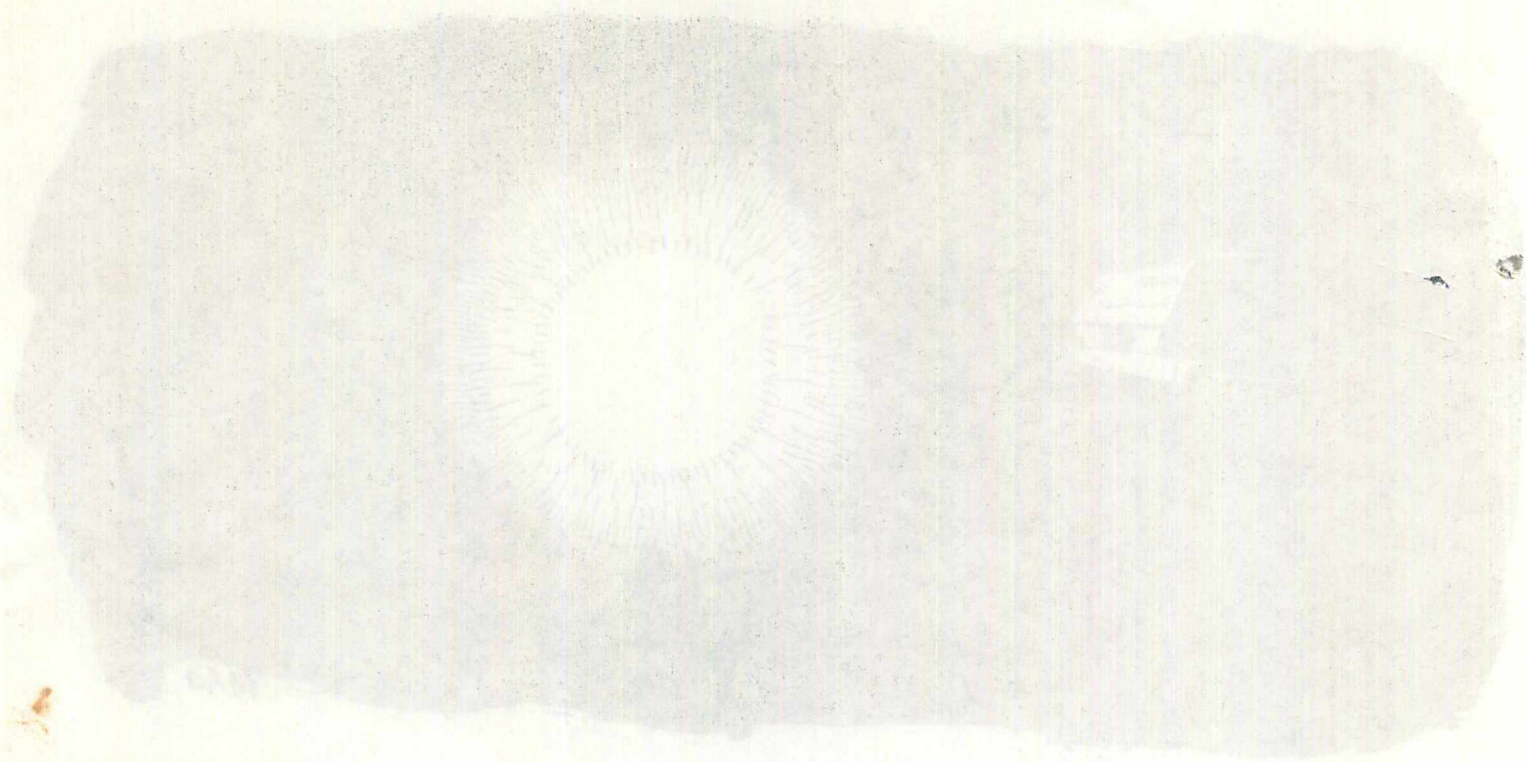


T-NEGATIVE



T-MEQUEN-T

T Negative 13, December 1971, comes from Ruth Berman, 5620 Edgewater Boulevard, Minneapolis Minnesota 55417.

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cover: illustrating "Sentience is where you find it" by Rosalind Oberdieck; lettering by C. Lee Healy

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backcover: Greg Jein

Illos: Rosalind Oberdieck, 6, 8, 10, 14, 15, 16; D. Carol Roberts p. 7; Anthony Tollin, p. 30, lettering opposite p. 26; Tim Courtney, opposite p. 26; Greg Jein, pp. 34, 43. Lino: Nan Braude.

