

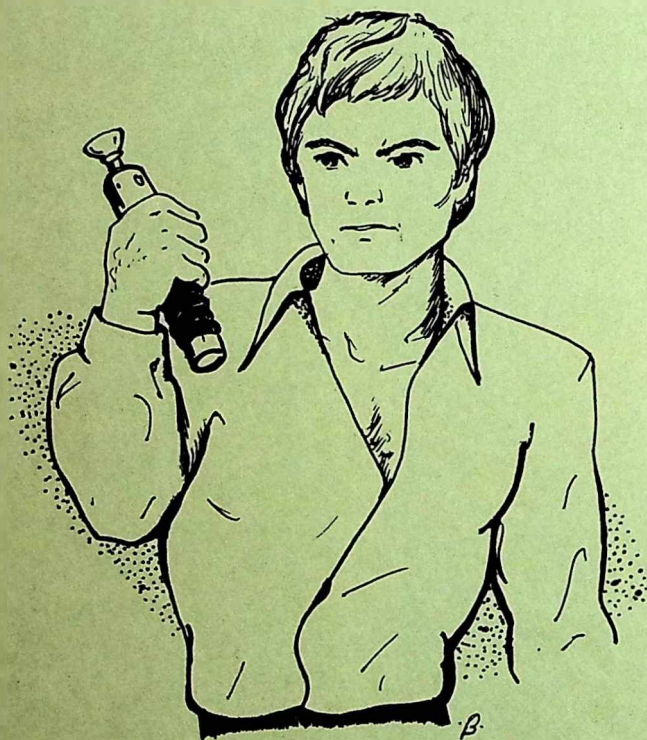
# MASIFORM D



*For the Honor of the Sith --*

*For the Glory of the Empire --*

# Kenobi must die!



## Knight of Shadows

by Karen Osman

Coming soon from **Poison Pen Press**



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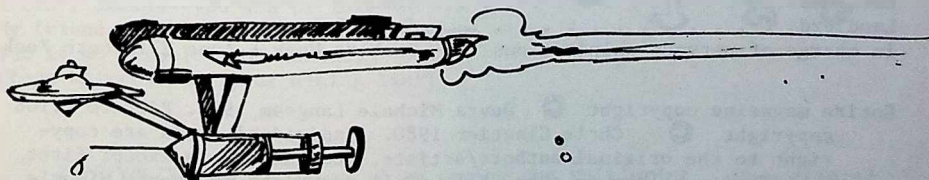
# Masiform D #12

POISON PEN PRESS, 627 East 8th St, Bklyn NY 11218. Available for \$3.75  
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for contribution, pre-arranged trade, review, or editorial whimsy.

Devra Michele Langsam, Editor

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial. . . . .	3
To Spock . . . After All These Years, by Judith Brownlee. . . . .	9
The Plot Sickens, by Sharon Foster. . . . .	10
A Matter of Tradition, by Geraldine E. Stout. . . . .	12
The Life of a Captain is a Lonely Life, by Phyllis Johnpoll. . . . .	32
Spock's Women, by Sandra Wise. . . . .	33
The Affair of the Xixobrax Jewelworm, a tragicomedy, by Sandra Wise. . . . .	38
Masiform D Contest Results. . . . .	65
Koon-Ut-Kal-i-Far, by Kathleen Gaitely. . . . .	68
The Horse is Lovely, by Nancy Giudice. . . . .	72
Portfolio of Mythological Beings. . . . .	73
Random, by Jocelyn Feaster. . . . .	79
Thoughts, by Cathy R. Phillips. . . . .	79
Domestic Arrangements, by Lois Welling. . . . .	80
Mandatory <i>STAR WARS</i> Item. . . . .	108



# Artists

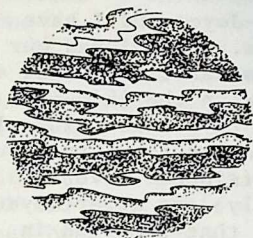
Eluki bes Shazar. . . . .	.14, 23, 29, 31, 65, 66, 67
Gordon Carleton. . . . .	37, 39, 45, 55, 61
Chris Cloutier. . . . .	.108
Bernie . . . . .	3, 88, 99, 101
Phil Foglio. . . . .	. bacover
Alexis Gilliland . . . . .	5
Caro Hedge. . . . .	.3, 9
Carolyn Hillard . . . . .	.34
Sue Johnston. . . . .	.11
Susan Klasky--calligraphy . . . . .	.72
Terri Laponovich. . . . .	.107
M R O Ludwig. . . . .	.cover, 4, 7, 73, 76
Martynn. . . . .	82, 95
Bonnie Reitz . . . . .	69, 71
Carrie Rowles. . . . .	75, 78
Carolyn Ruth. . . . .	.74
"Space" . . . . .	.1
Gerry Stout . . . . .	.74, 77
Gennie Summers. . . . .	.6, 105
Sally Wyant. . . . .	32

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In charge of nervous palpitations . . .	Barbara Wenk & Anne Elizabeth Zeek

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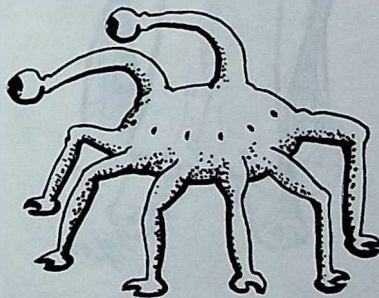
# Editorial

OPPS! Profound apologies are in order to several people: to Barbara Wenk, who owns the cover art used for masiform D #11, and graciously permitted its publication; to Barbara Wheel, the artist who produced the border on page 8 in masiform D #10 (not Caro Hedge as I originally said); and (gasp, blanch, blush) to Wanda Atwell, from whose poem (in mD #11) I inadvertently omitted a line. How, you may say, can someone leave out a line from a sixteen-line poem and not notice it? How could anyone? UH--duh-- Here, now, is the complete poem.

MEMORANDUM: SELECTING A PET ON SPACE STATION K-7

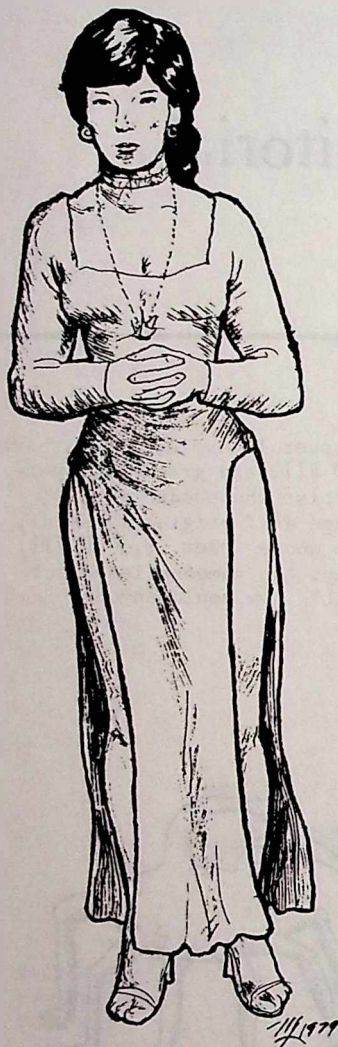
by Wanda Atwell

A tribble I should not advise;  
It eats too much; it multiplies,  
Until there's not a place in view  
Without a tribble--maybe two.  
They have no eyes, no tail, no ears.  
(You could be talking to their rears.)  
But then upon the other hand  
I've heard they are in great demand.  
They come all sizes--large to small--  
A cuddly, soft, and purring ball.  
They're gentle, loving, very neat;  
They track no mud (they have no feet).  
I can't decide--you win or lose?  
My friend, I guess that *you* must choose.  
But if on tribbles you insist,  
Cross Klingons off your dining list!



TYPETYPETYPE--This issue, I am trying out Multiprint. They printed *One Way Mirror* for me, and I liked their work then. I finally decided that I really don't like doing my own printing. It is a LOT of work, and as I am not mechanically inclined, tends me to nervous hysteria when the machine breaks down (*always* on a Saturday or Sunday, when no mechanics

are available. *ALWAYS.*) Now we shall see how I feel (still hysterical?) about someone else producing *MY CHILD*.



ON THE FIGHTING FRONT--Joyce and I have switched karate schools. We enjoyed our original school and teachers, but I had a great deal of trouble with the judo-jiujitsu we were supposed to be absorbing along with the karate. I started to worry about permanent back injury (since I never *really* learned to fall properly) and after Joyce took a really bad fall that resulted in whiplash and her spending two weeks looking like a zombie, or possibly someone with a poker up her--uh, hi, Joyce!-- Er--anyway, we decided to try another school. The one we picked is the New York Karate Club, Inc. --up on West 72 St.

Unfortunately, there they teach Shotokan (Japanese) karate, as opposed to Tae Kwan Do (Korean) karate, which is what our first school taught. This is like spending three years learning Spanish, and then being asked to speak Portuguese. You can sort of make yourself understood, but--

We both started in the new school as white belts (*Everyone* starts as a white belt there) and Joyce has now reached her (second) green belt, while I'm now an 8th kyu, or, roughly, a yellow belt. (No jokes, please.) ((I think. Some books say you start at 8th kyu, but. . . .))

The NYKC suffers from not having showers, or their own john (the one we use is in the main hall of the building's second floor, and demonstrates extreme grunge) but it's a good school. Sometimes I miss some of the things we did at our old place, and I miss the people, but on the whole, I'm glad we switched. ENDEAVOR!

Since last issue, I have become addicted to chiropractic treatment. (Oh, shame!) At least once a week, I rush into Manhattan so my practitioner can twist my neck around and make it go CRACK. (Strange, that woman.) I started going in January 1981, when I developed a nasty collection of pains in my shoulders, biceps, and collarbones. Ah, chiropractic! Peculiar but effective. And I used to think that only cranks and Barbara Wenk did it.

MODEST? Barbara Wenk's novel, *One Way Mirror*, which I published, won the 1980 Fan Q for Favorite Long Story. Modest polishing of nails, etc. Copies of this opus are still available from me for \$5/\$6.75 sp. handling insured. I think it's a zinger story, and am really pleased that Barbara won.

Since she also won the Short Story award for "Imperial Soliloquy" (in *Warped Space*), maybe she'll wear the plaques as earrings. A bit large, of course--

By the way, Barbara says she has *NO INTENTION* of doing a sequel to *OWM* and that she's completely lost interest in Slair since he took up with that hussy Jenny. . . .

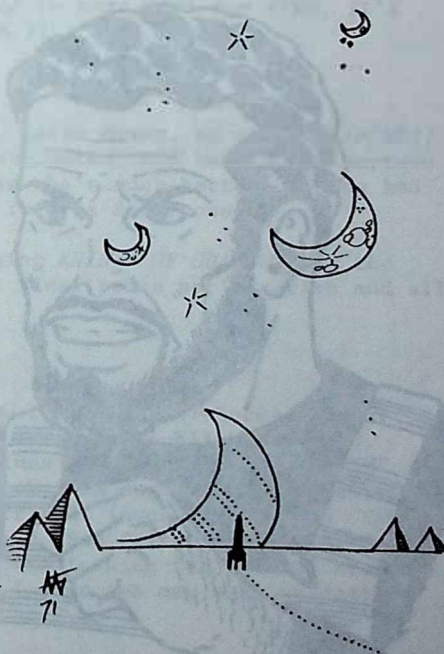
Nancy Giudice, whose poetry has appeared in these pages frequently, was also a nominee for the Fan Q, for her poem "Bottle-casting".

Even if it's not the *Enterprise*, I was very much cheered by the flights of *Columbia*. (It was beautiful!) We did good. And now I hope there'll be more and more flights, and that I can finally get to see a lift-off. I kept getting tickets, and things would keep coming up to prevent me going. What I'd really like would be to go up on a flight--just a very little one. I joined the First-Flights-to-the-Moon waiting list that Pam Am was collecting people for in 1969 (first moonwalk? Remember that?) but that doesn't look too hopeful. Just a shuttleflight, though--

I'm very happy to have gotten Janet Hunt to act as my British/Euro-pean agent. This will make it much cheaper for most of my foreign purchasers. I have shipped Janet a basic stock seamail, and she'll remail items directly to buyers. I'm not sure how we'll handle new issues of *MD*; it is about 6 weeks by sea, and I don't know if subscribers are willing to wait that long, or if they want to pay the extra air postage for new issues. Back issues, *OWM*, and *Spock* will be sold in Great Britain and Europe only through Janet; I'm not going to mess around with US airmail and weird currency on them any more. ((Janet, by the bye, can accept dollar or sterling checks.))

Janet Hunt, 54 Foxhunter Dr, Oadby  
Leicester LE2 5FE ENGLAND

Speaking of agents, I'll be handling distribution for Isis Press, starting Real Soon Now (or whenever I can get AE Zeek over here to straighten out the





piles of zines and paper. Ah, business. Ain't it neat? Metaphorically speaking.)

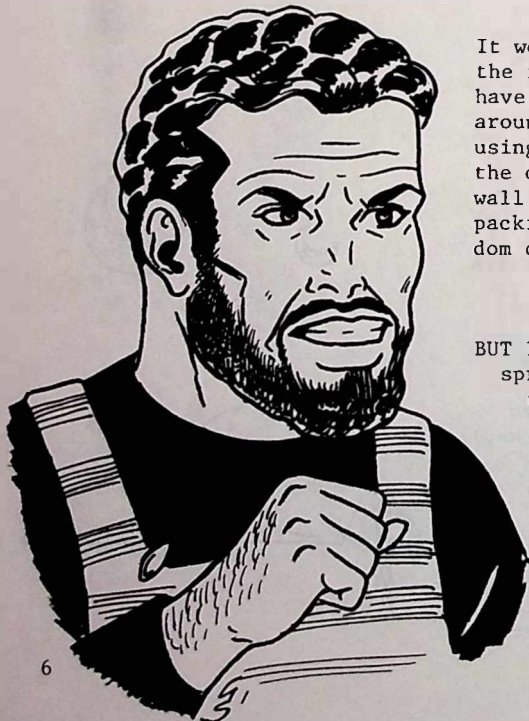
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Wanging is more fun than mooning

---

PILED HIGHER--For those of you who remember ~~before the dark time!~~  
~~before the zapit, the time of the beginning~~ when my cousin Debbie was my co-editor, here is some nice news. Debbie has FINALLY been awarded her doctorate in marine mycology, and has gotten an assistant professorship in Charlotte, North Carolina. Hurray for our side!

I hear that a new ST movie is in the works. Frankly, I'm not all that hopeful, not after the mess they made of the first one. Still, some of the rumors make for interesting hearing. I've now heard that a) Mark Lenard will be back as Sarek; b) that he won't; c) that Leonard Nimoy will play Spock, and will die nobly throwing himself between Kirk and certain death; d) that the rumors of his death are greatly exaggerated; e) that Ricardo Montalban will be back playing Khan Noonien Singh--1) as a young man [through gauze, no doubt], 2) as an older man; f) that the Klingons go back in time and cause the Genetic Wars--no doubt THAT'S why they have lobsters on their heads; g) that some of James Kirk's wild oats, in the form of an old flame and/or illegitimate son, show up; h) that Spock is given warder-ship over a young female half-Romulan/half-Vulcan Starfleet cadet (oh?); i) that Kor the Great returns in full Glory (now there's a villain with CLASS); j) none of the above.



Well, team, want to take any bets? It would be hard to make it worse than the first movie-- Maybe if they don't have quite so much money to ~~waste~~ throw around, they'll have to fall back on using their smarts, the way they did on the old show. Remember the pieces of wall apparatus made out of plastic foam packing shapes? May the factor of random chance operate in our favor.

BUT IT'S NOT THAT KIND OF BOOK! In the spring, a young fan's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of--Darth Vader? Yuh, friends, I am breaking (or at least bending) my rule, to publish (as a Special Supplementary Issue) some SW material. It is a Young-Darth-Vader novel entitled *KNIGHT OF SHADOWS*, written by Karen Osman. Illustrations are to be done by Carol Waterman, and printing by (natch) Multiprint. Due out for

Mediawestcon 2. It's a really fine story, and the most trouble I've had with it (aside from a few sparring matches with the author) is working out the ad blurbs. For instance:

WHAT HOLD did Obi-Wan Kenobi have over the young Dark Lord that compelled the Sith to leave his wife and young son to seek out the Jedi Master? ((Naw. It's not that kind of book.))

WHAT CAUSED the animosity between Darth Vader, Heir to Sith, and his betrothed, his cousin Jessha? What REALLY happened on their wedding night? Was the breach between them the fault of Catryn, the spunky Corellian studying at Darth's dojo? And why did Master Obi-Wan want to take away Jessha's child? ((No, it's not that kind of book.))

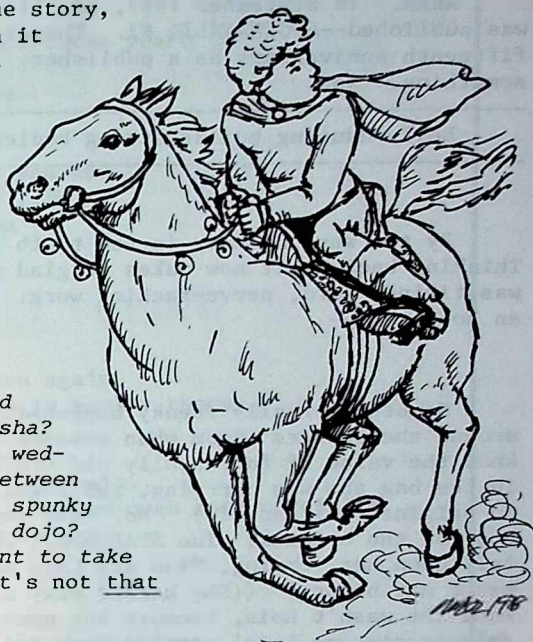
WHY DID the Emperor seek to woo the young (but exiled) Dark Lord from his devotion to the Jedi cause? Why do all Sith (except Darth Vader) hate and despise the Jedi? (What DID Obi-Wan do to the mind of the young Heir to turn him to HIS sorcerous ways?--Tune in next week for ((NO, it's NOT that kind of book, either. Sigh.))

No, no, Karen, don't beat me! It's just a blurb--

((And speaking of being beaten upon, Karen Osman, my author, (MINE!) was savaged by a llama at the zoo where she works, and had to get umpteen stitches. Fortunately, ~~she can type again~~ she's much better, having had a really fine surgeon. And they say New York is dangerous!))

Oh, and anyone interested in purchasing *KNIGHT OF SHADOWS*, by the way, please send me a SASE so marked, for final price notification and all that sort of good stuff.

I'd like to remind my readers that mD remains an ST-focused zine. Apart from the Mandatory SW Item, I don't intend to publish SW in mD. There are already a number of excellent zines (such as *TWIN SUNS*, *TIME WARP*, *PEGASUS*) and a bunch of new ones which I am sure will be equally good--they are all being published by my friends (such as *OUTLANDS CHRONICLES*, and *IMPERIAL ENTANGLEMENTS*)--planned. Sue Crites is looking for humor for *LIGHTER SIDE OF THE FORCE* #2. I am looking for good ST stuff, for mD #13, planned for December 1982 (if I ever get any submissions).



AHEM. In September 1967, the first fanzine totally devoted to *ST* was published--*SPOCKANALIA* #1. Therefore, this coming September is my fifteenth anniversary as a publisher. Gads. I may give a party. Or something. Wow.

---

Belly-dancing builds strong bodies twelve ways.

---

By the way, January is the tenth anniversary of the first *ST*con. Thinking back to it now makes me glad we're not doing it any more. It was tiring, hard, nerve-racking work. Argh. At an average salary of 12¢ an hour, too--

Something really freaky happened to me at Denvention. I was noodling around the Dealers' Room when someone was directed to me; she wanted to know the value of four really old *SPOCKANALIA*. I noticed another zine in the bag she was carrying, and asked if it were *SPOCK 5* (which I have no original edition of.) "No," she replied, displaying a very very old copy of the original zine *STARDATE*, "this is my zine." I immediately fell upon her, crying, "You are Lois McMaster's co-editor that I have never met before!" ((She backed away a bit--)) Yup. Sure enough. I knew she wasn't Lois, because her name tag said "Lillian Carl"-- She was able to give me Lois' married name and address, and now I may be able to try a long-desired project--a collection of "*Free Enterprise*" items. But of course to do that, I would need to have Lois' permission, because she originated the idea, along with Lillian, and wrote the first one.

At any rate, the whole thing gave me an ever-so-queerish feeling. It was only chance that I noticed the other fanzine in the bag anyway.

And who was the kind soul who gave the the strange button depicting a blonde young lady floating down the Amazon, saying it was for Barbara? I can't remember, and it's driving Barbara mad.

And here's a plug for *SAURIAN BRANDY*, whose editor very kindly printed an ad for me, away back in July--maybe of last year, even?

*SAURIAN BRANDY*--the only intoxicant in the galaxy for the mind rather than the mouth. Currently at issue #29 (how's that for persistence?)--including stories by Rosemarie Eierman & Karen Hunter, and Bonnie Reitz. \$3.50 FC from: Sylvia Stanczyk, 1953 E 18th St, Erie PA 16510

It's 11:45 pm on December 30--wishing you all a Very Hoppy New Ear.





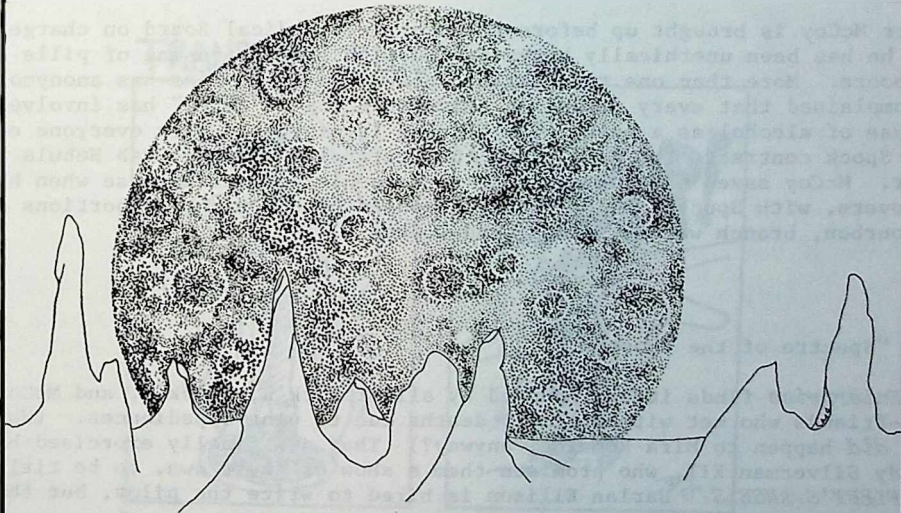
TO SPOCK . . . after all these years

by Judith Brownlee

We journeyed together, you and I,  
Through a decade of my life.  
After a while I saw you  
Only in old pictures,  
Viewed time after time  
Until memory became  
Remembrance.

Then suddenly I see you again,  
And the old familiarity is barely there.  
Your hair is longer.  
Your face is saddened  
With deeper traces of your pain.  
The key to your lock is hidden much more carefully.  
Beneath your elegant garments  
You are so clearly  
Not a soldier  
Any more.

But as I look deeper  
I see we are still in the same cadence.  
You have not found your answers  
Either.



# The Plot Sick— er, Thickens

Sharon Foster

I was greatly concerned when I kept hearing that the forthcoming *STAR TREK* movie was delayed, among other reasons, because a proper script had not been found. Production was held up significantly while the Great Bird of the Galaxy looked for a story of the proper epic proportions. Hoping to avert the recurrence of such an unhappy delay, should there be a rebirth of *STAR TREK* as a semi-annual television presentation, or a second movie, or whatever, I have worked up a few plot outlines which I herewith humbly submit:

## "Universe of the Dolls"

Doctor McCoy is brought up before the Starfleet Medical Board on charges that he has been unethically heavy-handed with the dispensing of pills and booze. More than one teetotaler aboard the *Enterprise* has anonymously complained that every second or third of McCoy's "cures" has involved the use of alcohol as a base. The hearing is disrupted when everyone except Spock contracts the deadly and (heretofore) incurable Crab Nebula Fever. McCoy saves the day and gets to keep his medical license when he discovers, with Spock's help, a cure composed of the right proportions of bourbon, branch water, scotch, and wodka.

