

time

Spock of Vulcan

T-NEGATIVE 1

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Cover by Tim Courtney. Facing p. 16 by Alicia Austin.

PROLOGUE

In November 1966, I started watching Star Trek, mainly because Juanita Coulson had recommended it so highly in Yandro. By December I'd got Eleanor Arnason hooked on it, too, and in December she made the classic remark, "We could write that, too." In the months that followed, I worked on several scripts -- some in collaboration with Eleanor, and some on my own. Also, being fond of the show to the point of mania, I worked on Star Trek stories which were suited to prose but not to drama. Again, some of these I did alone, and some were collaborations with others. Now Star Trek is going off the air, and so the scripts are useless. Some of them, and some of the stories, could perhaps be re-written as novels and sold as such (if Bantam publishes an original ST novel by Blish as he says in Star Trek 3 that they plan to, and if it is successful enough to make them want to publish more, and if they will consider other authors if they want to publish more). As the prospect is so exceedingly iffy, I don't want to wait. Instead, I want to share these stories with other ST fans, printing the stories as-is and re-writing the scripts as stories (script-format is not easy to read for enjoyment).

In 1968, Gene Roddenberry hired Bjo and John Trimble to set up Lincoln Enterprises, a company which was to handle Star Trek's fan mail and sell ST souvenirs. In April, I started working for the Trimbles as their assistant. After they left Lincoln Enterprises, I continued to work there until a couple of months ago. As a result of working for Lincoln, I had several opportunities to visit the Star Trek set and watch the show being filmed. At the time, I did not think I should write up any of these visits -- they were potential sources of material for one of Lincoln's souvenirs, a newsletter called "Inside Star Trek." But I took notes, planning to put out this fanzine after I left Lincoln, whenever that should be.

It turns out to be now.

So T-Negative is a magazine of stories, and articles about backstage aspects of Star Trek.

In the first issue of "Inside Star Trek," I published an article called "Back to Space." I want to re-do it here at more length.

BACK TO SPACE

First week of filming on the third season of Star Trek: dust covers are pulled off the bridge... between "takes" numerous electric fans fight the early summer heat... the warning bell sounds, the fans are shut off, and powerful arc lights shine down on the set. The scene is "The Last Gunfight" -- a "welcome home" for DeForest Kelley in more ways than one. He is back in the familiar role of Dr. "Bones" McCoy... but McCoy and his shipmates find themselves forced into playing the roles of the Bad Guys in the famous OK Corral shoot-out. Kelley has now played three different members of the gang, once on television's You Are There, once in the motion picture Gunfight at the OK Corral, and now on Star Trek. He twirls his six-shooter expertly before sewing it in the holster belted around his uniform.

This opening cleverly conceals the fact that I didn't know what was going on. I wasn't on the set to gather material for an article for "Inside Star Trek." I wasn't even on the set for any business reasons. "Inside Star Trek" was entirely Bjo Trimble's baby, and at that time I didn't even know if I would be writing for it (although I assumed I would be). I was on the set because a friend of mine from high school days, Bonnie Beecher, was in the show, playing "Sylvia," the dance-hall girl in love with Billy Claiborne/Chekov. I noticed a casting list of the episode in Daily Variety, thought it would be nice to see Bonnie again, and sent her a note suggesting we get together. I assumed she'd phone me after the show was filmed and she had time free, but instead she sent back a message suggesting I meet her on the set, the next day (May 28).

I came in while they were filming the scene where the landing party leaves the bar -- hampered by Chekov, who is too interested in Sylvia to notice that the others are leaving. In reality, they were hampered by Shatner, who cracked up every time he said "Mr. Chekov...I mean...Billy." After a few tries he managed to get through the line without laughing, and the scene continued to its end: Sylvia says intently, "Please, Billy, don't. Don't even go near him."

That was the last of Bonnie's scenes, and we spent an hour or two in her dressing-room talking (as the only woman around -- none of her scenes overlapped with Uhura's -- she had a dressing-room all to herself). The dressing rooms are a row of little trailers just outside the back door of Stage 9.

When Bonnie left, I went back inside to watch the rest of the afternoon's filming. They were then filming another saloon scene, the one just after Chekov's "death." This scene also required several takes (in fact, as a general rule, every scene required several takes). Oftentimes I could not see why they had to stop -- technical reasons, I suppose. One halt in this scene was an interesting demonstration of the problems of getting out a good performance and getting a good recording of a good performance. The scene opened with Spock, McCoy, and Scott sitting around a table, and Kirk, grieving over Chekov's death, standing by himself over at the bar. On one take Shatner tried bowing his head as the scene began. It was effective -- but it put his head too low, out of the light that had been focused on him. The director wanted to keep the motion and called a short halt for a conference with the light-men to see how much work it would take to re-focus the light. They wound up with a compromise -- Shatner bowed his head, but not so much as to be out of his light.

And then, on another take, Spock was supposed to say, "The immediate future requires great attention from all of us." The line was not directly related to the preceding line, and a pause was expected. But Nimoy got a frog in his throat at just that moment, and the pause stretched out endlessly (i.e., about two seconds' worth). He sat there straining to make a sound. "Cut," said the director. Nimoy coughed, cleared his throat, and apologized. "You need something to wet your whistle," said Shatner, and proceeded to make puns on whistle, leading to wick ("The wick shall inherit the earth"), and so on, as far-fetched as he could make them. He managed to keep a non-stop series of puns going until they were set up again for another take.

By the time the scene was filmed, I had it memorized. So, later, when I got a chance to look at a script of the show (several weeks later, it was), I checked to see if any changes had been made from the final script. An important change had been made (and the scene in the final script was a fourth re-write, at that). Important, that is, in consistency of characterization. As written, McCoy accused Spock of having no feelings, because he showed no reaction to Chekov's death, and Kirk said, "Can that be true? Chekov is dead. I say it now, yet I can hardly believe it. You knew him as long as I did. You worked with him as closely. Even that deserves its memorial." McCoy throws in another comment about Spock's avoidance of emotion, Spock says, "You seem to forget, Doctor, that I am half human," and Kirk says "Bones, every man grieves in his own way."

As written, the scene ignored the fact that Kirk is normally the one most aware of Spock's hidden emotions. Further, it called for Kirk to reproach McCoy for something that both McCoy and Kirk had done. Also, it left Scott with no reaction at all.

As played, Scott took Kirk's reproachful speech. The following line was McCoy's, as before, and Kirk cut in on him angrily, "Bones --" whereupon Spock stopped Kirk from letting out his own grief in anger at McCoy and Scott by saying to Kirk, "They forget that I am half human." The last line was cut, so that the scene ended with its high-note -- Spock's oblique admission of his grief, silently shared with the others. Results: improved pacing, more consistent characterization of Kirk, more consistent characterization of Scott.

They went straight on to the next scene (no change of time or place, but cutting to a different angle to emphasize the change of mood): the clock strikes four, and they settle down to trying to figure out a way to escape.

McCoy, along with Kirk and Spock, walks through the non-existent fourth wall of the saloon. "Where's Scotty?" asks the director, turning around. "Oh, there you are," he says, at the end of his turn -- James Doohan entered the set through the saloon door instead of walking through the wall. The clapperboard slams. "Action!" calls the director.

Kirk turns and paces a few steps away from the others. The characters begin discussing their current peril. "There must be a way out!" Kirk exclaims heroically.

"Cut!" says the director.

"...and there is: through the front door," Kirk adds, breaking up his co-stars.

It was also in this scene that Spock asked "But did not William Claiborne survive the battle at the OK Corral?" It was at this point that I finally began to catch on to what was going on in the story. I recalled that Kelley had been in a movie called "Gunfight at the OK Corral," deduced that the gunfight at the OK Corral was a historical event, and realized that someone or something had forced the Enterprise people to re-enact that event.

I also realized that Kelley must be quite amused at the re-play. When the scene was over, they took a fairly long break, and I went over to Kelley.

"You must be ready to be the technical expert now," I said.

"On Star Trek?" he said, with a have-you-got-the-right-man look.

"No, on OK Corrals."

"Oh! Yeah!" he said. And he pulled out a little folder he had tucked into his script and showed me two publicity shots of the fight, both including him among the characters, one from the movie and one from the television show.

Outside the saloon on one side is a miniature sagebrush desert. It looks vast because of the cut-out mountains surrounding it and the huge sky cyclorama behind the mountains stretching around two sides of the desert and right on up to the roof. On the other side of the saloon is a large twilit area, strewn with sawdust to deaden noise. A crowd of machines is assembled there, along with an even larger crowd of all the kinds of technicians needed to record the actors' work on those machines. Sound-men perch on little platforms, reeling out the microphones like so many fishing rods to catch the actors' lines. Light-men stand on a cat-walk just above the set beside their lights, ready to turn them on at the order "Lights!" or off at the order, "Save your arcs, gentlemen!" Make-up men watch the actors carefully, springing up with powder and combs between takes.

Take 2. The clapboard slams. "Action!" Kirk turns and paces a few steps away from the others.

Some notes about the following.

"Bright Alpha," by Dorothy Jones and Astrid Anderson, is the first (by internal chronology; not the first written) of the Orloff-and-Conway stories. Myfanwy Orloff and Dorothy Conway are two junior officers on board the Enterprise. Their stories are told in dual-first-person -- they tell segments of each story in alternation. Myfanwy is fond of science fiction; Dorothy has more general tastes in literature.

"The Green Carbuncle": a Sherlock Holmes story

BRIGHT ALPHA

by Dorothy Jones and Astrid Anderson

Myfanwy

"Captain's Log, Star Date 1313.8. Add to list of casualties: Dr. Elizabeth Dehner. Be it noted she gave her life in performance of her duty. Lieutenant-Commander Gary Mitchell. Same notation." The Captain closed the circuit and caught Spock's eye. "I wanted his record to end that way. He didn't ask for what happened to him."

"I felt for him, too," Spock said quietly.

The Captain looked at him in pleased surprise. "Mr. Spock, I believe there's some hope for you after all!"

"Sir -- " I said tentatively at this point.

"Yes, Lieu -- " he turned and blinked at me -- "tenant?"

"Orloff, sir. Exobiology. Dr. Piper's final report on the casualties, sir."

"Mmmm. Thank you. Dismissed."

I retreated to the elevator which Dorothy held for me. She had no real excuse to be on the bridge.

"Did you hear what Spock said?" I asked.

"Yes, bless his little green heart. I think we've just seen the beginning of a beautiful friendship. The 'casualties' were Mitchell and Dehner, I gather?"

"And the little Denebian lemuroid -- it was telepathic but not intelligent. Got its nervous system burnt out, poor little scrap."

"And you, maybe?"

"Er, ah -- well, yes. That's why I spent the last couple of days in bed. I didn't really have a paraflu."

"I thought not. And have you noticed any increase in your psionic abilities?"

"I seem to be just a little sharper. But I can't do anything. I don't think I'm going to become absolutely corrupted." We had reached our quarters.

She chuckled. "You wouldn't dare. Better go to bed early; you still look washed out."

It was a splendid idea. Dorothy frequently has such; she has a mind like a diamond. She ought to be an empress, if there were any empires around other than the Klingon -- tall and stately, with superb self-control -- daungier, she calls it. Comes of being convent-bred. And one of these days I'm going to do something to her eyebrows and she'll be quite beautiful, with the great dark braid above her pale face. Beside her I look like a day-old chick. But no one seems to mind. With which consoling thought I returned to my bed as to an eggshell.

"Where are you headed?"

"Down to my computer station to study," she said.

"Vulcan?"

"What else? I have a session with my informant tomorrow morning. Go to sleep."

"Tell me just one thing. Why are you studying Vulcan?"

"It was the obvious choice. My informant is also my superior officer, and much will depend on how I get along with him in the next five years. Learning his language will help me to understand him. Now go to sleep! Meet me tomorrow for lunch if you're up and about."

When I arrived at Dorothy's computer cubby, she and Mr. Spock were finishing up their session with a formal "Thank you for your time, sir," and a stiff "My pleasure, Conway. Review the semantic parameters of the dra-evidential before our next meeting."

"Are you ready to go?" I asked from the door.

"Come on in, Myfanwy. I have to clear up here."

Spock nodded politely to me and headed for the door. As it opened, he stopped and put one hand to the doorframe as if to steady himself.

"Sir? Are you all right?"

"Very well, thank you, Conway. Fatigued, perhaps." A thought seemed to strike him, and he turned. "Conway, what do you know about psi?"

"Very little, sir. Lt. Orloff has limited telepathy. I appear to have a mental shield of considerable strength."

He raised an eyebrow. "I believe you have. I have noticed that you are the only person aboard this vessel who can approach without my noticing. If a door opens behind me and no one comes in, it is liable to be Conway." He nodded to us again and left.

"That I should live to see the day!" I exclaimed. "Mr. Spock attempted to make a joke!"

"More than that. He tacitly admitted that he is telepathic. And I suspect that he, like you, is suffering from the psychic after-effects of our hitting the energy barrier."

"Should Dr. Piper be told?"

"I think not. He seems to be recovering without medical help. And it would not please him to have to juggle Rhine cards for Dr. Piper's benefit."

