

IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO A STARSHIP CAPTAIN

by Shirley Buck

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IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO A STARSHIP CAPTAIN!

by Shirley Buck

Kirk sat up in bed with a start, instantly awake. The cabin swam dizzily before him and he closed his eyes as a wave of nausea hit him. When he reopened his eyes, it was to find the cabin comfortably still again, but to his horror he realised he had overslept. The chronometer beside his bed told him he was already five minutes late on duty. Kirk couldn't remember ever being late before.

Quickly he showered and dressed. He became aware of a dull nagging ache behind his eyes and made a mental note to visit Bones for one of his 'cure-alls' later in the day.

"I must need R and R more than I realised," thought Kirk with a wry grin. After five months of hazardous service in a little explored part of the galaxy, the Enterprise had been pulled back to deal with some fairly routine diplomatic missions. The last five weeks had been more trying to Kirk than all the previous five months.

The Enterprise had been acting as a passenger ship, transporting various people between various destinations. It had not been arduous work, just irritating and aggravating dealing diplomatically with people not used to travelling on a starship. To crown it all he had had three children to deal with two weeks ago. They were two sons and a daughter of a high-up official at Centrinar 3. It had taken five Earth days to make the journey and at the end Kirk was counting his blessings that he was not their father. Three more obnoxious youngsters would have been difficult to find.

They had dropped their last passenger off yesterday and Kirk had heaved a sigh of relief that the thought of having the Enterprise back as a 'working' ship again rather than a passenger liner!

Spock vacated the centre seat as Kirk entered the bridge.

"Good morning, Mr. Spock. Anything to report?"

"Yes, Captain. A message has just been received from Starfleet Command instructing us to rendezvous with USS Potemkin, Admiral Rogers commanding, at 16.00 hours tomorrow," and Spock gave the co-ordinates.

"Well, we have plenty of time to get there!" commented Kirk, as he studied them.

"Indeed, Captain. I believe the Yorktown and Hood are also to make the rendezvous and have farther to come."

"These are the war games exercises we have been anticipating." It was a statement rather than a question. "Well, it could have come at a better time. However, 'our's not to reason why'!" Kirk sighed and gave the necessary instructions for the rendezvous to Sulu.

Weariness swept over Kirk and he rubbed the ache over his eyes.

"Spock, would you be so kind as to check life support. It seems rather warm here today." and he ran his finger round the neck of his shirt.

"Certainly, Captain." It wasn't long before Spock was able to report that the temperature on the Bridge was at it's normal level.

"Thank you, Spock," replied Kirk somewhat irritably.

"Are you sure you are well, Captain? You look a little tired this morning."

"Jaded would be a better word, Spock!! No, seriously, I'm fine. And glad to have my ship back in order again." And Kirk smiled. "Now what about some coffee yeoman?"

Yeoman Fields had been taking coffee round to various members of the Bridge crew and was already standing by Kirk's chair. As Kirk swung round, his hand caught the edge of the tray, tipping it sufficiently to knock the remaining cup of coffee over, cascading the hot liquid over the tray and into Kirk's lap. Kirk leapt up with a gasp as the hot coffee soaked through his trousers

onto his skin. The yeoman was horrified and full of apologies. Kirk cut him off.

"Not your fault, yeoman. Forget it. Spock, take the con while I change."

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As Kirk was putting on his second pair of trousers of the day, the intercom buzzed. Kirk pressed the button. "Kirk here."

"Spock here, Captain. A message from Admiral Rogers aboard the 'Potemkin'. Message reads 'Commencement of exercises advanced by 26 hours. Now due to start at 14.00 hours today. Expect you at rendezvous point by that time.' Message ends."

There was a silence as Kirk digested the message. "I take it there is no problem about making the rendezvous in time."

"Indeed not, Captain."

"Very well, Mr. Spock. Acknowledge the message and confirm our arrival. Kirk out."

Kirk sat looking at the intercom after the picture of Spock had faded. His shoulders sagged with a weariness he would never show to his crew. With an effort Kirk hauled himself to his feet and straightening his shoulders, headed for the door.

His whole body seemed to vibrate to the nerve endings, as he walked straight into his closed cabin door. Kirk stared at it in disbelief and angrily pushed the manual button. Nothing happened!! He pressed it again while feeling a large lump coming up over his right eye. The door remained stubbornly closed. Kirk resisted an insane urge to beat upon it with his fists, crying "let me out!"

Instead, Spock's Vulcan ears were nearly blown off by the blast from the intercom. "SPOCK!"

"Yes, Captain. I can hear you."

"Sorry, Spock. But I'm locked in my cabin. The damned door refuses to open. Now will you GET ME OUT OF HERE!"