## "Spectre of the Ghost"

The *Enterprise* finds itself haunted by all of Kirk's, Spock's, and McCoy's girl-friends who met with untimely deaths due to plot expediences. (Whatever *did* happen to Mira Romaine, anyway?) They are finally exorcised by Freddy Silverman XII, who promises them a show of their own, to be titled *STARFLEET'S ANGELS*. Harlan Ellison is hired to write the pilot, but that doesn't last very long.

## "The Deadly Ears"

#1:

McCoy develops a fatal ear infection which only attacks Vulcans. McCoy responds, "I'm just a simple country doctor, Spock!", and then proceeds to find a cure consisting of the right proportions of Saurian brandy, carbon, and *plomeek* soup. Spock not only gets cured--he and the Doc have all of a good time getting there! Yes, I know alcohol doesn't affect Vulcans, but why do you think they're always making *plomeek* soup? You don't know that about *plomeek* soup, did you?

#2:

McCoy's years of needling Spock finally pay off. He has achieved his goal of making Spock so angry that he throws logic and control to the wind and charges at Doctor McCoy head on, threatening to impale him with the famous Vulcan Death-Blow-to-the-Gut. Kirk stops him by reminding him of all the times McCoy saved his life (see for example plot #1 above), and Spock comes to his senses and apologizes for his distasteful display of emotions. He would hate to lose a good supplier of *plomeek* soup.

There're more, but time and space do not permit me to include them all here. Besides, I'm sending the *really* good ones to "Saturday Night Live". On second thought, maybe they would stand a better chance of getting aired on *BATTLESTAR*.

## TRANSPORT BLUES



"ENERGIZE, MR. SCOTT"



"VERY FUNNY..!"



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## TRANSPORT BLUES



"ENERGIZE, MR. SCOTT"



"VERY FUNNY..!"

# A Matter of Tradition

Geraldine E. Stout

It was hard to believe that one person could so easily disrupt the smooth running of a ship of 420 people, reflected Doctor McCoy. He was watching Lieutenant T'Ehri as she sat at the next table, laughing at one of Lieutenant Sulu's jokes. Although he had worked with the young half-Vulcan comparative biologist for a month and a half, McCoy still found her behavior a bit unsettling. He wasn't the only one unsettled, judging by the glares she was receiving from the ship's First Officer.

"Hi, Bones. Watching our newest enigma?" The captain sat down across from McCoy.

"It's funny, Jim, but I'm still not used to seeing a Vulcan laugh."

"She's only half-Vulcan, Bones."

"So's Spock, but you don't see him laughing at one of Sulu's jokes!"

"Maybe Sulu isn't his type."

"Hmm--very funny! I'm wondering now how much of that famous Vulcan control is learned behavior. Spock grew up on Vulcan, T'Ehri on Earth, and look at the difference. You can even tell which parent was the dominant one in each case."

"Sounds freudian to me, Bones. Isn't that a little old-fashioned?"



"Many of his theories were based upon the culture that he lived in, rather than upon actual psychological processes, but some of his ideas had a core of truth. What I'm really interested in is the general male reaction to T'Ehri. I've never seen so many adolescent crushes in my life! With one notable exception, of course."

"Can you blame him, Bones? There she sits, acting like a human being, even though she has the same genetic background that he has. She's made it appear to a lot of people on this ship that the non-emotional Vulcan outlook on life isn't absolute, but just acquired. Self-examination always makes people jumpy."

McCoy nodded his agreement. "Yeah, and Spock's always been supra-Vulcan, Jim. T'Ehri seems more like a true combination of the two species. I almost hate to say it, but her logic is flawless, and her knowledge of her own and related fields is exhaustive. On the other hand, she's got a good sense of humor, and Uhura tells me she's a good musician. Fine dancer, too."

McCoy chuckled, and continued, "Speaking of that, Jim, has the gymnasium master mentioned the remarkable increase in the male population down in the gym during certain hours each day? I went down there yesterday, myself, just to see what was going on, of course: psychological climate of the crew and all that . . . " He paused at Kirk's amused and disbelieving snort. "Anyways, I watched her dance. I haven't seen that kind of skill in a long time: an incredible combination of ballet and gymnastics." McCoy nodded towards Sulu. "You can see who was *really* mesmerized by her ability, if you note that starry-eyed expression." McCoy sighed. "She's a remarkable woman."

"You too, Bones?"

McCoy shot a look at him. "I don't see you ignoring her, Captain!"

"Touche, Doctor, touche!" laughed Kirk, and continued to watch the attractive lieutenant.

The attractive lieutenant in question was quite aware of the pervasive atmosphere of male admiration. A handsome woman, rather than beautiful, she was basically Vulcan in appearance. However, her human parentage had softened the features, rounding the eyebrows and ears somewhat, putting auburn highlights in her hair, and giving her startlingly green eyes.

While T'Ehri certainly didn't object to the reactions of the men around her, her Vulcan mother's influence gave her a certain reticence that only made her more attractive to them.

All but one. As most of the crew had noted (especially a delighted Lieutenant Sulu) the First Officer found T'Ehri's presence irritating, and her behavior scandalous. T'Ehri had grown extremely tired of his pompous lectures concerning Vulcan Tradition (always pronounced with



capital letters), and her supposed lack of knowledge of the same. Each new installment of what she privately thought of as "101 Ways to Be a Vulcan" only reinforced her human behavior. She found herself purposely acting more and more in this manner, to Spock's visible annoyance.

The situation had apparently come to a head for Spock two weeks ago. T'Ehri and Sulu had eaten lunch together, and the conversation had started out as a simple discussion of the next mission for the *Enterprise*.

Both retrieved their food trays from the synthesizers, and moved to sit at a nearby table.

Sulu smiled at her, apparently pleased at being her only companion. "This is a change; I'm not used to having your completely undivided attention."

T'Ehri cocked her head to one side, considering the tone of the comment. She liked the outgoing helmsman, and was beginning to admit to herself that the attraction wasn't due just to his agile and wide-ranging mind. She smiled encouragingly in return. "That does seem to be true. Sometimes conversation is difficult with a large number of people at the table, which is usually the situation, for some reason."

Sulu looked at her disbelievingly, then grinned as her faint blush betrayed that she knew full well why she had such a following, and that she had come perilously close to teasing him.

T'Ehri cleared her throat hastily, and changed the subject. "Have you read the survey team's preliminary report on the Aelti system?"

Sulu nodded, and bit into his sandwich. Once he had swallowed, he commented, "It's certainly one of the stranger systems we've come across. Having three inhabitable planets is rare enough, but its social setup is weird! No one in the sociology section has yet figured out how they're managing to operate on a warring city-state political basis. It's been going on for centuries, but they haven't destroyed themselves

because that High Warlord manages to enforce some basic rules."

T'Ehri agreed quietly. "It is strange. What is even more peculiar is the use of interplanetary travel, with no attempt to develop a star drive. They certainly are aggressive enough to have the will to do so, but they haven't tried, as far as anyone can discern."

"No population pressure," Sulu waved his sandwich to reinforce his point. "With three inhabitable planets, and a process that very effectively weeds out population in systematic battles, they don't have any reason to want to expand. Besides, it's a static society, a very stratified class system built on a slave labor force. If you aren't killed in one of their little wars, you end up a slave, if you're captured. On top of that, over half their free population isn't very productive--their women aren't much more than chattels."

"From what I've read, it was not always that way. Women could own land, and rule a clan, just like the men," commented T'Ehri.

"Humph! *That* ended as their killing became more efficient. Women were the only ones that could produce more warriors for the city-state rulers. Brood-mares, if you will." Sulu stopped at T'Ehri's grimace of distaste, and decided to change the subject. "The biology is fascinating, though; all those similar species. There are population differences, of course, but preliminary genetic scans of specimens indicate common source species."

T'Ehri nodded. "There's a theory that this whole Aelti system was a laboratory for the Preservers. Between this theory, and the strange society, the Federation is being very cautious about contact. Everyone's going to want to take a long careful look at the data we produce before they make a recommendation."

Sulu snorted. "That's no surprise, considering the situation. On the other hand, it's close to the Klingon border. That'll speed up the decision-making process! Are you finished?"

They returned their trays, and strolled towards the officers' quarters deck. T'Ehri glanced at the man walking next to her. "I noticed that you got yourself assigned to one of the survey teams. Just how did you manage that little maneuver, Helmsman?"

"My interest in xenobiology, and my technological background, I guess. The captain knows about my interests, and when I volunteered, he must have decided to utilize my hobbies."

T'Ehri smiled. "It was probably more an indication of how highly he regards your various talents and abilities as an officer in emergency situations. He trusts you."

Sulu stopped in surprise. "A compliment, T'Ehri?"

"Well," she said with some asperity, "someone has to say it! You're too modest, Sulu. It's good to see that the captain doesn't take you for



granted. I don't, and you shouldn't either!" She dropped her gaze to the deck, surprised at herself. T'Ehri began to feel acutely embarrassed. She and Sulu had spent a lot of time together during the last month, but usually in their circle of friends. This kind of personal comment had to be a breach of courtesy; they hadn't known each other long enough for her to take the liberty of criticizing something in his behavior. She jumped slightly when his hand gently tilted her head back up.

Sulu kept his hand under her chin while he searched her face with surprised eyes whose expression gradually changed to quiet delight. "I'm glad you don't, T'Ehri. And I'll try to remember your suggestion." He chuckled at the deepening blush. "I have to go on duty, or that captain who evidently values me so much will start to re-evaluate his opinion. May I join you for dinner after I get off duty? Yes?" He smiled again, then leaned close, and kissed her softly but firmly.

T'Ehri watched him walk back down the corridor, her knees feeling weak. As she turned to enter her quarters, she froze at the sizzling glare being leveled at her by Spock, standing at the corridor junction.

"Lieutenant, a word with you, if you please." She numbly gestured towards her quarters, following him into the sitting area. The contrast between Sulu's quiet affection, and Spock's furious disapproval, was too much for her confused mind to cope with.

Spock's next words hit her like a dash of icy water. "Lieutenant T'Ehri, I will say this only once. Until now, your behavior has only been occasionally illogical; excusable considering that you were raised among humans, and not trained correctly. Your early environment has had an unfortunate effect, but I thought that surely some of your mother's culture must have been conveyed to you. This . . . public display of rank emotionalism, however, forces me to come to the conclusion that you have no regard whatsoever for your Vulcan heritage and its traditions. Your deportment is beginning to produce gossip among the humans on board this ship . . . "

T'Ehri's anger at this appalling invasion of her private life caused her to interrupt the First Officer, ignoring the possible consequences. "And you are concerned that it will begin to reflect upon you? That is ridiculous! Everyone on this ship knows that I was raised on Earth, you on Vulcan. My behavior will be assumed to be as a response to this difference in background!" She stopped at Spock's glower, realizing what she had done, then decided to forge onward.

"Since you have made this a private conversation, Commander, about my private life, I assume that my response to your objections will remain private. I don't think that what I do off-duty is any of your business! I have not broken any regulations. Furthermore, I am perfectly willing to accept MY human heritage. Contrary to your opinions, I've also received a very sound background in Vulcan traditions from my mother, who is a highly respected scholar of sociology. My behavior, both on, and off, duty, has been completely proper, and I have no objections to discussing this matter with the captain, if you wish to bring your concerns to his attention. Now, if you will excuse me, Commander, I have a great deal of work to do to prepare for the Aelti survey."

Spock stood stiffly for several moments, regarding her with evident distaste, then turned on his heel, and left. T'Ehri doubted that her insubordinate manner would be reported. The situation surrounding the incident would have to be explained, and it would be extremely embarrassing for Spock to do so.

Kirk sat in the command chair on the bridge, his mind ranging over several topics of concern. He began to think about his conversation with McCoy in the mess hall. He had noticed Spock's obvious dislike for Lieutenant T'Ehri, and rumors had come to his attention that there was a definite strain in the Science Department, caused by the stiffness between the two officers. McCoy had filled Kirk in on the argument between the half-Vulcans after T'Ehri and Sulu had left the mess hall. Kirk sighed. Spock had overstepped his bounds when he had confronted T'Ehri about her personal life, but on the other hand, T'Ehri seemed to be taking perverse pleasure in baiting Spock. Once this Aelti survey was over, he'd have to do something about the situation without seeming to slap down either officer too hard.

Kirk turned his mind to the planet below. Several hours ago, he'd sent down eight teams, arranged by specialty, to the planet where the Warlord maintained his residence, as the first of the three to be studied. Spock had beamed down to act as coordinator. Kirk's mind drifted back to the earlier problem, and he hoped that Spock would let McCoy handle the biology team.

His thoughts were interrupted by Uhura. "Captain, the sociology team assigned to the Warlord's City Fortress hasn't checked in on time."

Before the captain had a chance to answer, the communications alert chimed on his chair, and he hit the button. "Kirk here."

"Spock here, Captain. I've lost contact with two of our landing parties: the other technology team, and a biology team."

"Those are the second and third ones missing, Spock. Uhura just told me that a sociology team hasn't checked in on time, either." He turned to Uhura, leaving the communications channel open to allow Spock to hear what he was saying. "Uhura, run a roll call. But first, call Security and tell them to have a team meet me at the transporter. I want to see what's going on down there." He returned to Spock. "I'll be beaming down to your co-ordinates shortly, Mr. Spock. Gather your team in, and be careful."

"Yes, sir. Spock out."

Kirk joined Spock and the remaining technology team on the city's edge just as Uhura called from the ship. "Captain, I managed to reach all of the other teams, but two reported that they've been dodging the Warlord's personal troops for the last ten minutes. Doctor McCoy's team must have been caught just as I contacted him; the doctor was able only to blurt out something about soldiers. Captain, it looks as if someone knows we're here, and is systematically picking up our landing parties."

"Thank you, Lieutenant; Kirk out." He looked at Spock, who nodded.

"A logical deduction, Captain, but how have these people discovered us? Their technology is incapable of detecting our communicator signals."

A disgustingly cheerful voice cut in from behind them. "Would you like the chance to make a few guesses, Mr. Spock? Oh, excuse me, Vulcans don't guess, do they?"

Kirk's stomach did a slow roll, and he turned around to see their old acquaintance, Captain Koloth. "Just what in hell are you doing here, Koloth? This is Federation territory! When the Organians . . ."

"Claimed territory, my dear Captain Kirk, only claimed. And as you humans say, what the Organians don't know, won't hurt them, or us, for that matter! You might tell your impetuous lieutenant that he is under intense supervision by the Warlord's riflemen. Their weapons are primitive by our standards, but effective."

Kirk glanced over his shoulder to see a tight-lipped Sulu dropping his hand from the phaser at his belt. Kirk could sympathize with Sulu, but as the very nasty-looking and well-armed soldiers came down to take their weapons and other equipment, he realized that Koloth's summation of the situation was probably correct.

Kirk fumed silently as they were herded into the city by the surrounding guards. He noticed that the population ignored them, swerving to avoid the group when the guards' allegiance was noted from the uniform design. Kirk was distracted from his observations by Koloth's continuous gloating. He was very difficult to ignore.

"Actually, Captain Kirk, we've been here for several months, and our hosts have been very hospitable. They seem to feel that they have quite a bit in common with us. A warrior people, you know. You humans just don't understand strength. . . ."

Sulu whispered to Kirk through clenched teeth, "Doesn't he ever shut up?"

Kirk rolled his eyes heavenward as Koloth's voice oiled on . . . and on. . . .

"Actually, the rulers here don't like unannounced visitors. You really should have endeavored to ascertain more of their culture . . ."

"We weren't going to intrude on them at all, Koloth," Kirk said tightly. "Our Prime Directive . . ."

"Oh, *PLEASE*, my dear Captain Kirk, that old wheeze won't work with me. I know you too well." Koloth paused to survey their glowers in a self-satisfied manner, then continued his monologue. "Well, we were pleased to help our hosts with their little difficulty in gathering up you trespassers. They have strong feelings concerning hunting territory, Captain, in case you are wondering."



"I wasn't."

"It really isn't difficult locating Federation landing teams with all that chattering over your communicators. You humans talk too much."

Kirk looked at him incredulously, as Sulu snorted softly, earning himself a prod from one of the riflemen.

As they passed into the Warlord's fortress, a massive stone structure that looked very old, Koloth continued on cheerfully, "By now we've picked up the rest of your teams, Captain. I hope that you won't be insulted by the quality of your accommodations. The Warlord doesn't want to contaminate the other prisoners with your alien ideas, so he's having you detained in an old wine cellar. It does have bars, however, to keep the wine from being stolen."

T'Ehri had been in McCoy's group. Besides disliking the situation on general principles, she didn't like some of the guards' comments that the translator had relayed to her before all of their equipment had been taken away. She gathered that being unique-looking would cause her to bring a good price at the slave markets. She knew that it was highly illogical, but she was glad to see the bridge officers when they were brought in. She hoped that their experience would enable them to get out of this unbelievable situation.

Sulu came directly to her, concern plain on his face, and took her hands in his. "T'Ehri, are you all right? You haven't been hurt, have you?"

She squeezed his hands reassuringly. "No, I am uninjured. However, I overheard some of the guards talking. I don't know what they plan to do with the males, but we females are evidently headed towards the auction block."

T'Ehri stopped speaking when she realized that they were the center of attention. Everyone had been listening, and her vague embarrassment was dispersed somewhat by the looks of alarm and disgust on the other faces; no one was noticing her intimacy with Sulu. Sulu's hands tightened on hers, and she glanced at him, only to be shocked by the open fury she saw there.

As conversation erupted around the cell, she and Sulu moved into a corner. "You certainly seem calm about this, T'Ehri. Don't you realize what you just said?"

T'Ehri felt slightly confused for several moments, not sure what he wanted. She answered hesitantly, "Total ownership of another sentient being was never known on my mother's homeworld, and it is difficult for me to completely comprehend it. We had war captives, or debt-servants, but they could work towards their freedom. Oh, intellectually I know what it means, but part of me rejects it as being completely illogical; it just

isn't possible to *OWN* a person! Their minds are still theirs alone, and people who think otherwise are deceiving themselves!"

Sulu shook his head. "Maybe for Vulcans, T'Ehri. It's possible to change a human enough so he starts to think like a domesticated animal. It can take generations to do it, but it does happen. . . ."

T'Ehri looked at him wonderingly. "It's so easy to forget how alien our peoples are to each other. My parents must be so flexible, to accept this." She smiled at Sulu's worried expression. "I can be flexible, too. However, there is another difference. My people's ancient society was matriarchial. My mother came from a long line of very strong-willed, dominant women; they had to be, to insure clan survival on Vulcan's deserts. I just don't have the same basic fear reaction to large, strange males that a human woman has."

Sulu grimaced slightly. "If I might make a respectful suggestion, oh Matriarch, it just might be pro-survival for you to acquire some of that reaction!"

T'Ehri's response was lost in the appearance of a large group of guards outside their improbable cell. The door opened, and one of the guards, apparently the captain, snapped, "The females are to come with us to the Throne Room. The Warlord wants to inspect his new acquisitions."

Kirk stood in the middle of the room, fists on his hips, glaring up at the captain of the guards. "Number one, none of us are anyone's acquisitions. And when the Federation, or my ship, for that matter, realizes what's happened here, there'll be hell to pay. Number two, where did you learn System Standard?"

"We taught the Warlord, and his most trusted officers, all about the Federation, Captain, including its language." Koloth appeared, smirking, behind the guards. "I don't think there will be any trouble from either the Federation, or your ship. Your Starfleet Command feels very strongly about damaging your hosts' tender psyches with advanced technology, and has directed your ship to wait for further developments. Sometimes your General Order #1 is very convenient. For us, of course!"

Looking over her shoulder, T'Ehri saw Kirk clench his teeth over another protest, as the guards herded the women out of the cell, then down the corridor.

A short while later, T'Ehri, Chapel, and the other women stood together in the center of the Throne Room. T'Ehri looked around, trying to estimate any chances of escape. Nothing that she saw raised her hopes in the slightest. She shuddered slightly at the gaudiness of the decor; the walls were mainly brilliant crimson, with designs painted upon them in green, yellow, and gold. Multiple doorways, and the four balconies, were ornately carved and gilded. Scattered on the walls were hanging tapestries and weapons of all kinds. Guards lined the room, all large and alert.

Chapel gently elbowed T'Ehri in the ribs, and her eyes followed the nurse's slight nod towards the front of the room, and a small table to one side of the throne's dais. Chapel said softly, "Why are they displaying our equipment like that?"

T'Ehri shrugged. "Captured weapons of a defeated foe? Prestige? These people are barbarians. . . ."

Their soft whispers were interrupted by the appearance of the Warlord and his two personal guardsmen. He was an impressive man, well over six feet tall, his skull shaven, except for an iron-grey roach of hair down its center. His face resembled a mask because of manhood scars and tribal tattoos, which made it very difficult to see any expression other than ferocity.

The Warlord revelled in the feeling of absolute power over a star-faring people. He surveyed the women standing in the center of the room, and smiled appreciatively at the defiant stares that were aimed at him. This might be more entertaining than he had anticipated!

He turned to the alien captain who had aided him, as was his due. "These females appear to have more spirit than most of those in my realm." He chose his words carefully, using the females' language to reinforce their awareness of his power over them. "In the past time, our ancestors allowed females too much freedom. They even had the right to hold land and to challenge for hunting territory. By the time he who was my father's grandfather ruled as Warlord, the practice had been eliminated. Our females now know that they exist to produce warriors."

The Warlord turned back to the women, eyes roaming over them, noticing their fine figures, pausing at last at one who appeared somewhat different. His gaze passed down her form; no softness in this one! Her pride and blazing eyes excited his masculinity, and he began to look forward to a pleasurable struggle.

He leaned back in the throne, and remarked to Koloth, "These are mine, of course, but I am in debt to you for your aid in capturing the trespassers. I will make a gift of one of the females to you. Any one except the strange-looking one. She looks strong, and spirited. I enjoy a . . . challenge. And, although a bit unusual in appearance, she is obviously female. It might be interesting to find out what . . . other differences there are. I have exotic tastes."

The Warlord smiled slightly at the woman's cold fury, and continued on to Koloth, "But, as I have said, one of the others will be yours. I suggest the tall yellow-haired one. She appears capable of offering some . . . interesting exercise." Out of the corner of his eye, he watched Koloth's interesting expression of attempted gratitude fighting with nauseated alarm.

Koloth almost stammered in his reply. "You are too generous, Warlord.



We have only done what we would for any friend. I am afraid that we have a . . . cultural bias against females of other species."

The Warlord saw through the excuse, and was amused by Koloth's panic. The Klingon was obviously repulsed at the idea of a tumble with a human female. The Warlord snorted to himself. *He also looks as if he's afraid that one of these women would kill him, given half a chance. Very probable. Would probably succeed.* He smiled diplomatically, feeling only disdain for the little alien captain. "A pity. Well, if nothing else, you can be helpful while I--ah--evaluate these new possessions of mine. Your critiques, if you will."

Koloth's smile reached new heights of nastiness at this suggestion. The Warlord narrowed his eyes slightly. *An observer, without the courage to risk being marked. Ah well, he is useful, in his own way.* He glanced at his guards around the room, noting the appreciative smiles on their faces. They knew how he had humiliated the Klingon, and that he could tell they were looking forward to what was going to happen. He decided to permit them to make their own corroborative evaluations. Such a reward would even further increase their loyalty to him.