We stopped by Star Base 17 to put our equipment back in shape and pick up new personnel. Dr. Piper left us for Sector Hospital, and we got one Leonard McCoy for Chief Surgeon and head of Life Sciences. He had bright blue eyes and a touch of Southern drawl and an acid wit. We hit it off very well, once I had gently broken him of the habit of singing "Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a thief" every time he saw me.

Our next stop was a planet mentioned in the old Valiant's log as Bright Alpha. The battered record seemed to indicate intelligent life, so Dorothy was sent down with the landing party, in case there was an alien language to study.

Within half an hour the landing party reported "something peculiar" and asked to be beamed up. The transporter shimmered and the three figures appeared. Jaeger and Boma stepped off the platform, but Dorothy looked around her in near-panic.

"Where are they?" she cried. "They didn't come!"

"Who?"

"The rest of the landing party. Where are they?"

Dorothy

They all looked at me in wonder. "Jaeger and Boma? They're right here, Lieutenant," someone said, gesturing at thin air.

"They are not here." They glanced uneasily at each other, and Spock said quietly to the intercom, "Dr. McCoy, to the transporter room. Security, stand by." Either I had gone mad or --

"Spock, listen to me!" I switched to Vulcan for the sake of the evidentials. "Spock, I do not (fact) tell lies, nor hallucinate, nor imagine things."

"This is true."

"We landed (I saw) in a wooded area. Boma and Jaeger said (I heard) that we were on the edge of a city. But there was (I saw) no city. We prepared (I saw) to beam up together. But no one arrived (I see) but me."

He considered me carefully. "What you say of yourself has always been true. And it is also true that you have a telepathic shield. Therefore -- " He opened the intercom again. "Security. Send six men to the transporter room."

"Six?" Myfanwy protested. "What do you think she is, a dinosaur?"

"Lieutenant, I am testing a hypothesis. Please be silent." Myfanwy shut up and we all settled down to wait.

What other man, I thought irrelevantly, would be so abrupt with Myfanwy? She dazzles every human male almost beyond speech. It's not only the physical beauty. She shines like a GO star, and her light illumines the whole ship, and me, who sit here like a dark toad, going mad -- NO!

Dr. McCoy came in, followed by the six (good grief) Security men. Spock directed their attention to that same thin air. "Look at these men. Concentrate. Are they actually there?"

Everyone looked. "They're there," Dr. McCoy said, "but there's something strange...."

Spock said slowly, "They...are...trans...." and cut off and opened a circuit to the computer. After two minutes of urgent talk which I couldn't quite hear, he closed the circuit and beckoned to me.

"Conway, you and I are returning to the planet's surface at once. By shuttlecraft -- I do not trust the transporter. What are Lt. Orloff's actual psionic capabilities?"

"Limited telepathy, as I said. She sends perhaps a trifle stronger than she receives. Mind you, I don't know this by direct experience -- "

"Very well. Lieutenant, you will come with us." And he strode out of the transporter room with us in tow before anyone else could say a word.

We proceeded to the hangar deck in silence, and boarded the waiting shuttlecraft. "What is all this about?" Myfanwy asked me as Spock piloted us out of the hangar deck.

"I don't know," I said, "but I trust Spock. Myfanwy, what was 'strange' about Boma and Jaeger when you were all looking at them?"

"They -- kind of wavered."

"They were transparent," said Spock. "They were telepathic illusions, imposed on our minds by something on this planet. When a number of additional minds had to be controlled, the illusion was difficult to stabilize."

"And what are we doing now?"

"We are going to land on Bright Alpha and learn what actually became of Mr. Jaeger and Mr. Boma."

"While the illusions continue on the ship."

"I have minimized their effect by the instructions I gave the computer. The transporter is now inoperable; nor can the Enterprise leave orbit. The computer will remain in control of the ship until I release it."

"Well done, ye!" I said softly.

"What was that?"

"Are we landing at the beam-down point?"

"Presumably, unless you have other suggestions."

"Well, sir, we beamed into a wooded area. But through the trees I saw the beginning of an open plain. If we land there, it will be easier to find the Galileo if we are in a hurry."

"An admirable suggestion, Conway."

Myfanwy whispered, "What are you blushing for?"

"Shaddap."

We landed the Galileo at the edge of the plain. Spock locked the controls and the door, and we proceeded into the woods.

"Let me know if you see a city," I said. "It would be nice if their illusions are consistent."

"In case they are not, you had better take the tricorder," said Spock. "Check for readings of two human beings."

I swept the sensor across the view. "There's something warm-blooded in this direction," I said, "and nowhere else." And off we went.

"Human, I think," I said, a few minutes later. "We seem to be on the right track -- "

Myfanwy went "Urk" and her eyes bugged.

"Something?"

"There is a city! Right in front of us."

"There appears to be a city," Spock said cautiously.

"How nice." I couldn't see anything but trees and more trees. "What kind of city? Towers? or more ground level?"

"Towers. It's very pretty, really, all white and crystal."

Towers. Boma and Jaeger were undoubtedly roosting in some damn tree.

Presently Spock stopped. "It appears to us that we are now entering the city."

"Any inhabitants?"

"No sign of life."

"Not to me either. Myfanwy, this place is like Fangorn Forest. You couldn't imagine animals living here. Or like the Wood Between the Worlds."

"It's not the sort of place where things happen," Spock murmured. "The trees go on growing, that's all."

"Wait a minute," said Myfanwy. "We're heading straight into a wall."

"Shut your eyes and try."

She did. "It's still there, but it's soft and squishy. I don't want to walk into it."

"There's a door a short distance away," suggested Spock, "if that course will not propel us into a tree."

We tried. It didn't. "It's getting dark in here," Myfanwy said after a dozen yards. "I hope you can still see where you're going."

"Conway, are we going downhill?"

"No, sir. Flat, level ground, with some third cousin of dichondra on it."

"Fascinating," Spock mused. "We are descending a long flight of steps, and it is now quite dark --"

"Ow!" This from Myfanwy, who had fetched up against a tree. I guided her around it.

"I saw daylight for a moment there," she reported, rubbing her nose. "Any sign of our wandering boys?"

"Should be dead ahead -- Ha! This way."

Boma and Jaeger sat with their backs to a tree, heads bowed on their knees, hands locked together. They didn't look up when I called.

I ran to them and shook them by the shoulders. "Wachet auf! It's Conway, with Mr. Spock. Get up and let's get out of here."

They started, and looked around in various wrong directions. Evidently they were in the same darkness as Spock and Myfanwy. "How do we get out? How'd you get in?"

They were firmly convinced that they were locked in a dark dungeon, manacled to some wall or other. I hadn't time to argue. Remembering Myfanwy and the tree, I slapped them sharply in the face. Boma snarled and jumped to his feet. Jaeger got up more quietly, saying, "I saw green daylight, and a grove of trees. Now I can't see at all, but I gather you can."

"Then let's go -- Maledizione!"

Spock and Myfanwy had vanished.

"What is it?"

"Wandered off when my back was turned.... The tricorder'll find them, I imagine. You two each take my elbow and follow me. Don't let go if the earth opens under your feet! We may be at this all day."

When I am from him I am dead till I be with him.

Now what put Religio Medici in my mind?

I found the tricorder readings, and we started off through the trees.

Myfanwy

Dorothy hurried us out of the darkness and through the streets of the city. I had some vague feeling that this wasn't the way we had come, but when I mentioned this fact she shook her head impatiently and yanked me along by the wrist. Boma and Jaeger seemed entirely cowed. Spock watched cautiously.

She led us into a low building of gleaming white marble inlaid with gold and brilliant stones which sparkled and scintillated in the sunlight. The main entrance was some hundred feet in width and projected from the building proper to form a huge canopy above the entrance hall. Wotthehell? Hadn't I seen this place before? There was no stairway, but a gentle incline to the first floor of the building opened into an enormous chamber encircled by galleries which rested on great ominous thick pillars. And then Dorothy, Boma and Jaeger were gone, and we were facing three large green ghashlies with six assorted limbs, red eyes, and fangs, who grinned wickedly, drew their shortswords, and began to close in on us.

"Thanks!" I said, trying not to scream.

"These creatures are familiar to you, Lieutenant?" asked Spock, checking his phaser.

"They're green Martians from -- "

"Nothing like that lives on Mars."

" -- from a pre-atomic work of science fiction."

"Then their images have been taken from your mind. What kind of disposition have these Thanks?"

"Fierce, cruel, and merciless. What's the matter with your phaser?"

"It appears to be non-functional, though that may also be an illusion -- " A Thark swung a mighty blow at his midsection. He bent and dodged like a bullfighter, the steel missing him by half an inch. No one took a swing at me; apparently I would be held like Dejah Thoris and saved for later fun and games. Spock

ducked a blow intended to behead him, and directed a sudden savate kick to the Thark's lower right kneecap. The blow ought to have lamed it, or at least made it go on three legs; instead, the Thark gave a solid "thunk" and was thrown fifteen feet backward and out of the action. Another one moved in.

"Fascinating," muttered Spock. "I would like to see these creatures in their natural state." He dodged again. "Lieutenant Orloff, Conway said you were a projective telepath. Is this accurate?"

"Well, sort of. I do seem to broadcast."

"Then I would be obliged if you would broadcast the illusion that this phaser is fully operative -" he ducked under a sword-stroke and jabbed a Thark in what should have been its cardiac plexus. The Thark paid no attention. "--- or, failing that, some weapon similar to those before us."

A great flash lit up my mind. Orloff Incorporated, Spawifery to Order. "I invoke the power of Melniboné!" I cried. "From blackest depths, unseen by all, in very center of the Hall--" "I'd mixed authors again, but who cares?" -- Appear, Stormbringer!"

The phaser in Spock's hand was gone, and he held a long line of blazing light. He swung it around his head and the air sizzled. The Tharks jumped back and began to circle around him. But Stormbringer seemed to have eyes in the back of Spock's head.

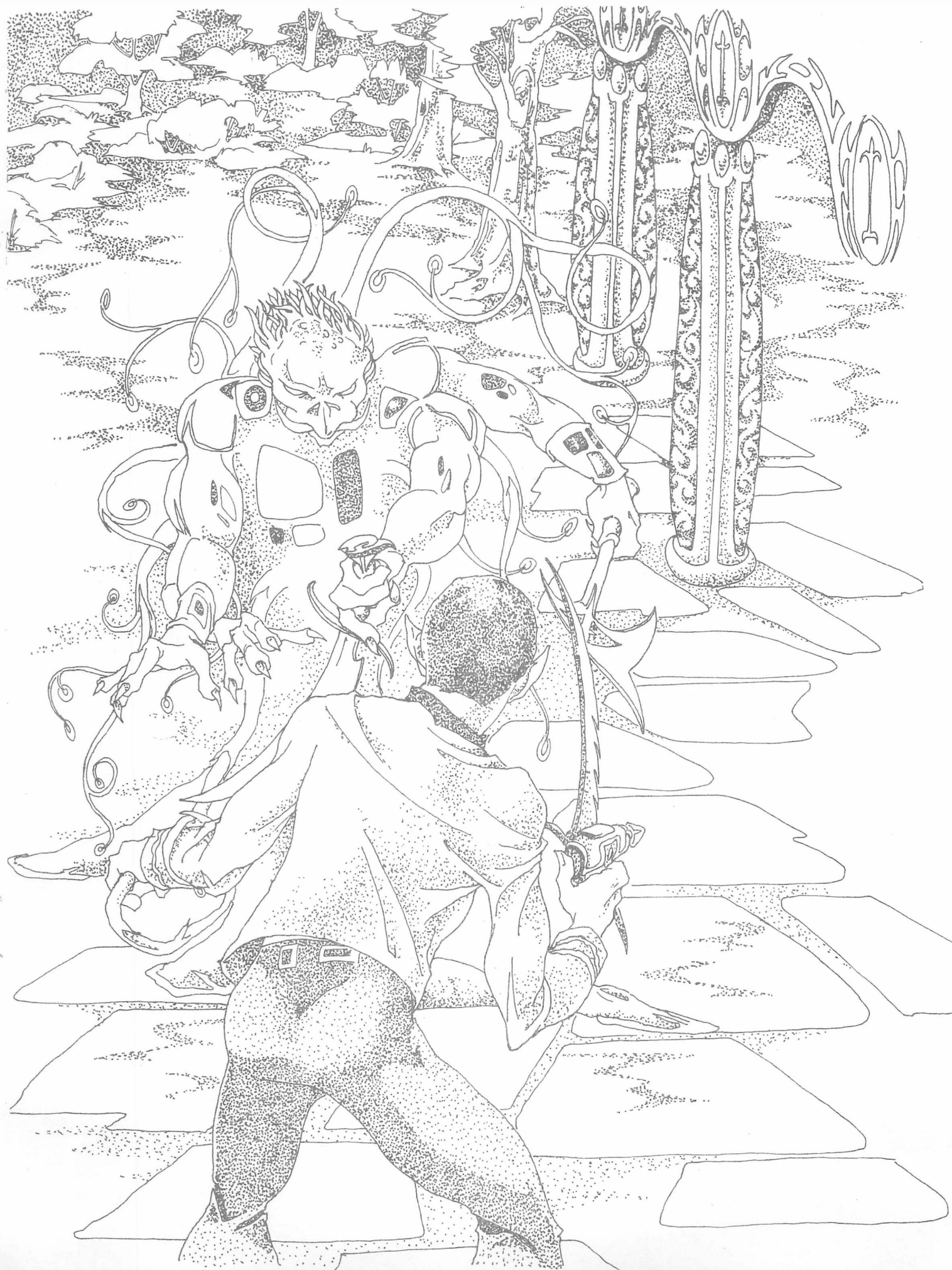
The first Thark was cloven from first right shoulder to second left armpit. The second lost its head, but kept coming till it was spitted through the midriff. The third got its bottom pair of legs cut out from under it and collapsed.

