy to notice any long faces. But later, when she took Spock his lunch, she felt her spirits dampened once more by the dead expression the Vulcan wore.

"Unfortunately, this isn't plomik soup, Mr. Spock. But you're to eat," she said, her bustling manner more for her own benefit than Spock's. His bedside reading viewer, she noted, was being rigged for sound, to enable him to listen to the library tapes he could no longer read.

"Try it now, sir," advised a young technician, busily engaged in making an adjustment within the mechanical entrails of the viewer.

Spock did. A tinny nasal voice declared, "...thus allowing for the calculation of A within the paramet..." The voice cut out, the screen regained its primary function in a sudden flare of brightness and Christine Chapel nearly dropped the food tray she was carrying.

On the opposite side of Spock's bed, the technician cursed the recalcitrant viewer with feeling before departing with an indistinct mutter.

Chapel, however, hardly paid him any attention. She was too stricken by the effect of the sudden source of light upon Spock's eyes.

His pupils had dilated in response!

With a dawning feeling, nebulously identifiable as hope, she dumped the tray on an empty adjacent bed and went for McCoy.

The doctor was talking to Kirk on the intercom. He looked depressed again, and she was in time to hear Kirk say, "Tell Spock it worked."

"Yes, Captain. He'll be happy to hear that." And there was a pause as both men realised how inappropriate that remark was.

"Bones, it wasn't your fault. Bones! Bones!" said Kirk, both giving sympathy and asking for it in return. McCoy eyed the intercom in speechless misery before snapping it off with nerveless fingers. He was incapable of saying anything.

He looked up at his head nurse with dull eyes. "You heard that? Deneva's

free of the parasites." McCoy suddenly registered her excitement and frowned. "What's up?"

Bubbling over, she told him. "...and his pupils dilated, there wasn't any response before to light."

"It may be nothing," said McCoy, his expression belying embryonic hope. He looked at her, suddenly stern. "Say nothing to him," he ordered. "The last thing I want to do is to raise what could be false hope. C'mon," he added, striding purposefully to the First Officer.

They found that Spock, however, was staring at his right arm as though he'd never seen it before.

"Oh, God!" she breathed, as she realised the implication of that observation.

"Blue," said the Vulcan in something nearing a reverent whisper, fingering McCoy's sleeve, as the doctor bent over his erstwhile patient with an ear-to-ear grin on his face. The Vulcan leaped out of bed, an action that was as uncharacteristic as it was spontaneous and gave doctor and nurse a particularly intense experimental stare.

"You can see!" bellowed McCoy, and grabbed the Vulcan who was apparently suffering from some sort of shock since he submitted to McCoy's sudden desire to back-slap him without a word of protest.

As for Chapel, she didn't know whether to laugh or cry at the sight of the Chief Medical Officer leading a dazed First Officer in an over-exuberant parody of a waltz.

Spock finally seemed to come to himself. "Really, Doctor!"

McCoy coughed and went a lovely shade of pink. "Um, yes, well, Spock. You've regained your full sight?" he asked, suddenly turning serious.

In answer, Spock swung the nearest bedside viewer to face him. He keyed in a tape at random selection from the library, and began to read.

McCoy switched it off half-way down the page. "I never was that particular for Milton," he explained. "Right, Spock. My office. I want to give you a full test."

"Doctor, I don't think that will be necessary..."

"Shut up, Spock! I'm the doctor."

"Oh?" inquired Spock with ominous innocence. "Your performance but a moment ago prompted me to wonder if you had not forsaken your beads and rattles for the vocation of dance instructor."

McCoy regained his rather interesting colour. "My office," he said again in a distinct growl, glaring at his head nurse; who was attempting to smother her giggles and obviously losing the battle.

McCoy's examination was brief but thorough. "Well, you have obviously regained your full sight, I am very happy to say, Mr. Spock, but if anything happens, any irregularities, anything unusual, I want to know about it straight away." And having dispensed the warning, he allowed himself a celebratory grin.

Spock nodded. "Agreed," he said.

"I must say you timed this neatly. You're due back on duty in fifteen minutes. Aren't you lucky?" said McCoy, adopting the sarcastic demeanour he specially kept a reserve of for Spock.

Spock, however, chose to misconstrue his question. "Indeed," he replied, simply and seriously.

McCoy exchanged looks with him and nodded in silent recognition of what was left unsaid.

"Christine, get his pants and shirt," he ordered. "He can't go on the bridge

in those fatigues. Oh - and Christine. Don't say anything to anyone until we're on the bridge." He grinned in sudden relish. "I want to see the Captain's face first."

Spock eyed him, an eyebrow on the rise, but before Chapel turned to comply, she noted a suggestion of an echo of the self-same relish that was suffusing McCoy's features.

"You, Mr. Spock, sir," she muttered under her breath when neither man could hear her, "are a fraud!"

DIVIDED LOYALTY by Gillian Catchpole

In the corner a candle glowed,
Thankful for what little light there was
He searched his prison,
As fingers followed the lines of rock,
Eyes strained for possible escape.
If not with words the hurried actions
Betrayed, to those accustomed to his ways,
His anxiety for his friends.
The other prisoners, strangers,
Stared unseeing, without care,
Once they too had searched as he - long ago.

Allow compassion to influence and control is lost.
Logic is the basis for sound decisions,
A considered action for a probable response,
Which only reason can suggest.
This is the Vulcan strength
That Human method will only diminish.
Steadied by such thoughts
He settled down to rest and think
And silently reproved himself
For draining energy more usefully employed in thought
Than wasted on concern.
Such troubled feelings he would undoubtedly deny -
Through much practise has he learned to mask
But not to reconcile.

Safe again in a sheltered harbour,
A time of brief respite from stress,
When no longer is he forced to choose
The loyalty, that half of him, in anguish, will reject.
For there is a comfort in routine,
The following of paths already trod,
Pleasant in their familiarity,
Away from turmoil and uncertainty,
Relaxing in the pleasing company of friends.

Security Guard: Chief Baillie has the worst memory in the world.
Recruit: You mean he forgets everything?
Guard: No, he remembers everything!

* * * *

Diplomat: Do these Starships often crash, Captain?
Kirk: Only once.

SAJAN by Valerie Piacentini

Located in a remote corner of the galaxy, the planet swung peacefully in orbit around its sun. Originally a colony founded by a long-forgotten religious sect from Earth, it had evolved over the years into a quiet, semi-rural society; there were few large cities, and only a little heavy industry - the inhabitants supported themselves mainly by agriculture, and the export of their one valuable commodity, the fine, soft wool of the native equivalent of sheep.

Although a member of the Federation, Sanctuary was of no strategic importance, and as it possessed no attractions in the way of rare minerals, it remained untroubled by the political conflicts of the Federation - there was nothing here to draw the acquisitive eyes of either Klingons or Romulans. The tiny spaceport was a trading centre only, though very occasionally Starfleet ships would call briefly to allow their crews the relaxation of shore leave in the capital city.