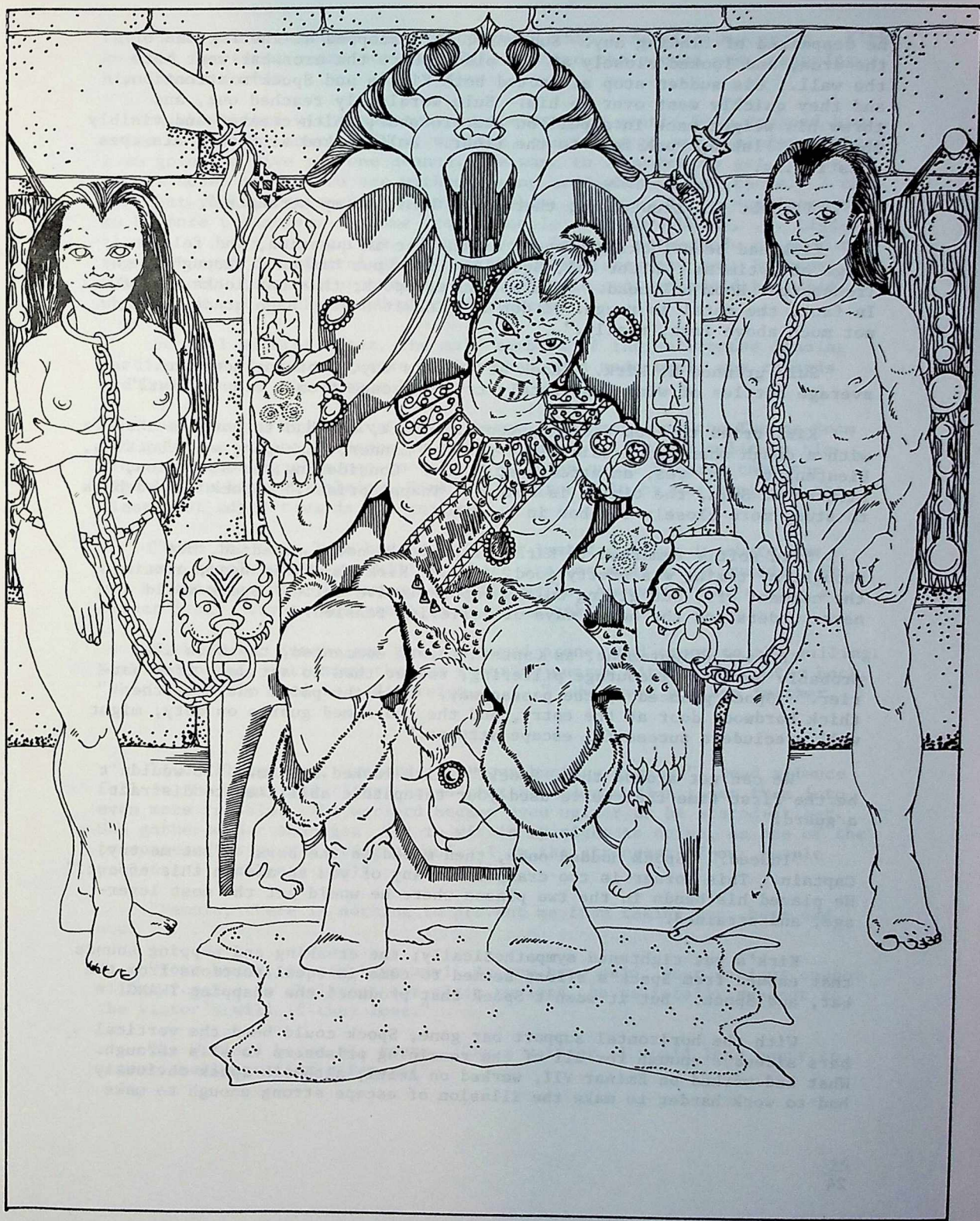
T'Ehri's patience and Vulcan control had disappeared roughly half way to the Throne Room. The third time one of the guards had tried to fondle her, on the pretext of shoving her along with the rest of the group, she had decided to subtly use her psi abilities. She'd been gratified at the guard's quavering voice, obviously asking for leave from the captain, and the sounds of retching from a side corridor after he'd left the group. It wasn't too difficult to touch the nausea center in the brain, if one concentrated.

The attitudes these men displayed towards women were revolting to T'Ehri, and she couldn't help but compare them to Sulu's sensitive nature. The desire for a very ancient form of revenge grew in her, and crystallized when she saw the male and female slaves chained to the Warlord's throne, symbolizing his absolute power over all in his realm. The dull disinterest in the slaves' eyes reminded her of what Sulu had said about ownership.

She was still looking longingly at the phasers and communicators, her mind darting from possibility to possibility, when the Warlord's comments concerning territorial challenge made acquisition of that ancient revenge become possible. His leering study of her, his suggestive comments, and the growing horror on the other women's faces, decided her. Summoning up all of her knowledge of the culture, she stepped forward.

"I challenge you, Warlord, for your hunting ground!"

Back in the converted wine cellar, Sulu paced along the bars like a captive wolf. Kirk stood, a tense, furious statue, his eyes flicking from point to point along the same bars, looking for some weak spot, although





he despaired of finding any. Suddenly, Sulu stopped at the far end of the area, and looked closely at the place where the crossbar went into the wall. His sudden stop attracted both Kirk's and Spock's attention, and they quickly went over to him. Sulu wordlessly reached out, and threw his weight back in a pull on the crossbar, which creaked and visibly shifted. Flaking rock fell to the floor. Sulu looked at Spock, his eyes questioning.

"I doubt it, Lieutenant; there is a limit to my strength."

Kirk had been looking closely at the bar in question, and felt a surge of optimism. After all, Spock had once put his hand through the Transporter Room bulkhead. "I'm not sure, Spock; this bar looks warped. In fact, the metal is rough. I don't think it's very high grade steel, not much above iron, really."

Sulu grinned at Kirk. "Look at it this way, Captain; how many average bottles of wine desperately try to escape from a wine cellar?"

Kirk tried to keep his amusement in check, but had to cover a chuckle with a cough when Spock said, in a puzzled manner, "Escaping wine bottles, Lieutenant? Ah, yes, an attempt at humor. Considering our situation, Lieutenant Sulu, the timing is somewhat inappropriate." Spock turned back to study more closely the bar in question.

Sulu softly remarked to Kirk, "I know I'm not a comedian, but I thought my timing was pretty good. . . ." Kirk shook his head, cutting the comment off, but giving Sulu an appreciative smile. Spock would never understand the human ways of relieving tension.

"In fact, Lieutenant, as Captain Koloth commented, the bars are probably here to discourage pilfering, rather than to act as a true barrier." Spock glanced up the passageway. "I might point out that the thick hardwood door at the entry, and the two armed guards on duty, might well preclude a successful escape attempt."

"We can get around that, Spock." Kirk looked at him. "It wouldn't be the first time that we've used your telepathic abilities to distract a guard."

"Indeed." Spock nodded once, then moved to the bars. "Let me try, Captain. This corner is too cramped for any of you to aid in this effort." He placed his hands in the two places where he would get the most leverage, and strained.

Kirk's gut tightened sympathetically; the creaking and popping sounds that ensued from Spock's effort seemed to come in equal portions from the bar, and Spock. But it wasn't Spock that produced the snapping TWANG.

With the horizontal support bar gone, Spock could bend the vertical bars sideways enough for all of the remaining prisoners to slip through. What had worked on Eminor VII, worked on Aelti, although Spock obviously had to work harder to make the illusion of escape strong enough to make



the first guard convince the second guard that something was wrong. Kirk knocked the first guard out, and Sulu grabbed the second one, spinning him into a corner.

Kirk watched with amazement as the usually gentle Sulu dropped his voice to a silky snarl. "Now, my fine, overly large and brainless friend, I am going to give you one chance. We want to know how to get to the Throne Room, and how to see without being seen when we get there. I can see that you are reluctant to tell me this. Perhaps I can convince you to be more talkative. I come from a people that have been . . . civilized . . . for a long time. We are very learned in methods of encouraging such open transferral of information that interests us. Perhaps . . ." Sulu's voice quieted further, so that only his captive could hear him, while Kirk and Spock traded shocked glances.

Several minutes later, the male members of the *Enterprise* landing parties left the bound guards behind them, and made their way towards the balconies of the Throne Room.

Ten minutes and twelve guards later, the people in the Throne Room had gained a silent audience in the balconies. Kirk had split up his group, cautioning them not to take any action until he gave them the signal. In his own balcony, Kirk had to grab Sulu by his tunic as the lieutenant edged towards the railing.

"Hold it, Sulu," he hissed. "If we just drop down in there now, too many people would get killed; there are too many armed guards. We may be able to use those weapons on the walls, however. Let's take a closer look: try to analyze a route of attack."

Kirk, Sulu, Spock, and McCoy dropped prone, and crept to the railing. Kirk whispered, motioning the two security guards with them to stay back, "What we really need is a diversion. . . ." He never got any further.

"I challenge you, Warlord, for your hunting ground!" Dead silence fell in the room, and T'Ehri hoped that her plan wouldn't get them into even more trouble. The warlord became even uglier as he stared at her. She gathered her courage. "It is within my right to do so, as one of the trespassers on your hunting ground. I am the strongest of our people present; I challenge you!"

"Female, there is nothing to prevent me from taking you, here and now. . . ."

"Your honor, if you have any! As you have said, your ancient custom allows females to challenge for claim to land, to be totally subject to the victor's will if they lose."

The Warlord bared his teeth. "As a warrior, I would lose honor to accept challenge from a female!"

T'Ehri interrupted, trying to keep the Warlord on the defensive. "You are no warrior! Others do your fighting!" She gestured at the guards. "You have no honor, to refuse my challenge! You are so poor a hunter, that your household slaves, those no longer counted as men, must provide meat for your children! You have no cunning, no strength, no patience!"

An ominous murmur sped around the room, and T'Ehri smiled coldly at the Warlord's glare following it. As it died away, she thought, *He's trapped, and we all know it.*

The Warlord stood, seemingly trying to use his height to intimidate her. "I, and I alone, am hunter for this household. None match me in the patience, in the skill, the cunning of the hunt!"

"Prove it!"

Above the two, Kirk whispered tightly over his shoulder, "Just what in hell is she *DOING?*"

Spock and Sulu exchanged glances, and Sulu answered, "They have to be talking about land challenge, or at least hunting territory challenge. There's an old custom allowing a trespasser, if caught, to challenge for the territory. He has to answer her challenge, on her terms, because she voiced first, or lose his honor in his followers' sight."

"But she's a woman!"

Spock answered this time. "There *is* an old custom permitting females to land challenge, although it is, of course, unthought of in their modern culture."

Ignorant of the expanded audience, T'Ehri watched the Warlord's face flush under the tattoos and tribal scars. He finally brought himself under control enough to snarl, "I will accept this, female, but think on this; you would have been cherished in my sight as the rarest of exotics. When I win this challenge, you will be mine, but I will give you to my guards. And I will ask no questions of them. Name your terms of challenge!"

"That you remain cunning in the wait, patient, and strong as the household's hunter must be. You must be motionless, hunter, while your prey comes near. If one muscle twitches, your prey will know, and the household will go hungry that night. And you need not fear, hunter; the prey cannot harm you; I will not touch you."

"If I move, you will go free."

T'Ehri felt a surge of triumph. "And all the others in my party, including the men?"

"They, too, as you are their champion."

Koloth broke in. "Warlord, you cannot mean to let them go!"

"Silence, alien! This is my household, and I must see that the traditions and laws of my people are followed. You may proceed, female. I will remain motionless." The Warlord resumed his seat on the throne.

T'Ehri nodded, squared her shoulders, and walked to a wall. She lifted down two lightweight, razor-sharp matching spears, testing their weight and balance. The guard who moved towards her gained only a scornful look for his trouble. T'Ehri said disdainfully, "Do you think that I would be so stupid as to try assassination? I have declared land challenge; do not lessen your honor by suspicion."

She walked back to the center of the room, composing her mind; casting it back into the ancient past of her people. By the time T'Ehri stood in her starting spot, long generations of matriarchs joined in the mocking smile aimed at the male who'd had the temerity to threaten her.

"You others, stand back. You have only to sit there, Warlord. You may actually be entertained." T'Ehri glanced at the other women, then held Chapel's eyes, projecting reassurance. As the crewwomen and their guards made their way to the sides of the Throne Room, out of her way, T'Ehri took a last look around to clarify in her mind where everyone was. The walls were lined with people, including Klingons, guards, and *Enterprise* crewwomen, but the central floor was left to her.

Her ancestresses whispered to her, and their teachings, the realities of life for a Vulcan Clan Mistress, sang through her blood. Her eyes looked on the Warlord's for a brief moment, and an echo of scornful judgment vibrated from the past.

T'Ehri tossed her hair back, and then knelt on one knee, back straight, arms outstretched to either side, balancing one spear on the back of each hand.

Above her, Kirk heard Spock gasp softly, and turned his head. "Now what's she doing?"

"An ancient rite, Captain. Her mother must have taught her because of her interest in dance. It could give us the diversion that we want. If nothing else, it will be . . . ah . . . distracting to the men in the room. We may not need the distraction, however; the Warlord must obey his traditions, or lose honor in his followers' eyes."

"Just the same, be ready to go over the railing when I give the signal. We can use those tapestries. Our crewwomen have managed to spread themselves out a little, so we can depend on them to take a hand in this. Those guards'll be sorry when they do. But we'll have to wait until everyone's mind is elsewhere, or they'll all get killed before we hit the



floor. . . ." Then the sound of spear shafts touching riveted Kirk's attention on the figure in the center of the Throne Room, and he forgot everything else around him.

With a sudden movement, T'Ehri surged to her feet, stretching backwards like a bow, and the two spears leapt forward, touching shaft to shaft, then head to head, before they returned to her hands.

CLICK . . . . TING

And she danced, and the spears danced with her.

CLICK . . . TING, CLICK . . . TING, CLICK . . . TING

Her dance was the essence of the female.

CLICK. . .TING, CLICK. . .TING, CLICK. . .TING

Every move was female, tempting, challenging.

CLICK...TING, CLICK...TING, CLICK...TING

Desirable, but surrounded by a web of steel.

CLICK...TING, CLICK...TING, CLICK...TING

Faster and faster, she whirled around the room: just out of arm's reach, then back to the center.

CLICK..TING, CLICK..TING, CLICK..TING

Every male in the room felt the invitation

CLICK..TING, CLICK..TING, CLICK..TING

And the challenge, the threat.

CLICK..TING, CLICK..TING, CLICK..TING

All their hearts beat in time to the spears' song.

CLICK-TING, CLICK-TING, CLICK-TING

She danced before the Warlord: inviting, scornful, tempting, challenging.

CLICKTING, CLICKTING, CLICKTING

The Warlord strained not to lean forward in his throne, desire and self-control fighting in his face.

CLICKTING, CLICKTING, CLICKTING





And the dancer whirled in her dance, and the spears took wing outward, to embed themselves in the throne on either side of the Warlord's face, a hair's breath away. And the Warlord's reflexes took over, and he dove to the floor, the shock of ultimate desire changing to death threat too much for even his iron will.

Utter silence filled the room, but knowing, mocking laughter echoed in T'Ehri's mind. *This one is unfit . . . unfit . . . unfit . . .* T'Ehri walked forward, proudly, to stand next to the shaking, prone figure of the Warlord.

"You are fortunate indeed, that this is not my world, during the time of the clans. We had a stern world to live in, and only the strongest could be allowed to breed. We tested the males who came to our mothers' courts, to see who would be a fit sire of our children, a fit warrior. If one flinched, he was driven from the hall with laughter. If one cringed, he was marked so that our sisters would know he had failed the one time he was allowed to. If one failed a second time, or if one reacted in the craven way that you have, it would have been my brothers' duty to make sure that he did not live to father any weaklings. Unlike those who lived in the towns, we clans who wandered in the desert had to choose our mates wisely. The weak could not survive in the wild. But then, our males expected and admired strong women." T'Ehri stepped over the Warlord, towards the equipment on the table next to the throne.

The two personal guards, shame and fury written on their faces, started in her direction, Koloth close behind them. At this, the men in the balconies snapped to, and Kirk, clearing the last wisps of desire from his brain, finally gave the signal. The only way down was by way of the tapestries, but the hangings weren't meant to support all this activity, and most gave way when the men were only half-way down them. The sound of heavily landing feet brought the Throne Room's guards sharply around. The *Enterprise* crewwomen reacted also, grabbing at guardsmen's arms and weapons.

"Let her go!" The Warlord's hoarse voice halted all movement. "I have lost honor enough, without having my word broken as well! All of you, *LEAVE*: all of you aliens! You have brought shame to this house, and most probably its ending! I have been bested by a female! Get out! All of you, get out!"

T'Ehri wordlessly picked up a communicator, and the other women came forward to collect the rest of the equipment. They all walked the length of the Throne Room to the men, who, under Kirk's direction, had gathered in a loose group, carefully watching the shocked and uneasy guards.

T'Ehri handed the communicator to the captain, who stood staring at her. He finally shook his head, and she reached out with her mind, sensitized enough to read stunned disbelief radiating from him at the sudden resolution of the danger, and distant memory of the emotions stirred by her dance. Kirk turned away from her, and as he contacted the *Enterprise*, she felt another, warmer presence.

She turned to see Sulu, amused chagrin on his face.



"I hope you never put me to that test, T'Ehri."

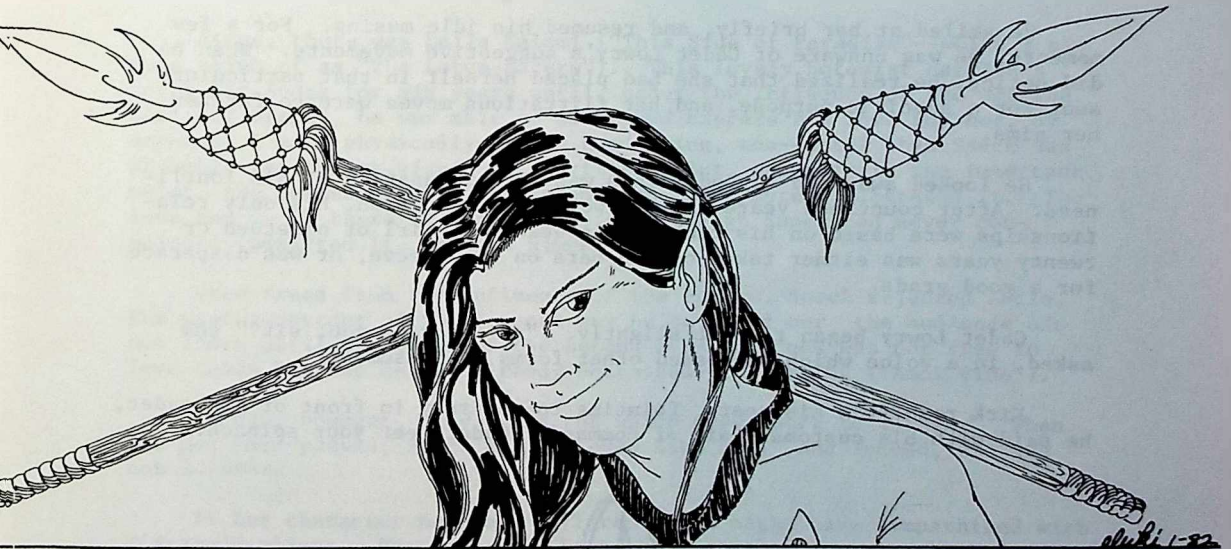
Relief at his caring closeness flooded her, and this, along with what she had done, made her begin to tremble. Sulu must have seen this, and came closer, putting an arm around her waist. She smiled up at him faintly. "You, swordsman? I have no worries about that. Besides, this wasn't completely fair to the Warlord; our warriors knew full well what the test would be." She shuddered. "But even given that, I don't believe I actually challenged that barbarous horror, and won!"

Sulu's arm tightened with obvious affection, and shared relief.

Kirk, McCoy, Spock, Sulu, and T'Ehri were the last group to beam up, having stayed to make sure that the Klingons also left. Standing on the transporter platform, Kirk turned to T'Ehri. "Just what do you call what you did down there, Lieutenant?"

She smiled at him sardonically, then glanced at Spock, raising an eyebrow. "Tradition, Captain, only tradition."

As she walked out of the Transporter Room with Sulu, feeling his chuckles through the arm around her waist, she was aware of Spock's eyes boring into her back.



# The Life of a Captain Is a Lonely Life

Phyllis Johnpoll

Captain James Kirk sat in the Starfleet Academy dining hall, toying with his chicken noodle soup. *His life, he thought, could hardly be called wasted. He was a starship commander, here to lecture future officers on what he had learned in his many years in deep space. Why, then, this empty, lonely feeling?*

The young woman who seated herself at the far end of his table wore the uniform of a cadet in her final year at the Academy. Kirk wondered why he had never noticed the attractive redhead before.

She blushed under his stare. In reply to his question, she said her name was "Lowry. Sharon Lowry, sir." She moved her seat closer to his end of the table and smiled.

He smiled at her briefly, and resumed his idle musing. For a few moments, he was unaware of Cadet Lowry's suggestive movements. When he did notice, he realized that she had placed herself in that particular seat for a specific purpose, and her flirtatious moves were to further her aims.

He looked away and sighed. This was the explanation of his loneliness. After countless years of hard work and dedication, his only relationships were based on his rank. This beautiful girl of nineteen or twenty years was either taken by the bars on his sleeve, or was desperate for a good grade.

Cadet Lowry began to pout slightly. "Am I boring you, sir?" she asked, in a voice which suggested other forms of amusement.

Kirk rose from his seat. Pointing to the tray in front of the cadet, he said with his customary air of command, "Cadet, eat your spinach."



# SPOCK'S WOMEN

by Sandra Wise

We are all familiar with the type of *STAR TREK* fan fiction in which a beautiful young yeoman (an obvious surrogate for the author herself) joins the crew of the USS *Enterprise* and wins the heart of none other than Mr. Spock. Her method varies: sometimes he and she are alone (marooned on an alien planet, say) when the *pon farr* strikes, and she saves his life by giving him her virginal body . . . etc.

What these enthusiastic authors should ask themselves before sitting down to write is, logically: "What sort of woman attracts Spock?"

There is no lack of evidence available since, in the course of three seasons of TV episodes, no fewer than five women managed to get some sort of emotional response from Spock.

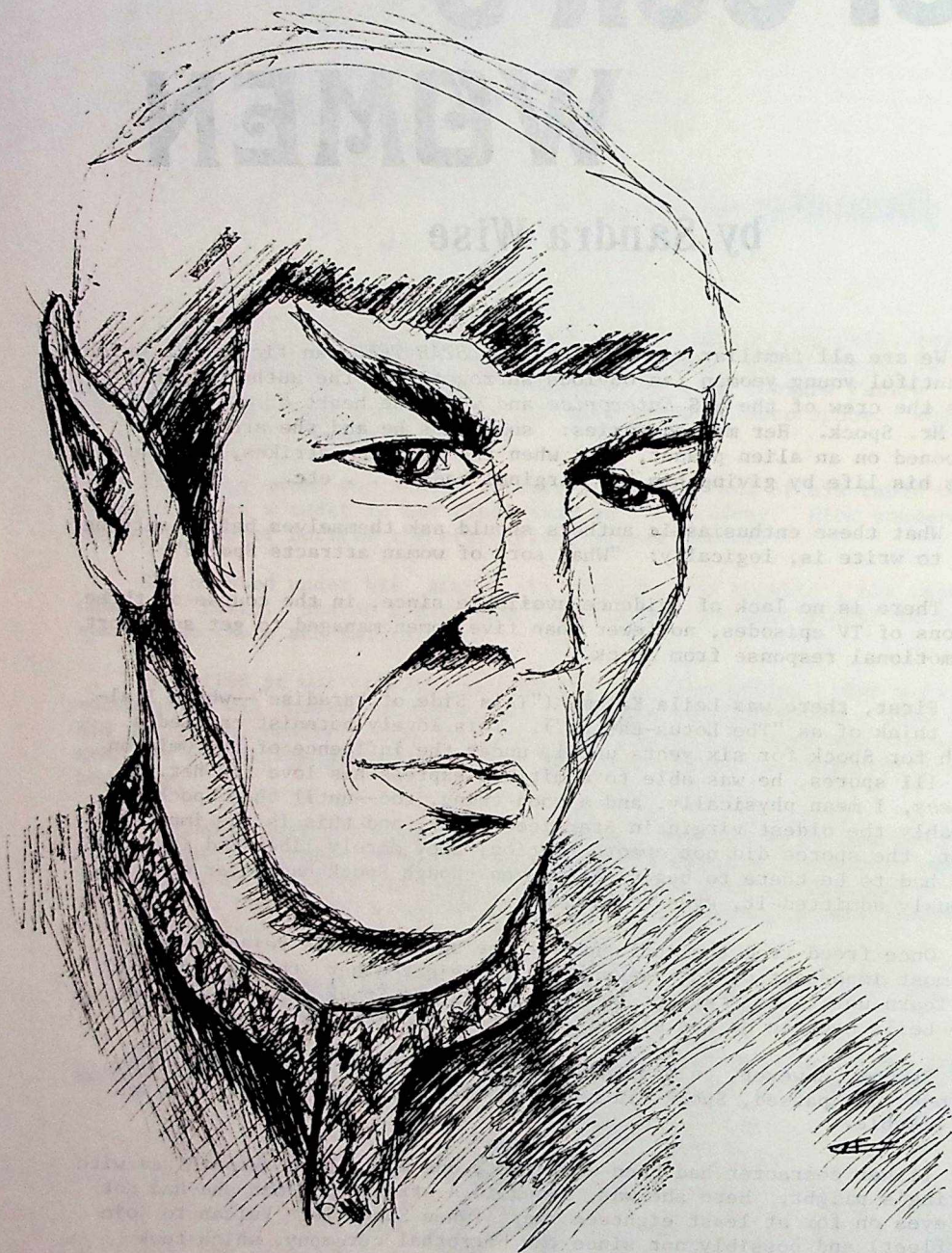
First, there was Leila Kalomi ("This Side of Paradise"--which I always think of as "The Lotus-Eaters"). This lovely botanist carried a torch for Spock for six years until, under the influence of the Omicron Ceti III spores, he was able to admit and express his love for her. By *express*, I mean physically, and a good thing, too--until then Spock was probably the oldest virgin in Starfleet. But, and this is the important point, the spores did not *create* emotion, they merely liberated it. The love had to be there to begin with, even though Spock had never consciously admitted it, even to himself.