Spock's face remained impassive, but there were several smothered smiles around the bridge.

"I shall send the engineers immediately, Captain."

* * * * *

Within ten minutes, Kirk was back on the Bridge, the expression on his face defying anyone to comment. But Spock was never one to be intimidated by a look.

"Captain?" he asked for the second time that day. "Are you sure you are alright? May I suggest a visit to Sick Bay for Dr. McCoy to attend to your head."

"No, you may not, Spock. I'm perfectly alright."

Spock merely raised his eyebrow and looked at the Captain's forehead. The lump was fully up now and it did look as if the Captain was going to have a black eye.

Kirk's face was stonier than ever and the Bridge crew concentrated on the jobs in hand with great studiousness. Half an hour later Spock reported a contact on their port beam. The war games had started.

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Kirk sat slumped in his command chair, his face flushed and his eye beginning to close. His head ached abominably and depression sat like a heavy weight on his shoulders. But everything else faded into insignificance beside the fact that the Enterprise had been declared destroyed in the day's war games. Kirk would never forget the look of shock and disappointment on the faces of his Bridge crew.

Things had gone well at first, but in the wink of an eye, the Hood had outmanoeuvred the Enterprise and claimed her as destroyed. The Enterprise had never been beaten in exercises before and Kirk bitterly blamed himself. He was aware of Spock standing by his side and could feel the concern that Spock felt for him.

"Captain, may I suggest that you go to Sick Bay now?" Spock spoke gently. "It is obvious that you are far from well."

Kirk glanced at him. "Don't try and make excuses for my incompetence, Spock."

"Incompetence, Captain? I saw no sign of incompetence. That you were under some stress was obvious, but at no time did it affect your ability. Please remember that the crew of the Hood are fresh from P & R on Starbase 4, while we have been on active service for over six months. I offer this not as an excuse, but perhaps a reason."

Kirk gave Spock a grateful smile. "Thank you, Spock."

Spock continued, "However, Captain, I do feel that a visit to Dr. McCoy would not come amiss."

"You're right as usual," Kirk gave a wry grin. "I feel like death warmed over."

Spock raised his eyebrow and opened his mouth to speak, but Kirk raised his hand and laughed. "Before you say anything, Spock, I mean I feel lousy. You have the con."

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His legs felt like cotton wool and every movement made his head throb. As he approached Sick Bay, the corridor seemed to blur and sway. He clung to the door frame dizzily.

McCoy looked at Kirk in horror. "Jim, what have you been doing to yourself? You look terrible."

"I feel worse than I look," groaned Kirk as McCoy helped him to the nearest diagnostic bed. "Bones, if those war games had been real I would have lost the Enterprise."

McCoy looked up at the real misery in his voice.

"Don't blame yourself, Jim. And just be grateful they were only war games." McCoy ran a scanner over Kirk. "The Enterprise is still yours and as beautiful as ever, which is more than I can say for her Captain." McCoy raised Kirk's shirt and a grin lit up his face as he viewed a scarlet rash which ran over his chest and was beginning to spread onto his neck and face.

"No wonder you feel so ill, Jim. As well as a really beautiful black eye, you have a first class case of measles."

There was a silence.

"Measles!?!?!!" said Kirk in a strangled voice. "How can I possibly have measles? Nobody gets measles these days."

"Wrong, Jim! You've got them and the rash is really something to see. You're going to be in bed for at least a week."

"Really, Bones! You seem to be taking a great deal of pleasure in the situation."

"Naturally, Captain," said a voice from the doorway. "He has delusions of grandeur at the thought of having a Starship Captain in his power for a whole week." And Spock lifted an eyebrow in McCoy's direction.

Outraged, McCoy spluttered, "Delusions of grandeur is it? Well, I'll have more of them when I've gotten the anti-measles inoculations made up. Everyone, but everyone, will be having one. And because of your peculiar Vulcan metabolism, you'll need two!"

Spock seemed unperturbed. "I know you have many faults, Doctor, but I never before realised that vindictiveness was one of them."

Before McCoy could think of an answer Spock had gone.

"Now do you think you could get around to doing something for the patient?" said a plaintive voice from the bed.

"Sorry, Jim. That Vulcan can get my back up quicker than anyone I know."

McCoy quickly prepared to take blood samples from Kirk, ready to make up the inoculations. "I reckon it was one of those kids that gave you this, Jim. The incubation period would be about right. And as for that eye!! Well, all I can say is 'Jim, it's a beauty!'."

And McCoy laughed heartily.

Kirk, however, was not amused. "I can see nothing to laugh at Bones. I should be glad if you would endeavour to control your mirth and give me something to make me feel better."

McCoy sighed. It was going to be a long week.