This mixture of paper and ink came to you because:

✓ I felt like sending it to you.

You contributed.

✓ You paid money at the rate of 50¢ for one or \$2 for five --

-- and your subscription just ran out.

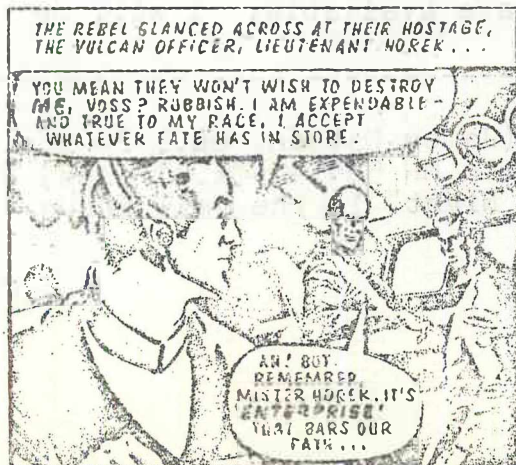
Back issues are available for 75¢ for one or \$2 for three; at present, #'s 2, 3, 4, 10, 11, & 12 are available. I will be reprinting others later.

Brag Dept.: The North Stone Review (James Naiden, ed., PO Box 14098, University Station, Minneapolis MN 55414, \$1.50/copy) had a poem of mine, "Dianiac on a Gibbous Night" in the Fall issue.

COUSINAGE

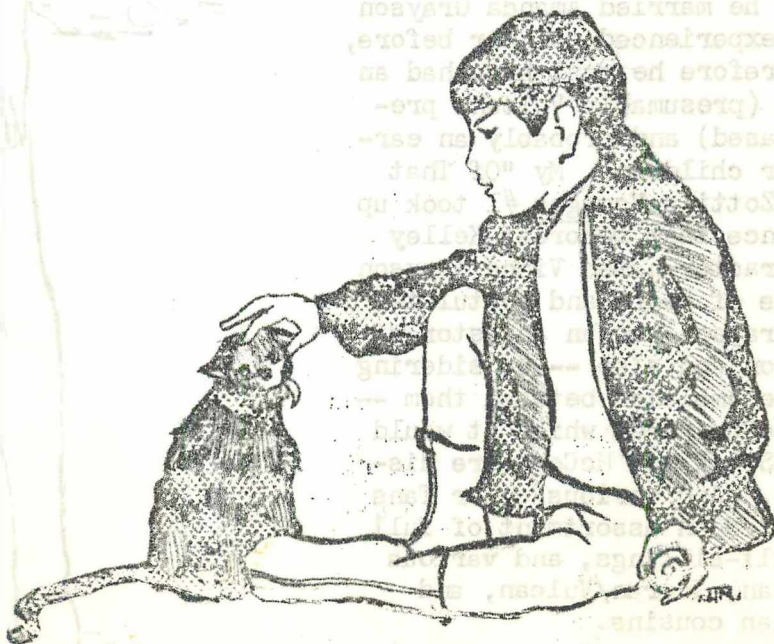
Many "Star Trek" fans are perhaps unaware that there is an English "Star Trek" comic appearing weekly in an anthology comic called TV21. (Until September, 1971. In October it merged with a similar magazine, Valiant. The new magazine, Valiant and TV 21, continues to publish the "Star Trek" comic, but with a new artist, who is markedly inferior to the artists who drew it before, although still much better than the Gold Key comic. The publisher is IPC Magazines Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4AD, England. I imagine that the price of an overseas subscription remains the same, \$9/year.) Unlike the American comic, it is well drawn and well plotted -- although still, of course, below the level of the show, and containing a number of inaccuracies (e.g., Romulans who look like Roman legionaires instead of like Vulcans), and the use of the conventions of comic-book-type diction is sometimes disconcerting, especially when it results in a Spock who exclaims "Good grief!"

One of the most interesting adventures serialized in the strip involved a mutiny against a monstrously harsh captain, which began in #32, May 2, 1970, and ran for the following two months. Led by Mechanic Erhard Voss, the crew of the Federation Guardship Dorado rebelled against Captain Louis Jago, put him and all but one of the officers in a shuttlecraft, and lit out for the Klingon Empire, where they foolishly hoped to find sanctuary. The one officer they kept back was the first lieutenant, Navigator Horek -- a Vulcan who happened to be Spock's first cousin. (The name, of course, is another mistake. To conform to the show's usage, I shall refer to him hereafter as S'Horek, although it is perhaps possible that he Terracized his name by dropping



the "s" prefix. Another mistake is implicit in the strip's consistent references to the officers of a ship as distinct from the crew. As mentioned in The Making of Star Trek, the "enlisted men" category does not exist -- at least, not on the Enterprise. One could assume that a guardship does have a crew of non-officers, but, as the strip uses the same terminology with reference to the Enterprise, it is perhaps better to assume that "officers" means "the senior officers as opposed to the junior officers.")