Once freed from the influence of the spores, Spock rejected Leila. The most important of the reasons why he rejected her the audience did not learn until the start of the second season; Spock was not free to love Leila because he was already betrothed--to T'Pring ("Amok Time").

It was, however, only blind rut which drew Spock to T'Pring. When the *pon farr* passed, Spock did not even like her. And indeed, she was not likable.

If her character had been different, one might have sympathized with T'Pring's plight. Here she was, bound to a stranger, a man she had not set eyes on for at least eighteen years (when Spock left Vulcan to join Starfleet) and possibly not since the betrothal ceremony, which took place when they were seven years old--perhaps after each of them had survived the *kahs-wan* ordeal?





The latter seems more probable, since the only photograph Spock had of his bride was of a little girl.

Assuming that T'Pring did her duty and went through with the wedding, Spock would have left her as soon as he could, to get back to his urgent duties on board the *Enterprise*--a matter of hours, or, at best, days. Some honeymoon! She could then have looked forward to being visited by her husband at least once every seven years, when the *pon farr* struck again. This delightful situation would continue until Spock was too old for further service with Starfleet--somewhere between 100 and 150 years--by which time it would have been a little late for them to begin building a real relationship.

Besides, T'Pring wanted to marry Stonn. It was fairly obvious that she preferred Stonn because she could dominate him, as she could never do Spock. From what we saw of him, Stonn was inferior to Spock in every possible way, but he was at least honest; he intended to fight Spock himself. Spock would have wiped him out in approximately 2.03 seconds, but what matter? At least he would have died an honorable death.

However, finding Spock accompanied, as was his right, by his "closest friends," T'Pring conceived the brilliantly logical, and totally ruthless, plan of choosing one of them as her champion.

"If your captain won, he would not want me; if you won, you would refuse me for having dared to challenge. Or, if you did not, it would make no difference, for you would be gone, and I would have your name and your property, and Stonn would still be here." 1.

Even without her cool admission of intent to commit adultery, T'Pring's explanation made the hearer admire her intelligence--and despise her cold heart. As did Spock.

The Romulan Commander ("The *Enterprise* Incident") was, like T'Pring, a special case. Spock was naturally attracted to her--a woman with the looks and intelligence of a Vulcan, but the emotional warmth of a Terran--but not sufficiently to make him forget his duty. His job was to distract her while Kirk stole the cloaking device, but if she had not set about trying to seduce him, it is doubtful that Spock would have made advances towards her. When, realizing how she had been used, she asked, "What are you, that you could do this to me?", he answered, splendidly, "First Officer of the *Enterprise*." 2.

Droxine ("The Cloud-Minders") was a special case in a very different way: she was the one woman Spock ever flirted with when in his right mind, and not under the influence of rut or spores or whatever. Their relationship never got beyond flirtation, but Droxine clearly wished it would. As for Spock--well, why did he tell her all about *pon farr*, a piece of information which Kirk had to drag out of him? Perhaps the taboo against discussing it doesn't apply with potential sexual partners. And, of course, this was the third season, when the old rules went out the window.

- 
1. "Amok Time"--paraphrased.
  2. "The *Enterprise* Incident"



DROXINE: Only once every seven years? Can nothing disturb that cycle?

SPOCK: The beauty of a woman is . . . always disturbing.<sup>3</sup>

At which point he *might* have lunged for her, had Kirk (drat him!) not screamed for help from the inner room.

In view of this, it is a pity that Droxine was not a little more worthy of our Mr. Spock. As written, and acted, she seems more idiotic than ingenuous. What could *Spock* see in this vacuous babe? Ah, well, one must take the intention for the deed, and assume that Spock was moved by her purity and innocence, not to mention her fragile beauty.

Finally, there was Zarabeth ("All Our Uesterdays"), the only woman, aside from Leila, with whom Spock ever made love. We saw Spock carry her to the bed, then we cut to the library where Kirk was yelling "Bones! Spock!", then back to Spock and Zarabeth, by this time looking languid and rumpled. One wonders what Dr. McCoy was doing while all this was going on? Watching? It was a small cave. When Spock loses his inhibitions, he doesn't just fool around.

So, leaving T'Pring out of it (gladly!), let us examine what the four women (Leila, Droxine, Zarabeth, and the Romulan Commander) have in common, and therefore, what Spock finds attractive.

- 1) They are piquantly lovely, as opposed to classically beautiful.
- 2) They all have slender, girlish figures. Large bosoms and behinds are out. Sophia Loren wouldn't stand a chance with Spock. Kirk, yes! Spock, no.
- 3) They are all (even Droxine!) highly intelligent.
- 4) They have great sensitivity, and sweet, gentle natures. Well, maybe not the Romulan Commander, but *she* is highly emotional.
- 5) They are all brave: Leila with her dream of love shattered, Zarabeth exiled alone in Sarpeidon's Ice Age, Droxine discovering that Stratos City is Cloud-Cuckoo-Land, the Romulan ordering the destruction of the *Enterprise* without an instant of hesitation--they all face difficult situations with dignity and courage.

Does this remind the reader of Somebody?

Put them all together, they spell A\*M\*A\*N\*D\*A.

Yes, Mr. Spock is attracted to women who resemble his Terran mother.

So bear that in mind, anyone who contemplates writing stories about Spock's sex life.

---

3. "The Cloud-Minders"--paraphrased.





# The Affair of the Xixobrax Jewelworm ( a tragicomedy ) by Sandra Wise

Even in deep space, where 'day' and 'night' are meaningless concepts, starships keep to their own diurnal rhythm. The USS *Enterprise* is no exception. During the eight hours out of every twenty-four which constitute shipboard 'night,' the corridor lights are dimmed, the graveyard shift (which, except under emergency conditions, is only a skeleton crew --appropriately enough) goes on duty, and most of the ship is given over to quiet activities, like sleep . . and messing around.

On this particular 'night' the Senior Officers' quarters were peaceful:

Chief Engineer Montgomery Scott was beguiling a bout of insomnia by reading the latest technical journals. Any normal person would have been put to sleep within minutes, but Scotty devoured the dry pages with as much gusto as if they had been girly magazines.

Chief Surgeon Leonard McCoy knew an infallible remedy for insomnia, the secret ingredients of which included bourbon and mint. Consequently, silence reigned in his cabin, except, of course, for the sound of his gentle snores, and darkness, except for the light shining on his planter-box of fresh mint.

It would have been difficult for most of those associated with Mr. Spock to imagine the First Officer with his hair rumpled, his mouth open,





GORDON  
ARLETON



and one bare foot sticking out from under the covers, but such was his situation. He was dreaming that he was on a planet whose inhabitants had huge, shining wings, like angels. They pitied him for being, from their point of view, a cripple. He tried to explain that, never having had wings, he did not miss them. In any case, if he wanted to fly, he could do it in a shuttlecraft. But when he turned to look at his shuttlecraft, he found it overgrown with red-and-white flowers, whose perfume seemed to linger in his nostrils as he awoke. . . .

"Illogical," muttered Spock, rolling over and drifting back to sleep.

Captain James T. Kirk was also dreaming, but his dream was somewhat less esoteric than that of his first officer. In point of fact, he was dreaming about a cute little blonde whom he had met on his last rest leave.

"Oh, Captain Kirk," she was saying, "it must be wonderful to be so strong and handsome."

"It is," said Kirk modestly.

"Oh, Captain--"

"Call me Jim."

"Oh, Jim!"

Her crimson lips were moving closer, ever closer. Her golden hair brushed against his cheek. He reached out to crush her against his pectorals . . .

*Tu-Whee-Whut!*

The blare of the intercom shattered his dream world. Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, he pressed the intercom button. "Kirk here," he said, thinking *This had better be important!*

The face of the Night Communications Officer, Lieutenant Veronica Langstrom, appeared on the screen.

"I'm sorry to wake you, Captain, but there's a Priority One message from Starfleet coming in," she said.

"Pipe it through to my quarters, Lieutenant," said Kirk, quickly putting on his robe and smoothing back his hair.

Lieutenant Langstrom was replaced by a whitehaired man in the uniform of a Starfleet Admiral.

"Captain Kirk," he said, "the *Enterprise* is to proceed to Caecus Delta with all possible speed. The Federation Cultural Observer on the planet will explain the situation when you arrive. Falcon. Starfleet out."

"Falcon" was a codeword indicating that the Klingon Empire was involved somehow. Kirk acknowledged the order automatically, wondering what it was all about, then called the bridge and ordered the course change.

A quick glance at his chronometer told Kirk that he could sleep for another half-hour, but there was small chance of his returning to that same pleasant dream. He decided to take a cold shower instead.

Several light-years away, on board the Klingon Battlecruiser *Destruction*, the Chief Communications Officer finished decoding Starfleet's message to the *Enterprise* and played it back for the captain, Commander Koloth.

"Caecus Delta," he said, tugging thoughtfully at his beard. "The Empire has an interest in that planet. This bears looking into. Set a course that will bring us within sensor range of the *Enterprise*, but subtly, subtly."

"Yes, Lord Commander," said the navigator, a trifle uncertainly, subtlety not being a Klingon strong point.

Koloth, meanwhile, had turned toward the Communications Console.

"Good thing you cracked Starfleet's latest code, Kyla," he remarked.

Kyla, who was his wife as well as his Communications Officer, smiled smugly.

Like the Terrans of the Twentieth century--whom, in many ways, they strongly resemble--the Klingons are firm believers in the double standard and in the inequality of the sexes. For the most part, they have very little patience with women, considering them domestic cattle, useful for doing the dirty work and breeding sons.

Occasionally, however, a Klingon woman manages to make her mark in this chauvinistic society, usually by dint of being twice as good as any man. Kyla had risen to be Chief Communications Officer on board the *Destruction* by merit--and by assassinating the previous holder of the post. She herself was fairly secure in her position, as long as Koloth remained secure in his. Knowing this, she made his interests her own. It was one of the things that kept them together.

There were other things as well: they had been married five years and were still not tired of each other sexually; they thought alike in many ways; they were fond of each other--one might even say that they were "in love", insofar as that term applies to Klingons.

Koloth, at any rate, often congratulated himself on having found a woman who was not nearly as stupid and weak as the majority of her sex.

The only cloud in their relationship to date had been Kyla's pregnancy, three years earlier, which had necessarily kept her planet-bound for the better part of a year. She had not liked the idea of Koloth finding a substitute for her, as Communications Officer, or as the other thing. She had hated being reduced to the brood-sow status of an ordinary woman. Once the baby (a son, naturally) was born and safely tucked away in a State Creche, she had hurried back to the ship, and kicked out the (female) junior officer with whom Koloth had been consoling himself in her absence. Koloth, happily, had been glad to see her. He had missed having someone to confide in, someone whom he knew was on his side.

Thinking of his previous encounter with the USS *Enterprise* made Koloth grind his teeth in fury. That time, the Klingons had not only lost Sherman's Planet and one of their most valuable deep-cover agents, Lieutenant Kralek (also known as Arne Darwin), but also their ship had been infested with millions of horrible, disgusting, furry parasites, which bred like crazy. Crazy was what they had nearly driven the Klingons before they were finally cleared out of the ship.

This time, Koloth vowed, things were going to be different.

Caecus Delta was a pleasant Class-M planet with abundant natural resources--just the kind of place the Federation liked. They would have colonized it as a matter of course, except that it already possessed an indigenous humanoid population. Therefore, the Federation had to content itself with offering help, advice, and Federation membership.

The Federation's Cultural Observer on Caecus Delta was a man named Lyle Jurgensen.

"I don't suppose you know much about the government on Caecus Delta . . . " he said.

"Caecus Delta," said Spock, right on cue, "is ruled by a Council composed of the heads of the various clans. The three largest and most important of these are the Amethyst, the Carnelian, and the Peridot Clans."

"That's right," said Jurgensen. "Carnelian and Peridot are diametrically opposed on every issue, on principle, so it generally falls to Amethyst to cast the deciding vote."

"Which makes Amethyst the most important," murmured Spock.

"Yes. Right now, Peridot is in favor of joining the Federation, so of course Carnelian opposes it. In fact, I strongly suspect them of conspiring with the Klingons. Amethyst is . . . undecided."

He paused and looked down at his knuckles as though he had never seen them before.



The pause lengthened until Kirk prompted him: "Why exactly was the *Enterprise* sent for, Mr. Jurgensen?"

Jurgensen swallowed audibly. "It concerns the Noble Lady Ivorine," he said.

"The wife of Clan Lord Flaven, the head of Amethyst Clan," said Spock.

"As a matter of fact, she's got him twisted around her little finger, so you might say that *she* is the head of Amethyst," said Jurgensen. "That's why it's important that the Federation keep in her good graces, and with the Klingons hanging around all the time--if I hadn't done it, they would have!" he finished, defiantly.

"Mr. Jurgensen," said Kirk, "*what have you done?*"

Visions of mind-boggling horrors swirled in Kirk's brain, but what Jurgensen replied was almost worse.

"I told the Noble Lady that the Federation would help her to obtain a Xixobrax Jewelworm," he said. "Not pay for it," he added hastily, as Kirk took a deep breath; "the Clan Lord will pay. Just *help* get it."

Kirk did not trust himself to speak, so he gestured to Spock. The Vulcan's voice was as calm as ever. "I take it that she desires one?"

"Who wouldn't? She's been nagging the Clan Lord about it for months."

Kirk had heard (as had everyone in the Federation) about the Xixobrax Jewelworm, an unique blend of ornament and pet worn by the Priests of the Cosmic Egg. It was a warm-blooded creature which appeared to be composed of shimmering jewels, would cling wherever it was placed, and changed color, chameleon-like, to match its background. The Federation had become Jewelworm-conscious a few months earlier, when Doralda Delatour, star of the fabulously popular tridee series, *Queen of the Ice Stars*, had refused to sign her new contract until and unless she received an Xixobrax Jewelworm. The studio had done its best, but the Priests of the Cosmic Egg refused, for religious reasons, to part with one at any price.

Apparently, the resultant uproar had penetrated even as far as Caecus Delta.

When he could control his voice, Kirk said, "And just how are we supposed to get the Noble Lady an Xixobrax Jewelworm, when *Doralda Delatour* had to do without?"

"I don't know," said Jurgensen helplessly.

"There is only one thing to do," said Kirk. "She will have to be told that you were mistaken."

\* \* \* \* \*

Even using all the prestige belonging to a Starship captain, it took Kirk the better part of an hour to hack his way through the jungle of protocol and speak directly to the Noble Lady Ivorine. At last her face appeared on the bridge viewscreen.

Kirk felt his pulses pound at the sight of her. Jurgensen had said that she was reputed to be the most beautiful woman on the planet, but Kirk had not been prepared to find her *so* beautiful. She just might, he thought, be the loveliest woman he had ever laid eyes on: skin like translucent alabaster, eyes like emeralds, lips like . . . words failed him.

"Noble Lady," he said, pulling himself together, "I am Captain James T. Kirk of the United Starship *Enterprise* . . . "

Ivorine interrupted, in a voice like a peal of golden bells. "And who is that handsome creature standing behind you?"

This was news to Kirk. He looked around quickly, but didn't see anyone except Spock.

"Uh--that's my First Officer, Commander Spock," said Kirk. "Noble Lady, I must speak to you about--"

"You will come to dinner. We can talk then."

"But--"

"You . . . and Commander Spock."

She broke contact before Kirk could say another word.

Kirk and Spock exchanged glances.

"Mr. Spock, it looks as if you and I had better break out our dress uniforms," said Kirk.

Seen in the flesh, Noble Lady Ivorine was even more exquisite than she had appeared on the viewscreen. Kirk found it difficult to tear his eyes from her, even to attend to what he was eating.

Spock, however, was cautious about what he ate, as usual. The first course, spiced fruit, was safe enough, but the second course was a form of pilaf in a dark sauce. Spock eyed it dubiously.

"There is no meat in it, Mr. Spock," said a soft voice. "I know Vulcans don't eat flesh."

Kirk was startled. Until she had spoken, he had not even been aware of the other woman's presence at the table. *So much for the trained powers of observation of a Starship captain*, he thought wryly. Of course, it was difficult to notice any other woman when Noble Lady Ivorine was pres-





ent, and in any case, the speaker was a drab little creature in grey. The only thing memorable about her was that her hair was dark purple, and even that was not uncommon among her people.

The Noble Lady, meanwhile, had focused her attention upon Spock.

"Why don't you eat meat?" she demanded.

"Vulcans do not find it necessary to take life in order to obtain nourishment," he said.

Ivorine shrugged one creamy shoulder. "What are animals there for, if not to eat?" she said.

"Everything has its place in the universal ecology," said Spock, "but that place is not simply the convenience of sentient species."

"That's silly," said Ivorine, "but then, Vulcans are odd anyway. Tell me, is it true that you don't have normal feelings?"

"That depends upon one's definition of 'normal'," replied the Vulcan.

"Doesn't a woman's body mean anything to you? Doesn't that green blood ever boil?"

She laid her hand upon his. He remained motionless, his face a mask of stone.

*Talk about tactless!* thought Kirk, remembering Spock's extreme cultural, and personal, reticence in sexual matters. He cast about for some way to distract the Noble Lady's attention.

However, this proved unnecessary when a servant dropped a spoon with a clatter.

"Clumsy Oaf--" cried Ivorine, springing up, and slapping him as hard as she could. He bore it with a stoicism which indicated that this sort of thing happened frequently.

"Be Off, Fellow," said Clan Lord Flaven, a large, mild-spoken man.

The servant made his escape gratefully.

Ivorine sat down again. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes sparkled with temper. It only added to her beauty.

"Perhaps the Clan Lord's guests would care to see the gardens," said the woman who had spoken earlier; "there are few flowers this early in the year, but the tik-trees are in blossom, and the moons should be rising by now."

"We would *love* to see the gardens," said Kirk quickly.

\* \* \* \* \*

As soon as Kirk and Spock had followed her out into the cool darkness of the gardens, the woman said, "Mr. Spock, please accept my apologies, and don't be offended with the Noble Lady."

"I am never offended," said Spock distantly, "and no apologies are necessary, Noble Lady."

"Luraleen, not 'Noble Lady'. I am only a poor relation. You must understand that my cousin Ivorine was not born to rank and power. Our fathers were minor sept officials. It tends to go to her head. And of course, the Clan Lord never denies her anything she wants. This Xixobrax Jewelworm, for instance."

"About the Jewelworm," said Kirk, seizing his chance, "I am afraid that there has been a mistake. The Federation cannot help get her one."

"Perhaps you can," replied Luraleen.

"How? The Priests of the Cosmic Egg aren't selling, and theft is out of the question."

"What about Bazaar? You know their motto," said Luraleen.

"'Whatever you want, we can get it for you--wholesale'," quoted Spock.

"It's worth a try," said Kirk thoughtfully.

"It's worth more than a try," said Luraleen, "because if the Noble Lady doesn't get that Jewelworm, goodbye Federation, hello Klingon Empire."

On board the *Destruction*, Koloth was saying, "Are you certain you cannot obtain this Jewelworm?"

Krax, the Klingon Empire's Chief Agent on Caecus Delta, shook his head. "The Empire has sent three Theft Teams to try and steal one," he said. "Two of them disappeared without a trace, and the third got religion and have become acolytes of the Cosmic Egg."

Koloth wondered what sort of product the Thieves' Guild was turning out these days. Things had been different when he was a beardless youth.

"Have you tried blackmail? Ransom?" he demanded.

"No good. The Priests live disgustingly blameless lives, and they refuse to pay ransom. They don't care if you kill hostages, because they say that death is the gateway to Oneness. Whatever that means."

"What about *buying* a Jewelworm?"

"I've even tried that," confessed Krax. "They refuse to sell."

"If the Federation succeeds where you have failed," said Koloth nastily, "we both know whose head will be on the chopping block."

Krax turned a sickly shade of puce. "Yes, Commander Koloth," he said. "I'll keep trying."

"Trying isn't good enough!" snarled Koloth, and broke contact. "What is the *Enterprise* doing?" he asked his aide.

"Still in standard orbit, sir."

"Let me know the instant anything changes."

"Of course, Lord Commander."

When Kirk and Spock beamed back up to the ship, they found Doctor McCoy waiting for them in the Transporter Room.

"Well, how was dinner?" he asked. "Or have you-all become too high and mighty to speak to your humble servant?"

"Indeed, Doctor," said Spock, "it is a pity that you were not invited. You would undoubtedly have found the Noble Lady Ivorine a fascinating psychological study. Although she possesses everything that is usually considered desirable, including beauty, wealth, and a high position in her society, she must constantly reassure herself of her importance by behaving in a manner which, in some societies, would be considered ample justification for . . . wife-beating. Now if you will excuse me, Doctor, Captain--"

"Good night, Mr. Spock," said Kirk.

"Yeah, pleasant dreams, Spock," said McCoy.

"Good night, gentlemen."

As soon as the Vulcan was out of earshot, McCoy turned eagerly to Kirk. "What did she do?" he asked. "Rape him or something?"

"Or something," said Kirk.

"So come have a nightcap and tell me all about it."

"Bones," said Kirk, "you are an incurable gossip."

"Nonsense," said McCoy, "if something has happened to upset Mr. Spock, I, as his physician, should know about it."

The next morning, Luraleen beamed aboard with a letter of unlimited credit, and the *Enterprise* set course for Bazaar. They could not fail to



notice that they were being paced by a Klingon Battlecruiser.

"Nothing we can do," said Kirk. "This is neutral space."

As usual when the *Enterprise* had a VIP passenger, Kirk arranged a formal reception, attended by the senior officers, for Luraleen. He himself went to her quarters to escort her to the dining room.

When Luraleen appeared, Kirk wondered (illogically, as Spock would say) if he had gotten the wrong cabin. Last night's grub had become tonight's butterfly: pearly flesh gleamed through a silken gown; makeup brightened lips and eyes (her eyes, Kirk realized, were grey with just a hint of violet); the purple hair was becomingly arranged, and a gold-and-amethyst brooch in the form of the Clan emblem waged what looked like a losing battle to hold the front of her bodice together over her shapely breasts.

"You look . . . terrific," Kirk said.

Luraleen smiled. "I seldom get a chance to dress up," she said; "Ivory cannot endure competition. She won't even have a pretty scullery maid in the house."

When Kirk entered the dining room with the transformed Luraleen on his arm, Spock slowly raised one eyebrow. *It was*, thought Kirk, *the ultimate accolade*.

Dinner that evening was distinctly more enjoyable than it had been the night before. McCoy, as always in the presence of a pretty woman, was very much the courtly Southern gentleman, Scotty tapped a vein of Gaelic charm, and even Spock was at his ease.

"I'm puzzled as to why you put up with the Noble Lady," said Kirk. "Or does she treat you better than she does everyone else?"

"Someone is needed to run the Clan Lord's household," said Luraleen. "I have no dowery. I am . . . grateful to my cousin for giving me an honorable place. And I like the Clan Lord."

The distinction was not lost on Spock, at least. He quirked an eyebrow thoughtfully as McCoy said, "From what I hear the Clan Lord is some kind of idiot. Can't he make his wife behave herself?"