Spock looked around for the next target. He had a most unSpockian gleam in his eye, and I remembered nervously that Vulcans had been deadly warriors before the Reforms and that Stormbringer was not a sword but a demon. Four more Tharks came out from among the pillars, and Spock took them in hand.

"Jolly good show!" said an admiring voice behind me. It was Dorothy, with Jaeger and Boma in tow -- or it seemed to be.

"Are you for real this time?" I asked.

"None other," she said. "Please link arms with these two, and don't let go. Oh, well done, Spock!" as she turned to watch the fighting. "Hal valka! How are you seeing this, Myfanwy?"



I told her, and she made a face. "Swords, quotha! I wondered why he was swinging his phaser around in an arc."

"What do you see?"

"We're in a clearing -- Ha! Bande! -- and Spock is fighting a clutch of -- well, if you crossed tribbles with tumbleweeds and gave them half-a-dozen flagellae...."

"You're in an Eric Frank Russell story," I told her happily, "but we're in an Edgar Rice Burroughs story with a touch of Moorcock."

"I am in reality, or so I devoutly hope," she said acidly, "and you are in a mishmash of your own imagining. What wonders me is why the illusion doesn't at least flicker every time one of the aliens is killed."

"Maybe they're the wrong aliens."

"There's an idea." She looked around the hall. "Did you say this place was lined with pillars?"

"Yes."

"Very good. Spock!" Spock halved the last Thark and turned to her. "Try your weapon on one of those pillars."

He raised an eyebrow, but strode toward the nearest pillar and brought Stormbringer across it. A wide gash opened in the pillar, and the air around it wavered as if with heat. Something rustled above us, and I started and looked up to the gallery. There was nothing there, and that (the human mind being what it is) scared me worse than a couple of banths or whatever this world could offer us.

"Another one!" Dorothy called, and Spock obligingly attacked another pillar. Louder rustling, and the shimmering air drifted around Spock; he sniffed and his eyes widened.

"Try another."

"No; I think this may be sufficient."

The heat-wave effect filled all the air now, but that couldn't account for my feeling of disorientation. Time seemed to have slowed, and as Spock experimentally pointed Stormbringer at another pillar, I could see its light sail out to the forward surface of the pillar, spread over it and continue out past it, to the end of space I guess. The air was hot and dry, but I

shivered and clutched Boma and Jaeger's arms. The gallery looked strange; the ground looked strange; where Spock had slashed them, the pillars were oozing...sap. They were trees, and their leaves were rustling without wind. It was dark now, but I could see that the ground was littered with the fluffy green remnants of what we had taken for Tharks. Spock had a phaser in his hand, and cautiously returned it to his belt. At least I wouldn't have to figure out how to get Stormbringer to let go of him.

Dorothy

After Spock offered to blast the third tree, the grove evidently gave up, and Spock and the rest were undeceived. Myfanwy seemed badly frightened, but there were advantages in that; Boma and Jaeger were too busy reassuring her to be scared themselves. Myfanwy leads the other half of the human race around on a leash without even noticing. I understand she was spoiled outrageously almost from birth by the kelpjacks on her parents' pelagic ranch, and has taken male adoration for granted ever since.

"Tarvan," I said to Spock, when means 'with-your-permission-and-out-of-necessity,' and took his arm. "Link arms, please, one and all," I said. "I don't want to lose you again.... That's you plural," and gave Boma my other arm.

"Of course, Conway," Spock said mildly. His arm felt like anyone else's, objectively at least.

"You'll notice," I told him, "that night fell while you were fighting green Martians. I suppose we can make it to the shuttlecraft in the dark, but I'd rather not have to try. On the other hand, if we stay here all night, the grove may get over its scare."

"I don't think that will be necessary," said Spock. "In a few minutes -- correct, Mr. Boma? -- the planet's satellite will rise." Boma nodded. "The aurora will then be bright enough to travel by."

"Aurora?"

"This planet," Jaeger said smugly, "is covered with aurora at night. Thus, 'Bright.' Especially when the moon's up; it's mostly nickel-iron, and the magnetic --"

"Spare us," said Myfanwy. "Dorothy, what's this about the grove getting scared?"

"Isn't it self-evident? Either the individual trees, or else the grove as a unit, is an intelligent entity. They, or it, projected these illusions. Elsewhere, other groves, other illusions."

"What about the green tumbleweeds?"

"Possibly another species, but I think they're the larval form of the trees. Either way, I don't think they're intelligent; the trees control them. From the tricorder readings, I'm pretty sure the brains are down in the roots, so I don't think they've been killed. They can regenerate their tops when we've gone."

I prattled on about the trees, to kill time if nothing else. My head was spinning out all the tattered residue of a minor in English. I looked at Spock's face, the growing light playing the perfect planes and angles of his bones, and O God, God, God, I can see such trouble! Is life sending a flame to nest in my flax? For pity's sake!"

The moon rose, and light filled the grove. But the satellite itself gave off almost no light; it had a low albedo and was only just visible through the aurora.

"That is Dark Beta," said Spock.

"I might have known," I groaned.

"G'wan!" snorted Myfanwy.

"Its name is Dark Beta, officially," said Boma. Sorry."

"Can everyone see?" asked Spock. Everyone could. "Then we will proceed." And we ran through the forest, still clutching hands in a line. I don't know what the others saw once we got into trees that weren't afraid of Spock, except that once Myfanwy began whimpering about the Towers of the Teeth. "Bite them back!" I snarled, and kept on running.

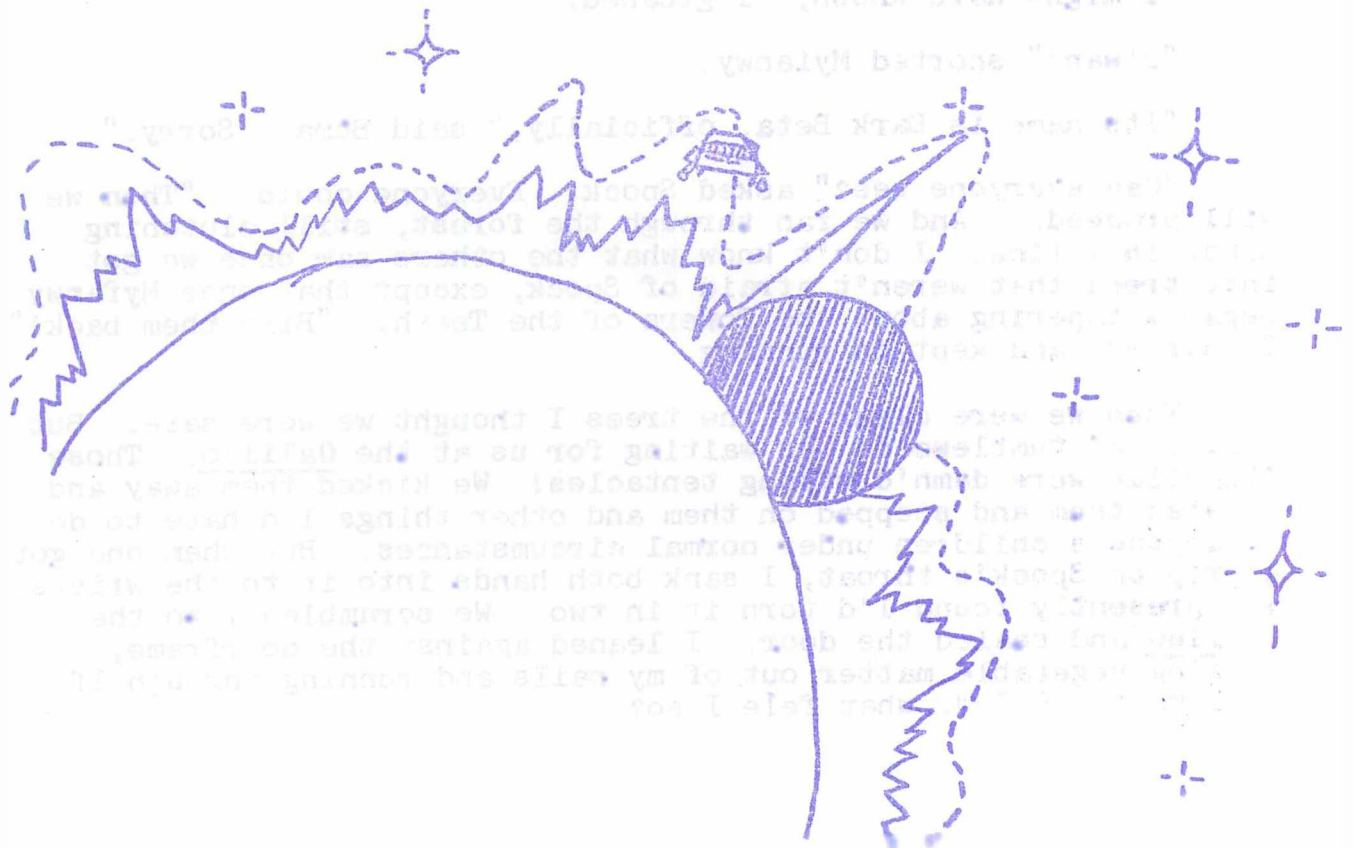
When we were clear of the trees I thought we were safe. But a flock of tumbleweeds was waiting for us at the Galileo. Those flagellae were damn'd strong tentacles! We kicked them away and blasted them and stepped on them and other things I'd hate to do to anyone's children under normal circumstances. But when one got a grip on Spock's throat, I sank both hands into it to the wrists, and presently found I'd torn it in two. We scrambled into the Galileo and sealed the door. I leaned against the doorframe, picking vegetable matter out of my nails and running through If no love is, O God, what fele I so?

"What?" asked Myfanwy, who doesn't know Middle English.

"I'm tired," I said, and sat down on the floor. Spock and Boma were preparing for takeoff. Jaeger picked me up and transferred me to a seat. I slumped against his shoulder. "I have come suddenly upon my heart," I told Myfanwy, "and where it is I see no hope for." Jaeger blushed.

We took off. A lovely flight, no problems, no more illusions, back to the Enterprise, and for me, I bet, a nice forty-eight hours in bed, with ol' Chapel to fluff my pillow and feed me balanced electrolytes.... "Peace, prattler," I told my brain, and sat up enough to look out the porthole. Bright Alpha's nightside was wrapped in cold fire that flowed lazily from poles to equator. Dark Beta brooded over it. Then we turned, and the sun rose from behind the world's edge, and the aurora was dead as the moonsheep. I leaned against Jaeger again, and he patted my shoulder. He's happily married, I remembered gratefully.

Sunlight streamed in the porthole. Then let me wish us both good morning, I thought at last. And may the Lord have mercy upon our souls.



FOR THE GOOD OF THE SERVICE

by Ruth Berman and Nan Braude

The Enterprise lay above Starbase 19 in an equatorial orbit around Gernsback's Planet, and the crew were engaged in a star-ship's equivalent of barnacle-scrapping. On the bridge, Mr. Spock occupied the command chair, watching the news roll by across the star-screen (patched through by Lt. Uhura and left on automatic). Meanwhile, Uhura herself was running a check on the communications circuits, and Lt. Sulu, humming something vaguely pentatonic under his breath, was executing a series of intricately improbable changes of course on his (disengaged) controls. Into this scene of domestic tranquility erupted Dr. McCoy, with a handful of charts, followed by Navigator Stiles, coming to join Sulu at their station.

"Jim.... Where is he?" said McCoy.

"In his cabin, Doctor," replied Spock.

"Thanks," called McCoy, swinging around without breaking stride to return to the elevator.

"He's established that the Kirk boy doesn't have any after-effects from the Denevan plague, just an allergic reaction -- easy to control," Stiles said, by way of explaining McCoy's abruptness. Kirk had lost a brother and sister-in-law on Deneva and had been much worried when his nephew seemed to be slow in regaining his health. Peter meant a good deal to him, both for the child's own sake and for his parents'.

"Thank you, Commander," said Spock, as the elevator doors closed. They opened again immediately.

"What did you call him?" said McCoy.

Spock indicated the star-screen. "As of 1300 hours, Mr. Stiles, you are advanced to the rank of Lieutenant-Commander. My congratulations."

"Thank you," Stiles said, looking slightly dazed, as possibilities of transfer, advanced study, responsibility, and authority began jostling about in his head.

"Congratulations!" said McCoy. "You deserve -- Wait a minute! Mr. Spock: do you or do you not respect the traditions of his service?"

"Why, of course, Doctor," said Spock, with some surprise. "I have always --"

"Well, then, you are presumably aware that one of our oldest customs, supposedly initiated by Noah, calls for a newly promoted officer to buy a drink for the first man who salutes his new rank."

"Be my pleasure," said Stiles. "That is, if -- "

"I shall be delighted to accept," said Spock.

McCoy's eyes opened very wide. Uhura and Sulu turned to stare at Spock as the Vulcan continued, "I am thirsty; a glass of lemonade will be most welcome."