The Enterprise was sent to recapture or, if necessary, destroy the Dorado, which had been recently equipped with special instruments and therefore had to be kept out of Klingon hands. Kirk discovered that he had an advantage the mutineers did not know about: S'Horek, a stronger telepath than his half-Vulcan cousin, was able to send "messages" to Spock, although Spock could not get through to him in return. Spock has some ability as a long-range projective telepath (e.g., his causing Sirah to open a communicator in "Omega Glory"; but she only stood across a courtyard from him, whereas as S'Horek was in another spaceship), but it is reasonable to suppose that a full-blooded Vulcan might have greater ability -- or might have greater inhibitions to overcome in allowing someone else to enter his mind. S'Horek's information gave Kirk the opportunity to fire on the Dorado, but Spock, overcome by the emotions of his human side, diverted the phaser beam. S'Horek, naturally, disapproved of Spock's emotional action of saving his life. However, Spock redeemed himself by managing to get telepathic control of his cousin's body

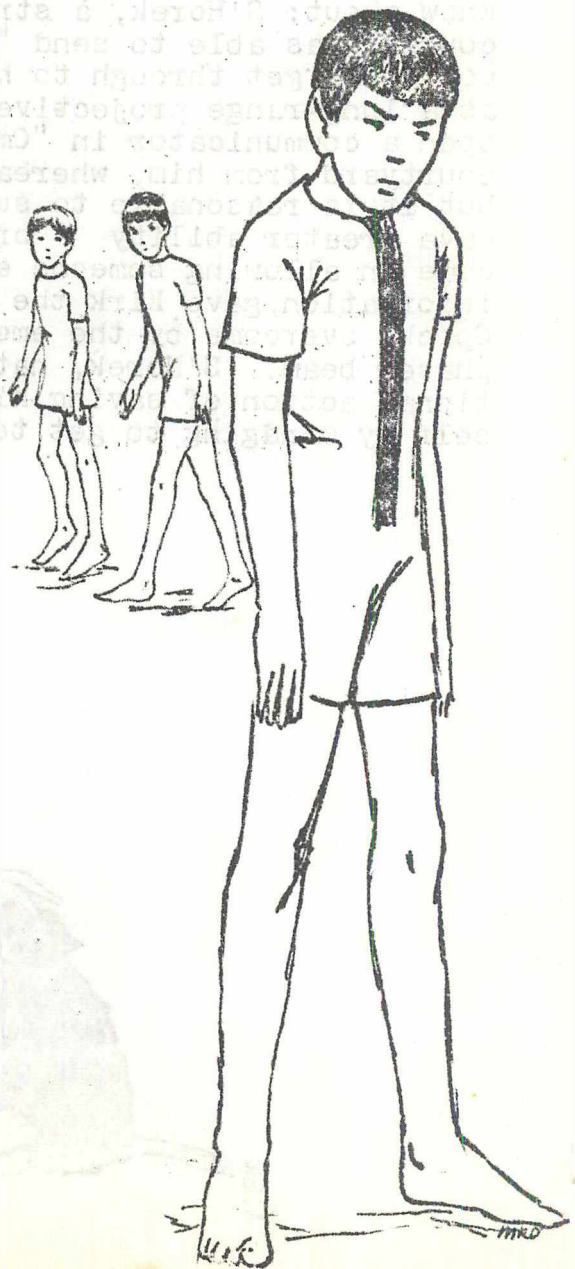


while S'Horek was unconscious and by then using his knowledge as Science Officer to sabotage the Dorado, enabling the Enterprise to capture the mutineers.

The possibility that Spock has a cousin seems a likely one, and it also seems likely that Spock would be deeply attached to his cousin (since he has no brothers or sisters, according to The Making of Star Trek). The story as a whole seems to be acceptable as a probable set of events in the "Star Trek" universe -- and it is, of course, pleasant to learn on a semi-official basis of other members of Spock's family, instead of being confined to Sarek, Amanda, and speculation.*

The drawing of the adventure made S'Horek appear to be somewhat younger than Spock; his rank of first lieutenant is lower than Spock's rank as commander and also suggests that he is in fact younger than Spock.