"The Clan Lord," replied Luraleen, slowly, "is a man whose wife is certain to have a great deal of influence over him."

As the son of an ambassador, Spock knew diplomatic evasion when he heard it. However, it was not his way to cross-examine people regarding their emotions, so he refrained from comment.

"He ought to have been a little more choosy about whom he married, then," said McCoy.

Luraleen did not reply, but a faint flush stole across her cheeks.

A few days later, the *Enterprise* reached Bazaar.

Bazaar--Marketplace of the Galaxy (as the ads proclaim)--an entire planet given over to one vast shopping complex.

Imagine a department store having a fire sale the day before Christmas.

Imagine an amusement park where all the children are being given free rides.

Imagine the wildest party you have ever attended.

Imagine all this going on, non-stop, on a planet-wide basis, and you will have some dim idea of Bazaar.

To all outward appearances, Itzak Toeplitz was a respectable, indeed rather dull, *kevas*-merchant. In reality, however, he was the head of the Klingon Empire's spy network on Bazaar.

Therefore, as soon as the *Destruction* was in orbit around the planet, Koloth wasted no time in contacting Toeplitz. (His real name was Krunk, but he preferred to be called Toeplitz, and who can blame him?)

"There are no Xixobrax Jewelworms for sale on Bazaar, Commander Koloth," said Toeplitz. He paused, then added, "Not officially."

"Then unofficially?" said Koloth.

"There is an old hag named Chen Ay, who, among other things, runs an illicit flamegem-and-dope ring operating out of the Anubis Cluster."

"And?" Koloth decided that he didn't like Toeplitz--*Krunk!* He detested people who would not get to the point.

"A Cosmic Egg Temple-ship went missing in the Anubis Cluster a while back. The official verdict was that the ship's warp-drive imploded, but I suspect--"

"Very well, Krunk," interrupted Koloth, "find out what she wants, and pay it."

Toeplitz looked embarrassed. "Chen Ay refuses to deal with the Empire, Commander," he confessed. "Something about us having massacred her family when we took over on Iskander."

"Hell and damnation!" said Koloth. "That was a hundred-and-twenty-three years ago! She certainly knows how to hold a grudge!"

"I'm afraid so, Commander," said Toeplitz. "However--" He gave another of his dramatic pauses. Koloth found them intensely irritating. "Her heirs might prove more reasonable."

Koloth leaned towards the viewscreen. "Tell me more," he said.

"Well, one of them came to see me recently to buy some *quelk*. . . ."

Settling into orbit around Bazaar at the twenty-thousand-mile perigee, the *Enterprise* crew could not help seeing the Klingon Battlecruiser at the *nineteen*-thousand-mile perigee.

"The registration checks out as the *Destruction*, currently under the command of Commander Koloth," said Spock.

"My old pal Koloth," said Kirk. "We must assume that he is here to sabotage our mission. Lieutenant Uhura, contact the authorities on Bazaar--"

"The Board of Directors," prompted Spock.

"Thank you, Mr. Spock--and see if they have an Xixobrax Jewelworm for sale. Also, anyone who is due for shore leave can take it on Bazaar."

"Shore leave on Bazaar? *Horosho!*" said Chekov.

"Aye, aye, sir," said Uhura.

"Mr. Scott, you have the conn," said Kirk, rising and heading for the turbo-lift. "Mr. Spock, come with me."

As Kirk had anticipated, Koloth sent Klingons planet-side to shadow every single member of the *Enterprise's* shore parties.

"Keep the Earthers in sight at all times," Koloth told his men, "and above all, don't let them get their hands on an Xixobrax Jewelworm."

"Yes, Lord Commander!" they chorused.

"And tell me as soon as Captain Kirk beams down. I intend to keep a *personal* eye on him."

"Here's the plan," Kirk told Spock, McCoy, and Luraleen. "As soon as we hit the surface, we split up, and wander around asking at every shop if they have an Xixobrax Jewelworm for sale."

"With all due respect, Captain," said Spock, "that is not a logical way to proceed."



"No, but it will drive the Klingons out of their skulls."

Spock looked blank.

"Don't you get it?" asked Kirk. "The Klingons are so devious that if they hear us asking for an Xixobrax Jewelworm, they'll think we must *really* want something else, only they won't know what!"

Spock raised his eyebrows as Kirk and McCoy burst into laughter.

At approximately four minutes after High Noon, Bazaar-time, Kirk, Spock, McCoy, and Luraleen materialized on a busy street and parted company, Luraleen staying with Kirk, and Spock and McCoy going in two different directions.

One minute later, Koloth, Kyla, and two Imperial Space Marines appeared on the same spot and set out after the quartet.

"I don't know if this is right," said Luraleen. "Shouldn't we be trying to find the Jewelworm?"

"We are trying to," said Kirk. "We have feelers out to the Board of Directors. There is nothing we can do until we hear from them, so we might as well have a little fun with the Klingons."

"Since you put it that way. . . ."

"It sure beats biting your nails," said Kirk. "Shall we have something to drink?"

They stopped at a vending machine, and Kirk used his Universal Credit Card.

The machine must have been malfunctioning, since Kirk had punched the code for fruit juice, but what came out was definitely alcoholic.

Luraleen, who was thirsty, gulped it straight down. Not surprisingly, she soon developed a certain unsteadiness in her gait.

"I'm dizzy," she explained.

"Liquor on an empty stomach," said Kirk. "Come on, I'll buy you something to eat."

They were looking for a restaurant when whom should they meet but Koloth and Kyla.

"My dear Captain Kirk!" said Koloth, showing his teeth in what was no doubt meant for a friendly smile.

"My dear Commander Koloth!" said Kirk with equal sincerity.

"What a surprise seeing you here!"

"Yes, isn't it?"

They beamed at one another.

"This is the Little Woman," said Koloth. "Kyla, you've heard me speak of Captain Kirk of the *Enterprise*?"

"Many, *many* times," said Kyla.

"And your own lovely companion is--" prompted Koloth.

"Ms Luraleen Amethyst Pendarsdaughter," said Kirk.

"Enchanted," said Koloth, and kissed her hand. Even Kirk had to admit that he did it with panache.

Doctor McCoy had not gone far before he noticed a Klingon Imperial Space Marine close behind. He wondered if he could shake him.

"I'm a doctor, not a secret agent," he muttered, entering a haberdashery.

"Can I help you, ssir?" asked the proprietor, an elderly Gorn who resembled Albert the Alligator.

"Do you have an Xixobrax Jewelworm?" McCoy asked, loudly, to be certain that the Klingon heard.

"No, ssir. Ssomething Elsse?"

"Well, I--say, what have we here?" McCoy's attention was caught by a rack of colorful garments.

"Finesst Aldebaran cloud-ssilk, ssir. Guaranteed waterproof, fire-proof--"

McCoy tried on a chartreuse cloak lined in shocking pink. "I'll take it," he said. "Might as well look the part. You don't sell daggers as well, do you?"

"No, ssir, but there iss an armamentss sshop in the nexxt block."

Mr. Spock, meanwhile, had wandered into one of the planet's many red-light districts.

As he hesitated at the entrance of Petulia's Pleasure Palace, a young woman appeared beside him.

"How may I serve your pleasure?" she asked.

She was tall and slender, and wore a dress that seemed to be composed entirely of red and white flowers. It reminded Spock of something.

"I have an unusual request," he said.

"Anything within reason," the woman replied. "Come with me."

Spock followed her to a private room.

"Now," she said, coming very close to him, "tell me your desire."

Her dress had somehow become unfastened, and was sliding slowly towards the floor. Centimeter after centimeter of smooth flesh came into view even as she spoke.

"Did--did you notice the Klingon Imperial Space Marine who entered this establishment directly behind me?" asked Spock, resolutely fixing his gaze on the opposite wall.

"Friend of yours?"

"No. Do you think he could be kept occupied long enough for me to make my departure unnoticed?"

"A Klingon? I suppose I could do it . . . but he might give me the uglies."

Spock produced his Universal Credit Card. "I am prepared to double your usual emolument," he said.

"In advance?"

"Of course."

"Are you sure you don't want anything else?"

"Quite sure," said Spock.

"Pity," she said, pulling her dress back into place.

A few minutes later, Spock returned to the *Enterprise*, confident that at least one Klingon would be out of circulation for some time.

Meanwhile, Kirk, Luraleen, Koloth, and Kyla were having a "friendly" lunch together.

Kirk eyed Koloth's wife with some interest. He remembered the





joke with which Chekov and Sulu had rolled 'em in the aisles at the annual Shipboard Talent Contest.

Chekov: How do you tell a Klingon Woman from a Klingon Man?

Sulu: Easy. The men all have beards and mustaches. The women just have mustaches.

However, this did not apply to Kyla. Dark-eyed and sultry, she looked as lissome as a young panther--and about as trustworthy.

"Well, Koloth," said Kirk, "and what brings you to Bazaar?"

"Just a little R & R. And you?"

"The same thing."

"What a coincidence!"

Suddenly, a peculiar bleeping noise began to emanate from the region of Koloth's belt.

"I think they're playing your song," said Kirk.

In the privacy of a cubicle in the Men's Room, Koloth pulled out his communicator. "Koloth here. What is it?"

Korax, the *Destruction's* First Officer, replied. "We have just been informed by the planetary authorities that Underofficer Korg has been arrested, Lord Commander."

"What for this time?"

"It seems he was in a whorehouse and got into an argument about the size of his bill."

"What," said Koloth, "was he doing in a whorehouse? He was supposed to be following the Vulcan."

"Korg claims he did follow the Vulcan--into the whorehouse."

"A likely story. Very well, Korax, pay Korg's fine and beam him back up to the ship."

"But, sir, shouldn't we let him cool his heels in jail for a while?"

"Use your head, Korax. Where is he going to be happier and more comfortable?"

There was a pause while Korax thought it over. *In jail, of course.* "Yes, Lord Commander," he said at last.



"And remember, the fine comes out of Korg's pay," snarled Koloth.

Koloth returned to the table in no very good mood.

"Something wrong?" asked Kirk cheerily.

"Nothing," said Koloth from behind clenched teeth.

A few minutes later, Kirk's communicator began to buzz. "My turn," said Kirk, heading for the Men's Room.

"Spock here," Captain," came the familiar voice. "The Bazaar Board of Directors informs us that there are no Xixobrax Jewelworms for sale on the planet. However, we have received a message on a private channel asking you to meet with a woman named Chen Ay."

Koloth, who was in the next cubicle with a listening device to his ear, smiled thinly. It was all going according to plan.

Doctor McCoy was sitting in a sidewalk cafe when Chekov came along.

"Doctor? Is that you? Vy are you dressed like that?"

"Oh, hi, Chekov," said McCoy, signalling the waitress. "Grab a chair."

"Thank you. Wodka, please." Chekov looked around warily before sitting down.

"You feeling okay, son?"

"I think maybe I'm getting paranoid," said Chekov, glancing over his shoulder. "All day, everywhere I go, I keep seeing--Klingons."

The vodka arrived, and Chekov tossed it straight down, Cossack-style.

"Oh, well," said McCoy, "it's better than pink elephants."

"I think I'd prefer the elephants," said Chekov.

Chen Ay was so ancient that she resembled an unwrapped mummy. The eyes staring out of her shriveled-prune face were still bright, however.

Kirk and Luraleen were ushered into her private office after a lengthy process of being frisked, scanned, and damn-near casserled by the various security devices which surrounded her.



Chen Ay spoke in a voice like a rusty hinge. "I hear you want an Xixobrax Jewelworm. I have one for sale."

"How much?" asked Luraleen.

"If you need to ask, you can't afford it."

Luraleen held up her letter-of-unlimited-credit for inspection. "I am authorized to pay whatever price you ask," she said. "Name a figure."

"Ten million credits."

Luraleen did some quick mental arithmetic. "Seven hundred and eighty-five thousand *rills*!" she gasped. "You can buy an estate for that!"

"Take it or leave it," grated Chen Ay.

"I'll take it," said Luraleen, "but this had better be the authentic Jewelworm."

Chen Ay picked up a ventilated casket and held it open so that they could see inside. Against the green interior, the Xixobrax Jewelworm blazed like a rope of incandescent emeralds.

Chen Ay coiled the Jewelworm around her black-and-red sleeve. After an instant, the green color faded under a flush of red and black, until the Jewelworm appeared to be composed of rubies and black diamonds.

"An interesting phenomenon, is it not?" said Chen Ay.

When they reached the exit, Kirk requested the return of his communicator, which had been confiscated on the grounds that no electronic equipment could be taken into Chen Ay's sanctum. The guard looked for it without success.

"Was anyone else here while we were with Chen Ay?" asked Kirk.

"Just a couple of tourists asking directions."

Kirk smelled a rat. "Tourists?" he asked. "Not . . . Klingons?"

"That's right. A man and a woman."

"I should have known Koloth wouldn't be far behind," muttered Kirk. "I wonder what he's up to now?" Whatever it was, Kirk was sure he wasn't going to like it.

"Can we get you to call the USS *Enterprise* for us?" he asked the guard.

"Sorry," said the guard. "Our comm is out."

"Coincidentally with the visit of the 'tourists'? I see," said Kirk. "Come along, Luraleen, we are going back to the ship if we have to use a ladder."

"Wouldn't it be better to use the public transporter? Or find one of the shore leave parties?" asked Luraleen.

"Good thinking," said Kirk.

Kirk and Luraleen had only gone a few blocks when the Public News Screen flashed a special announcement:

"Well-known entrepreneur Chen Ay has been found murdered in her private office. The security forces are searching for her last known visitors, a man and a woman whom they believe can help them in their inquiries. The pair are described as humanoids. . . ."

Not waiting to hear more, Kirk and Luraleen dived down an alley.

"Now what do we do?" asked Luraleen.

"Try not to panic."

Suddenly they heard two familiar, off-key voices raised in song. The tune was vaguely recognizable as *Song of the Volga Boatmen*, but the lyrics were: "Xixobrax Jewelworm/X-ix-o-brax Ju-u-el-worm!"

"Bones! Chekov! Over here!"

"Well, hello there, Jim!" said McCoy, staggering over. "How's every little thing?"

Both he and Chekov were very drunk.

"Quick, Bones, give me your communicator!"

"Sure, Jim." McCoy began turning out the pockets of his cloak. "Pesky thing must be here somewhere," he muttered.

"Chekov, give me yours!"

"My vhat, Keptin?"

"COMMUNICATOR!"

"There iss no need to yell at me, Keptin," said Chekov. He looked as though he might burst into tears at any moment.

Kirk took a deep breath. "Ensign Chekov," he said sweetly, "may I please borrow your communicator?"

"Certainly, sir," said Chekov, handing over the familiar gold-and-black clamshell.

"Kirk to *Enterprise*! Come in, *Enterprise*!"

"*Enterprise*. Spock here, Captain."

"Mr. Spock--" Kirk suddenly saw a team of heavily-armed Security Officers bearing down on his little party. "--see if you can get us a good lawyer."

When the prisoners arrived at the Central Security Lockup, they found Koloth waiting for them.

"Got them, eh?" he said. "And I see you have recovered my Xixobrax Jewelworm as well. Good work."

"*Your* Jewelworm?" said Kirk.

"He and his accomplice there stole it from me just before they murdered that unfortunate old lady," said Koloth.

"That's a lie!" said Luraleen. "I bought the Jewelworm from Chen Ay. And we didn't murder her, either."

Koloth smiled nastily. "According to the Board of Directors," he said, "there are no Xixobrax Jewelworms on Bazaar. I brought that one with me. An extremely clumsy lie, but what can one expect from an assassin?"

Kirk attempted to throw himself upon the Klingon, and was restrained, with difficulty, by three burly Security Officers. Koloth dusted himself off fastidiously.

"And now," he said, "if I may have my Xixobrax Jewelworm, I shall be on my way."

"You're not going to believe him, are you?" cried Kirk. "He's a Klingon! Klingons are vicious, rotten, sadistic, brutal, and treacherous! And those are their good points!"

Koloth's smile broadened. "Flattery will get you nowhere," he said.

The last thing Kirk saw, as he was dragged, kicking and screaming, toward the maximum security cells, was Koloth gazing down into the casket which contained the Xixobrax Jewelworm, his bearded face split in a triumphant leer.

Two hours went by, during which Kirk raged up and down his cell like a wounded bear, Luraleen wondered morosely how she was going to pay back the seven hundred and eighty-five thousand *rills* she now owed Clan Lord Flaven, and McCoy and Chekov slowly sobered up in the drunk tank.

At last a familiar figure appeared at the door of Kirk's cell.





GORDON  
CARLETON

"Spock, you've got to do something!"

"You are free, Captain," said Spock, as the guard turned off the forcefield.

The shock brought Kirk up short. "How? Why?"

"The true assassin of Chen Ay has been apprehended," said Spock.

"One of the old lady's heirs got tired of waiting for her to kick the bucket," explained the guard, "so he slipped some slow-acting poison called *quelk* into her supper a couple days back. Sorry about holding you. No hard feelings, I hope."

Kirk scarcely heard him. "Spock, the *Destruction*?"

"It left orbit an hour ago and headed for Caecus Delta at warp six," said the Vulcan.

"I think I blew it," said Kirk.

On board the *Destruction*, in the privacy of their quarters, Koloth sprawled on the sleeping platform, watching Kyla as, sensor in hand, she performed the daily sweep of the cabin for spying devices and hidden microphones.

(The *Destruction's* rec room was not equipped with tridee, but the crew found it almost as entertaining to spy on the senior officers.)

The sensor began to whistle shrilly as Kyla passed it over a chair. She ran her fingers over the upholstery until she located an electronic spying device not larger than a pinhead. Cursing eloquently, she dropped it to the deck and ground it to dust under her booted heel.

She continued the sweep until she was certain that she had not missed anything. Then she tossed the sensor into a drawer and started to undress.

"Koloth," she said, kicking off her boots, "I think I'd like an Xixo-brax Jewelworm."

The satisfaction of his personal triumph over Kirk, and the anticipation of the imminent capitulation of Caecus Delta to the Klingon Empire, had put Koloth into an unusually good mood.

"Certainly," he said, pulling Kyla down onto the fur coverlet, and caressing whatever part of her caught his fancy. "As soon as I can hijack a Cosmic Egg Temple-Ship."

\* \* \* \* \*

Even by straining every ounce of power out of the warp drive, the *Enterprise* was unable to catch up to the *Destruction*.

"I blame myself for this, Bones," said Kirk, helping himself to a liberal glass of the Doctor's Saurian brandy. "I knew how much was at stake, but I just had to play cute little games with Koloth."

"I agree," said McCoy tartly. "It's all your fault. Now are you going to wallow in self-pity, or are you going to do whatever can still be done to save the situation?"

"Point taken, Doctor McCoy," said Kirk.

Luraleen said, "Can't we just radio ahead and have the Klingons arrested when they reach Caecus Delta?"

"On what charge?" asked Kirk. "It's just our word against theirs. We have no proof."

"Besides," said McCoy, "Who's going to do the arresting? The tooth fairy? This is neutral space."

When at length the *Enterprise* arrived at Caecus Delta, it was just in time to see the *Destruction* leave orbit and head off into deep space.

"All we can do is explain the situation and hope that Ivorine can be made to understand," said Luraleen. She sounded more hopeful than Kirk felt was reasonable. Still, what else was there to do?

They found the Noble Lady Ivorine in her inner chamber. She was no longer beautiful. Her face was swollen and black with congealed blood. Buried in the flesh of her throat was a shining line.

"She's dead," said McCoy. "The Jewelmorm strangled her."

"I find this situation extremely puzzling," said Spock. "Since the Klingons desire the support of Clan Lord Flaven, it is illogical for them to have murdered his wife."

"Since when are the Klingons logical?" asked McCoy.

"Whatever his faults," said Kirk, "Koloth is no fool. Spock is right. It just doesn't make sense."

"Never mind why they did it," said McCoy, "I just want to know *how* they did it."

They looked over to where Luraleen sat beside Clan Lord Flaven, simultaneously comforting him and issuing orders to the servants. The latter



seemed to find it difficult to maintain the proper air of melancholy. \*

"I'll take care of all the arrangements," she was saying. "--See that the mourning banners are in good repair before you hang them--"

"She was so young, so lovely--" said the Clan Lord.

"She was certainly that," said Luraleen; "they'll make songs about her beauty. And about her funeral. I know exactly how everything should be arranged. Trust me, Lord."

"I do. In fact, I don't know what I'd do without you. Dear Luraleen!"

*In my humble opinion, thought McCoy, that man doesn't have the brains God gave a gopher. Still, Luraleen seems to know how to handle him. If there's any justice, she will be his next wife.*

Aloud, he said, "My Lord, I'm puzzled about the cause of your wife's death. I'd like to study the Jewelmorm, if I may."

"Take the accursed thing," said the Clan Lord bleakly. "I never want to set eyes on it again."

Some time later, Kirk and Spock dropped around to Doctor McCoy's lab. "Well, Bones?" said Kirk. "What did the Klingons do to the Xixobrax Jewelmorm?"

"Not a thing," said McCoy.

"What?"

"The Klingons had nothing to do with it. It turns out that the critter is allergic to some of the inhabitants of Caecus Delta. Something in their bodily secretions causes it to contract. Ivorine would have been all right if she'd tried it on over a garment, but putting it around her bare throat like that. . . ."

Kirk shook his head wonderingly. "It's enough to make you believe in Providence," he said.

"How so, Captain?" asked Spock.

"If *we* had given Ivorine the Jewelmorm, the same thing would have happened, and Clan Lord Flaven would be hating the Federation now. As it is, Amethyst has voted to apply for membership."

"So you might say," said McCoy, "that the Klingons did us a favor."

A strangled noise escaped Kirk. "I really shouldn't laugh," he said, "but--wouldn't you love to see Koloth's face when he finds out?"



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\* Ding-dong, the Bitch is dead.

# Contest!





Among the notable entries for this contest, in addition to the striking cartoons by Eluki bes Shahar, were such items as:

"I dreamt I seduced Mr. Spock in my masiform D. (Opps; that was *supposed* to be a secret!)--Valarie Dickinson

and Linda Simpson's series--

I dreamt I survived the Naked Time in my masiform D  
I dreamt I boldly went where no man has gone before in my masiform D  
I dreamt I brought out the Enemy Within in my masiform D



Sheryl Adsit wrote: "Somehow, I can't seem to draw my entry for your "I dreamed . . ." contest. My caption was going to be "I dreamed I edited masiform D in my masiform D." Obviously, the subject was to be you, with one hand cranking a (cranky) mimeo, one hand blue-penciling a manuscript, one hand collating an issue, one hand answering the phone, one hand writing a letter, one hand fixing something in the kitchen, (one hand pulling out your hair) and one foot not stepping on a cat, and your body all blurred from keeping up with all these goings-on. Unfortunately, the sketches all look like stick-figure Indian statuary. Oh, well. It was a nice try, eh?"

My choice for best entry is Eluki's wacko cartoon below. Congrats, lady.

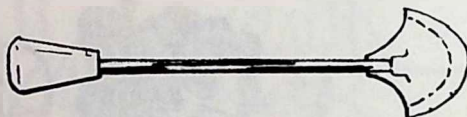
My thanks to everyone who entered the contest.



These cartoons of Eluki's are reputed to be pretty fair likenesses of me. I don't see it myself. . . .