"Lemonade," muttered McCoy disgustedly.

Uhura and Sulu turned away to hide their grins.

"That'll be fine," said Stiles. The drink was not one he would have chosen, but he felt that he certainly owed Spock that much.

"All right, my abstemious friend," said McCoy, "I know when I'm beaten. But I think I'll make a point of hanging around the bridge tomorrow, so I can claim a drink from you when your promotion comes through. And it won't be lemonade, either!"

"Perhaps you should choose a drinking companion on a more logical basis -- such as conviviality," said Spock. "Mr. Scott, perhaps, or -- "

"Nothing doing!" said McCoy. "Scotty already drinks like... like a Scot. You I'm still trying to corrupt."

"A most irrational course of action, Doctor."

"Fun, though," said McCoy. "Oh, well, go drown your cares in vintage -- lemonade."

McCoy managed to happen to be on the bridge when the next day's promotion list came through, but it was not easy to get a good luck at the screen. This was the final batch, and most of those crewmen still up for promotion had found some excuse to be on the bridge.

Even the crewmen who were supposedly on duty there were staring at the screen.

When Mr. Scott, the chief engineer, who usually spent most of his time in the engine room, came to the bridge, sat down at

his panel of instruments, and promptly swung his chair around to watch the screen, Kirk's sense of humor overcame his irritation at the disruption of routine. Instead of ordering everyone out, he told them all to stand still and shut up.

"But I can't see," complained a short, pretty girl from Linguistics. Muted noises of agreement came from the crewmembers caught at the back of the crowd.

Kirk glanced at McCoy, a serene study in insatiable curiosity, watching the star-screen from the middle of the group, at Navigator Kevin Riley, who had been relieved ten minutes ago and was not a step closer to the elevator, at the varied mixtures of eagerness and anxiety on all the faces there. "I'll read the list out loud, Miss Han," said Kirk.

As the list unrolled there were many occasions for congratulations. The men and women of the Enterprise were all highly qualified, and Kirk was a captain who gave his crew full credit in his efficiency reports.

Riley's promotion came through. He gasped and barely held back a whoop. Lt. Sulu reached him first and put in a claim for a glass of sake.

Kirk hoped, rather futilely, that Riley's celebration would not result in an impromptu concert-recital. Kirk had nothing against Irish tenors as such, but Riley's sense of pitch was unreliable.

When the list reached Commander, tension heightened. Since Kirk was not yet due for another promotion, this was the top of the bill for the Enterprise. Kirk read levelly on, "...Sakura, Star of Vega; Savarin, Resolute; Smith, J., Constellation; Smith, T., Matsu; Snell, Breadnought; Stephenson, Enterprise; Trevor-Lloyd...." His voice trailed off as he realized what had happened.

Half the people on the bridge turned to stare at Spock. The rest carefully avoided looking at him. Kirk watched the screen silently for a few seconds, then announced, "There are no further promotions pertaining to this ship. All personnel now on duty here will leave the bridge. Mr. Spock!"

"Yes, Captain?" The Vulcan's voice gave no indication of emotion.

"How soon can you complete the stress-tolerance study of that Klingon alloy?"

"It is complete, Captain."

"Good. I want the results."

"The report has not been filed yet. Laboratory Four-A has the studies, if --"

"Thank you. Take care of that now."

Spock followed the last group of departing crew-members into the elevator.

Kirk rose as the doors closed and began to pace, clenching and unclenching his fists. Finally he paused at the sensor console and brought his right hand down on top of it with an explosive "Damn!"

McCoy, who had insubordinately remained, said placatingly, "Jim, these things happen. Maybe they just --"

Kirk turned on him. "They --" He stopped to get his voice under control and said carefully, "Mr. Spock is the only First Officer of a Class I starship who does not hold the rank of Commander. He is also probably the most decorated Lieutenant-Commander in the entire service. And he's never had an efficiency rating below 96 in his entire career. And he's been passed over again. And do you know why?"

"Suppose you tell me, Jim."

"Because Rear Admiral Silas Endicott commanded that board. And as long as Endicott has any say in the matter, no Vulcan is going to get within hailing distance of command rank. He's... he's medieval! He thinks we're still at war with Vulcan!"

"You could be mistaken," said McCoy.

"Oh, no. Two years ago, when Spock was passed over the first time, it was understandable. There'd just been a big cut in the military budget. Okay. Fair enough. But this! It's a deliberate insult. Passed over twice!"

"No, sir," said Scott, turning his chair around. "Not twice."

"What are you talking about, Scotty," said Kirk irritably.

"My first ship, the Bonnie Dundee, was teamed with the Enterprise for a group of diplomatic missions. Before your time, sir. When the Dundee broke up -- untested warp drive, you'll have heard of the scandal? -- it was Mr. Spock managed to get aboard, and risked his life getting the jammed engine-room doors open when the rest had given us up and begun piling out as fast as the transporters could take them."

McCoy figeted. "What does that have to do with -- "

"Only this, Doctor," said Scott, "Captain Tang was killed helping with the rescue operation. As he was dying he recommended Mr. Spock for promotion for extraordinary gallantry. He was passed over, then -- he'd no seniority to speak of, and vacant commanders' berths were precious few. So he was still a lieutenant-commander when I came to the Enterprise a few years later, and so...this is the third time."

"Oh," said McCoy. "Oh."

"The third time," said Kirk slowly. "I didn't know about the Bonnie Dundee incident. It's not in his file."

"No, sir," said Scott. "You'll remember how conditions were then. Perhaps he willna consider it a proper -- "

"He will," said Kirk, "I know him: logically speaking, it fits the definition. So the Unwritten Law applies. 'When an officer is denied promotion for the third time in a row, he shall be expected to resign his commission for the good of the service.' For the good of the service! Oh, damn, damn."

McCoy looked sick. "And I was teasing him yesterday about respect for service traditions. Do you think he had any idea -- "

"Probably," said Kirk grimly. "Endicott's views on Vulcan are scarcely a secret."

McCoy considered the information. "So what happens now?"

"Now, Bones? Why, we wait -- to find out who our new First Officer will be."

Spock submitted his resignation the next morning. Kirk made a feeble attempt to refuse it, pointing out that no official regulation required it. "After all, Mr. Spock, you're well aware that you are one of the best men on the ship. For you to act as if your resignation would benefit the service is...illogical."

"Negative, Captain," Spock answered. "Usefulness is determined not by ability alone, but also by the opportunity to apply it. An officer who refused to accept the board's opinion of his abilities might, for example, be transferred to command of the station on Betelgeuse VI."

Kirk looked at him, puzzled. "Station? All we have there is a weather-study post, and it -- " he stopped abruptly, catching Spock's meaning.

" -- is totally automated," Spock finished the sentence for him. "There have been parallel cases."

"But what will you do?" Kirk asked.

Spock looked confused. "I don't know, Jim. I could try for a place at the Academy as a civilian instructor, I suppose, or return to Vulcan. I've never imagined any career except in space. I decided when I was five years old that I would be a starship captain."

"And it never occurred to you that you might not make it?" asked Kirk curiously.

"Never, Captain. Why should it?"

Kirk made no reply, momentarily silenced by a mental image of Spock -- Spock! -- as a starstruck small boy.

"If there's nothing else, Captain...?"

"No, go on with your regular work. You'll stay the requisite ninety days to orientate your replacement, of course."

"Of course. Have you any idea who it will be?"

"No, one of the new crop of commanders, I suppose. I don't know many of them. Trevor-Lloyd of the Galadriel, maybe. Know him?"

"Negative, Captain." Spock turned to go.

"Mr. Spock!"

"Captain?" The Vulcan paused obediently.

"Don't you feel anything about this? Angry, sad, surprised, for heaven's sake? Even you must have some reaction to a thing like this. After all, it's only your whole life going up in smoke."

Spock considered the question. "Do you remember the time we were caught in an earthquake on Lycon XII, and a bronze pilaster collapsed on top of me? The present sensation is -- quite similar."

Three days later Spock's replacement turned up, along with a few more additions to the crew. The others, naturally enough, were more or less invisible, although Kirk was momentarily distracted by a brash young navigator who reminded him of a

dark-haired version of his younger self. The new commander, a chunky, fair young man of medium height, turned rather pink under the concerted stares of the bridge personnel as he crossed to deliver his orders to the captain. Kirk glanced perfunctorily at the papers, stopped, looked again, and looked up to stare at the young man.

"Commander Peter Endicott?"

"Yes, sir." The new First Officer shifted uncomfortably.

"Any relation to the admiral?"

"My uncle, sir."

McCoy, who, as usual, seemed to be spending more time on the bridge than in his surgery, whistled softly. Kirk glanced at him coldly, and he subsided.

"Commander Endicott, this is Mr. Spock, whom you will be replacing. He will start your orientation as soon as you've stowed your gear. Let's see -- you can bunk with Lt. Yuan temporarily."

"Share a cabin, sir? But surely -- "

"Mr. Spock is the First Officer of record of this ship, until the effective date of his resignation, ninety days from now. I do not intend to ask him to vacate his quarters or surrender any of the privileges of his position to you. Do you understand?"

Endicott swallowed. "Yes, sir. Certainly. I didn't mean -- "

"Very well. Dismissed."

Endicott turned around and marched out with swift precision.

McCoy edged over to stand behind Kirk's chair. "So that's it!" he exclaimed softly. "Now we know why Spock wasn't promoted."

"Negative, Bones. I'm sure Endicott didn't pull rank to get that...youngster...here. The admiral may be a bigot, but his integrity is beyond question. According to these papers, Nephew is one of the Academy's prize whiz kids. He got here on his own."

"If you say so, Jim. I guess he can't help looking like Peter Rabbit."

Having made a poor beginning, Peter Endicott went on as he had begun. At first Kirk thought he saw a trace of the uncle's prejudice in the nephew's condescending attitude towards Spock's instruction. He changed his mind while taking a break to study a chess problem in the main rec hall, when the easy-going Sulu came storming in and slammed his cup of coffee down next to Uhura's. After he had finished apologizing and mopping up, he said, "Do you know what Peter Rabbit said when I asked if he wanted to join the fencing class?"

"No, but I'm going to," murmured Uhura.

"He informed me that it's an archaic and trivial sport, requiring more savagery than skill. Savagery! I'll savage him, if he -- "

"That's all right," said Uhura dryly, "he told me I shouldn't wear ear-rings on duty. They're non-regulation, you know."

Kirk coughed noisily to remind them of his presence, and they fell silent. He tested a few more moves, but gave up and dropped into reverie. If white could mate in five, it wasn't going to do it with Kirk. Spock could very likely solve the problem, and perhaps the Rabbit, but not Kirk. Peter's work in the technical aspects of his job -- he was almost up in Spock's class in competence with machinery -- suggested skill in chess problems, and perhaps in the game generally, although so far he'd avoided any kind of recreation. Kirk caught himself drumming his fingers on the table and went to his quarters.

On his way, however, he was joined by a fuming McCoy.

"Problems, Bones?" said Kirk wearily.

They entered Kirk's cabin, and Kirk sat down at his table and put in a call to the library computer.

"Problems," said McCoy. "No, not really." He flung himself on the bunk. "It's just that I'm going to kill him. I'm going to take him by his round, pink throat, and -- "

"Bones."

McCoy stopped and occupied himself with picking up a small bottle of Saurian brandy, glancing at Kirk for permission, and then taking a hearty nip.

The library answered, and Kirk told it to pipe "The Flying Dutchman" into his room.

McCoy started over. "I'm not going to make a full-scale re-arrangement of all my equipment to save three seconds per

examination. And I'm not going to have any time-motion studies of my sick-bay."

"Peter Endicott," Kirk said, just to be quite sure.

"Oh, yes, and he cautioned me against excessive use of alcohol." McCoy took another sip with a look of wounded innocence.

The music began. McCoy, recognizing the music, jerked at the sudden outcry of instrumental doom. He scolded himself silently for not catching the title Kirk had called for. McCoy was no expert in musicology, but he was an expert in signs of depression in James T. Kirk. Like many Star Fleet officers, Kirk found an uneasy parallel to his own life in the Dutchman's eternal exile.

"Jim, I'm sorry," he said. "What's the problem? Endicott's bad, but -- "

Kirk shook his head. "Give him a fair chance, Bones. You used to feel just as violent about Spock, remember? But you got over it."

"Spock! There's no comparison," McCoy said. "Spock is... well, without him, what would I do for aggravation? He's a stubborn, arrogant, wrong-headed, self-actuating servomechanism, but that doesn't mean I don't like him. I may hate his guts at times, but he's a damn good officer with more sense in one of his pointy ears than that Rabbit has in his whole body. The boy's indefensible."

"He's intelligent," said Kirk. "What he says is usually right -- technically. He doesn't know yet what's essential and what isn't."

"He knows he doesn't," said McCoy. "So he never does anything firmly. Even at their most irritating, Spock's orders are always clearcut."

"Yes," said Kirk. "But can I ask to have Endicott transferred for making suggestions? or disapproving of fencing? or for the tone of voice he uses with Spock? To take official action, I'd need something concrete." He looked away from McCoy and down at the desk. "He'll work out, or he won't. It doesn't matter."

"I see," said McCoy. "And Spock?"