* Speculation, of course, has been plentiful. For example, "Spock's Argument," in this issue, postulates a half-sister for Spock, on the basis that, if Spock's pon far in "Amok Time" occurred at the normal age, Sarek was too old when he married Amanda Grayson not to have experienced pon far before, and that therefore he must have had an earlier wife (presumably Vulcan, presumably deceased) and probably an earlier child or children. My "Of That Ilk" in Pat Zotti's Voyages #1 took up the coincidence that DeForest Kelley played a character named Vince Grayson in "The House of Fear" and postulated that Vince Grayson was an ancestor of Amanda Grayson and also -- considering the marked resemblance between them -- of Leonard McCoy; from which it would follow that Spock and McCoy were distant cousins. And various other fans have postulated an assortment of full siblings, half-siblings, and various Terran, Vulcan, Terran/Vulcan, and Vulcan/Romulan cousins.



(I am somewhat confused by the reference to S'Horek as the "first lieutenant." According to my dictionary, first and second lieutenant are U.S. army and marine corps ranks, whereas the U.S. navy has lieutenant and lieutenant junior grade only, and the British navy has lieutenants only. So far as the show indicated, Starfleet ranks follow naval procedure -- whether American or British, I can't tell. However, it is possible that "first" in this case is a non-technical adjective, indicating that S'Horek is the most senior of the lieutenants, or it may be that the writer of the comic means us to assume that a guardship is a branch of the service descended from the marine corps. In any case, the rank is lower than that of commander.)

Perhaps Spock, feeling rejected by the children his own age, turned to his young cousin, a boy too young to have gained the full control over his emotions that an older Vulcan would have, and too young to realize that Cousin Spock was not as self-controlled as a big boy should be. If so, eventually the two boys grew apart as the younger boy found companions his own age and came to be disapprovingly aware of the alien qualities in Spock. Nevertheless, he must have retained a considerable respect for his cousin, for he followed him not only in entering Starfleet, but in choosing to serve aboard a largely Terran-staffed ship. Living among humans may have led S'Horek to a better understanding and appreciation of his cousin's Terran qualities, but, at the time this adventure began, he still tended to look down on Spock as a human.

However, in the course of the adventure, I suspect that S'Horek lost what he had left of condescension towards his cousin. Spock's impulsive action in spoiling the shot aimed at the Dorado was illogical in that it made it almost certain that the Dorado would be captured by Klingons. They all -- except the mutineers, who could not afford to admit the fact to themselves -- knew that the Klingons would kill those aboard the Dorado as soon as they secured the ship. Therefore, Spock's act was likely to result in the loss of an important ship without saving any lives. However, Spock had learned the human habit of playing long shots (cf. his behavior in igniting all the remaining fuel of the shuttlecraft in "Galileo Seven"), and the adventure must have demonstrated to S'Horek the wisdom that can sometimes be found in "illogic." Thus Spock not only saved his cousin's life, but regained his friendship.