# Roun-Mt-Kal-i-Far

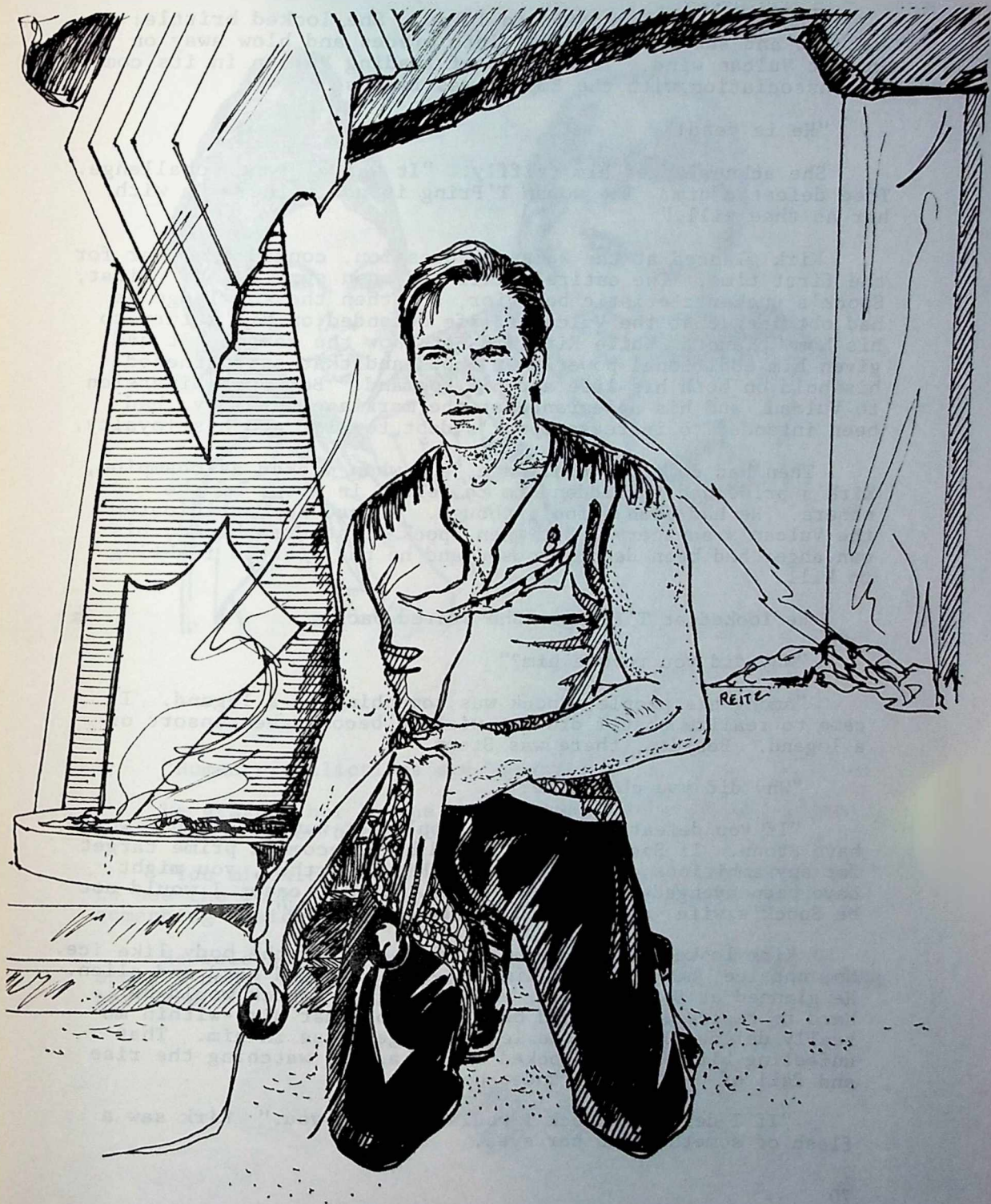
## Rathleen Gaitely



Kirk dragged himself to his knees and his chest labored, trying to draw oxygen out of the thin, parched air. His throat ached from the pressure of his near-strangulation, and the sweat forced out by the heat and exertion of the past few minutes made a line of agony of the seeping wound across his chest. He looked down at his own bloody hand and at the dead Vulcan sprawled in the sand. It had been close; if he had not found that jagged splinter of rock, or felt the drug-induced surge of strength that had enabled him to smash it against Spock's skull, he would now be dead.

As his pounding heart slowed he looked around and stood up. The marriage party was motionless and McCoy stood watching intently. McCoy! The surgeon's actions required some thought. The opportunity had risen suddenly and unexpectedly, but McCoy had chosen to support Kirk. Why? Then the answer came to him--the doctor maintained his power through his knowledge of people, their strengths and weaknesses and Spock, Spock was unpredictable. McCoy probably felt that his advantage lay in manipulating the captain. Now Kirk would have to convince him of that advantage and maintain him as an ally--especially with Spock gone.







He turned his attention to T'Pau. She looked brittle; one blow and she would shatter into pieces and blow away on the hot Vulcan wind. The strain of leading Vulcan in its complex association with the Empire was immense.

"He is dead!"

She acknowledged him stiffly. "It was a proper challenge. Thee defeated him. The woman T'Pring is now thine. Do with her as thee will."

Kirk glanced at the woman in question, considering her for the first time. The entire affair had been surprising: first, Spock's uncharacteristic behavior, and then the knowledge he had obtained that the Vulcan's life depended on his return to his home planet. While Kirk did not know the reason, it had given him additional power over Spock and that strengthened his hold on both his life and his command. Both his diversion to Vulcan, and his appearance at the marriage ceremony, had been intended to increase Spock's debt to him, and his loyalty.

Then had come the challenge, and when picked as champion, Kirk's pride had forbidden him to refuse in front of the others. He had been a fool, though. He had not anticipated the Vulcan's savagery. But when Spock first drew blood, his own anger had been deeply roused and he had started fighting to kill.

He looked at T'Pring. She stared back.

"Why did you refuse him?"

"Among his people, Spock was something of a legend. I came to realize that I did not wish to become the consort of a legend. Besides, there was Stonn."

"Why did you choose me?"

"If you defeated Spock, you would not want me, and I would have Stonn. If Spock won, he would have become a prime target for any ambitious officer on your ship. Further, you might have been avenged by your followers. In any case, I would not be Spock's wife, and I would still have Stonn."

Kirk looked at her: the dark eyes cold, the body like ice. No, not ice, he corrected himself--hot, hot and hard and alien. He glanced at Spock's body, and was angry. Spock would be hard to replace. Kirk had been able to trust him--within mutually defined limits. He let the anger rise in him. That unfeeling bitch! Kirk looked at her again, watching the rise and fall of her breasts under her gown.

"If I defeated Spock I would not want you." Kirk saw a flash of something in her eyes.



"Human predilections are known!"

He grasped her by the chin possessively, and forced her head back, forced her to look up at him.

"You miscalculated," he said quietly, and was satisfied to see the look of horror on her face as she became aware of something besides anger arousing him.

He released her, and T'Pring stood staring fixedly at Spock's body, the bright green of her bondmate's blood branding her face.





The horse is lovely ~ ~ ~  
Nancy Gludice

The horse is lovely, white as milk,  
and champs softly the silvered bit ~  
Champs and moves restlessly  
the unsifted hooves on sweet grass ~

You lean against  
the saddle, search the sky  
with eyes as dark  
as she is bright,  
nod, smile ~

How long have you stood  
patient

who once rode steel-shod stallions  
into battle;

how long delayed leading the mare ?

Ah, warrior, I am late, late ~

I stood dreaming on a hill  
while the war went by,

I stood yearning into summer dusk,  
while you with such quiet  
guarded her and the hill ~

for me ?

Oh, forgive ~

I had forgotten  
that you were waiting here ~

While I built my dreams,  
stone by stone,

I had forgotten you ;

Oh, forgive me,

forgotten you standing  
here,

alone ~

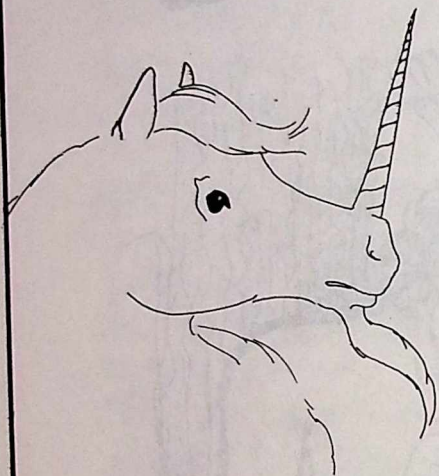
Sue Nasky  
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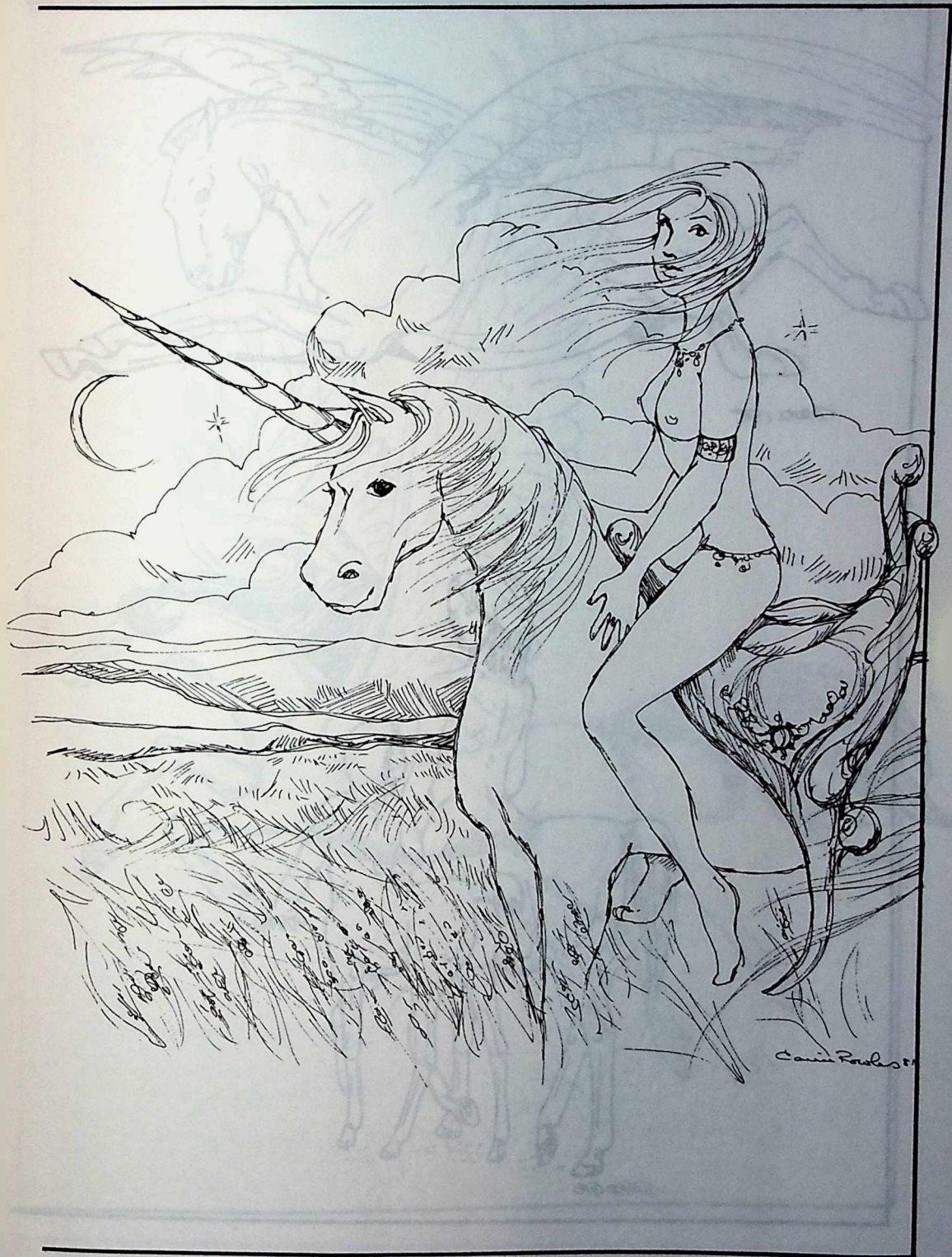
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# OF MYTHS



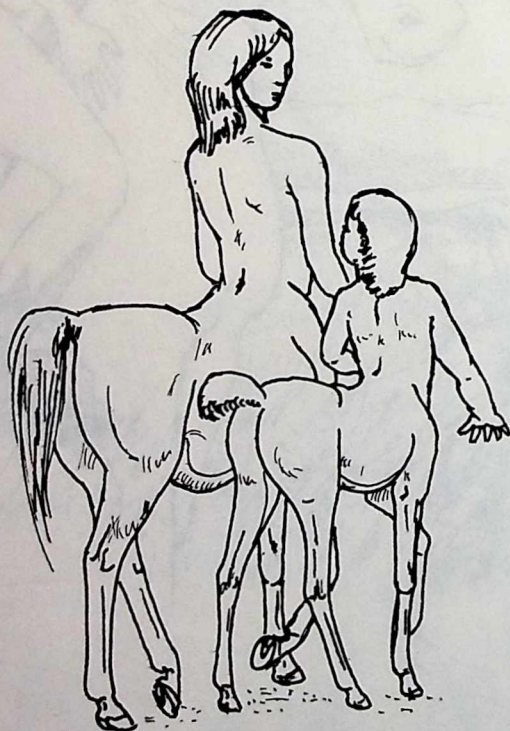








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# random *Jocelyn Feaster*

While visiting "The City on the Edge of Forever", "I, Mudd" got "A Piece of the Action" away from "The Gamesters of Triskelion" . . . who "Return to Tomorrow" using "The Doomsday Machine".

"The Way to Eden" was blocked by "Patterns of Force"--a "Savage Curtain" placed there by "The Cloud Minders". . . .

After a brief "Shore Leave", and feeling mischievous, Trelane, "The Squire of Gothos", had his favorite machine--"The Ultimate Computer"--place "The Mark of Gideon" upon "Plato's Stepchildren".

Another great "Enterprise Incident" was when Kirk rescued "The Galileo Seven" from "The Tholian Web" by using that "Corbomite Maneuver" again.

Behold! "The Return of the Archons" from "Where No Man Has Gone Before" through "The Menagerie"!

# thoughts *Cathy R. Phillips*

Did you ever wonder . . .

. . .that the shuttlecraft *Galileo* took more of a beating than a Timex watch, but still ticked enough to get through numerous episodes?

. . .how long it took Yeoman Rand to unbraid her waffle?

. . .how Amanda has gone this far without having a nervous breakdown?

. . .that when a jolt came, everyone on the bridge slued around, while Kirk remained glued in his seat?

. . .what the recruitment incentives were for security personnel?

# Domestic Arrangements

by Lois Welling

Lieutenant T'Ayrian was nervous. Being Vulcan, she would not have applied that term to her condition. Instead, she told herself she was fatigued. The past few weeks had been very hectic. First there had been final exams at the officers' training branch of Starfleet Academy. Then she had spent two weeks in intense orientation for her new assignment. In order to rendezvous with the *Enterprise*, she had had to travel almost half-way across the galaxy. As was usually the case, none of the times had coincided. She had arrived on Fairfax at noon ship time, to find it late evening there. Before she could adjust to that, she had to awaken in the middle of the night to beam aboard the *Enterprise*, where it was mid-morning. But, had she described her symptoms, moist palms and tenseness, any human could have told her: she was nervous.

There were other causes that contributed to her condition. She and Spock had been married for over a year now, yet they had seen each other only once since their marriage, and then only for a few short hours. Since the incident with the engagement ring (she twisted the band on her third finger), Spock's correspondence had grown more personal: he had even gone so far as to express frustration at their not being able to spend time together. Several times their plans had fallen through and when she had free time, he did not. He had blamed it on someone named Murphy.

It had taken several hours to complete the necessary chores required for transfer, to be installed as head of the *Enterprise's* water treatment plant, and to meet some of the crewmembers with whom she would be serving. Now she was finally standing in front of the first officer's quarters. These were to be her quarters also. Today, she and Spock would begin their life together. It was not the usual way that Vulcans began marriage. There was no fever calling her to her bondmate, no place waiting in the desert, no urgent need. This was not the beginning for which she had been trained, and she had no idea what to expect on the other side of that door. Yes, Lieutenant T'Ayrian was nervous.

She took a deep breath and touched the door plate. A soft hum reassured her that it was working as it scanned her. She knew Spock was on duty and would remain there for several more hours. T'Ayrian planned to use the time to put away her belongings and to rest. She wished to be at her best when her husband arrived. Having tried several times to picture it in her mind, T'Ayrian was anxious to see her new home. She knew the floor plan of these quarters, but how had Spock personalized his private living space? The size of the quarters was also a consideration. On Vulcan, room was not a problem and large homes with a good deal of personal space were the rule and, in fact, necessary for telepaths.

The opening door meant that she had permission to enter. Spock would have already programmed the information into the security locking system.

To her surprise, her husband was seated at the desk. "Spock, I thought you would be on duty."

His face was serious as he stood and came towards her. "I am scheduled for this shift, but I wished to be here when you arrived."

His tone of voice and body language negated any pleasure the words might have brought. T'Ayrian sensed his tension.

"Something is wrong. . . ."

"No. Not wrong. But there is a matter we must discuss--before you unpack." Her eyes followed his to her personal locker, sitting next to the door.

Her throat was suddenly dry. "You would prefer that we not share quarters after all; that I take separate . . ."

"No. I do *not* prefer that," he said, his voice a shade too loud. "But when you have heard me out, *you* may desire separate quarters."

"I thought it had been decided that we share . . ."

"T'Ayrian, there is information you require before you make a final decision."

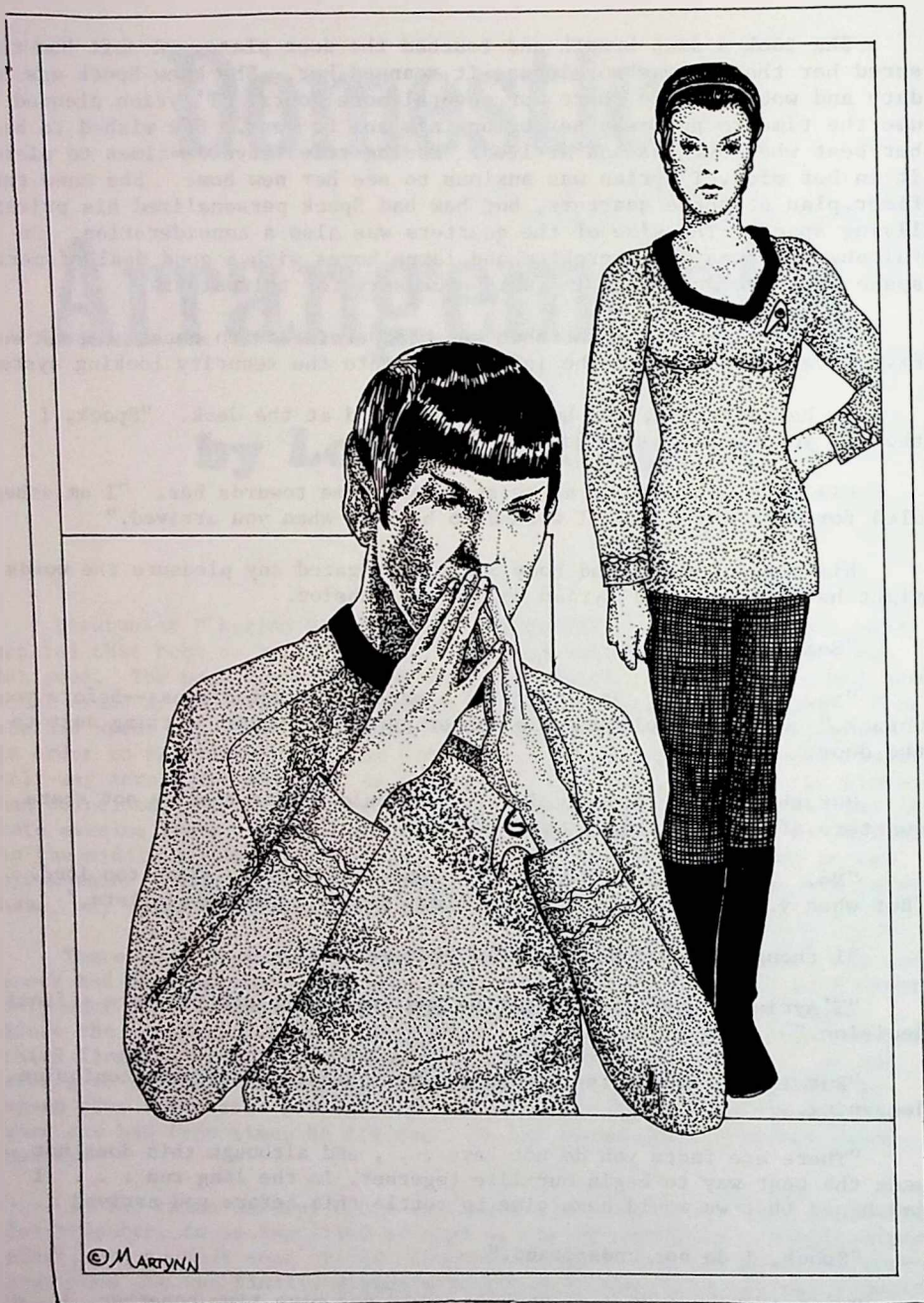
"But I had thought the decision made," she repeated, her confusion deepening.

"There are facts you do not have . . . and although this does not seem the best way to begin our life together, in the long run . . . I had hoped that we would have time to settle this before you arrived . . ."

"Spock, I do not understand."

"When it became obvious that we would not have time together, I even tried to put the information into a tape, but could not bring myself to do so. T'Ayrian, I have searched my mind for several months now, and there is no delicate way to put this."





"Spock, you are ill. . . ." She stepped toward him.

"No. No. . . . My digressing only makes matters worse. Let me just state the facts." He increased the distance between them by another meter. "I am not fully Vulcan and in *this* I cannot deny my human heritage. I do

not believe it possible for me to occupy this confined space with you as my bondmate, and share that bed . . ." Both eyed the enclosure. " . . . and not desire, not be compelled--to consummate our marriage--almost immediately. . . ."

"You are able to function sexually as a human male, then?" The words came pouring out of her.

"Yes," he said, sounding surprised at how easily she had said that. "And I do not believe that Vulcan training and control would serve me in this." His eyes would not meet hers.

"You believe I would consider this a problem?"

"Yes. It would be better for you to make the decision to move now, rather than later."

"You are referring to ship's gossip. If I should move in here, and then leave at a later date, there would be talk. . . ."

"Exactly."

"Suppose I were to tell you that I do not find this a problem, but that I prefer it be this way?"

"Indeed."

"Spock, when I pressed for an immediate marriage, did I not speak of intimacies?"

"I did not believe you meant . . . physical."

"But I did. I had no idea that actual coitus would be possible, but there are--other things . . ." Now Spock's eyes were watching her. "I have been researching the--matter. . . ."

"Researching? What methods did you employ in this research?"

She went to her locker, opened it, and removed some printed matter. Spock took the material, leafed through it, then stared at his wife. "Pornography! T'Ayrian, you have been reading pornography."

"You disapprove?"

"No. . . . I should not presume to censor what another reads, but why . . . *this*?"

"I do not consider this material pornography."

"How would you define it then?"

"As eroticism. Lee, my roommate at the Academy, explained the difference. Pornography is that which degrades or exploits one or all sexes. Eroticism is a mutual sharing: the giving and receiving of pleasure. We spent many hours discussing the sub . . ."

"You discussed our personal lives with . . ."

"Certainly not! We talked in generalities, and, for the most part, I listened."

"I had expected you to gain new information at the Academy, but I assumed it would be related to engineering."

"Spock, except for types and placement of fixtures, there is little they could teach me about hydroponics or engineering. But *this* information--we have nothing of this sort on Vulcan. Have you ever read such material?"

"Definitely not."

"But, you recognized it."

"T'Ayrian, one cannot pass through the Academy without learning about the existence of pornography. I find your interest in it curious, though."

"I am interested because I believe that while the Vulcan way has much to offer, in sexual matters it is sorely deficient."

"I see. The fever, it . . ."

"Permit me to explain further," she interrupted.

"Please do." He pulled the room's other chair next to the desk, and they sat down.

"The fever is a biological fact and must be accepted. It is our attitude with which I find fault. It is the chief contradiction of our culture. In our pre-history the savage woman was taken during the fever. She thought little of it and bore her child; the planet flourished. Then intelligence and sensitivity grew, but the fever remained unchanged. As a people we choose to ignore it until the last possible moment--to shroud it in mystery and ritual. The modern Vulcan is torn between the concepts of Surak and the madness. Couples know each other first through the fever and through caring and tenderness only much later. Children are conceived in a time of violence. Is it any wonder that our miscarriage rate is the galaxy's highest?"

"You would reverse this process?"

"Yes. I would know you--*before* the fever. This material shows that there are many ways a couple can share pleasure . . ."

"This seems very important to you."

"It is. Spock, I watched my sister. Shortly after my own childhood bonding, I helped her prepare to go to her bondmate. And I saw her when she returned. She said nothing, of course, but the look in her eyes. . . . She was changed. I did not understand at the time, but later I came to



know what they had been through, and what I might expect. To come together as strangers, experience first intimacies, deal with the fever, conceive a child, all within such a short time. Is it not too much to ask, even from Vulcans?"