These visits however made little impact on the majority of the citizens, who carried on their peaceful, stolid lives aware of, but not particularly interested in, the wide-reaching galactic civilisations that flowed around them.

Sheriff Blair disliked mysteries; yet now, he thought gloomily, he was faced with one. He had prided himself that in the small town of Arden, crime was scarcely a problem - the occasional drunk, of course, sometimes an outbreak of petty theft, once even a case of arson - but this latest series of crimes was outrageous, horrifying. Several young women had been attacked in the town and the surrounding countryside; luckily, none fatally so far, but all had been injured in a manner which testified to the callous savagery of their assailant.

Blair investigated, sick at heart - surely none of the men he had known all his life could be responsible? Unfortunately, none of the women could describe the man who attacked them; there were no clues to his identity, apart from the unusual physical strength he displayed.

Unconsciously hoping for a solution which would divert the guilt from his neighbours, Blair found himself considering the most obvious suspect, the new tenant of the old Forbes place on the edge of town.

The arrangements had been made through a lawyer in the capital, and the newcomer had moved in late one night, so that no-one had seen his arrival, and no-one in town seemed to know anything about him. He was a young man, this Kirk, to have chosen a life of isolation; for the house stood in extensive grounds, thickly wooded and heavily overgrown. He was seldom seen except when he drove into town for supplies, and the speculation increased when it was found that he politely, but firmly, discouraged all attempts to engage him in personal conversation.

Investigation revealed that he made no telephone calls, and received none; no visitors were ever seen at the house, nor was any mail delivered - he seemed to be, by his own choice, cut off from any social contact. And it was, by Blair's reckoning, shortly after his arrival in town that the attacks had begun. Certainly, he must be investigated - but discreetly; Blair knew only too well how easily rumour would brand a man as guilty without proof.

Casually, the Sheriff wandered past the grocery store one morning, timing himself so that he collided heavily with the emerging Kirk; the man staggered, his purchases flying.

"Sorry about that," Blair apologised. "My fault - let me help you." Kirk glanced at him, but Blair was scrambling after some tins that had rolled along the pavement.

"That's the lot, I think," he said at last; then, casually, "Settled in all right, Mr. Kirk?"

"Yes, thank you; there are some repairs needed, of course - that keeps me busy." The pleasant voice was light, the lips smiled, but Blair saw that the

hazel eyes were wary, defensive. He gestured Kirk towards the car.

"I'll bring these."

What was the man hiding? Despite his wish to pin the attacks on an outsider, Blair's every instinct told him this man could be trusted. He moved with the air of a man accustomed to authority, his face resolute and controlled. The simple clothes he wore were expensive, as was his car - he was young, good-looking, attractive to women - as his own daughter had informed him emphatically - why should such a man choose to bury himself in an isolated house in a small town?

Reaching the car Blair paused as Kirk reached for his keys; across the street he noticed the youngest Morris boy playing with some friends. Suddenly a ball bounced into the street, and the child followed - straight into the path of a heavy truck which had just turned the corner.

Shock held Blair frozen for a few vital seconds, but Kirk was already moving; dropping his purchases he raced across the road, snatched the child up and threw him to a startled passer-by; but as he turned to jump clear he stumbled and the truck was upon him, sending him spinning in a crumpled heap to the side of the road.

Somehow the Sheriff found himself calming the confused crowd that quickly gathered; he was conscious only of the terrified child screaming somewhere in the background, and of a pale face, blood-streaked, at his feet. Snapping an order for an ambulance he knelt and gingerly touched the chest, feeling with relief that Kirk's heart was still beating. When the ambulance came he rode with it, reluctant to leave the stranger.

At the hospital there was an anxious wait until the doctor appeared at last.

"How is he?" Blair enquired.

"He was lucky - the truck must have caught him only a glancing blow. There's bad bruising, and a slight concussion, but we won't have to transfer him to the city hospital. He's still unconscious, though, and likely to remain so for some hours yet. I'm glad he's going to make it - I heard what he did."

"Yes, I couldn't have reached the kid in time. I'll look in tomorrow, doctor, just to see how he is."

The doctor glanced at some papers he was carrying. "Do you know anything about him? I need details of his next-of-kin and so on."

"Can't help you, I'm afraid - he's a stranger in town. I'll talk to him when he comes round, and see what I can find out."

That night the mysterious attacker struck again. His hysterical victim had a fortunate escape - some neighbours returning from an evening out heard screams, and scared him off; although shocked, the girl was unhurt, but like the others she could only repeat that her assailant was unusually strong, and moved very quietly - he had approached her from behind, and she had heard nothing. Blair was aware of a curious relief mixed with his frustration - Kirk was in hospital, still unconscious, so he could not be responsible, after all. He was glad - he had liked the man, and his action in saving the child had not been that of a man who could attack young women so brutally..

The following day Sheriff Blair returned to the hospital to visit Kirk; the doctor met him with a worried frown.

"He's not responding; seems to have something on his mind that's upsetting him. I can't understand what he's talking about - see if you can make sense of it."

Blair entered the isolation ward quietly. Kirk was lying in bed, his eyes closed; he was under restraint, a necessary precaution as he was tossing from

side to side, muttering quietly. Blair leaned closer, and placed a gentle hand on the burning forehead.

"Can I help?" he asked.

Kirk's eyes opened, unfocussed, bright with fever. The unintelligible muttering steadied into words.

"Spock...must reach...alone...so afraid...Spock...must help...Spock..." For an instant the eyes cleared. "Help Spock," he said distinctly; then his head fell back and he slipped once more into unconsciousness.

Blair straightened, a puzzled frown creasing his brow. Who was Spock? And how was he supposed to help him? It seemed that Kirk had been cleared of one mystery only to be involved in another. Or...was he? It might, after all, be the same one...

Grimly, Blair checked his holstered gun. Somehow he had the suspicion that a visit of inspection to the old Forbes place might be rewarding.

The house looked peaceful, deserted, as Blair surveyed it in the late afternoon sun. He was alone; Kirk was, after all, entitled to his privacy if he had nothing criminal to conceal - but he had told his deputy that he would be calling at the house to try and trace Kirk's next-of-kin.

To his surprise Blair saw that all the windows on the ground floor were heavily shuttered; either Kirk was afraid of intruders during what he had intended to be only a short absence, or he was taking precautions against being spied on.

The door was locked. Blair had suspected that, and pulled from his pocket the key-ring he had found among Kirk's possessions. The door swung open easily, and he stepped into the hall. The lights came on at a touch; well, that was a relief - he hadn't fancied groping about in the gloom.

Taking a firm grip on his gun Blair began a tour of the ground floor, finding that the rooms showed little sign of occupation. The exception was the kitchen, where a table had been laid for a meal; with a sinking heart he noted two place settings. So his fears had been confirmed; someone else was living here, someone whose presence Kirk felt it necessary to keep a secret. There could only be one reason for such concealment, and Blair knew a bitter disappointment - he had wanted to trust the man.