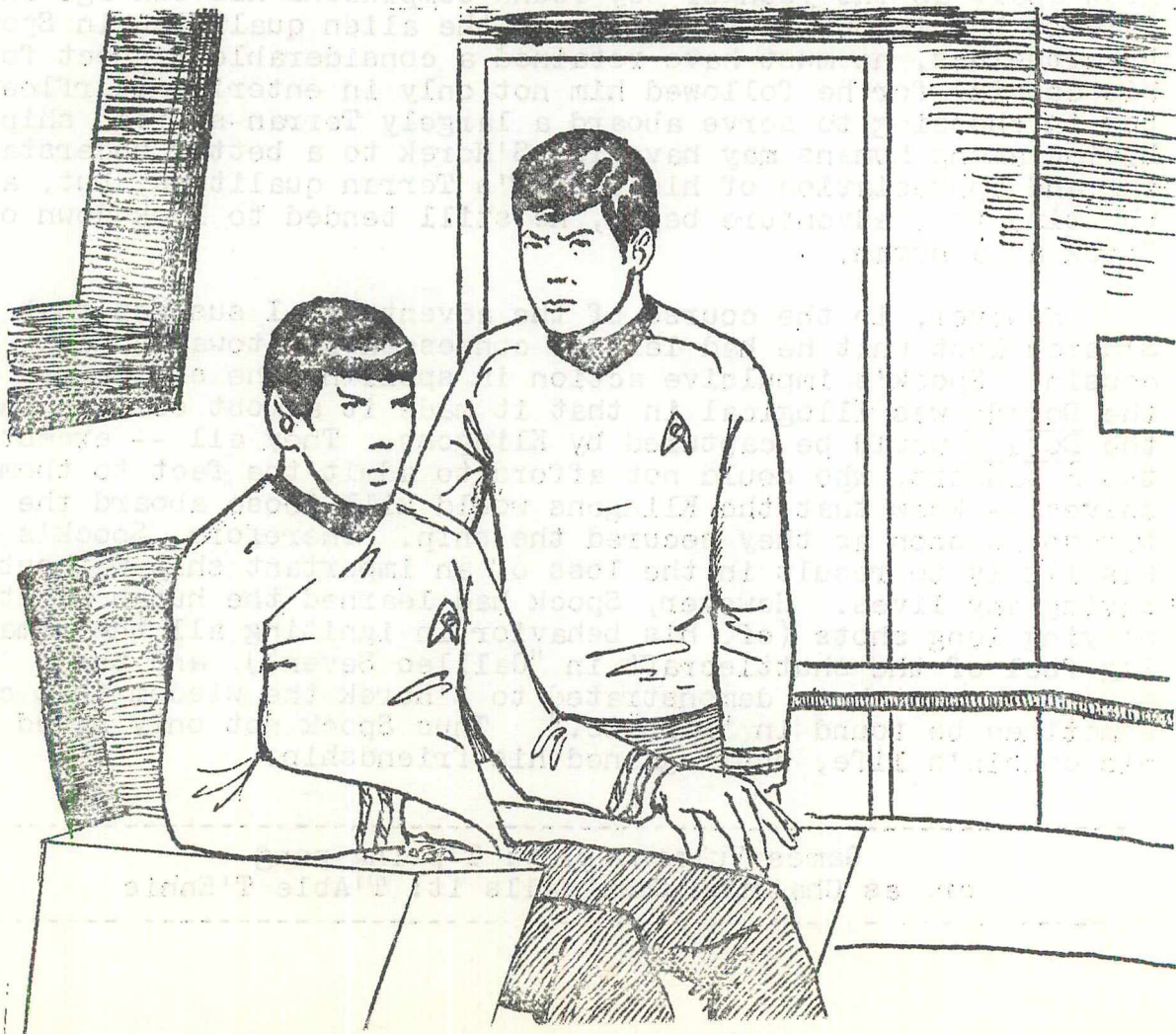
Games Vulcans play: T'pring-pong
or, as Chairman Smao calls it: T'Able T'Ennis

SENTIENCE IS WHERE YOU FIND IT

by Melisa Michaels

On the bridge of the starship Enterprise, the First Officer, Lt. Com. Spock, sat in the command chair, his eyes on the control panels before him. Behind him stood the ship's surgeon Dr. McCoy, who bounced on his toes impatiently, his hands clasped behind his back.

"It's past time," he said at last.



"Yes," agreed Spock indifferently.

"Well, where are they?"

Their position is unchanged," said Spock.

"Then why don't they answer your communications?"

"Insufficient data," said Spock firmly.

"Don't you even care?" demanded McCoy.

Spock turned to look at him, one eyebrow raised.

"They should have reported," blurted McCoy. "They could be in trouble. We don't know anything about that planet, Spock! Anything might be happening. How can you just...just sit there?"

Spock turned back to his instruments. "I am concerned, of course; they should have communicated. However, as their position is unchanged, and we scanned no life forms on the planet, the odds are infinitesimally small that they are in any real danger." He paused for a moment watching his controls, then turned to face McCoy again. "Tell me, Doctor, do you feel I would be better able to perform my duties in command of the Enterprise, were I to exhibit as high a level of emotionalism as is customary for you?"

"Maybe not," conceded McCoy. "But you'd be a better man for it, in my opinion."

"I am not a man. I am Vulcan. Your opinion is worthless."

McCoy settled back on his heels, but before he could frame a suitable reply Spock rose and started toward his library computer station. "If you will excuse me, Doctor," he said coldly, "I have preparations to make, if we must beam down. Have you also, or do you carry your charms and talismans with you even now?"

"Spock...."

Spock turned back, his face impassive and somehow forbidding, and McCoy stared for a long moment at the shadows in his eyes, trying to read something there beyond self-assured silence, indifference, contempt. Even those, he knew, were his own subjective projections -- but surely there must be something in a man's eyes, something one could understand, relate to, something....