"You have had this in mind all along; it is the reason you joined Starfleet. But this is not the usual way for Vulcans. What led you to believe that I would agree?"

"I did not think you would consider it out of the ordinary."

"Explain!"

"Since our marriage, I have visited with your parents. I know that they share a bedroom, and it contains only--one bed."

Silence filled the room, then he said, "Am I to understand that you wish to share these quarters and to initiate a--physical relationship?"

"Yes. When could we begin?"

"Ah . . . An, any time we decide."

T'Ayrian was amazed. She had never heard a Vulcan stammer before.

"We can begin by unpacking your belongings." He quickly went to the trunk and lifted it. He was carrying it to the desk when T'Ayrian asked, "Spock, what does it mean to be horny?"

The trunk crashed to the floor.

She ran to her husband. "Are you injured?"

"No," he said, picking up the trunk. "I was--unprepared for your question. Where did you hear the word?"

"Lee kept saying it about me. I have not been able to learn its meaning. It is not in the dictionary."

"No, I expect not. It is an exceedingly archaic reference. Why did you not ask your roommate to explain its meaning?"

"I am not sure. They all assumed that I possessed more knowledge than I actually do. They believed me shy, but knowing in these matters. They did not realize that I am--a . . ."

"Virgin," he said.

"Yes," she said softly.

Their eyes did not meet as they spent several minutes concentrating on emptying the trunk. T'Ayrian placed a handful of underclothes into a drawer, then went to stand next to Spock as he made room in the closet. "I do not wish to do this--now."

"Indeed. What is it that you wish to do?"

She looked up at him as she tried to find the correct words. It was unnecessary. He reached out and drew her into his arms. "Is this perhaps what you had in mind, my wife?"

Her reply was lost as his mouth covered hers. It was as she remembered and she pulled him closer and moved against him. The kiss deepened as his lips parted, searching, then she ventured to explore.

He picked her up and moved toward the bed. "Spock," she said, while nuzzling his neck, "I have thought much of this moment."

She could sense his mixture of joy and relief to know that she was neither appalled nor frightened by his dual nature. Happiness reverberated through their shared thoughts as the last obstacle that could have stood between them dissolved. Theirs would be a true bonding.

As he placed her on the bed she said, "Spock, I would be . . . naked with thee." Her skin flushed and she lowered her eyes.

He responded by removing his tunic. Before he had it off, she was touching him.

"I believe you said 'with', my wife."

"Yes, my husband, I did." Without taking her eyes from him, she began opening the one-piece pant uniform she preferred. She paused. "Perhaps I shall not please you."

"The chances of that cannot even be computed." He was pulling the pins from her hair and it fell to her shoulders. Slowly, he removed her boots. Then, while she continued to run her fingers through the hair on his chest, he slipped the pantsuit from her shoulders. She stood to allow it to fall to the floor, then stepped out of it.

With a few swift moves his remaining clothes were gone and the bed coverlet thrown back.

T'Ayrian was mesmerized. "I have seen holographs, paintings, even sculpture, but *this*--compared to the touch of living flesh, they have no substance, no texture. . . ."

Taking his time, he began to inch her smooth sand-colored chemise downward. When he had freed her breasts, he lingered to kiss and tease each nipple into firmness.

Intrigued, she reached out to touch the counterparts on his chest, and was rewarded with the same reaction. His fingers traced the curve of her waist and over her flat belly. He paused again at her navel, leisurely tonguing the area until she moaned softly.

Her body began to quiver. He stopped, just long enough to confirm that the cause was excitement, not fear.

Slowly, deliberately, the molded garment continued its descent. When it reached her thighs, it slid to her ankles and she stepped out of it.

They lay together on the bed, side by side. Mouth sought mouth and hands investigated, wanting to learn, to know the other. Thoughts blended and overlapped, but the physical dominated.

His hand slipped between her legs, providing the courage she needed to do the same for him. The sensation of him growing even harder at her touch brought forth simultaneous sighs, but for her it built as he massaged her to orgasm. She dug her fingernails into him as the trembling shook her whole body and her breath came in short gasps.

Their enjoined minds told him of the trepidation that accompanied her passion.

"T'Ayrian?"

"Oh Spock, such a mixture of emotions. But to experience them, one must--abandon control. . . . It is frightening, but worth the price. Have patience, my husband. I shall learn."

"You need not fear, my wife."

"Abandon control," she interrupted. "Spock, the fever--that is what it is for the male. Multiply my experience by a factor of thousands and that must be what you will endure. I shall remember, when the time comes, my husband. I promise."

They lay, their bodies entwined now, content to savor the wonders they had shared.

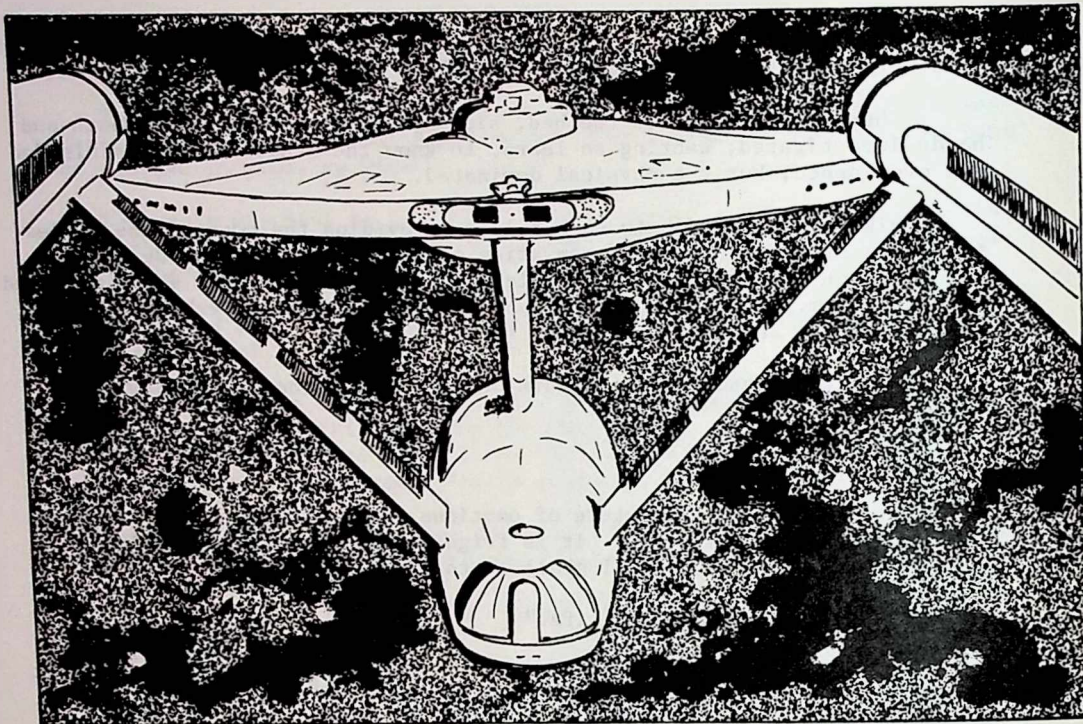
Then T'Ayrian's hands were roving again, although she seemed drawn to one particular part of his anatomy. Mentally encouraged, she became even bolder. Guided by her Vulcan training, she let her instincts and newly discovered knowledge lead. Her movements were slow, teasing, enticing him as he had done with her. She could see the tremors on the surface of his skin and sense them through their link. Knowing they were ready, she still tried to prolong it, but could not. She straddled him Vulcan fashion, easily accommodating him. Both were moving with their passions as he matched her rhythm. Within their minds, it was impossible to tell whose climax triggered the other's.

They were quiet again, drifting in and out of a light sleep. One or the other would doze off, only to be awakened and aroused by the movement or touch of the other.

Their love-making continued. She lay on her back and he entered. Her body arched and twisted as she encouraged him.

It would be incorrect to say that either Spock or T'Ayrian slept that night. Each was too conscious of the other's presence to sink to a level of deep sleep.





"Try to rest now," he said. "In a few hours we must report for duty and . . ."

"Oh, husband, do not speak of duty now. I could wish that we had no duty to concern us."

"Would that were the case, to be free of everything but each other . . . Humans have a custom called a 'honeymoon.' The newly married couple separate themselves from familiar people and surroundings for a time . . ."

"We should have had such a honeymoon."

He turned her face up to his. "Believe me, my wife, had I known that we would begin our life in this fashion, we *would* have had a honeymoon."

"Is it too late?"

"No. I shall speak to Jim. Perhaps some time might be arranged."

"How pleasant, just we two, alone somewhere with no responsibilities . . ." She moved against him as she whispered these words.

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Spock kissed her lips lightly. When she awoke he said, "It is time we were up. We report for duty in 67 minutes."

A sigh escaped her lips, but she rolled over and got out of bed. "Spock, I know we have discussed this in our tapes, but I do feel apprehension about my position aboard this vessel. . . ."

"T'Ayrian, there is no cause for these emotions. We are two Vulcans and two professionals. There are no problems with which we cannot deal. Now, if you would shower first. . . ."

"We could shower together. In the books it shows . . ."

"I think not. Some other time perhaps, but this morning we shall shower separately." Anticipating her question, he added, "I will not have us late today."

Her eyes widened as she understood. Everyone on the ship would be watching. No, they could not be late today.

T'Ayrian emerged from the shower and Spock entered. She dressed and quickly put up her hair, hoping to have a few minutes to begin putting the cabin in order. But before she could leave the bathroom, Spock rushed out of the shower stall.

"T'Ayrian, my tricorder, quickly."

She ran to the work area and began rummaging through drawers and scanning shelves. She finally found it on the desk under a pile of her underclothes. She grabbed for it, scattering the clothes. Back in the bathroom, now filled with malodorous fumes, she handed Spock the tricorder. "What is that?" she asked.

Naked, dripping wet, he dialed the tricorder and scanned the room. "Unknown. Non-toxic, I believe." He handed her the instrument and grabbed a towel. "Continue."

She wiped her eyes and changed the setting. "Correct. Irritating, but not dangerous." She went to the wardrobe and took out clean clothes for Spock. While he dressed, she went to find his boots. He was ready in less than two minutes and they went out the door just as a yellow alert sounded.

"Spock, wait." They turned to see the captain coming up to them.

The lift arrived and the three entered.

"What the hell is it?" Kirk wanted to know.

"Unknown, Captain. But not toxic," Spock answered, still scanning.

T'Ayrian noticed Kirk staring at Spock. She also noticed drops of water trickling down the back of his neck.

"Your hair is wet," Kirk said, genuine surprise in his voice.

"Yes, sir. I discovered the problem while in the shower."

"Oh," Kirk said softly, his eyes catching T'Ayrian's, then glancing away. "With me it was the coffee. I reached for my wake-up cup and almost gagged."

T'Ayrian continued watching these men who shared the lift with her. They seemed oblivious to her presence as they discussed the situation. "Excuse me. Excuse me, sir."

Both men turned to stare at her. "I suggest a code W1 alert."

"A what?" Kirk asked, looking to Spock.

"Usage stop order on water, sir."

"Right." He hit the lift's communicator switch. That completed, he turned to T'Ayrian. "Sorry, Lieutenant, not the best way to begin your tour of duty. Let's hope it's nothing serious."

The door opened and the three moved towards the *Enterprise's* water treatment plant.

The large room was filled with people frantically checking gauges and equipment. T'Ayrian was not quite sure of the proper procedure. Under ordinary circumstances, she would assume duties as day crew chief of this department, but this was a crisis.

Fancher, the night crew chief, responded to the captain's questions and Spock was again scanning with the tricorder. T'Ayrian did her own visual scan of the wall gauges. The pH level was low, indicating an increase in acidity. Working her way along the catwalks next to the inner machinery of the plant, she spotted a blinking red light where she had suspected she would. "Captain," she called, "back here."

He came running, followed by Spock and several technicians. T'Ayrian raised one of the three charcoal filters from its place in the treatment trough. It was completely saturated. She lowered it and raised another in the same condition.

"So this is the source of the problem," Kirk said.

"But not the initial cause," Spock added.

"Any idea what is?" Kirk asked, looking to Spock again.

"Only speculation."

"Well?"

"The odor is suggestive of butyric acid." Nodding heads indicated agreement.

"How did it get into the system?"



"Unknown at present, but sabotage must be considered."

"Or an accident," T'Ayrian volunteered.

"And more likely," Spock agreed.

Kirk pointed to the filter, then turned to Fancher. "You suggest replacing these?"

"We could, sir."

"To what avail?" T'Ayrian asked. "They will become saturated within the hour."

"You're probably right, Lieutenant." Kirk flipped the switch and the filter lowered into place. "Let's see if we can sort this out. We don't know what's causing this smell, or if it's toxic in the water, but tricorder readings confirm that we are not breathing anything dangerous." Yet another time he looked to Spock.

"Correct, sir."

"Next step is to find the initial cause. . . ."

As the captain spoke, T'Ayrian felt a sense of relief. Now they would get out of her way so that she could begin her work. She began making mental plans.

" . . . Get to it, people," Kirk continued. "Spock, you're in charge here. I'll be on the bridge."

T'Ayrian stood dumbfounded as she watched Kirk turn and move along the catwalk, with the others following. *Spock in charge! This is my department!* "Excuse me, sir. But is my competency in question?"

Kirk stopped dead and the two behind him almost walked into him. He turned to face her while the others looked away. His tone was low. "Are my orders, Lieutenant?"

"No, sir," she replied, knowing too late her mistake.

"Then carry them out." He turned and was gone.

With the captain gone, the rest returned to the main gauge room. Spock immediately took charge. He dismissed the night crew and assigned the day people their tasks. The water treatment plant would require a thorough inspection. He called for extra people, because there were water and air samples to be collected and analyzed from all over the ship. To T'Ayrian he said, "I suggest gas chromatography to confirm the identity of the substance."

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By 1200 hours they had the confirmation. It was butyric acid and it was non-toxic at this concentration. But they had no idea of its origin. The air and water samples told them the concentration was .08 parts per million, and nothing more. The water treatment plant checked out in perfect working order.

The next step was to check and cross-check all the experiments performed in the ship's labs in the past 72 hours. It was possible that two unrelated experiments, the results or wastes of which were emptied into the ship's drains, had combined to create the problem. Also in order was a complete check of the *Enterprise's* entire water system, not just the treatment plant.

Spock went to the bridge to report to the captain that the "no usage order" on water could be lifted. But, since the odor remained, he did not anticipate that anyone would be rushing to the water fountains or for coffee.

By 1600 hours, T'Ayrian and crew had isolated the source of the acid: the hydroponic gardens. T'Ayrian had learned that six months ago the gardens had been refurbished. They now contained 94 plants new to the *Enterprise*, 36 of which had never before been used in a closed hydroponic system. She explained these facts to Mr. Scott. "It seems logical that we concentrate in this area."

"Aye, Lassie, but before you begin, report this information to the captain. He's waitin'."

T'Ayrian had no desire to face Kirk. "Mr. Scott, as head of engineering, I should think you would do that."

The look in his eyes told her that he was on to her. "Hydroponics is your department, Lieutenant; you report."

"I do not have bridge clearance." It was her last chance.

"I'll code it in. The captain's waiting."

When the lift doors opened, Lieutenant Uhura acknowledged T'Ayrian's presence. As she approached the captain, she noted that Spock was at his station with his back to her.

Kirk swiveled his chair when he noticed her. "Spock," he called over his shoulder. The first officer joined them. "Well, what have you got for us, Lieutenant?"

"The butyric acid is coming from the hydroponic gardens." She watched Spock's eyebrow climb at this news.

"Why so long to isolate?" Kirk asked.

"By the time the problem came to our attention, the acid was already in the entire water system. We had no clue as to its origin. Our first theory was that something had been introduced into the drains, either ac-

cidentally or on purpose. But we could find nothing to substantiate this. While doing a check of the entire water system, we discovered stronger concentrations at the hydroponic outflow valve."

"That explains the presence of the acid in the air circulation system," Spock commented.

"And it is getting worse. I'm *not* imagining it," Kirk emphasized.

"No, sir. I just completed another test. Concentration is up by .01 parts per million."

"So now what?" Kirk asked.

"The botanists have already begun a systematic check of all plants, giving particular attention to the new ones that were incorporated into the garden at the last refurbishing. We must conduct a physical examination of each plant and take cultures of the water to check for micro-organisms. Our first task is to rule out disease."

"Is there any chance of by-passing the gardens?"

"Not without upsetting the entire system, sir. The balance is very finely set."

"I guess we live with it then. Anything to add, Spock?"

"No, sir. But I request permission to begin work on that project we discussed earlier."

"Project?"

"The still."

"Oh, yeah, for Bones' medications. Permission granted." He turned to T'Ayrian. "Carry on, Lieutenant."

The two Vulcans left the bridge together. When the lift door closed, T'Ayrian said, "Spock, I do not understand what you are planning. You cannot distill the acid and hope . . ."

"I realize that. I plan to add enough sodium hydroxide to neutralize the acid, then I can . . ."

". . . distill the water. Yes, that should work."

The door opened and she left without further conversation.

T'Ayrian noticed Spock just inside the door of her office. He stood back until she finished speaking with Ensign Ashmul. When the ensign had gone he came to stand next to her. "There is still nothing further to report, Mr. Spock."



"Lieutenant, it is now 0100 hours. You were to have gone off duty at 1600 hours yesterday."

"I am not tired. As you well know, I could go on . . ."

"I know the excuse, Lieutenant. I have used it myself on several occasions. It is unacceptable under these circumstances. You are suffering from time lag and have not had proper rest for over a week."

"I am needed here."

"The night crew can manage. You are off-duty, Lieutenant."

She turned away from him, not acknowledging his words.

"Lieutenant."

"I heard . . . sir. I will give instructions, then leave."

The sight of their cabin further depressed T'Ayrian. She didn't know where to begin. She spotted a wet towel in the bathroom doorway and threw it into the chute. She had just finished hanging up one of her uniforms when Spock entered, with a tray full of food. She had to clear a place on the desk before he could even set it down.

"Have you eaten today?"

She shook her head.

"I suspected as much. You will do so now." He uncovered the tray and was setting a place when the intercom sounded. T'Ayrian could sense his unspoken sigh.

"Spock here."

"Trouble on Deck Five, section F, sir."

"On my way. Spock out."

He paused at the door and faced T'Ayrian, who was about to hang up another garment. She could anticipate his remark.

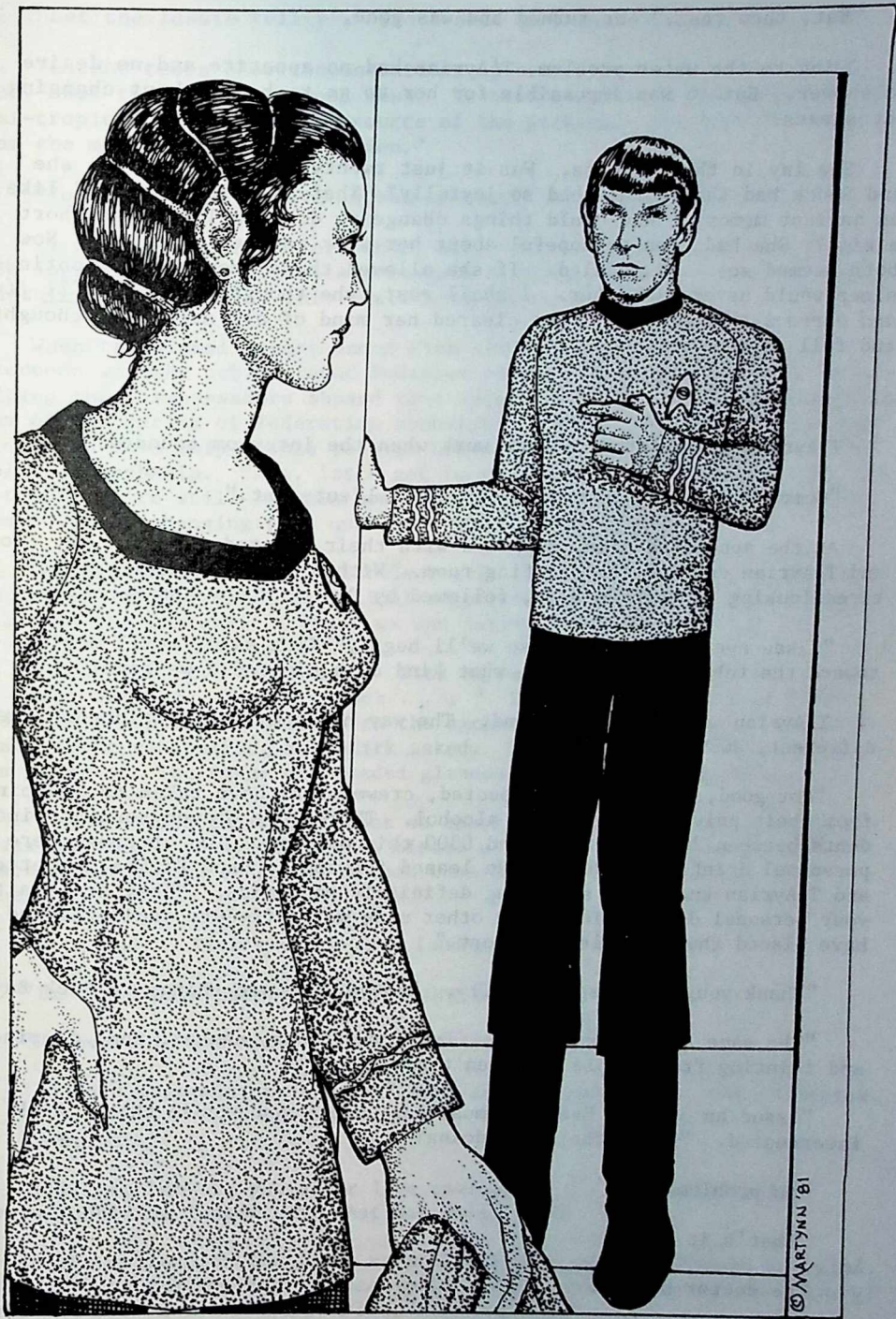
"Spock, this cabin is a disgrace."

"Yes, it is. And that is exactly the condition I expect to find it in when I return. You are here to rest, not to clean."

Her eyes met his. "Do you speak as senior officer or husband?"

"Whichever you prefer."

The garment slipped from her fingers.



"Eat, then rest." He turned and was gone.

Owing to the water problem, T'Ayrian had no appetite and no desire to shower. But it was impossible for her to go to bed without changing the sheets.

She lay in the darkness. Was it just twenty-four hours since she and Spock had shared this bed so joyfully? That experience seemed like an ancient memory. How could things change so drastically in so short a time? She had been so hopeful about her work and her marriage. Now both seemed so . . . muddled. If she allowed these thoughts to continue, sleep would never claim her. *I shall rest*, she thought, *then I will find and correct this problem*. She cleared her mind of all stressful thoughts and fell asleep.

T'Ayrian was absorbed in her work when the intercom sounded.

"Command briefing in room C1 at 0800, Lieutenant."

At the appointed time, supplied with their updated reports, Mr. Scott and T'Ayrian entered the briefing room. Within a few minutes, a very tired-looking captain came in, followed by Doctor McCoy and Spock.

"I see everyone is here, so we'll begin," Kirk said, still moving toward the table. "Mr. Spock, what kind of a night did we have?"

T'Ayrian watched her husband. The way he handled the tricorder was different, awkward.

"Not good, sir. As we suspected, crewmembers have taken to imbibing from their private supplies of alcohol. There were eleven separate incidents between 2000 yesterday and 0300 this morning. Two of those were personnel drinking on duty." He leaned forward to hand Kirk a cassette and T'Ayrian knew that something definitely was amiss. "They are awaiting your personal disposition. The other nine were off-duty incidents and I have placed those people on report."

"Thank you," Kirk said wearily. "Bones, how are things in Sick Bay?"

"The same as yesterday, Jim. Eye irritations, nausea, some dizziness and fainting from people who aren't eating . . ."

"Issue an order. Everyone must eat unless you excuse them," Kirk interrupted. "How's the still doing?"

"No problems."

"That's it then?"

The doctor nodded.

Kirk turned his attention to the chief engineer. "Anything new?"