Leaving the kitchen Blair cautiously began to climb the stairs; from the landing he looked to left and right, wondering where to start his search. A patch of light wood on a door at the end of the landing decided him, and he hurried forward to find that the heavy door had been burst open from the inside. His mind raced, considering - someone had been locked in that room, someone with unusual strength... He must have broken out during the night, escaped...

Forgetting in his anger the shuttered windows and the locked doors, Blair turned away, intending to find the telephone and contact his deputy. He had only just begun the movement when steel-strong fingers clamped down on his shoulder, and he felt himself crumpling helplessly to the floor.

Blair stirred, groaned, and pulled himself unsteadily to his feet; he was not sure how long he had been unconscious, but certainly a considerable time had elapsed, for it was now dark outside. As he gingerly rubbed his aching neck and shoulder, he became aware of a cold draught blowing up the stairs - the front door, which he had carefully closed behind him, stood wide open. Blair caught his breath in horrified realisation - the maniac had made good his escape, might even now be on the search for another victim; and this time, he might be successful.

Running downstairs Blair found the telephone, and called his office; Dave

Phillips, his deputy, answered.

"Dave, I'm at the Forbes place. Kirk's been hiding that madman we're after; he attacked me, and escaped. Round up search parties - make sure they're armed - and get them to start looking before we have a death on our hands. Warn them to be careful - this one's dangerous."

"What about Kirk?"

"I don't suppose he'll be going anywhere, but put a guard on him in case our man finds out where he is and tries to contact him. Get started right away - you've got a lot of ground to cover. I'll join you as soon as I've finished looking around here."

Replacing the receiver, Blair returned to the landing, intending to investigate the once-locked room.

He found that it was furnished as a bedroom, containing two beds, one showing signs of recent occupation, the other neatly made up. The wardrobe held clothing, some in Kirk's size, the rest intended for someone taller and slimmer. After a cursory glance Blair was about to close the door again when the gleam of gold caught his eye; he reached to the back of the wardrobe and lifted down a hanger, his eyes widening as he realised what he held.

Blair had never actually seen one before, but newsreels ensured that everyone on Sanctuary could recognise the uniform of a Starfleet Captain. Beside it hung another, a blue shirt this time; he was not able to identify the rank of its owner, but it bore the same gold arrowhead badge.

Blake hung the uniforms on the outside of the wardrobe, and stared at them thoughtfully; he was, he realised, involved in something he couldn't handle - but where could he turn to for advice?

Investigating further, he found on a shelf a box containing equipment, but the only items he could identify were two communicators. Gingerly, he lifted one, and examined it carefully; from films he had seen he thought he remembered roughly how it worked, and after several fumbling attempts he managed to raise the grid.

"Hello?" he said nervously. "Is anyone there?"

The answer was immediate and explosive. "Who the hell are you?" a voice demanded. "Whit's goin' on doon there? Where's the Captain?"

"I'm Sheriff Blair of Arden," he replied. "Are you with Starfleet?"

"Lt-Commander Montgomery Scott, in temporary command of the U.S.S. Enterprise," the voice identified itself precisely, then continued agitatedly, "Sheriff, did ye say? Has something happened to Captain Kirk?"

"It's a bit difficult to explain. There's been...an accident, the...the Captain's in hospital, and..."

"Stay right where ye are," the voice ordered. "I'll send somebody down."

Blair waited, relieved that the responsibility was no longer his alone. Very soon he heard a low humming sound, and saw four glittering columns of light which coalesced into the figures of four men dressed in Starfleet uniform. One stepped forward.

"I'm Dr. McCoy," he greeted the Sheriff. "This - " he indicated one of the red-shirted men who accompanied him " - is Security Chief Baillie. Now, what's happened?"

Blair explained how he had come to investigate the house, hastily reassuring the doctor that Kirk was not seriously hurt; then he spoke of the assaults that had taken place, his initial suspicion of Kirk, and his final certainty when he himself had been struck down by the man the Captain had so carefully concealed. An exclamation of impatience from the doctor interrupted him.

"If you think that Spock's responsible for these attacks, you're a fool!" McCoy said disgustedly. "Of course, you don't know him... Scotty, did you get all that?"

"Aye, Ah did," came the voice from the still open communicator in Blair's hand. "I've got Chekov scanning for Vulcan readings now, but there's a lot of movement in the area, and it's confusing the sensors."

"The search parties," Blair explained. "I ordered them out when I was sure ...I couldn't take a chance on what he'd do..." His voice trailed off.

"Armed, I suppose?" McCoy snorted. "Chief?"

"Leave it to me, Doctor." The Security Chief turned to his two assistants. "Blade, Sorenson, get out there and keep an eye on things. Mr. Scott will give you Mr. Spock's co-ordinates when he's found; get between him and the search parties, but don't go near him - remember, he'll be scared and confused. He's hiding somewhere, and it's up to you to make sure that none of these trigger-happy vigilantes get near him. And gentlemen - " Baillie's beckoning finger summoned the two men closer, " - if anyone other than the Captain or Dr. McCoy lays a finger on Mr. Spock, I'll have a few words to say to you both. I trust I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly, Chief," the two assured him fervently.

"Off with you, then; call more men from the ship if you need them. They're good boys," he said earnestly to Blair as the Security men left, "but it doesn't do any harm to keep them on their toes."

"No, I suppose not," the Sheriff agreed dazedly.

"Now for the Captain," McCoy broke in decisively. "Scotty, can you beam us over to the hospital?"

"If you'll excuse me, Doctor, I'll go and keep an eye on the search," Baillie said. "I'll keep in touch with Mr. Scott - one of us will let you know when we have Mr. Spock safe."

"Thanks, Baillie. When you're ready, Scotty."

He did not, Sheriff Blair decided, like the transporter system; but for once his companion did not voice his own disapproval as they sparkled into existence before the goggling eyes of a youthful deputy; with merely a grunt McCoy hustled the dazed Sheriff into the room where Kirk lay.

The duty doctor hovered apprehensively as the Starfleet surgeon made a thorough examination, then relaxed visibly when the blue eyes flashed a glance of approval.

"You've done a good job," McCoy commented, "but he should have come round by now. This'll do it." He pressed a hypo to Kirk's shoulder, and within seconds the Captain stirred and awoke. He stared blankly at first, then his eyes widened in recognition.

"Bones!" he exclaimed, struggling to sit up. "Where's Spock?"

"Take it easy, Jim," the doctor ordered, pressing him down. With a curt command McCoy dismissed the deputy and the duty doctor, and Kirk subsided impatiently until the door closed behind them.

"Well?" he snapped impatiently.

"Jim, there's been some trouble," McCoy said slowly. "Did you hear about a series of attacks on women in this area recently?"

"Yes, vaguely; but it's got nothing to do with..."

"I'm afraid it has. It seems that you mentioned Spock when you were raving, and the Sheriff here went out to the house to investigate."