In Spock's eyes, only reflections. Shrugging, McCoy turned to leave the bridge, his face set.

"Kirk to Enterprise

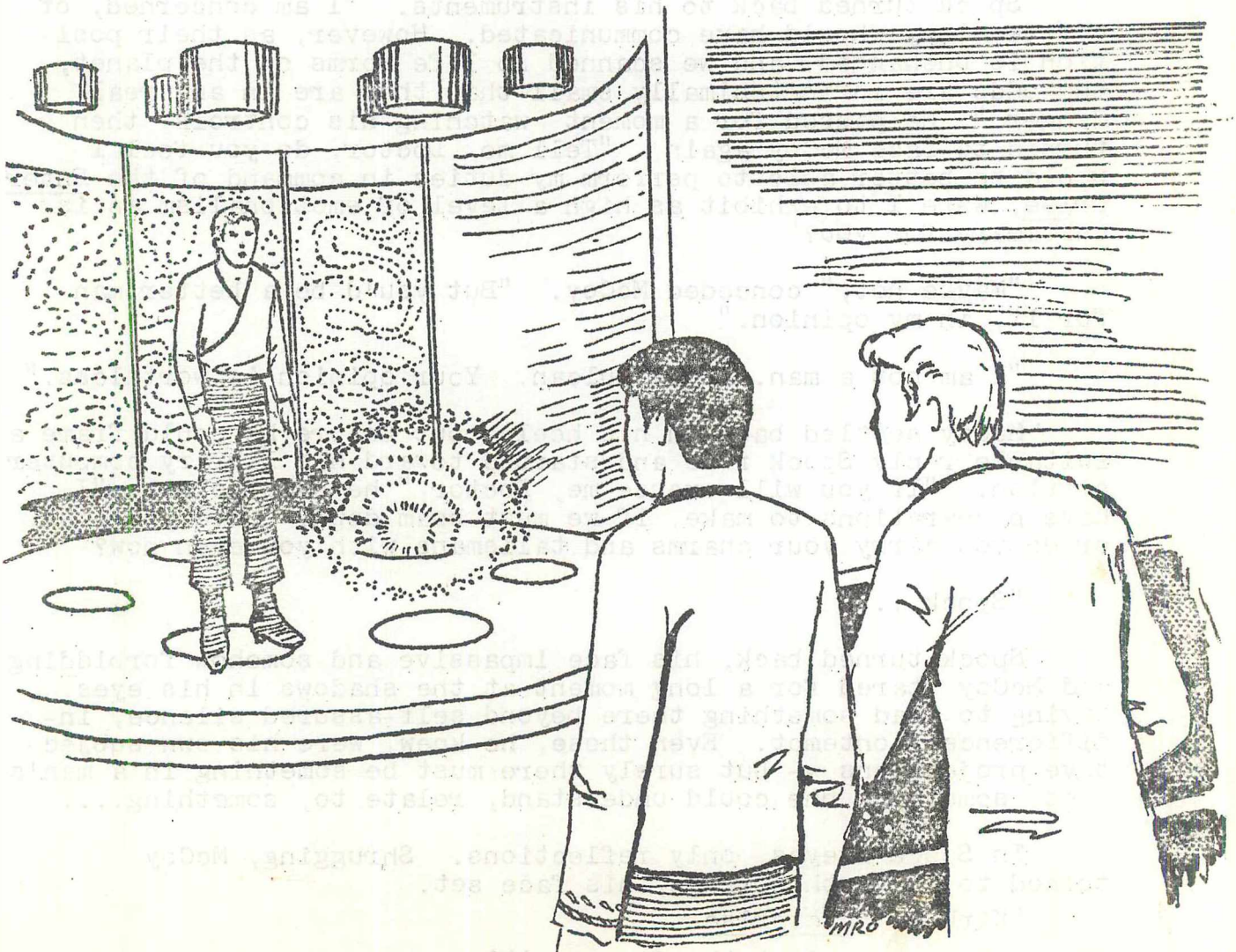
McCoy stopped at the door, waiting.

"Spock here, Captain. Are you all right?"

"Affirmative. Spock, we've found something -- some sort of life form, I think. They interfere with the communicators, and I had to get away from them to contact you. Beam me aboard; the others will stay to examine these things, and I'm bringing tricorder readings for the science department."