"Let the lassie tell y'," Scott said in a tired voice. "Go ahead."

"Latest tests show concentrations up by another .001 parts per million. But there is some good news. We have eliminated the tropical and semi-tropical gardens as the source of the problem. The acid is coming from the moderate climate section."

"You think you'll have an answer soon?" Kirk asked hopefully.

"I would like to believe that, sir. But all the plants have Federation approval, which includes stringent testing. I cannot imagine how something that could do this could have gotten past them."

When the dismal report ended Kirk slowly stood up. "People, this afternoon we make orbit around Rudantor and this evening we will be entertaining their ambassadors aboard *this* ship. We shall be trying to convince them of the merits of Federation membership. That's not going to be easy to do when this ship stinks to high heaven." He slammed his hand on the table for emphasis. "Now, let's get to work and remedy this problem! Mr. Scott, if we're still in this condition at 1600 hours, change those filters and keep changing them until our guests have departed."

"We may be able to do a little better than that, sir. The lieutenant (he nodded in T'Ayrian's direction) suggested the ion exchange cartridges would aid the filters. I think we can jury-rig somethin'."

"Good. Do it. Dismissed." Kirk turned his attention to the doctor and first officer. "Bones, Spock . . ." The two men stopped at Kirk's words and T'Ayrian tried to catch the exchange as she headed for the exit. "What aren't you telling me?" Kirk asked. *Yes, she thought, I have the same question.* The three men traded glances, then the doctor spoke.

"One of those incidents Spock so casually spoke about was a physical attack on him." (T'Ayrian almost missed a step.) " . . . Ensign Miller attacked Spock with a spanner wrench when he stepped in to break up a fight."

"Attacked?" Kirk's voice grew louder. "What happened?"

"It could have been serious," McCoy said.

"However, it was *not*," Spock emphasized.

"Is this information in here?" Kirk asked, reaching for the cassettes.

"Yes, sir."

"I'll get back to you after I've reviewed . . ." At this point, T'Ayrian could no longer hear what was being said.

As she waited for the lift, several thoughts swirled through her mind. *Spock was hurt and she had not been told. Why? How severe was the injury? If she had solved the water problem, this would not. . .*

"T'Ayrian, I would speak with you."

She looked at her husband. He had called her by her given name, not 'my wife' or 'lieutenant'. She sensed that he was treading a fine line between professionalism and intimacy. "If you wish."

"The briefing room is empty now."

They went back to the room so recently vacated. "This morning's accident was not serious, simply a cut hand." He extended his right hand, palm up. Bandi-seal covered the already healing wound. He responded to the question in her eyes. "I had no wish to disturb your rest. There was nothing you could have done."

"I awoke to find myself alone. I should have been told."

"Doctor McCoy suggested it. I said no."

"And if the situation had been reversed?"

" . . . Yes, I see. If anything had happened to you. . . . I concede. My decision was incorrect. I shall learn."

"You are sure the injury was not serious?"

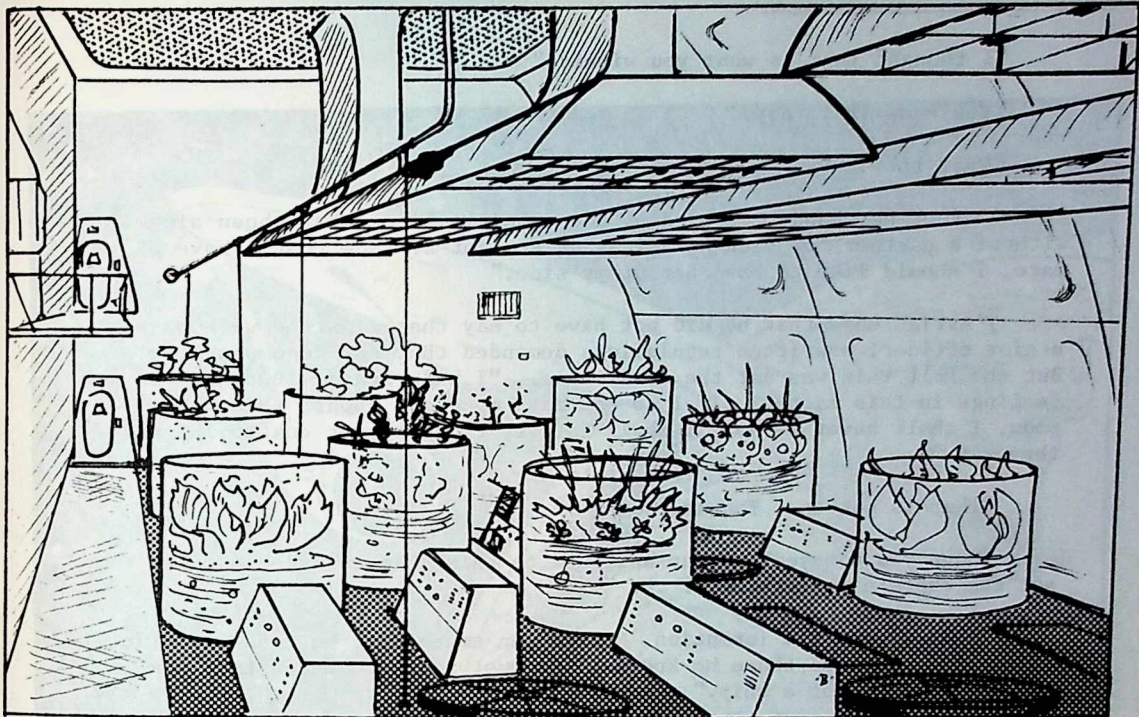
"You need not worry. If it were, the good doctor would have confined me to Sick Bay."

T'Ayrian fitted her face filter into place. It was necessary here in the moderate climate garden, due to the higher concentration of acid. This done, she strapped herself into a body harness and hooked it to an anti-grav disc, commonly known as a sky hook. She flipped the switch and slowly began to rise above the floor. Using the remote control in the harness, she guided herself through the expanse of vertical tubes. The garden was in spring cycle and the hundreds of plants from all over the galaxy were in bloom. It was a spectacle she had not previously seen before coming to the *Enterprise*. Under other circumstances, she would have taken pleasure in the sight, but her concern lay elsewhere: in the physical damage (albeit minor) that she was encountering in many of the plants. The speed of the water circulating through the growing tubes had already been increased to minimize the damage.

She surveyed the area with frustration. All these plants, and any one of several thousand combinations could be responsible for the problem. Then she headed back to her office. The next computer results should be ready.

At 1805 hours Spock, in dress uniform, appeared in the water treatment section. "Your presence is required at the dinner for the ambassadors."

"As a junior officer, I have no place there."



"As my wife, you will accompany me."

"I prefer to continue with my work."

"I prefer you at my side."

"You prefer. . . . At our marriage, you signified that ours would be a union of equals."

"When there is a conflict, we must compromise."

"You consider this a compromise?"

"Call it what you will. You cannot, for efficiency's sake, work all three shifts. Come now and prepare yourself."

Conflict surged through her. On one side was a lifetime of training to be a Vulcan wife and bondmate. She was conditioned to respond to her mate's needs and desires. On the other side was a year of freedom, of being on her own at the officers' training school, and making decisions, small though they might be, without consulting anyone. She had been free of parents, husband, and Vulcan. A lifetime of training won, but resentment filled her. She logged out and followed Spock out of the lab.

When the cabin door closed behind them, he turned. "Was it necessary for you to stay exactly *two* steps behind me all the way from the lab?"



"I thought that is what you wished."

"You know it is not."

"What then?"

He took her hand. "T'Ayrian, all my adult life I have been alone, without a partner for such occasions as tonight's. Now that I have a mate, I should like to have her at my side."

T'Ayrian knew that he did not have to say that. As the wife of a senior officer, unwritten regulations demanded that she accompany him. But she felt this was not the usual case. "I understand. But what of my feelings in this matter? If I do not make my place aboard this vessel soon, I shall never do so. I shall forever ride on your coattails, as they say."

"That is not so. You are doing . . . "

"Have you no eyes? I was assigned to this ship as Hydro expert, yet the captain ignores me. . . . "

"That is not his intention. During an emergency, he reacts instinctively and calls on those he knows. You must learn to understand him and the workings of a ship."

"He does not follow standard procedures."

"No. He does not." Spock's tone softened. "And he never will; this you will have to accept. His record speaks for itself."

"I cannot believe these words are coming from you. Aboard this ship I am a junior officer married to the executive officer. I belong nowhere, am accepted by neither group. *You* of all people should understand my position."

"I do. But because of the nature of the water problem, progress is slow. Perhaps an evening's diversion will . . . "

"So. It is for my benefit that you force this on me. . . . "

"We will discuss this no further. I must see to some last-minute arrangements. Prepare thyself. I will return."

It was a nervous group that assembled in the Transporter Room to greet the visitors. The honor guard took its place. Word came from the surface and Kirk gave the order: "Energize."

The first six of the ten-member party shimmered into existence and then stood silently as the rest beamed aboard.

Kirk, flanked by Spock and McCoy, stepped forward to greet the party. Introductions completed, they moved into the hall toward the dining room.



As they walked through the corridor, the Rudantorites began sniffing discreetly. The chief spokeswoman stopped and took a deep breath. Kirk stiffened; the crewmembers were afraid to breathe at all.

"Captain," the woman said, and smiled. "You have enriched your air on our account. How thoughtful. We thank you." All the ambassadors smiled and relief flooded the faces of the *Enterprise's* officers. Being Vulcan, T'Ayrian's reaction was outwardly controlled, discernable only through her expressive eyes. She looked at her husband, expecting him to match her relief at this news, and was puzzled by his lack of reaction.

From that point on everyone's mood brightened and the evening's festivities proceeded without further incident.

\* \* \* \* \*

T'Ayrian looked up to see Kirk striding into her office.

"Captain?"

"Got some time, Lieutenant? I'd like to talk." He set one of the two cups he was carrying in front of her. She could tell from the aroma that it contained a Vulcan herb tea.

"Yes, sir. I am awaiting some computer results."

He perched on the edge of the desk.

"Captain, this seems to be an appropriate time to offer my apology for my remarks the other morning, and to state that I am prepared to accept any disciplinary action you feel justified in taking."

"The action I intend to take, Lieutenant, is to forget the incident."

"Sir?"

"Lieutenant, it is my policy to disregard remarks made during a crisis, if at all possible. Do you think you'll have this 'thing' licked soon?"

"That is my hope, sir."

"Is that frustration I detect in your voice, Lieutenant?"

She studied this man, who was the captain and a close friend of her husband's. "As a Vulcan, I should claim ignorance of such emotion."

He smiled at her. "I'll keep your secret. Now tell me, after you isolate the culprit, will you be able to remove it from the garden?"

"Yes, with all possible haste."

Kirk's smile broadened. "How will you cleanse this closed system of what's already in it?"

T'Ayrian touched several buttons and the computer screen brightened, displaying the diagram of a filter. "We have designed a new lime filter which we shall install in both the water and air systems."

The intercom sounded. "Captain Kirk, to the bridge." That ended their conversation.

"Lieutenant T'Ayrian."

"Here."

"Report to Sick Bay immediately."



"On my way." The professional-sounding voice belied the fear that was surging through her. *Spock! It had to be. Something has happened to him.* The lift seemed to take forever to arrive and forever to reach Sick Bay. Only her years of training and conditioning kept her from running the last few feet of the corridor. Inside Sick Bay, she followed the sound of voices. Relief flooded through her as she identified Spock's voice, then saw him sitting on one of the beds. *Surely his injuries cannot be too serious.* Spock, McCoy, and a nurse looked up as she entered. Spock's eyes met hers, wordlessly trying to reassure.

The doctor was bending over his patient. "What I'd like to know is how you were the last one on the scene and still managed to get the worst of the explosion." McCoy glanced up as T'Ayrian moved closer. "Acid burns," he said, continuing to work, "splattered all over hell, second degree burns, more pain than damage. The uniform protected him fairly well; right thigh took the worst of it."

"How did it happen?" Her inquiring voice sounded calm.

"One of the widgets on the still clogged and caused the thing to blow."

"Doctor, that is not . . . "

"Quiet!" McCoy snapped at Spock's interruption, then turned to T'Ayrian. "May not be technical, but that's the gist of what happened." He finished his task and motioned for Spock to lie down. "Ten minutes, you two." He aimed his piercing blue eyes at Spock. "Then *you* put yourself under, or I will." He handed the tray to the nurse. They were almost to the door when the captain hurried into the room.

"Spock?"

"Captain, I am not seriously injured. . . . "

"Bones, is he right?"

"Yeah, Jim. Come on, I'll fill you in."

As they left the room, McCoy dimmed the lights. Illogically, T'Ayrian was grateful. She felt less vulnerable in the dim light.

Spock's uninjured hand slipped from under the blanket and formed the two-fingered gesture. "My wife, attend." It was the first time in their marriage that he had made use of this intimacy, and she did not respond immediately.

"Spock, I would not expose you to the fears that are running unchecked in my mind."

"We shall share them and dispel them." His hand remained poised.

"I . . . Spock . . ." Physical symptoms joined her mental ones, as fear of her thoughts being laid bare surged through her.

"My wife." His voice was gentle.

She placed her fingers against his and their bonding link closed. Further efforts at controlling her feelings failed and humiliation joined the medley of emotions that spilled from her mind to his. She sensed his mind, sorting and evaluating.

There was fear for his safety, accompanied by an illogical desire to lock him in their quarters where no harm could come to him. He saw her frustration at not being able to create an independent place for herself aboard the ship. There were other, deeper emotions concerning him, a respect for his abilities and something else hidden even deeper, jealousy.

"Do not be distressed, my wife."

"How can I not be? I am like a child who has yet to learn the disciplines. . . ." She would not meet his gaze.

"I think not. T'Ayrian, let us examine these emotions. I sense your fear for my well-being. It pleases me to find it so strong. I choose to interpret it as affection, and is that not desirable in any bonding? I should be distressed if you were indifferent. I would use your own words of earlier today: 'Reverse the situation.' "

She could understand that. If she were hurt, she would want him concerned. "But my control. I wanted to *run* all the way here."

"But you did not."

"No."

"Then you have control. It is on the outside we build our barriers, my wife; on the inside we cannot. Let us look at this jealousy."

"No." Shame rose up in her and she almost pulled away.

"T'Ayrian, accept the emotion."

"I am ashamed of it. You have been one step ahead of me through this whole situation. You even knew that the Rudantorites would not be adversely affected by the acid, while it never occurred to me to check."

"And if I were not one step ahead of you, then you would be the science officer and I the lieutenant."

"Spock, I know that your experience alone would put you ahead of me, and I would not wish a mate who offered no challenge. I spent many hours at the Academy reading your papers. It was your thinking and innovative methods of interpretation that intrigued me. Why now, when I could use that intelligence and experience, am I . . . envious of it?"

"If our relationship were simply one of junior and senior officer, I suspect this competition would not exist."

"Your words keep coming back to me. 'We are both professionals and Vulcan. There is no problem with which we cannot deal.' I have failed."

"I stated that we would deal with our problems, not that we would not have any. I believe we are doing just that. I am also at fault. In my own narrow thinking, I saw only *one* problem, and when that did not materialize. . . ."

She knew he was referring to the physical side of their marriage. "Spock, I knew of your mixed heritage. Why should you believe that I would fault you for it? It seems we have much to learn about each other--and ourselves. . . ."

They stood staring, all of them. The chemists, botanists, and engineers surrounded the tank, staring at the odorous offender. "How could something so innocent-looking--I mean, just look at those delicate red-orange blossoms. How could that be the cause of so much trouble?" asked Engineer Hennings.

All eyes turned to T'Ayrian. "That," she pointed to the culprit, "is commonly known as a Klemmer. The mature fruit, I am told, is excellent eating. . . ."

"Slice it, saute it in butter with mushrooms," a young woman from Chemistry interrupted, "and you'll never want beefsteak again. Excellent."

When everyone had stopped salivating, T'Ayrian continued. "During its flowering stage, it emits cetyl butyrate to repel a native parasite. Now, as everyone knows, aboard the *Enterprise*, we allow no parasites. . . ." A series of titters and suppressed laughter went around the room. "Had it not been for the fact that three plants, the Lessa, a Terratwo tomato, the Drayab, a Vulcan citrus fruit, and the Makinz, Rigellian cabbage, evolved the ability to metabolize such esters, unfortunately releasing butyric acid as a by-product, the steady-state concentration of cetyl butyrate would have remained insignificant. The Klemmer itself would have inhibited further production when concentration reached .00006 parts per million."



\* \* \* \* \*



The gauge room was crowded with anxious crewmembers. The first run-through of the water system since the Klemmer plant had been removed and the lime filters installed was about to be completed. The room grew silent as the gauges began to flicker and the needles moved to register in the normal range. Then cheers and applause erupted. "Hurray!" "Thank God!" "Let's eat!" "Where's the coffee?" "Hell with the coffee, I want a shower!" But most significant was, "It's over!"

Kirk and McCoy carefully guided the cart out of the lift and down the corridor. They stopped in front of the first officer's quarters.

"Let's check this again before we go in," McCoy said.

"Bones," Kirk answered impatiently, "we've got everything: supper for two, Vulcan wine, a fresh flower, and a candle. Now come on before they get off that lift and see us."

"All right." Using his medical override, McCoy opened the door and Kirk pushed the cart. Both stopped dead in their tracks as they surveyed the condition of the cabin. Even with only the light from the corridor to aid them, they could plainly see the mess. Dirty dishes covered the desk except for one corner, where a trunk sat at a precarious angle, with clothes hanging out of it. More clothes were strewn on the chair and floor. A glance at the bathroom revealed still more clothes and towels on the floor.

"My God! What happened in here?"

"Looks like a tornado went through."

"This must be against some regulation."

"Bones, you don't suppose they had a fight--and threw things. . . . No! Not Spock. . . ."

McCoy reached down and with thumb and index finger picked up a female's undergarment. "I don't think it was a fight," he said, waving it under Kirk's nose.

"Lord! When did they find the time? I mean. . . ."

"I don't know, but they did. Now let's get out of here before we get caught."

"Yes, right now! How would we ever explain?"

"Us explain? How about Spock? It's his room that looks like a whore house after a raid."

"Here, get the cart." He pulled, but a wheel was stuck on a boot.

"Leave it. Come on."

"No."

Kirk pushed the cart in one direction while McCoy pulled it in the other.

"Then they'll know we were here."

"Yeah, but we can't take it back. We'll get caught."

"Well, we can't leave it."

"Outside. We'll leave it outside the door."

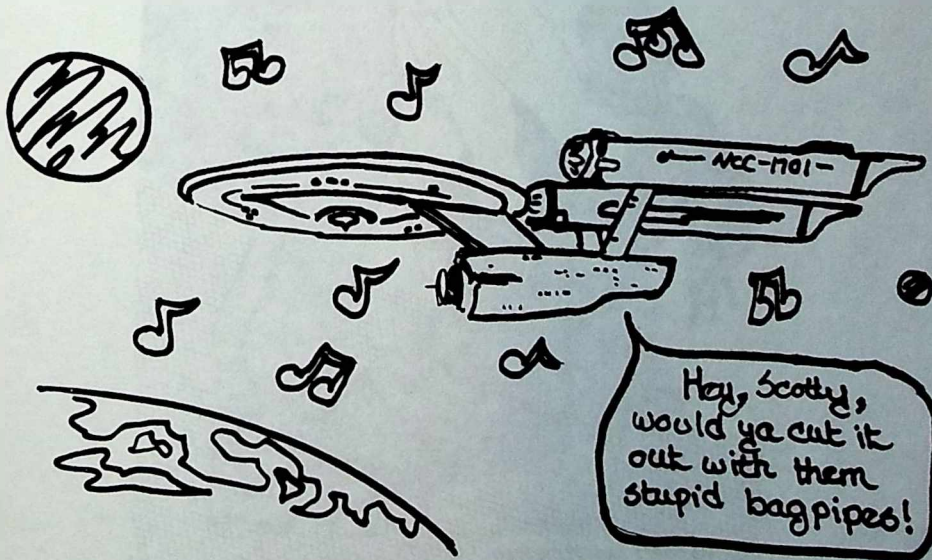
"Good idea. Let's go."

The cart rattled through the opening.

"God, that was close. . . ."

The door closed.

In the bedroom alcove, two Vulcans huddled together beneath the bed covers, one thought swimming from mind to mind. "Embarrassment is illogical. Embarrassment is illogical. . . ."



♥ MOM! ♥

SIGH ...  
ALL RIGHT LUKE,  
WHAT'S VADER BEEN  
TELLING YOU NOW?!

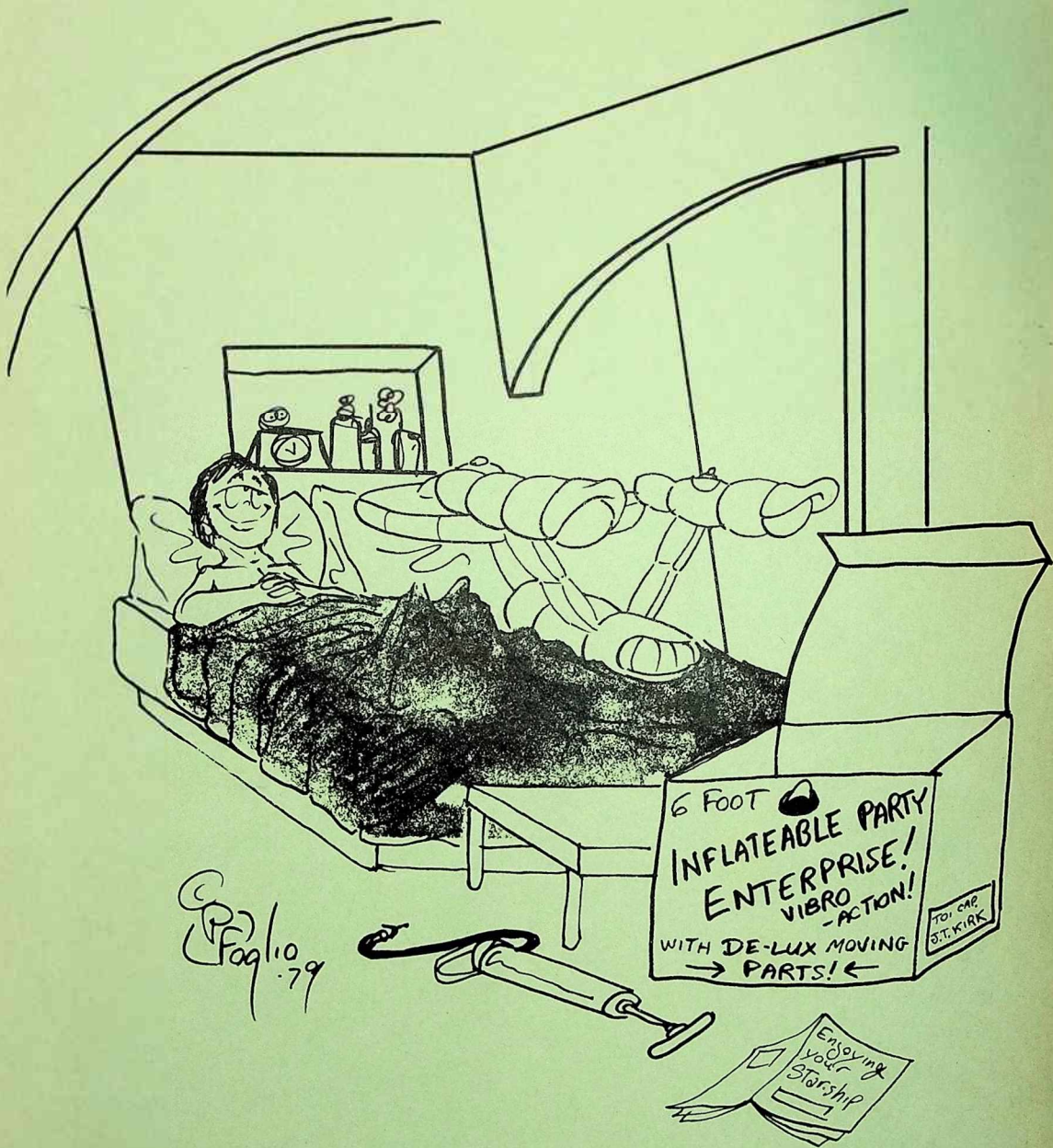


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C.P. Foglio  
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