"Oh no!"

"Oh yes. Your pet Vulcan panicked, nerve pinched him, and ran - he's out in the woods somewhere, with armed search parties after him."

"I must find him!" Kirk sat up abruptly.

"Not yet. Scotty's scanning for him, and Baillie and some of his boys are keeping an eye on the search parties. As soon as he's found I'll take you to him, I promise. There's no point in rushing around just now - relax, and get some rest until we have news. You know the Chief won't let anyone near Spock."

"You're right, of course," Kirk said wretchedly, "but he'll be so afraid."

Blair could contain his curiosity no longer. "What is all this about?" he burst out. "Who's Spock? Why all the secrecy? And why did he attack me?"

McCoy glanced at Kirk, and received a weary nod of assent. "Sit down, Sheriff," the doctor said. "It's a long story."

* * * * *

At the transporter station on Starbase 12 Jim Kirk turned anxiously to McCoy.

"Where the hell is he?" he demanded for the dozenth time. "The Vulcan liner should have arrived an hour ago, and I made special arrangements for him to beam straight down."

Kirk and McCoy had spent their leave at the base, while Spock had taken the opportunity to pay a visit home. Their leave was now over, and the three had arranged to meet and return to the Enterprise together; but the arrival of the liner from Vulcan had not been announced.

"I'm going to ask..." Kirk was interrupted as an official of the spaceline approached him discreetly.

"There is a message for you in the President's office, Captain," he murmured.

Kirk opened his mouth to ask a question, thought better of it, and beckoning McCoy, followed the messenger.

The President of the spaceline was not alone; a very worried-looking Admiral Bradshaw was with him.

"Sit down, Kirk, Doctor," the Admiral began without greeting. "We have an emergency on our hands - it's a lucky thing that the Enterprise is here just now. We have not released the news as yet, but the liner Saturn Queen, en route from Vulcan, has been attacked and seriously damaged; we have her position, but communications are poor - all we know is that most of the crew and passengers are dead or injured."

"My God!" Kirk burst out. "My First Officer was returning from leave on that ship!"

"I see; well rescue ships are already on their way, but I want you to investigate - we think we know who is responsible."

"Klingons?" guessed McCoy. "Surely not, in this area."

"No, not Klingons - pirates. We've had trouble with them recently, but nothing on this scale. We knew very little about them, but a short time ago one of their crew was injured on a raid; they must have thought he was dead, because they left him behind. The little information we have, he gave us.

The pirate leader is named Raynar. He was the ruler of a planet which recently appealed to the Federation for assistance in overthrowing his tyranny; normally we wouldn't have interfered, but we had evidence he was sympathetic to the Romulans, so... Anyway, Rayner bitterly resented the Federation, and Starfleet; we think this is his revenge on us. He escaped when Starfleet moved in, taking a fortune with him, so he's not doing this for money. Our informant told

us he equipped a ship, set up a base somewhere, and recruited a crew of criminals and renegades. His First Officer's a Klingon, and we understand he has at least one Vulcan among his crew; the others are mainly Humans, but other races are represented as well. He's dangerous, Kirk; his ship - the Starwolf - is fast and well equipped. We'll get him in time, but he can do a lot of damage before he's caught - he's not too particular about sparing innocent lives."

"What about his base?" Kirk asked.

"Nothing, I'm afraid. Our informant couldn't help us there; it seems that only Rayner himself, his First Officer and his helmsman, know its whereabouts. We want him, Kirk; you have a free hand to act as you think necessary."

"I'll get him, sir," Kirk said grinly. "Come on, Bones."

The rescue ships were already bustling about the stricken liner when the Enterprise reached her. Kirk beamed over, taking a full medical team; Scotty followed with Sulu and a Security squad to give what help they could

McCoy and his staff were quickly involved in aiding the surviving passengers and crew, while Scotty immediately began work on repairs to allow the liner to be taken to safety. Before heading for the bridge Kirk despatched the Security team to search for any survivors trapped in the ship, and followed McCoy into the overcrowded sickbay.

His heart in his mouth, he moved among the improvised beds without finding the man he sought; he was just nerving himself to enter the room where the bodies of the dead were laid out when McCoy emerged and barred his way.

"He's not there, Jim," he said, and watched as Kirk's tense expression relaxed a little. "Don't worry - Security will find him."

But they did not. As some sort of order was gradually produced from the chaos, the reports began to come in, each with the same result - there was no sign of Spock. His cabin was empty, he was not among the dead or injured, and a thorough search of the ship had revealed no sign of him. The Vulcan had vanished.

"Do you think the pirates took him, Bones?" Kirk asked, worriedly.

"It's possible. If they knew he was a Starfleet officer, they might have thought it worthwhile holding him for ransom; or if they knew of his family connections..."

"Then all we can do is wait until they make contact," Kirk said quietly. "I'll be on the bridge if you need me, Bones."

Hoping that the liner's dead Captain had been able to leave some clue to the attackers, Kirk ordered the ship's log played. After some minutes of routine reports came the first hint of trouble - the radio contact from the pirates ordering the ship to hold position. Then followed a confused babble of orders as the Saturn Queen attempted to outrun the pirates, but was steadily overhauled. When the attack began in earnest the ship's screens went down almost at once - they had never been designed to take such punishment.

Kirk bit his lips in frustration - he was learning nothing useful - then suddenly he shot bolt upright in the command chair as a serene, familiar voice broke into the din.

"This is Commander Spock of the U.S.S. Enterprise. All ascertainable details of the attacking vessel have been fed into the ship's computers. Traces indicate that the pirate ship approached from the 'Devil's Reef' area of space; it is reasonable to assume that her base will be located in that sector, and that she will return there to evade pursuit. I regret..."

The voice was drowned in a flood of static; Kirk allowed the tape to run on, but it remained obstinately silent - presumably the recording mechanism had been damaged.

"What's the Devil's Reef, Jim?" asked McCoy, who had arrived unnoticed on

the bridge:-

"Oh, it's a solar system of sorts, named after an old seafaring hazard on Earth, I believe. There are no planets, just hundreds and thousands of asteroids, ranging in size from a few inches to several miles across. It's a dangerous area to enter, but a skilled pilot could hide a ship there indefinitely. It's not much to go on, Bones, but it's all we're likely to get. And Spock thought it worth mentioning. Have you finished here?"

"Yes, I'll leave M'Benga to keep an eye on the injured. Scotty has finished the repairs, he says, so the liner can be taken back to base."

"Right. Let's get back to the Enterprise. We're going hunting."

In the sickbay of the pirate vessel Starwolf, Captain Raynar leaned over the bed and delivered a resounding blow to the face of the man who lay unconscious. There was no response.

"Damn Vulcans!" he muttered.

"Try again, Raynar," advised a harsh voice at his side. The Captain turned, acknowledging the arrival of his second-in-command, the Klingon renegade Kuthra.