Spock glanced at Dr. McCoy but said nothing; just punched a button on the arm of the command chair and told the transport officer to beam up the captain.

McCoy left the bridge, grumbling, and headed for the transporter room. When he got there Kirk was just materializing, and McCoy broke off his grumbling to watch. "What the hell," he muttered, as Kirk shimmered into existence and stepped down from the platform.



"What's the matter now, Bones?" asked Kirk, turning to see what McCoy was staring at.

Behind him on one of the empty energy discs bounced a small, yellow, furry ball of light.

"One of the creatures from the planet?" asked Lt. Kyle from behind the transport desk.

"Yes," said Kirk. "Send it back, Lieutenant -- "

But before Kyle reached the controls, the thing bounced off the platform after the captain.

"I think it likes you, Jim," grinned McCoy.

"Don't just stand there " ordered Kirk. "Help me get it back up on the platform."

"Gladly," said McCoy. "How?"

Kirk shrugged impatiently. "I don't know " he said helplessly. "Shoo. Git. Go on," he instructed the light, waving his arms threateningly. It bounced away silently, paused, and returned, settling at his feet like a soap bubble.

After several moments' fruitless coaxing and threatening, with the help of two security guards Kirk called in, they gave up. The alien simply would not approach the transport platform; at a certain distance, it stopped and, if possible, retreated to Kirk's feet to huddle forlornly.

"I feel like somebody's wicked stepmother," said Kirk, leaning against the transport desk. "I'd swear the thing's shivering."

"Maybe we hurt its feelings," suggested Kyle.

"Anyone have any constructive suggestions?" asked Kirk, but no one had.

"Bridge to transporter room," said the intercom.

"Transporter room, Lt. Kyle here."

"Is the captain aboard?" demanded Spock, not quite indifferently.

"Here, Spock," said Kirk. "One of the aliens followed me aboard, and we can't get rid of it." He stared absently at the thing at his feet for a moment, then straightened, looking specu-

latively at the intercom speaker. "Spock," he said, and hesitated. "Spock, we can't seem to communicate with these things. They can't make sounds, which is not unreasonable, considering their form, and we don't know what they do instead."

"What is their form, Captain?" asked Spock. "I had no readings of any life forms on this planet."

"They're not like any form of life previously encountered," said Kirk. "They look like...well, like balls of light. No solid form. I put my hand right through this one, trying to chase it up on the transport platform, and it didn't seem to affect either of us."

On the bridge, Spock rose to stand beside the command chair, well aware of Kirk's unspoken request. "Mind meld requires physical contact," he said, "but I will attempt it."

"Good," said Kirk.

"Mr. Scott, I leave you in command," said Spock already on his way to the elevator.

"Acknowledged," said Scotty, leaving his engineering console to take the command chair.

Switching off the intercom, Kirk turned his back to the transport desk and leaned against it, watching the light bubble. "Friendly," he said, "is one thing, but this is overdoing it."

"Maybe it's adopted you," grinned McCoy

"It isn't funny, Bones," objected Kirk. "We don't know anything about these things. They seem harmless, but so do Merriweather Frogs, to look at." Behind McCoy, one of the security guards shuffled and fingered his phaser, tense with the remembered pain of a Frog sting. "I don't like having this thing on my ship," finished Kirk, edging one foot away from it as he, too, remembered past acquaintance with Merriweather Frogs.

"Looks like we're stuck with it, for the time being, anyway," said McCoy.

"Maybe Spock can get through to it," said Kirk. "If he can't I don't know what we'll do - rig up some butterfly nets, maybe."

"Give Scotty enough time, and he could rig up some kind of trap for it," suggested McCoy.

"I don't want to take the time," said Kirk. "I want this thing off my ship. Maybe it's perfectly harmless -- but, until I'm sure of that, I want it off my ship."

"We could try to stun it," began one of the security guards.

Kirk glanced at him. "No good," he said. "Ensign Berkeley panicked, when we first encountered them. Hit this thing with a phaser beam, and all that happens is it'll look brighter for a while. And bigger."

When Spock arrived, the alien at Kirk's feet hunched defensively and slid a little to one side, so it appeared to be peering around Kirk's leg at the door.

"Fascinating," said Spock, approaching the captain. The light slid cautiously away, further behind Kirk's leg.

Silently Spock settled down on his heels at the captain's feet and reached one hand slowly toward the alien. "Everyone please remain stationary," he said as McCoy moved to lean against the wall.

"Did you remember your charms and talismans?" asked McCoy acidly.