"That...matters." Kirk stood up. "I'd better get back to work." As the door slid open he said softly, "You know, the Flying Dutchman didn't have it so bad. He has to wander, but

he's the captain of the ship. He has a command." He lengthened his stride to get away before McCoy could answer.

McCoy looked after him for a moment, then went back in and told the computer to turn the Wagner off.

A curious side-effect of the general dissatisfaction created by Peter Endicott was a wave of solidarity aimed at Spock (so far as a wave can be aimed). Uhura reacted to the new Science Officer's subtle disparagement of his predecessor by treating Spock with an exaggerated deference, until he inquired if she were feeling ill. Scott and Sulu simply made a point of taking orders only from Spock, asking him to confirm any directives from Endicott. McCoy asked Spock to play chess with him -- "to improve his game" -- and accepted both his invariable defeat and Spock's patient instruction without complaint.

"After all," he explained to an amused Kirk over coffee, "compared to the Rabbit, the guy's practically human."

"The trouble with you, Bones, is that you've never forgiven Spock for the lessons you gave him."

Uhura looked up from the next table, overhearing Kirk's words. "What?"

Kirk glanced at her, then at McCoy, and grinned.

"I suppose it's none of my business?" she said hopefully.

"Not at all, Lieutenant," replied Kirk cheerfully.

McCoy turned red.

Kirk went on, "It seems that the good doctor decided to have a little fun and profit. He thought he'd teach our poor, unsuspecting alien the noble art of poker.... It cost him three months' pay to appreciate Vulcan logic as applied to game theory."

"My own fault," growled McCoy. "My mother warned me never to play poker with computers. Or telepaths."

"Captain --" said Spock's voice over the intercom.

"Kirk here, Mr. Spock."

"Special orders coming through, Captain. Code A."

"I'll be right there."

Code A orders could be deciphered only by ship's captains. They were the equivalent of the sealed orders of sailing-ship days. Kirk took the cards to a conference room, identified himself to the computer, put in the cards, and received a decoded print-out. He sat quietly considering for a minute, then returned to the bridge and instructed Uhura to open the intercom.

"Attention," Kirk's voice announced all over the ship, "The Enterprise has received new orders. Tomorrow at 1100 hours we depart for Sector T-Zero to join Starfleet Seven for six weeks of field maneuvers." Kirk waited for the inevitable murmur of comment -- inaudible to him -- to die down, and went on, "The Enterprise has been selected as flagship for this operation. The fleet commander, Rear Admiral Silas Endicott, will come aboard at 0900."

On another level of the ship, a slim, dark girl who looked more like a ballerina than a supply officer, jumped up at the information and swung around to her files.

"Lt. Nevins," said Kirk's voice, as she pulled out a large tape, "Arrange accommodations to have a cabin ready for the admiral."

"Acknowledged, sir," she called over her shoulder at the intercom, and sat down to another session of what she privately called Musical Cabins.

On the bridge, Kirk turned to his Science Officers. "Mr. Endicott."

"Yes, sir," said Endicott nervously.

"As soon as we are on course for rendezvous with the fleet tomorrow, you will take over the duties of First Officer."

Spock looked at him questioningly.

"Mr. Spock, you will be relieved of duty for the duration of this exercise."

"Yes, Captain," said Spock.

When Kirk's watch was over, and he returned to his cabin, he said experimentally, "Hello, Bones," before entering.

"Huh?" said McCoy, looking up from Kirk's desk. "But how -- ?"

Kirk smiled at him and lay down.

After a moment's bewilderment, McCoy gave up the problem of Kirk's sudden telepathy to attack the main problem. "Jim, have you lost your mind, or something?"

"You don't approve of Endicott's taking over Spock's duties?"

"Don't approve!" McCoy echoed. "Give Spock a chance to show the admiral what he can do, don't let the Rabbit show off for an admiring relative!"

"I think you're underestimating the admiral, Bones. I told you, he's an honest bigon. I think he'll see soon enough that his nephew is unfit for the job."

McCoy digested this. "Better than waiting for a major disaster. But how does it help Spock? If Endicott decides the Rabbit's a washout, he'll just give us another replacement."

"Your confidence in our Peter's prowess is touching."

"Huh?"

"You apparently expect him to last the full six weeks. I'm betting the admiral will suggest he be relieved within six days. And who do you think can be reached to replace him without halting the maneuvers?"

McCoy chuckled. "If you get any more devious, you may yet grow up to be a starship captain. Have you said anything to Spock?"

"Of course not. I can't undercut Endicott openly."

"Going to be hard on Spock," McCoy commented.

"I know," said Kirk. "Officially he's just along for the ride. I'll have to think of some way to keep him on the bridge, though, in case -- wait a minute!" Kirk sat up. "Bones, I have just had one of the more brilliant ideas of my career. I'll assign Spock to the admiral as Escort Officer."

McCoy grinned. "I'll drink to that."

"Impossible, Bones. You killed my bottle the last time you were in here." Kirk lay down again and turned over. "Go away," he said peacefully.

"Yes, sir," said McCoy, and tiptoed out.

Uhura and Sulu exchanged puzzled looks at 0855 as Kirk said cheerfully, "Take command, Mr. Endicott," and strolled into the

elevator. An unhappy captain, an enraged captain -- those they understood. And, what was more, those they had expected. They felt obscurely annoyed with a placid captain who sat in his chair with Buddha-like serenity.

On the whole, they were relieved when Kirk sauntered out, leaving them with Peter Endicott. Uhura adjusted the radio in her ear, touched the lobe to be sure the bright, dangling ear-rings she had chosen that day were in place, and settled back in her chair. The bridge was quiet.

In the transporter room, Kirk nodded a greeting to Spock and turned to the beaming area. Two columns of bright flickering appeared there. One solidified rapidly into a tall, lean man with a bony face and dark grey hair. The other became a black cube about a meter high.

"Admiral Endicott?" said Kirk, shaking hands with him. For a moment Kirk seriously meant the question as a question. He realized that he had subconsciously expected the looks of an elderly Peter -- ruddy face and snow-white hair, perhaps a plump body. This Endicott looked more like...more like....

"Captain Kirk," the admiral answered. He turned to Kirk's companion to be introduced and found himself facing a Vulcan. He raised his eyebrows.

At that, Spock's own eyebrows went up for a moment.

Kirk suddenly knew who Endicott was more like. "Admiral," he said briskly, "Your escort, Lieutenant-Commander Spock."

Endicott looked sideways at Kirk for a moment, then saluted Spock in the Vulcan manner. There was a brief silence while Endicott searched for a greeting properly balanced between neutrality and courtesy. He settled on, "How do you do. Your captain speaks highly of you."

"Thank you, sir," said Spock. "Shall I see to removing your viewer to your quarters?"

Kirk was bewildered at first, but caught on in time to appreciate the look of respect that crossed the admiral's face when Spock correctly identified the box as a three-dimensional viewer. The normal 3-D viewer looked like any other viewer, except that the screen and its housing were bulkier, to hold the devices that projected an image with depth on the flat surface. This viewer had no screen at all.

Endicott answered, "No, I'll be on the bridge, most of the time, and I'd like to have it there. With your permission, Captain."

"By all means," said Kirk.

Spock turned to the intercom to arrange for the viewer to be taken to the bridge.

Kirk went on, "Is that a new model, sir? I didn't recognize it as a viewer at first."

Endicott nodded. "Projects a force field above the mechanism and images within the field -- simplifies the problems of distortion and, if it's a question of dealing with as-if views from outside a given situation, of shifting and orienting the viewpoint. And in terms of handling a group of ships, as-if views are generally more useful. My nephew could probably give more details if it interest you."

"Yes," said Spock, coming back to them, "Thank you, sir."

They held a formal dinner for the admiral, of course: Kirk, Spock, Peter Endicott, and several chiefs of departments. Kirk was a little slow in leaving the bridge, as he had some administrative details to take care of before leaving his ship in the care of the senior officer on duty (Mr. Scott, in this case). Admiral Endicott was unaccountably slow in going, and he and Kirk entered the elevator alone, a few moments later.

Kirk turned to face the admiral as the elevator slowed, and reached out one hand to stop the doors from opening. "Well?"

"Just a few words, Captain," said Endicott. "I am not sure whether you hope to change me or simply annoy me, but you will not succeed. I do not object to Vulcans on personal grounds. The Vulcan ships in the fleet are among the best."

"Some of your best friends..." said Kirk.

"As a matter of fact, no. Several were my respected enemies once, however."

He paused for a reaction, so Kirk made none.

"Yes," Endicott added, "and in some ways we'd all be better off if we were still fighting."

"Still fighting?" Kirk repeated, jarred out of his judicious-listener act.

"Yes, Captain. That attitude they take with emotions -- it makes life hell for a Terran who's caught in a bunch of them, being treated like a potential psychopath. And I could almost be sure from your reports alone that it makes life hell for one of them caught in a bunch of Terrans, all trying to make him display emotions."

"So the board thinks Spock should resign for his own good?"

Endicott ignored Kirk's sarcasm. "No," he said, "the board thinks Lieutenant-Commander Spock should resign for the good of the service. You've never been under a Vulcan command, have you, Captain?"

"I've had one under my command."

Endicott shrugged.

"And I've watched my crewmen work under one."

"It's not the same, Captain."

"Perhaps you would like to ask Dr. Leonard McCoy about human reactions to Mr. Spock's authority," said Kirk, wondering maliciously which of the men concerned would be most upset by the idea.

"No," said Endicott. "A Vulcan representing you is not the same as a Vulcan in command."

"Possibly not," said Kirk, "but I don't see that it matters."

"You feel a great deal of loyalty for your men," Endicott commented. "Would Mr. Spock?"

"Spock!" Kirk stared. "Vulcans are incapable of disloyalty. Everyone knows that."

"I do not dispute it. But you feel loyalty. A Vulcan is logically convinced that any betrayal damages the social fabric too much to be worth its individual advantage. Your crew respond to your emotion. How long do you think men could feel loyal to Mr. Spock with the emotional support for their loyalty cut off?"

"You underestimate humans," said Kirk. He was not sure of the statement, but it was the best defense he could manage. He wanted to claim that Spock did respond to humans on an emotional level -- he felt sure it was true, but he suddenly wondered if anyone but himself knew it. And if others could not see through Vulcan self-control, maybe the admiral was right about their reaction to that cold exterior.

Endicott waited patiently.

Kirk smiled suddenly and let the elevator doors open. The admiral allowed himself a moment's look of surprise before they walked out, and Kirk's smile grew a little wider. He had no intention of admitting to Endicott how close that attack had come. Kirk was no longer vulnerable to logical-in-theory attacks from Spock, but he had fallen into the habit of expecting humans to avoid that style of persuasion.

Peter Endicott rose as they came in and hurried over to shake hands with his uncle. "It's good to see you, sir," he said in a low voice.

The admiral's face relaxed, for the first time since Kirk had seen him, and he answered, "You're looking well, Peter." The words were stiff, but the look that went with them was not. Endicott leaned back a little to examine his nephew's uniform. "Congratulations, Commander," he said.

"Thank you, sir," Peter straightened himself, if possible, even more.

The admiral smiled. Then he glanced at Kirk, and his face became gravely apologetic for a moment.

They sat down, and after the introductions there was a moment of confused silence while they waited to see if Endicott was going to be Peter's uncle and talk family to him, or a visiting dignitary and talk business to them.

"Miss Han," Endicott said to the linguist, "I understand you're involved in the quarrel over the so-called spaceman's dialect."

"So-called?" she said. "We must be on opposite sides, then, sir."

"Yes," said Endicott, "although, of course, I have only a layman's opinion. But I've noticed that our men don't lose the dialects they started with. There's a limit to the amount of unification the service can bring about. Your Mr. Scott, for example --"

"Oh, yes," she interrupted, "but a general dialect overlays it. His o-u diphthong, for instance, is typical of...."

Kirk nodded approvingly, guessing that the admiral was going to set each person there on his own hobby-horse and watch him ride it. It was a good technique for getting the feel of a ship.

"...my own treatment of the liquid consonants, as my colleagues on the ship could tell you...."

Kirk turned his attention away and found Peter Endicott apparently resuming a discussion with Lt. Kyle, chief of transport.

"Yes," Peter said, "I can see that it's a safety factor if everyone knows how to operate the transporter controls. But you have supervised drills for that, right?"

"Right enough," said Kyle in his sharp Londoner's voice. "But," he said, pointing out the word with his soup-spoon, "if some people like more practice, it's all to the good. And they do like it. You wouldn't believe how many people here think all the machines in the world, and transporters in particular, are their personal, favorite playthings. You might as well tell a kid to keep off a rocking horse as try to keep Mr. Scott away from the transporter controls. A lot of the physicists -- no, all those science chaps -- are like that, too, and so is Mr...." A bit of soup went down the wrong way, and Kyle stopped to cough. "Well, anyway," he said, "you're another one, unless I miss my guess, and I'm hereby giving you permission to play with the transporter."

Peter laughed at the teasing, but Kyle had judged him correctly, and his face turned pink with real pleasure. He was a resolute man, however, and not to be turned aside from a matter of duty. "Yes, I understand," he said, "but shouldn't someone stay there, just in case something goes wrong?"

"With you, yes, until you're checked out. Not otherwise. And the man scheduled to be on duty always stays somewhere on the same deck just in case."