"Might as well," he grunted. "He's no use to us like this." He lashed out again, with increased force, and in response the Vulcan's eyes flickered open.

"Awake, are you?" Raynar said. "How do you feel, Sajan?"

A frown of bewilderment crossed the face of the man on the bed. "Sajan?" he said questioningly. "I regret, I do not..."

"Looks like the doctor was right, Raynar," Kuthra broke in. "That knock on the head has made him lose his memory. What can you remember, Sajan?"

"Nothing at all," the man addressed as Sajan commented calmly. "Most inconvenient. May I request that someone inform me precisely who I am, and what has happened?"

"Well..." Raynar began, but was interrupted by the Klingon.

"The other matter, Captain... Our presence is urgently required."

"I'll come at once. Sajan, I'll send Dr. Fellowes in to see you - he can fill you in. Don't worry - I'm sure you'll remember everything soon. See you later."

Left alone, the Vulcan lay back frowning in concentration; try as he would, he could recall nothing of his life before he had awakened in this room. The two men, Raynar and Kuthra, might have been total strangers - even the name Sajan awoke no memories for him. He was striving vainly to recover even a flicker of his past when the door opened again and a short, elderly Human bustled in, rubbing his hands.

"Right, Sajan," he said briskly, "this is no more than I expected, you know. You took a nasty crack on the head during our last raid - must have scrambled your memory circuits."

"I am not a computer," the Vulcan answered instinctively, and was puzzled by his instinctive response. "Raid?" he asked.

There was something about this man that he disliked and distrusted, he thought, without being able to give any reason; despite his friendly manner his smile did not reach his eyes, and there was a cold undertone in his voice. However, it seemed that Fellowes was to fill him in on his past, so he listened attentively to the events that were described to him.

They were, Fellowes informed him without the slightest trace of embarrassment, on board the pirate ship Starwolf, on which Sajan had served for a year under the command of the dispossessed Lord Raynar, who had turned to piracy out

of a desire for revenge on the Federation and Starfleet for the loss of his heritage. His mixed Human and alien crew were criminals, outcasts of all races, and fiercely loyal to their commander.

The Starwolf's last attack had been on the liner Saturn Queen; there had been unexpected resistance from her crew, and Sajan had been struck down in the fighting. The Starwolf was now on her way back to her base in the Devil's Reef, where the liner's cargo would be disposed of through Raynar's many contacts.

"And that's all I can tell you," Fellowes concluded. "Your personal life I know nothing about - no-one talks about his past here."

"What do you suggest I do?" asked Sajan.

"Well, in a case like yours, memory often returns spontaneously once the bruising of the brain has healed. Don't try to force it - just take your time, ease your way back into the ship's routine. There's no need for you to stay here - go back to your quarters and take things easy for a few days. I'll order light duties only, and we'll see what happens. I could use drugs, but I'd rather not risk it with a Vulcan - your reactions are too unpredictable."

Sajan followed the doctor's advice, but his confusion only deepened. He found his way to the quarters he had been told were his - they were furnished in the Vulcan fashion which he recognised but he could not feel any familiarity or possessiveness about anything in the rooms. He examined a chess set, finding that he instinctively knew the moves, but he could not remember learning them; there was a harp standing by the desk - his fingers moved automatically, produced the correct notes, but when or where he had learned the tune, he could not remember.

It was the same when he went to the bridge; he followed orders automatically, seemed to know exactly how to operate the equipment, knew his way around the console without having to think about it - but he could not capture the elusive memory his surroundings evoked.

Even the crew remained strangers. They knew him, called him by name, but he could not respond. They had been told what had happened to him, however, and with a kind of rough friendliness attempted to awaken his memory by talking to him of events and situations they had shared - all in vain.

Accepting at last the doctor's advice, to give himself time and not try to hurry things, Sajan returned to his quarters at the end of his duty period. As he left the elevator he met Raynar and Kuthra, who were standing talking to another Vulcan, who nodded a courteous greeting as Sajan approached.

Raynar turned and beckoned. "Fellowes told me what he suggested, and I agree," he said. "We'll have some free time soon - Setron here thinks it advisable that we lie low for a time after the Saturn Queen affair. It's our first really big job, and we'd better let the fuss die down. Once we make base, take all the time you need to work things out."

Sajan inclined his head. "Thank you, Captain. With your permission, I will go to my quarters and rest."

"Do that. I don't want you ill, you're too valuable. Oh, by the way, we should reach Tortuga tomorrow." In response to Sajan's enquiring glance Raynar chuckled. "Our base - I named it after an old pirate stronghold back on Earth."

"I see. Most appropriate. Goodnight, gentlemen."

In the privacy of his quarters Sajan stretched out on the bed, and began to consider what he had learned - and what he had not. His biggest problem - what was he doing here at all? To find himself apparently accepted as a member of a pack of outlaws and renegades had been a considerable shock.

Raynar he instinctively mistrusted, despite his seeming friendliness - he could sense the man's cold ruthlessness. The Klingon - Kuthra - was no better; there was an air of barely-leashed cruelty about the man that Sajan found

repulsive. Yet he knew he must hide his reactions; these men considered him one of themselves, but if they suspected his reservations, action against him would be swift and vicious. He must wait, learn what he could, until he was more sure of his ground.

Then there was the Vulcan, Setron; for the first time Sajan had felt a glimmer of recognition when he met the impassive dark eyes, so like his own... but was it in truth a memory, or merely an instinctive response to one of his own race? He rather thought it was a memory, but there was a subtle...wrongness ...about it that confused him.

With a sigh Sajan postponed his efforts to plan his next move; his head ached abominably, he felt so tired... Perhaps when he was rested, he would see his way more clearly.

As the Starwolf approached the Devil's Reef Sajan grew puzzled. The area was certainly confusing, with its complexity of planetary bodies, but surely the powerful sensors of a starship would be able to detect them?

Raynar took over the helm as they entered the edge of the Reef, and Sajan watched in curiosity as they approached one of the larger planetoids; then, to his utter amazement, a shaft opened in the surface below them, large enough to admit the ship.

"Welcome to Tortuga," Raynar chuckled, noting his astonishment.

"No wonder we've remained undetected for so long," Sajan said. "A hollowed-out asteroid - Starfleet would have to take very precise readings to detect it."

"Even then, they'd have to know where we were, to compensate for my screens. There's no way they could detect us by chance."

"Expensive," the Klingon commented, "but worth it - we can sit in here and watch Starfleet going crazy trying to find us."

Raynar piloted the ship safely into its docking bay; whatever else he might be, the man was a superb pilot.

Because of Sajan's impaired memory Dr. Fellowes took him on a tour of the vast complex. The interior of the asteroid had been hollowed out to provide adequate living accommodation for the crew, and the Vulcan could only marvel at the ingenuity and patience that had gone into setting up this operation - in a rarely expansive mood, Raynar told him that almost his entire fortune had gone into equipping his ship and his base as a preparation for his career of piracy.

As the days passed Sajan familiarised himself with his surroundings; his memory did not return, but he gradually found himself fitting in to the routine of the base, and he was accepted unquestioningly by his fellow renegades. Yet the sense of alienation persisted, growing stronger; he could not imagine what had brought him here, among people he detested, and to a way of life that offended every instinct he possessed. The only person in whom he felt any interest was Setron, and he seemed very withdrawn, associating only with Raynar and Kuthra; he answered when spoken to, but never initiated a conversation, to an extent remarkable even in one of his reserved race.

For a few days the men of the Starwolf relaxed, then came the pursuit they had expected - sensors detected the presence of a Federation Starship in the Reef. Too large to manoeuvre easily, she held position and explored the asteroid belt thoroughly by sensor scan.

Raynar was confident of his safety until he received a report that a shuttlecraft, obviously from the Starship, had crashed near the concealed entrance to the base.

"It could be a coincidence," Raynar told his assembled officers, "but I

don't like it. They didn't have time to send a distress call, so we have some time yet before the ship comes looking for them. Sajan, you and Setron beam over and see what you can find out. The hull isn't breached, so the crew may have survived. If they're conscious, tell them you're Vulcan scientists investigating the Reef; try to find out what they know, and if they seem suspicious - kill them."

The two Vulcans beamed over to the wrecked shuttlecraft, accompanied by Martinez, another of Raynar's lieutenants, a clever, unscrupulous man whom Sajan disliked intensely.

There were three men in the wreck. Setron moved to check the condition of the pilot, while Sajan and Martinez examined the two passengers.

"The pilot is dead - killed in the crash," Setron said quietly.

"Well, these two are alive - a Starfleet Captain, and a doctor," Martinez replied. "What should we do with them? They're out cold."

"Let me see." Setron moved forward and leaned over the unconscious bodies; unseen by Martinez a flicker of...something...crossed the impassive face, but to the watching Sajan, his fellow Vulcan was displaying extreme shock and surprise. He looked at Sajan.

"Do you know them?"

"It is unlikely; my memory is impaired, as you know." Nevertheless, Sajan leaned forward and studied the two faces intently. The doctor was totally unfamiliar, but as he gazed at the face of the Captain, he felt a distinct sense of familiarity - somehow he knew that face, knew exactly how his voice would sound...

"Best kill them, then, just to be on the safe side?" Martinez asked, reaching for his phaser.

"No, wait!" Sajan thought frantically, seeking a logical reason to spare the two men. "To kill them would be unwise. Their companions would know that they were not killed in the crash, and would suspect that we must be in the area. They would search until they found us. It would be wiser to do nothing - their ship will find them, and they will leave when their scan of the base reveals nothing."

"I agree," Setron added in unexpected support. "Martinez, check their radio log - that should tell us if they suspect our presence in the area."

"Right." Martinez moved away and Sajan followed him, looking back in time to see a curious thing - Setron, who was returning the two officers to their former position sprawled on the floor, was leaning over the unconscious Captain; for an instant his hand touched the Human's face lightly, his fingers assuming almost the position for the mind-touch.

Puzzled, Sajan turned away, to catch Martinez' eye as the Human bent over the radio; he could not tell if the man had seen that fleeting gesture, but when he said nothing, he assumed that mere chance had caused the impression. When he looked back, Setron was standing patiently waiting for them.

The radio log revealed nothing of interest, revealing only that the shuttlecraft had been on a routine sweep of this section of the asteroid belt, so removing all trace of their visit, the three men beamed back to the base.

Raynar heard their report in silence, then said grudgingly, "I don't like the idea of leaving them alive, but you were right - if you'd killed them, their ship would have known we must be near, and they'd have made it a personal fight. We'll monitor them, and watch what they do."

Not long afterwards, the Starship's sensors began to scan the base; it was too well-concealed to be detected, but the shuttlecraft was found, it seemed, for a transporter beam was activated as the missing men were recovered. Then the starship passed out of range of their scanners, and Raynar relaxed.

The following day Sajan was again on duty in the base control room. Raynar was present, with Kuthra and Setron in attendance; the Captain had decided to maintain an alert until they could be sure the Federation ship had left the area.

Suddenly Martinez, who was in charge of communications, swung round in his chair.

"Captain - that Starship - she's making contact"

"On screen, Martinez," Raynar ordered.

The screen dissolved into a picture of the Starship's bridge; in the command chair sat the Captain Sajan had seen in the wrecked shuttlecraft. He shivered involuntarily as the hauntingly familiar voice, sounding just as he had imagined, came through the speaker.

"Captain Raynar, this is Captain James T. Kirk of the U.S.S. Enterprise. We have your base pinpointed - I suggest you surrender to avoid useless bloodshed. You have thirty minutes..."

"Cut it!" Raynar spat savagely; as the image faded he leaped to his feet. "How the hell did they find us?" he snarled.

"It must have been the Vulcan - Setron," Martinez burst out. "When we were in the shuttlecraft I saw him with that Captain. They're telepaths, aren't they? He was touching the Captain - he must have reached his mind and betrayed us!"

"So!" Raynar wheeled round to face Setron, who looked back at him expressionlessly. "You have recovered your memory, Commander."

"Indeed. A most ingenious idea, Captain. When you found me on the Saturn Queen you conceived the idea of using me - a Starfleet officer would be a valuable addition to your crew. Kuthra's adaptation of the mindsifter was...most effective; the false memory you created for me was very convincing. However, when I saw my Captain in the shuttlecraft, the surprise restored my memory. I am accustomed to linking with him - a brief contact was enough to enable me to reach his unconscious mind and give him the necessary information. It would be advisable for you to surrender - there is no escape."

"But we still have thirty minutes, Commander," Raynar said viciously, "and I am a vengeful man. You and your Captain have robbed me of my freedom; by the time he finds you, you will wish that I had killed you - and so will he. Bring him, Kuthra!"

The Klingon stepped forward and pulled the Vulcan to his feet, twisted his arm viciously and forced him out the door. Raynar followed, commanding his men to remain on the alert, and to prepare to resist the Federation attack when it came.

Sajan remained with Martinez in the control room, listening with dismay as the man described the hideous trick that had been played on the Vulcan, and how the entire crew of the Starwolf had conspired to confirm his identity as the renegade Setron.

"He'll be sorry now that he's got his memory back," the Human gloated. "Raynar is very...inventive, and Kuthra... Well, he really enjoys hurting people. That Federation Captain won't find much left of his precious First Officer when he gets here."

Dazed, sick with horror at what he had learned - to a Vulcan, tampering with anyone's mind was the worst of crimes - Sajan rose and moved closer to Martinez. Before the man could realise his intention his hand shot out, and the Human collapsed unconscious. Pushing him out of the way Sajan scanned the communications panel; luckily the settings had not been changed, and he quickly made contact with the Enterprise.

The face of the Human Captain - so disturbingly familiar - filled the screen; he was white and strained, his eyes worried.