Peter looked worried. "But do the regulations -- "

"Look, Commander," said Kyle, "Someone competent has to mind each transporter. It's my job to see that someone does. As long as I do that, that's all that matters."

"I see," said Peter thoughtfully. "Thank you." He looked at Kyle timidly. "If I come in some time when I'm off-watch, could you start teaching me?"

"Oh, sure," said Kyle. He had been a little nettled, but now he smiled at Peter.

Even Kirk found it hard to dislike Peter's sincerity. "Your nephew is eager to be useful," he said quietly. He was making fun of the boy, but he found, to his surprise, that he meant the joke kindly.

"So I see," the admiral replied.

Peter's questions about transporter procedure reminded Kyle of a series of improbable anecdotes about the early days of the beaming process, ranging from merely bawdy ("...so she was just getting under the covers, when....") to grimly supernatural ("...and there he was, a bundle of impulses, streaming through space, diffusing in a wider and wider arc, with no focus to turn them back into flesh and blood, and people say....").

Kyle claimed that every word was true, but that was obviously impossible. If the stories had been true -- if they had even been established legend -- they would have been familiar to everyone on the ship long ago. There was never enough gossip to go around, and Kirk made a mental note to find out if Kyle was re-telling someone else's stories or developing a talent for making them up himself. The Enterprise could use another source of entertainment.

Anecdotes breed, and soon most of the people there began telling old favorites. Kirk and the admiral told one each for policy's sake and then sat back, content to observe. Peter was silent, for many of the stories were new to him.

The dinner passed by pleasantly enough, and they did not break up until the end of the watch. Those of the group whose work-day was over went back to their stations only long enough to take their leave. Kirk took back command of the ship from Scott and passed it on to Peter, and then left the bridge, a little reluctantly, accompanied by the admiral and Spock.

Once in the elevator, Kirk leaned back against the wall. Spock and the admiral stood firmly perpendicular, as usual, and all three were silent.

The elevator's journey was unhindered this time, and seconds later they had separated, each on his way to his quarters. But when Kirk reached his door, he stopped. He was tired, yet felt too restless to sleep. He interrogated himself on possible alternatives. Did he want to visit McCoy? go to the gym for exercise? play a game in the ship's endless chess tournament? go to the bridge and hang around making Peter Endicott nervous?

For a moment, the last idea appealed to him, but, at the thought of really doing it, his pleasure faded, and he found that he didn't want to do anything.

So he walked.

There was no way to avoid people entirely, but Kirk set his face in a look of solemn meditation, and the men and women he passed went politely by him without speaking. If they guessed what he was thinking about, they kept their guesses to themselves.

Kirk paced off corridors aimlessly, sometimes climbing the catwalks between levels, going up or down at random. He stayed away from the elevators. Eventually, with a little effort, he managed to get lost.

He was just beginning to seriously wonder where he was, when he rounded a corner and found out.

The door ahead of him in the wall to his right was closed, but the harp-like instrument had high, piercing tones. It repeated over and over the same basic melody (if a sequence of only a dozen notes or so was long enough to be worth calling a melody), each time in a different mode. Not just the major and minor modes, nor the various possible five-tone, eight-tone, and twelve-tone scales common in Earth's past, but all the variations possible to people whose ears were keen enough to hear and enjoy the difference between one eighth of a tone and the next.

Humans who heard the Vulcan lyre for the first time often thought that the player was having trouble remembering the notes and never quite getting them. To Kirk, and most of the crew of the Enterprise, it had a plaintive sound, although Spock claimed that the progression of variations could express any mood.

This time Kirk thought the music coming out of Spock's room sounded more plaintive than usual. He frowned and hurried past Spock's door.

Then Admiral Endicott came around a corner at the other end of the corridor. Kirk advanced to meet him.

"Trouble sleeping, Captain?" Endicott asked.

"Yes, sir," said Kirk. "And you?"

Endicott nodded and turned around to go on walking in Kirk's direction. "That's Mr. Spock, I take it?" Endicott said, as if he were continuing a conversation.

Kirk blinked, unable to find a cause for the remark at first.

Behind them, the melody went into the highest mode possible on the instrument and then came whirling down the scales in a series of descending changes.

"Yes," Kirk said. "You're familiar with Vulcan music?"

"A little," said Endicott. "I've learned to like it."

"It grows on you," Kirk said agreeably.

"The music does, yes."

Their quarters were on the same level, so they continued down the corridor together. They preserved a facade of official gravity, by unspoken agreement, but when their ways parted again they could not help exchanging a look of sympathy. In other circumstances it would have become a grin, but they were too much opposed to each other in their mutual worry to go that far.

"Goodnight, sir?" asked Kirk.

"I hope so, Captain," said Endicott.

Kirk grumbled and turned over when the lights went on in his cabin, but the horn theme from "Siegfried's Rhine Journey" kept urging him to arise until he got up and turned his alarm down. After dressing, a wash, and a cup of coffee, he felt reasonably conscious, and settled down to the mess hall's typical, nourishing breakfast. He hated breakfast, but had never been able to shake the feeling that setting an example in wholesome diet was part of his job.

On the bridge, all was quiet. Peter Endicott slipped out to eat soon after Kirk arrived. Although technically both he and Kirk were on duty during all their waking hours, the swift communications systems of the starship made it unnecessary for them to stick limpet-like to the bridge.

The admiral arrived a moment after Kirk, seated himself by his viewer, and signaled the fleet to begin. The other ships swarmed around the Enterprise, and Kirk began giving Sulu course-changes, one after another, speaking quickly, but clearly. Spock took out a portable reader and some Vulcan book-films.

The maneuvers for the first day and a half amounted to a game of tag in which every ship but the Enterprise was it. The Enterprise had the power to outrun any of the others, but, together, they should have been able to englobe the Enterprise, immobilize her with tractor beams, and so effect a capture without damaging the ship. They had 36 hours to try.

The Enterprise was changing directions and speed too rapidly for the artificial gravity system to compensate. In consequence, there was a good deal of jolting. It wasn't as violent as it would have been in a real battle, but it came more frequently.

By the end of the watch, they were all weary. Or, at least, Kirk assumed that they all were. Spock and the admiral looked freshly alert, but Kirk was reasonably sure that he did, too. He considered playing "iron man" another part of his job and suspected that Endicott felt the same. And Spock's unmitigating Vulcan stoicism would have had the same effect, in any case.

Sulu looked indecently happy when his relief came, and, at the end of the next watch, even Mr. Scott looked pleased at the appearance of his assistant, DeSalle.

Spock looked up from his viewer as Scott rose. "Oh, Mr. Scott," he said.

Scott stopped, looking surprised.

"With your permission?" Spock said and, receiving Endicott's nod, went over to Scott.

The others on the bridge could not hear what Spock said, but Scott threw up one hand, groping for words, and exclaimed, "Mr. Spock!"

Spock nodded gravely and went straight back to his post by Endicott, leaving Scott still searching for the proper response. Having lost the opportunity to make any, he looked reproachfully at Kirk and left the bridge, muttering to himself.

They were all avid to know what was going on, but, as a rule, only McCoy, and sometimes Kirk, had the nerve to probe Spock, even when Spock seemed to be in a mood to submit to it. He did not seem to be in a submissive mood at that moment. So all reactions were suppressed, with two exceptions.

One was Uhura, who gave Spock a long look until she caught his eye, smiled sympathetically at him, and turned back to her instruments.

The other was Peter, who had been communing with the computer and not properly observed the exchange. It percolated a minute in him, suddenly producing a "What was that all about, Mr. Spock?"

"Commander?" said Spock, with bland non-comprehension.

"I mean -- just now with -- " Peter began.

"Mr. Endicott," said Admiral Endicott, "are you asking in your capacity as first officer of this ship?"

Peter held tightly to the dial under his hand as he realized the intrusive impertinence of what he'd said. "No, sir," he said firmly. "I wishdraw the question."

Uncle and nephew stared at each other, and Kirk noted with regret that Peter's eyes were steady. On the whole, he thought the Rabbit came through the incident pretty well, considering.

When Kirk's long day ended, the Enterprise was still free of its pursuers. Their position had varied considerably over the hours, sometimes free enough to allow Kirk several minutes' relaxation, sometimes close to capture. They ended in a moderately poor position. Kirk's first impulse was to stay right where he was and keep command, but he reflected that it was a training situation, and to be fair he should let his first officer take his share of the practise. He further reflected that the

difficult position would offer Peter a chance to foul up royally. It might even result in a resignation by morning. So Kirk prepared to leave and formally apologized to Peter for leaving him in danger.

Peter made the appropriate formal noises in return and was startled to hear his uncle snort. Both officers looked at the admiral with surprise.

"I'd like to see you giving up command if this were a real battle," said Endicott.

"I might, if fatigue made me unfit for duty," said Kirk stiffly. "Or," he added, smiling reluctantly, "I might not." He left the bridge, together with Endicott and Spock, feeling slightly guilty. Spock looked silently at him, and his sensation of guilt increased.

When they came out of the elevator, Endicott stared after his silent escort officer as Spock went to his quarters. He looked away almost at once, aware that Kirk was watching him, and headed briskly for his own room. When he heard the noise of Kirk's door closing, he changed direction and headed with equal briskness for Spock's quarters.

"Come," said Spock to the buzzer. His eyebrows went up as the door opened and he found the admiral invading his room. He set down his harp and rose.

"Please sit down," said Endicott.
"I enjoyed your playing last night."

"Indeed," said Spock. He touched the strings lightly in sequence, tuned them quickly, and began to play.

For a time, Endicott lost himself in concentrating on the lacework patterning of the music. He and Spock stared at each other without seeing, their minds at home in the structure of the sound. But the piece was unfamiliar to Endicott, and eventually the work of paying attention became too great for him. He blinked, relaxed, and let the structure collapse out of his consciousness, leaving only a pleasant tinkle of notes. He closed his eyes and was near sleep



when the silence at the end brought him back. "And what was it all about?" he asked.

Spock set the harp down. He did not look surprised.

"I'm asking as an officer of Star Fleet," Endicott added.

Spock nodded. "I had been...supervising Mr. Scott in some of his studies. I told him that I had programmed lesson plans for him into the computer."

"I see," said Endicott. "Couldn't my nephew have taken over the lessons?"

"No, sir. Not in this field."

"What if it had been a field Peter could handle?" Endicott wondered.

"Commander Endicott is and will be occupied with learning the duties of his new position," Spock said primly. "In any case, it is illogical for me to delegate to another that which I am well equipped to handle myself."

"Thank you," said Endicott. "Good night." He paused at the door. "It is logical; I admit it. But I wish I knew what you felt about it."

It was the usual human digging into private selves, but Spock had thought better of the admiral. He picked up the harp again.

"More to the point," Endicott added, "I wish I knew what your engineer thinks you feel."

Spock looked up, startled. "I don't know, sir."

Endicott sighed. "Good night," he said again, and left.

Out in the hall, Endicott stepped to the nearest intercom and called the computer for the location of Scott's quarters. He walked there slowly, half hoping that the engineer would be asleep. But the door opened for him, and a surprised Scott switched off his desk viewer and stood up. "Good evening, sir."

"Good evening," said Endicott. "May I sit down, Engineer?"

"Aye," said Scott. They sat down, and Scott waited for the admiral to explain himself.

Endicott waited a moment to see if Scott would help him out by asking for an explanation, then nodded at the viewer. "One of Mr. Spock's tutorials?"

"Aye, sir," said Scott. There was another silence. "If it's information you want, sir, you'd best ask for it."

Endicott smiled briefly. "You're right. Thank you. What has Mr. Spock been teaching you?"

"Vulcan."

"The language?"

"Aye, sir," said Scott, looking surprised at Endicott's surprise. "Some of the best engineers in the Federation are Vulcan. Translations of their work are well enough in their way, but an engine is a precise creature, do you mind, sir, and a man should care for it accordingly."

"That's...logical," said Endicott.

"I call it common sense. An engine is like a bairn -- or a woman. They demand devotion." Scott sighed and added, "He tells me that's illogical, but I notice he's taken a deal of trouble to teach me, all the same."

"I suppose liking machinery gives you an insight into Mr. Spock's nature," said Endicott.

Scott shrugged. "I'm fond of both, if that's your meaning."

"No," said Endicott. "Well -- perhaps." He said goodnight and went at last to his own quarters.

When the ship's morning came, Kirk was disappointed to find that the Enterprise, under Peter's leadership, was still uncaptured. Peter's look of apprehension dissolved into hurt misery that the captain had expected so little of him, and he began apologizing for turning the Enterprise back to Kirk in a position worse than before.

By this time Kirk was flabbergasted. "Mr. Endicott," he began, cutting the young man off in mid-apology.

"Sir?"

Kirk hesitated not quite sure how to assure Peter that he would have been surprised to find the Enterprise free no matter who had been in command. "I left you in a difficult situation," he said carefully. "If I'm surprised that we've come out of it as well as we have, it's no reflection on you."

"Thank you, sir," said Peter forlornly, and finished his apology.

By this time, Kirk was too engrossed in studying the situation to pay any attention. If the Rabbit didn't know he'd done a good job, Kirk wasn't going to waste time persuading him. He was only vaguely aware of Spock and the admiral at the special viewer studying the arrayment of the fleet, as he bent to trying ways to change the Enterprise's position within that structure. Then Spock's voice jerked him out of his concentration.