"Do you surrender?" he asked crisply.

"Captain, I have little time - I am making this call without Raynar's knowledge. If you wish to recover your First Officer alive and sane, I suggest you beam over a full Security team at once. Raynar and Kuthra have him - they know he guided you here."

"How do I know it's not a trap?" Kirk asked suspiciously.

"You have only my word; but if you doubt me, send only one man to check out the situation."

The Captain studied him intently for a moment, then appeared to make up his mind. "Very well; I have your co-ordinates - we'll be with you shortly."

Sooner than Sajan expected the hum of a transporter beam filled the room; Kirk himself materialised, accompanied by the doctor who had been with him in the shuttlecraft, and four Security men. The guards checked the room, and found no trap; one of them contacted the ship, and soon more guards were appearing in relays.

Kirk turned impatiently to Sajan. "Where's Spock?"

"Raynar took him - probably to his quarters. I'll guide you."

Sajan led the way along the corridors. The Enterprise men proved to be swift and efficient - the pirates they encountered along the way were taken by surprise and disarmed before they could raise the alarm.

At last Sajan signalled a halt, hearing voices round the corner. "That's Fellowes, the doctor," he whispered to Kirk. "He may know where Spock is - let me ask him."

At Kirk's nod of assent Sajan advanced casually towards the doctor, who was talking to one of his assistants. They looked up at his approach.

"Looking for Raynar?" Fellowes asked.

"Yes, I have a message for him."

Fellowes grinned evilly. "I wouldn't interrupt him now, unless you have a strong stomach. He and Kuthra have that Starfleet officer - you know, Setron - in sickbay. He's real sore about being tricked - be careful you don't spoil his fun."

"I'm afraid I shall have to," Sajan said quietly, drawing his phaser; raising his voice, he called, "Captain Kirk - sickbay!"

"Why, you...!" Fellowes snarled, seeing the red-shirted Security men who approached at Sajan's call; he seemed about to attack the Vulcan, but the phaser lifted warningly, and he raised his hands in defeat.

Sajan paused long enough to see the two men taken into custody, then followed Kirk who, with the doctor and half a dozen security guards, had burst into sickbay:

So swift and silent had been their approach that the two pirates had been taken by surprise; they had evidently fought back, though, for both were bleeding heavily as they struggled in the grip of the burly Security guards.

"Get them out of here," Sajan advised, then turned his attention to Kirk "Captain, wait!" he shouted in warning, but it was too late - Kirk reached the operating table, and stared down at its pitiful burden.

Joining him, Sajan felt his stomach heave in revulsion; after all, Raynar and Kuthra had had enough time - too much time.

Incredibly, the Vulcan still lived, for the slow pulse of blood from the wounds that covered him showed that his heart was still beating; but worst of all, from the ruins of what had been a sensitive, handsome face, two dark eyes gazed up at them, filled with a soul-chilling agony and awareness that was the more dreadful for the silence in which the victim endured.

"Bones!" was all that Kirk could manage, but the doctor seemed to under-

stand; a hypo hissed, and the tragic eyes closed slowly. Kirk sagged against the table for a moment, then pushed himself upright, staring blankly at the green blood on his hands. "How is he?" he demanded hoarsely.

The doctor looked up, his face white. "It's...bad, Jim," he said slowly. "He'll live, I think, but he'll need extensive surgery; and his mind... God knows. Look." He carefully removed a metal band that encircled the Vulcan's head. "They've used the mindsifter on him again. I just don't know... But you'll have to be prepared, Jim...he could be insane."

"Insane! Oh, my God!" Kirk leaned over the table, took one of the broken hands in his, and held it gently to his cheek. With astonished pity, Sajan, that unemotional Vulcan, felt his throat tighten as he watched a Human Captain weeping in anguish for an alien half-breed he called 'friend'.

* * * * *

"We kept him alive," McCoy's quiet voice continued wearily, "but to this day I don't know how - I suspect Jim had a lot to do with it; he never left Spock's side except when he was in surgery.

Surgery... Yes, there was so much of that, but even so, his face... I'll be able to restore it in time, but there's so much still to do. His hands... they healed, thank God - he was an accomplished musician. Mercifully, they didn't touch his eyes - perhaps they didn't have time; but it was weeks before he could walk again. Then there was the damage they'd done with the mindsifter..." He turned appealingly to Blair. "You'd have had to have known him as he was before...a Vulcan, confident, serene, always totally self-controlled; now he's like a frightened child...the only one he really trusts is Jim - and me, perhaps. We can cure that, too, in time - his own people have methods...but he was too weak, and we had to wait... I ordered medical leave, until he was strong enough for the final operations, but it was difficult... I wanted to get him away from hospitals for a while, but his face...people turned from him in revulsion. I'd heard of this town from a friend of mine who used to live here; he told me about the old Forbes place, and it seemed ideal - a quiet, isolated house where he could remain concealed, with Jim to keep him company...things were going so well..."

"Until now," Kirk broke in despairingly. "Now he's out there somewhere, alone, frightened, perhaps even hurt...hunted like an animal, to be shot down on sight... Bones, we must do something!"

"We will," McCoy said soothingly. "Don't worry, Jim - Baillie won't let anyone near him."

Sheriff Blair had listened attentively to the story McCoy told; he was a compassionate man when his duties allowed, and his heart went out to the crippled alien the doctor had depicted so vividly; but honesty made him say quietly, "From what you've said your Mr. Spock is mentally disturbed; he could be the one we're after, you know."

"No!" Kirk stated violently. "I was with him all the time; and you don't understand - he's the gentlest, kindest person I've ever known...he couldn't harm anyone. I hurt him...so badly...changing the dressings...but he never complained... He can't be responsible!"

"Perhaps not," Blair said soothingly; but he remained unconvinced. He had only Kirk's word, and was certain that the Captain would lie without a second thought to save his friend. After a moment, wanting to distract Kirk, Blair asked, "What happened to the pirates?"

"The pirates? Oh, they were returned to Abron - that's where the Saturn Queen was registered - and sent for trial. The Abronese still invoke the death penalty for murder. Raynar, Kuthra - oh yes, and Fellowes - were found guilty of murder, and hanged; the others - most were sent for rehabilitation."

"And Sajan? He helped you," Blair remembered.

"That was a curious case. We simply couldn't identify him - there were no records anywhere to indicate his true identity. The only clue we had was that he thought he recognised me, but that didn't help - I couldn't remember ever meeting him. The Vulcans tried a meld, but his barriers were too strong - they had to give up, or they'd have killed him. Whatever he was trying to hide he succeeded - his past life is still a mystery. But whoever he was, the Vulcans and Starfleet psychologists were all agreed - he was no danger to society. He was given a suspended sentence, and released... I heard he went back to Vulcan. I was glad of that - he did save Spock..." Kirk's voice faded in exhaustion, and McCoy stepped closer.

"Try to rest now, Jim; we'll need you when we find him."

Kirk nodded and lay back in the chair, but he did not sleep; his haunted eyes remained fixed on the dark window as he waited - as they all waited.

At last the bleep of a communicator broke the silence.

"McCoy here."

"Baillie. We've found him, Doctor - he's in a sort of cave in the woods about five miles from you. I haven't approached him - thought I'd wait for you and the Captain - but I've got my men posted around; that mob is somewhere near, but they won't get near him, you can count on that."

"Thanks, Chief; we're on our way. McCoy out." The doctor closed his communicator, and glanced at Blair. "What's the quickest way?" he asked.

"I'll drive you - you can see the cave from the track."

Shortly afterwards Blair, McCoy and Kirk stood by the Sheriff's car in the middle of a forest track. In the distance could be heard the sound of the search parties, but the three men had found their quarry as they peered intently at the dark mouth of a cave a few hundred yards away.

Baillie appeared from the shadows. "He's just inside the cave, sir."

"Right - I'll go alone." Kirk turned at Blair's movement of protest. "I know you still think he's dangerous, but he won't hurt me. Have you a light, Baillie?"

"Here, sir." The Security Chief handed over an emergency light, and with a reassuring smile at his companions, Kirk moved forward.

"If you'll excuse me," Baillie murmured, "my boys and I have a little something to take care of..." Noiselessly he melted into the shadows.

The light had reached the entrance to the cave and was stationary, throwing a soft pool of illumination against the darkness. Within its circle Blair could see a slim, huddled shape crouching against the rocks, a shape that curled tighter upon itself as Kirk walked slowly forward, and knelt.

"Spock." The one word came clearly as Kirk reached out to grasp the trembling shoulders; there was a moment's resistance, then the fugitive turned, burrowing his face into the Captain's shoulder, clinging to him fiercely. With careful tenderness Kirk's arms closed around the man he held, pulling him close, and his voice sank to an inaudible, comforting murmur.

Somehow, Blair was glad he could not hear that whispered exchange; but when Kirk raised a hand to beckon them forward he followed eagerly at McCoy's heels.

At their approach the dark head lifted from Kirk's shoulder and turned to face them - with an intense effort Blair forced himself to concentrate only on the eyes, beautiful, velvet-dark, shining like stars in the ruined face. For a moment pity choked him - if the physical damage was a symbol of the harm that had been done to his mind, how this man must have suffered! And McCoy had repaired much already, he remembered.

He moved, and the dark eyes focussed on him, widening in alarm at the unfamiliar face. Kirk stroked the Vulcan's hair gently. "It's all right, Spock; he won't harm you, you're safe with me."

"Safe...yes...with you," Spock said slowly.

"Captain, I'm sorry," Blair said quietly, "but he is a suspect; he should be questioned..." He broke off as a red-shirted figure darted to Kirk's side.

"The search parties are coming, Captain," the Security guard reported.

"So I see."

Led by Dave Phillips, a group of armed men emerged from the trees to surround the cave entrance.

"You got him, then, Sheriff," someone called. "Come on, you - and him over!" Rifles were levelled, and Blair started forward in alarm.

"Hold your fire!" he called. "There are guards all round you." He had seen the Security men who shadowed the search party, and knew that any violence would be countered swiftly.

"What do you want us to do, Sheriff?" Phillips called.

"Captain, please hand him over," Blair pleaded. "You can see that there will be trouble if you try to take him away - we have our suspect..."

"But you haven't got the criminal - I have," announced a voice from the darkness as Baillie strolled casually into the circle of light. His two aides, Blade and Sorenson, followed, supporting between them the semi-conscious figure of a man Blair did not recognise. The two Security men looked a little dishevelled, but when they dropped their prisoner to the ground at Blair's feet, it was clear that he had sustained considerable damage.

Baillie shook his head sadly. "He tried to take my boys," he said reprovingly, "so I'm afraid he's...er...slightly damaged. He's the one you're after, Sheriff. I did a bit of checking - he escaped from a prison for the criminally insane about thirty miles away. They didn't send out a warning, thought it might cause a panic. I'll have to have a few words with the Governor... Still," he smiled brightly at the Sheriff, "you won't want our Mr. Spock now, will you?"

Without waiting for a reply Baillie swung round, issuing terse orders. The prisoner was handcuffed, and pushed to Blair's side; the Security guards assembled in front of the cave, their eyes still watchful, phasers at the ready. With an abrupt change of manner to a gruff compassion Baillie urged Kirk to his feet, helping him to support the Vulcan, who seemed bewildered, confused, by the sudden influx of people. He buried his head on the Captain's shoulder and stood trembling in his sustaining embrace. McCoy, who had been tending the injured guards, took his place in the group, and in a shimmering sparkle of light the Enterprise party was beamed away, leaving a stunned Sheriff, a silent, embarrassed search party - and one somewhat battered prisoner. Making the best of things, Blair organised their return to town.

The following day Sheriff Blair was busy at his desk when the phone rang. He answered it, to hear Captain Kirk's voice.

"I'm at the house to collect my things," he said. "I'd like to see you, to explain - and to say goodbye."

"I'll be there in five minutes," Blair promised.

Kirk was waiting for him in the room he had shared with Spock. As Blair entered, Kirk turned, smiling a greeting.

"How is Mr. Spock?" the Sheriff asked. "I hope my...mistake...hasn't harmed him."

"No, thank God. He was just so afraid when I didn't come back...he thought

you meant to harm him - that's why he knocked you out and ran. And that's how I knew he couldn't be guilty - he could have killed you easily, but even in his fear he's too gentle to harm anyone." His voice softened. "We're taking him home now, to Vulcan. McCoy thinks he's ready...and strong enough for final surgery."

"He'll be all right?" Blair asked anxiously.

"Oh yes - we can be sure of that. If he'd broken last night...but he held on."

"Because he trusted you," Blair said understandingly.

"As I trust him." Kirk hesitated. "To you he's an alien - but to me... he's my friend. I hope that one day you'll have the chance to see him as he really is."

"So do I. In the meantime...it can't atone - but I'm sorry."

"I know. It's easy to jump to conclusions, isn't it? Just because someone acts strangely, it doesn't mean... but we won't speak of it. You're satisfied the case is closed?"

"Yes. Warders picked up the prisoner this morning. They should have warned me."

Kirk's grin flashed. "They will in future. Our Mr. Baillie had a word with the Governor this morning, and he has the knack of making a strong impression."

"So I noticed."

"Well, I must leave now. Goodbye, Sheriff."

"Goodbye, Captain. Good luck."

As the shimmering column faded and vanished Blair cast a last look at the deserted room. He could not rid himself of the memory of last night, of those two faces, one fine-drawn, handsome, the other a shattered ruin; yet the eyes had been so alike, each regarding the other with faith, and trust, and love.

For just an instant he had been allowed to glimpse a friendship that could transcend all barriers of race and tradition; had learned that it was possible to look beyond the obvious, and find a hidden truth. It was a lesson he thought he would never forget.