"A most unusual use of the endsweep, Commander. Your tactics have been well chosen."

When a Vulcan says it, it has to be believed. Peter said, "Thank you, Mr. Spock," in a strained tone of voice and sat down at the sensors trying not to look exalted.

Kirk made his decision and turned to the admiral. "Request permission to concede defeat. I estimate capture within one hour -- all the ships' crews could probably use the extra rest."

Endicott nodded slowly and announced to the fleet, "Victory to the attacking forces. Special commendation to Bird-of-Andor and Samurai. Phase two maneuvers will commence as planned. Bird-of-Andor and Enterprise are your targets."

Phase two let the lucky target ships get something of a rest. Symbolically speaking, they were valuable cargo ships, and each had half the ships on its side. Each ship was to protect its own side's "cargo ship" and attack the other, using phaser banks at one-hundredth of their normal strength. The ships' deflector shields were capable of taking such minimal punishment indefinitely, but their computers were instructed to report all hits in terms of the damage which would have resulted from a full-strength phaser. Similarly, the computers would estimate how much energy a shot ought to have taken from the ship. The "cargo ships" were supposed to have no arms, but heavy shielding. A shot that actually (the computers' estimated actuality, that is) got through the deflectors to damage the cargo ship itself was the most useful to the attacking force, but also the most risky. If the computers announced that the Enterprise's or the Bird-of-Andor's shields were down, men could be beamed aboard to take over; if the computers announced that the whole ship was blown up, the "valuable cargo" would be lost -- also the game.

The day went by peacefully enough. There was a good deal of mild jolting, and once Scott called from Engineering to say that the cumulative effect of the small hits on the deflectors was disturbing his instruments, and it might be as much as five minutes before he could guarantee Kirk really accurate control of their speed. In fact, it was four minutes before Scott called back to report that all was well again. He sounded a little put out. Kirk was not sure whether the engineer regretted having had to allow a few minutes of minimal error or having been off one minute

in his prediction of gloom. Peter Endicott and Uhura later reported similar disturbances in their instruments and likewise adjusted them without difficulty.

It upset Kirk's nerves a little to be dependent on others for safety, even in play. He was aware of this irritability in himself as a weakness and -- intellectually -- welcomed the games as valuable to himself personally. Nevertheless, he was upset, and became more so as the hours wore on.

It was with a feeling of vengeful relief that Kirk saw three of the opposing ships pull apart. They pulled apart under the "attacks" of his defenders, and one had been put hypothetically out of action; the resulting gap was barely wide enough for him to slip safely through into a region of clear space -- one which several of his ships could reach before any of Bird of Andor's could. The move would put his whole side in a strong position, but just at that moment Kirk was only interested in taking advantage of a chance for his ship to do something for itself unaided.

They drove ahead at a cargo ship's maximum speed, and all eyes turned to the main viewing screen, seeing what Kirk was up to. The captains whose ships had opened the gap also saw it, of course, and the two whose ships were still in the game tried to coax their ships into just that extra bit of speed needed to block the Enterprise.

Kirk had a sudden vision of a grandstand looming up against the stars, full of cheering giants with waving pennants.

Even Admiral Endicott looked up from his three-dimensional view of the whole fleet to watch the race.

When the noise began, Spock would have been the first to hear it in any case, as his ears were more sensitive than theirs. It was a quiet, humming sound, gradually becoming louder, punctuated by occasional sudden stops. It did not sound out of place among the other sounds of the bridge -- which sometimes resembled a toccata and fugue for electronic bleep -- but it was out of place. Any officer with half an ear for music was accustomed to judging the ship's condition by sound alone. Spock stiffened.

The admiral was in front of him and did not see. But Kirk was behind Spock, and did. With that cue, he, too, went on a private Red Alert and became aware of the humming sound. They identified the source at almost the same moment. It was the admiral's viewer.

Spock hesitated, delayed by the habit of turning to Kirk. "Admiral -- "

Kirk hesitated, delayed by the habit of turning to Spock. "Analysis," Mr. Endicott, he said.

The admiral looked around, surprised, and stood up.

The two opposing ships almost had the gap closed.

Peter, alerted by the glances between Kirk and Spock, was already aware of danger but was delayed by being furthest from the viewer. Yet another second was lost before the humming was loud enough for him to hear.

A third opposing ship and two of their own ships were well into the picture before them.

"Something wrong with the viewer. Maybe phaser-induced disturbances, but...." He set to throwing on a frantic medley of switches among the sensors. "Better halt the games, sir."

"You," said the admiral, nodding at Uhura and leaving it to her to halt the maneuvers.

Spock looked at the secondary technicians' stations. From them he could have access to many of the sensors. He moved towards one, thought better of it, and placed himself back at the admiral's heel.

Kirk called Transporter and gave them the co-ordinates of the viewer. "Stand by -- it may be necessary to beam object off the bridge and out into clear space."

The admiral said, "This is valuable equipment, Captain. Don't jettison it lightly."

Kirk nodded, threw an impatient glance at Peter, and stood up for a fuller view.

"It may be necessary to jettison, sir," Peter said hastily. "Data insufficient to say at this time. Recommend clearing the bridge to let me try --"

The viewer flashed.

The accompanying noise seemed small, although it left those closest momentarily deafened. It was the light that did harm. All on the bridge except Spock cried out in pain at the radiance reflecting off the myriad metallic surfaces around them. Spock was doubly shielded: by being the evolutionary product of a planet with a sun brighter than Earth's, and by having been standing directly behind the admiral. His main field of vision showed only an expanse of yellow fabric. Its lines suddenly changed their pattern, and he knew the admiral was falling even before he knew that his arms had reached out to catch the man. He knelt under the falling weight, bringing Endicott gently down to the floor.

"Medical emergency," said Spock crisply, turning to Kirk.

The captain sat slumped in his chair, holding a hand over his eyes. "Acknowledged," he whispered, and groped at the controls on his chair for the intercom.

Spock looked from Kirk to Peter without speaking.

"Bridge to sickbay -- " Uhura began.

"One moment, Lieutenant," said Peter, standing up.

The viewer went on humming to itself, louder and higher. The images of the ships inside it flickered crazily as if beaming in and out of so many miniature transporters.

Peter snatched a look into the main sensor, hoping it had more exact information ready for him, but it did not.

"Alert sickbay. Clear the bridge. Take the captain and the admiral to sickbay. Lieutenant Sulu -- " He stopped, realizing that the crew had already divided up the tasks.

Sulu and a yeoman took the admiral away from Spock. The Vulcan rose slowly, putting his hands over his still ringing ears.

Scott and Riley converged on Kirk. "No," he said, "I'm all...." He choked off the lie as his mind set a sardonic admiral in the dark nothingness before his eyes. He allowed them to bustle him away, not knowing that the admiral was unaware of him. "The ship -- ?" he asked, as they left the bridge.

"She's unharmed, sir," Scott said.

McCoy was already outside in the corridor to meet them when they emerged from the elevator. "Where's Spock?" he asked, but he was too intent on his work to mean much by it. He did not even wait for Scott's answer, but hustled off with his patients, commandeering Riley to help him.

Scott, Sulu, and Uhura stood where they were beside the elevator. All at once, Sulu began to laugh, a rhythmic chatter deep in his throat. "I think I've got an idea...." he said.

On the bridge, Peter Endicott reached the viewer and was opening its circuitry with delicate fingers. He looked away without pausing in his work to say, "Leave the bridge, Mr. Spock."

Spock lowered his hands. He could guess well enough what Peter was saying. "I have not recovered my hearing, Commander. In any case, I judge that you need assistance if this viewer is to be repaired before implosion."

A few decks below them, Scott pressed his lips tight against a grin and worked his face into lines of solemnity. "Come on, then. They'll be needing us." He went back into the elevator, with Uhura and Sulu.

Arriving on the bridge, they found that both science officers were too engrossed by the immediate emergency to the ship (and possibly to the fleet as a whole) to consider wasting time in questioning their arrival. Peter Endicott noticed as if from a distance that the chief engineer had replaced Spock in helping him try to hold the discordant forces in control long enough to shut down the viewer completely. But he also noticed that he was making a judgment: it was more important to work on the viewer than to order Scott off the bridge, let alone ask him to explain his disobedience. The judgment and his awareness of making it were complete before he had time to say anything. He nodded at Scott and went on working.

Spock, freed from the immediate problem, looked at Peter to see if he would say anything, then, finding him silent, went to Uhura. "Open a channel to all ships, Lieutenant," he said, "and include a ship-wide intercom on the Enterprise."

"Yes, Mr. Spock," she said.

Spock's muscles relaxed involuntarily, and he had to steady himself by taking hold of the top of Uhura's chair. He had heard her answer. Her voice sounded far away, but it was clear that his hearing was coming back to him.

"This is Lieutenant-Commander Spock, Admiral Endicott's escort officer, speaking for the admiral. He has been injured in what is so far a minor shipboard malfunction. The malfunction is not yet under control, and all ships are ordered to keep at a distance, as it may be necessary to beam the affected instrument off the ship where it may implode harmlessly in space. Mr. Sulu, ahead warp factor six."

A few decks below, Kirk was already able to see fuzzily, but the admiral had just been waking up when the sound of his name at the beginning of Spock's address brought him fully awake. Endicott felt two pairs of hands holding him. One set held him down while another set carefully touched a few drops of a cool liquid

into his eyes. He could tell that both men were tense at first, by their breathing, although the one administering the eyedrops did not allow the muscles in his hands and arms to go rigid as the one who was holding him down did. Then the one holding him relaxed, and Endicott thought they were done with him, but they did not stop. Their breathing was calmer, and he suddenly realized that he himself felt calmer and that they had all reacted to the calmness in Spock's voice.

"A point," he murmured, "a distinct point."

"Admiral?" said Dr. McCoy's voice.

"You no doubt realize," Endicott went on, "that he would sound equally assured whether he was saying that it was a nice day or that the ship was about to crash. And yet it has the effect of authority. Interesting." His vision began to clear, and he could make out McCoy looking at him with an expression compounded of concern and non-comprehension, and beyond him Kevin Riley. It was Riley holding him down. "Dr. McCoy," said Endicott, as he made out the features. "Captain Kirk said I should consult you about human reactions to Vulcans."

McCoy glanced at Kirk.

Kirk smiled affably.

Endicott closed his eyes before McCoy could tell him to rest.

Spock came to the end of his speech.

Riley blinked. "Sulu's at the helm? But the Rab -- Commander Endicott ordered us all off the bridge. What's he doing there?"

Kirk sat up before McCoy could stop him. "An interesting question, Mr. Riley. Moreover, what is Spock doing there?" He shoved himself up off the bed.

"Jim, you shouldn't -- " McCoy began.

"Nonsense, Bones. If you seriously thought I shouldn't, you'd already have stopped me. Come on."

McCoy decided that the mental strain would do these particular patients more harm than the physical one if he stopped them from going to check would, and gave Endicott a hand in following Kirk out the door.

Part of the information in Spock's address had already been given the fleet when Uhura had halted the maneuvers at the

admiral's order, but, as there had been no time for her to be given or to transmit instructions to the other ships, they had changed course to parallel the Enterprise's, so as to be ready either to move in if they could help or out if they could not. The five ships visible on the main viewing screen ahead of them veered off sharply and smoothly at Spock's words.

"Full view of the fleet, Lieutenant," Spock told Uhura. She quickly replaced the view on the main screen with a series of back and side views. Satisfied that the fleet was leaving them at warp speed, Spock checked with Kyle that the Transporter was ready to get the viewer out at moment's notice, decided it was better not to take time to call sick-bay, and walked back to the viewer. He stood over it, ready to signal Kyle.

For an instant, the image within the viewer stabilized, the humming dropped, and Peter reached to shut the whole thing off. Just then the humming went back up, quick as a scream.

"Kyle," said the two science officers in chorus.

The implosion began even while the viewer was disappearing in front of them. There was a bang as air rushed in to fill the vacuum. Peter Endicott and Scott were kneeling, but Spock, standing upright, was easier to catch off-balance. The wind took him, and he fell face down between them, his head striking the floor just where the viewer had stood.

The elevator doors opened on a tableau: Sulu and Uhura rigid in their chairs -- not hurt, but still too startled by the noise to move -- and Scott and Peter, both half-dazed, kneeling over Spock.

Peter tentatively put out a hand to touch Spock.

Scott roughly brushed his hand aside and turned Spock's head so that the Vulcan could breathe more freely. A thin line of green blood was flowing from a cut in Spock's forehead. Scott carefully wiped the blood with his sleeve. By that time he had Uhura and Sulu on one side of him and McCoy on the other. The doctor was moving a diagnostic instrument along Spock. Scott found that Uhura had pressed a lace handkerchief into his hand, and he put it to Spock's forehead.

Kirk, leaning against the wall by the elevator, spared a moment to wonder frivolously where his female crewmembers managed to keep such items and yet be able to get them out so fast. His own eyesight was still a bit fuzzy, and he looked at the admiral, wondering how much he had seen.

The admiral returned his gaze, nodded, and then said, "Is Mr. Spock all right?"

"Well, he will be," said McCoy. "I want to get him to sickbay. And you," he added, glaring back at the admiral and Kirk. "And you," he repeated, looking at Scott and Peter. "Sulu, give me a hand," he said plaintively.

Kirk nodded obediently. "Uhura, you have the con," he told her. "Tell the fleet we're all right and have them rejoin us and stand by for further orders." He looked at the admiral to see if he wanted to add anything, but Endicott only nodded.

After a few moments of commotion, Uhura found herself alone on a large and empty bridge. She sent out the message to the other ships, then walked to the captain's chair, stepped up, turned once around, feeling regal, to survey the bridge, and sank into the chair. "Well," she said to the main view screen, "that's one way to get command,"

The sum total of injuries was reasonably small. Admiral Endicott's mild concussion had left him a severe headache, but he refused a sedative. McCoy gave him and Kirk dark glasses and told them to go lie down and rest their eyes. Spock had cracked several ribs in falling and would not admit to feeling any discomfort. McCoy fussed over him and at him trying to get him comfortable, until he was stopped by an uneasy feeling that the admiral was staring at him from behind the dark glasses. He consoled himself with the reflection that Spock had stopped merely tolerating his efforts and had begun to look actively amused -- presumably a sign of less discomfort. Peter Endicott and Scott had some rather bad wind burns, but McCoy told them they could leave sickbay if they went to their quarters to rest.

Kirk beckoned to Scott as the engineer started to leave with Peter. "Aye, sir?" Scott said, coming back.

"Why did you go back to the bridge?"

"Well, now.... Do you mean the reason, sir, or the excuse?"

"Both," said Kirk.

"The lad needed help," said Scott. "If he seriously wanted to save that lovely mechanism, he had no business trying to do it alone, not with the time so short. He'd have had to give it up at the start, but for Mr. Spock staying behind. Even with two the chance was little enough. I suppose he didn't want to risk other lives, but...." He shrugged and stopped.

" -- but that's an officer's business," said the admiral. "And the excuse?"

"Well, sir -- it was really Mr. Sulu's idea, you understand --"

"All right," said Kirk, "I understand you're proud of your ingenuity. Go on."

Scott grinned. "Mr. Endicott hasna completed his orientation. You said he was taking over as science officer for the duration of this exercise. You halted the exercise, sir," he said to the admiral, "and so -- we went back to ask Mr. Spock to confirm Mr. Endicott's order." He paused reflectively. "We seem to have been a bit slow getting round to it." He took advantage of the resulting stunned silence to make his escape.

The admiral recovered first. "So that was why you stayed on the bridge, Mr. Spock?"

"No, sir," said Spock. "I did not hear the order. The initial explosion temporarily deafened me."

"Are you familiar with the life of Lord Nelson?" asked Endicott.

Kirk looked up quickly.

"He was a figure in Earth's naval history, was he not?"

"Yes," said Endicott. He put his hand to his forehead. "Doctor, I will take that sedative after all."

McCoy bottled up his curiosity until he could get Kirk alone, feeling that it would be tactless to demand an explanation in front of Spock. He had to keep shoving the metaphorical cork back down, but he managed to contain himself until the following day. At that time he discharged both Kirk and the admiral and let them go back to work. Peter had set up a conventional viewer, which he geared for watching the fleet, on the bridge during the ship's night, so that all was in readiness for the maneuvers to continue.

Outside the door, McCoy held Kirk back.

"Yes, Bones?"

"What was that Nelson stuff?"

"A signal was run up ordering the ships to surrender. Lord Nelson held the telescope to his blind eye and said he couldn't see any signal."

"If he thinks Spock was lying about the deafness, he's wrong," said McCoy in annoyance. "Considering that Spock probably saved half the ship, he could have said something pleasant."

"He did," said Kirk. "Nelson went on fighting and overcame the opposing ships. It's one of the more frequent inspirational anecdotes around the Academy."

McCoy smiled briefly. "Well, that's something. Our hope that Peter would put himself out of action doesn't seem to've come out, exactly."

Kirk nodded and started to move off. As he went, he looked back at the sickbay door.

"Yes," said McCoy, "I'll take good care of him."

On the bridge, Kirk found that the fleet was re-assembling in the positions they had been in at the moment when the maneuvers had been broken off. It was a tricky procedure, because they were also going to match the velocities they had been at, and they had to reach their correct situations simultaneously to duplicate the over-all situation.

Admiral Endicott entered the duplication of a given configuration in his log as phase 2-A and announced to the ships that their performance in re-assembling was itself to be part of the maneuvers. Possibly as a result, on the first try the ships all wound up where they were supposed to, and heading where they were supposed to at the correct speeds, all at the same moment.

Kirk felt for a moment as if he had gone back in time, and had to shake off a feeling of doom, half expecting the new viewer to go off in their faces. In the few minutes while they waited to see if the Enterprise would make it through the re-created gap, he had time to collect himself, which he did by focusing on the few differences: Riley happened to be off-duty, and the new navigator was on (Kirk noticed that the young ensign was not used to the lay-out of their navigational console, but was memorizing it fast); the admiral now had a conventional viewer; Spock was not on the bridge.

The Enterprise made it through the gap, and two of their own ships closed in behind them to block pursuit. Kirk settled down to guiding his ship through the game.

The Bird-of-Andor was badly crippled, according to computer reality, by the end of the day, and its ships had to leave the Enterprise pretty much alone to concentrate on defense. They had set up a good defense, one likely to hold for several hours. In fact, it was still possible for Bird-of-Andor to win, but Kirk felt reasonably confident as he left the bridge. It was not until he and the admiral sat down to a late supper that he came out of the limited world of the game and back into depression.

The admiral was waiting for him. Neither had spoken, but the change in Kirk's face and the long pause before he began cutting his meat told Endicott that he could not put the decision off any longer.

"Captain, I have learned something."

Kirk made a polite, enquiring noise, unwilling to display anxiety or eagerness.

"Your men want Mr. Spock on this ship -- almost as much as you do. I wish you'd told me."

Kirk pushed his plate away from the edge so that he could lean forward. He didn't feel like eating. "You had already ignored my recommendations, sir."

Endicott mixed himself a multi-worlded spice dressing for his salad. "My opinions on Vulcan are scarcely a secret."

Kirk looked up, startled at Endicott's unconscious repetition of his own description of the man.

"I have some first-hand knowledge of the Vulcans to judge by, you know. I have also had experience with human distrust of those who have rigid emotional control."

Endicott spoke quite evenly, and it took Kirk a while to realize that Endicott was talking about himself. He turned the moment aside with a counter-apology. "I'm sorry I didn't try to tell you. I thought it would take something more vivid to convince you, but --"

"Perhaps you were right. In any event, I am going to recommend a re-consideration of Mr. Spock's promotion. If he can be persuaded to withdraw his resignation --?"

"I think he can," said Kirk, smiling. His face smoothed back into depression. "He'll have to find a new post, of course."

"I doubt it," said Endicott.

"But unless -- " Kirk started. "What do you mean, sir?"

"Peter will resign."

"I hope not," said Kirk. He was lying: he did not know what he felt, and his emotions were in a confused tangle.

Endicott shook his head. "Nonsense, Captain. You don't want him on your ship."

"No, I don't. But.... Spock is a good officer. I think Peter will be one. For the good of the service, they should both be given a fair chance. I...haven't given Peter one here."

Endicott shrugged and went back to his salad.

Kirk stared at his own plate. He had won, and he still didn't feel like eating. Endicott looked across the table and raised an eyebrow. For a moment Kirk felt annoyed at being scrutinized. Then he realized that Endicott was looking past him. Kirk turned around.

Peter Endicott was approaching.

"Yes, Commander?" said Kirk.

"Bird-of-Andor has been boarded and captured, sir."

"So soon?" said the admiral.

"Captain Trepovna hid behind the Enterprise to get close, while we pretended to be approaching in an attempt to decoy some of the opposing ships away. She got through their shielding."

"Good," said Kirk. He looked at the admiral, but there was no sign of approval on Endicott's face.

"You must have something private to say," the admiral said, "to have brought the news personally."

"Yes, sir," said Peter.

"The answer is no," said Kirk.

Peter looked startled at finding that they had apparently foreseen his request, but he answered Kirk stiffly, looking at his uncle, "That is very kind, but I would prefer -- "

"I will not accept your resignation," snapped Kirk.

"Resignation?" said Peter.

Both officers stared at him.

The admiral reached over to a table intercom. "My compliments to the fleet. Phase three will begin in one hour. Endicott out." He turned it off. "Sit down, and explain yourself."

"I want to transfer," said Peter.

"Where to?" asked Kirk.

Peter wriggled uneasily. "I think...I'm afraid that...." He started over. "They let me go through the courses too fast. I know the books cold, but handling all these people...."

"It's been a difficult situation for you," agreed Kirk. "There was a natural resentment on Mr. Spock's behalf -- "

"Perhaps," said Peter, not accepting the excuse. "I think I need more experience before I can handle...this much experience. I want to transfer to a smaller ship, or a base post, or I've made up a list of the current -- "

"Thank you, Peter, I'll look it over," said Kirk. The young man stood up fast, but Kirk put a hand on his sleeve. "I'll be proud to recommend you, Commander."

Peter turned red, mumbled something that could have been "Thank you, sir," and got out.

Kirk discovered that he was hungry and pulled his plate back. The food was cold. He pushed it away, wondering if he ought to eat it after all or if he should get a fresh serving. He solved the dilemma by putting the plate down the chute and getting a large helping of dessert. "Never mind nutrition," he said to himself. "I like ice-cream."

Endicott smiled, and Kirk felt embarrassed, realizing he'd spoken aloud. Then he smiled back and sat down.

Endicott decided he ought to say what he was thinking. "I want to thank you, too, Captain. It means a good deal to me and my brother to see Peter succeed. I've tried to keep that from influencing my judgment of him, but...perhaps I over-compensated."

"I think you did," said Kirk. "Vulcans may not realize it, but there are times when emotions can be trusted."

"Such as your wanting Mr. Spock on your ship?"

"Yes," said Kirk. "At least, I think so."

"I understand," said Endicott. "You're going to tell him now?"

Kirk nodded.

"I'll be on the bridge," said Endicott.

"Just how long do you plan to stay there?" a voice demanded.

Kirk and Endicott looked up to find Dr. McCoy standing over them with a stern face.

"I didn't let you gentlemen out of sickbay so you could over-work yourselves right back in."

"I have some business to take care of," said Endicott, "But it shouldn't take long. I want to watch the start of the next phase in the maneuvers."

"That's what I figured," said McCoy. "I would've found you sooner, but I tried the bridge first. You can have...well...an hour and a half."

"Very well, Doctor."

Three three of them left the room together and then separated, Endicott to the bridge; Kirk and McCoy to sickbay. "Is Spock awake?" Kirk asked.

"Yes, Jim," said McCoy.

Kirk wondered why McCoy was not after him for an explanation, then reflected that the expression on his face and the few sentences McCoy could have overheard were probably quite enough to tell the whole story.

As they went down the hall, they passed Engineer Scott. He looked tired. As they came near enough for a better look, Scott suddenly began staring at them. Kirk turned just enough as they passed to get a glimpse of the rest of the reaction. Scott had turned, too. He looked wide awake, and his face was slowly lighting up with...Kirk decided it should be classified as "wild surmise." He also decided that the expression on his face was probably enough to tell the whole story all by itself.

Nevertheless, he wanted the fun of telling the whole story in his own words, so he stood at the head of the bed, where

Spock could not see him, and said abruptly, "Mr. Spock, Admiral Endicott and I have been considering the problem of what you are to do next."

"Indeed," said Spock.

Kirk and McCoy exchanged a look at the listlessness of Spock's voice. Kirk dropped the pretense. "We decided you should be First Officer on the Enterprise."

Spock said nothing, but turned his head, trying to see Kirk. Kirk moved down into his view and repeated the conversation at high speed. At the end he waited expectantly.

Spock said nothing.

Kirk and McCoy looked at each other. "Spock," Kirk said, "I'm sorry I couldn't tell you what I had in mind when I took you off duty, but...." He stopped, feeling that the reason was obvious.

Spock said nothing.

McCoy looked at Spock. "Commander," he said, "you owe me a drink -- not lemonade."

"I shall carry out the obligation as soon as you discharge me from sickbay, Doctor." The corners of Spock's mouth twitched.

"That's blackmail!" exclaimed McCoy.

Spock looked shocked.

McCoy tried to glare at him. "I can wait a while to collect." He gave a sigh of relief that turned into a yawn. "There's time."

"There's time," Kirk echoed. He was suddenly very tired. "Goodnight," he said.

"Goodnight, Jim," Spock said. He waited till Kirk turned away to add, "Thank you...all of you."

Kirk turned around to smile at Spock. Spock did not smile back, but the muscles of his face relaxed, and McCoy, watching both men, nodded to himself. After a moment, Spock turned his head, looking around at the sickbay and, in imagination, through the walls to the whole of the ship, as it seemed to McCoy. "Goodnight," said McCoy. He led Kirk out of the room.

Left alone, Spock yawned, suddenly, a gaping, cavernous yawn. "My human half," he said apologetically to no one in particular, and closed his eyes to sleep.

YOU

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☐ You worked on Star Trek and maybe you keep scrapbooks, too.

☐ Your name is D. C. Fontana, and you think Uhura ought to be left in command once in a while, too.

☐ Your name is Ted White, and I feel like bugging you.

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