"Vulcan mind-meld," said Spock without looking up, "is a logical and scientific practice."

"So was medicine, last I heard," said McCoy.

"I must request silence," said Spock.

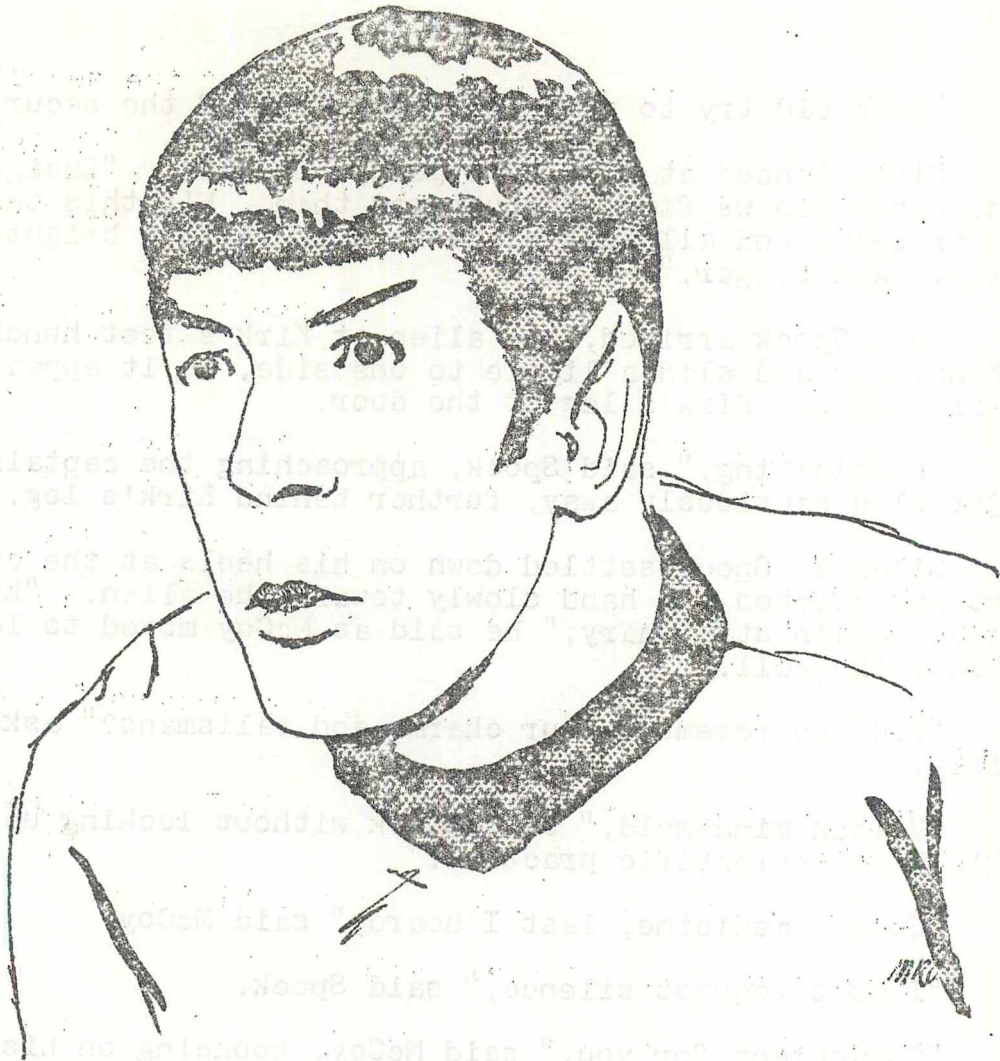
"Convenient for you," said McCoy, bouncing on his toes again.

"Will you two cut it out?" demanded Kirk.

Silently Spock stretched both hands out over the alien and closed his eyes. For a long moment nothing happened.

Then, slowly, the creature edged its way from behind Kirk's leg and flowed cautiously over his feet toward Spock, stopping in the air on a level with his face. It rested there, shivering.

Suddenly it dimmed, and Spock's eyes flew open, infinitely surprised. "Be careful," he said, but it was too late. The light-bubble disappeared, and Spock, with a strangely human look of bewilderment, collapsed.



* * *

"Jim, sit down," said Dr. McCoy. "You've walked miles back and forth across this room, and, if you're not tired, I am."

Captain Kirk stopped pacing and stood at the foot of Spock's bed in sickbay, watching Spock's face. "I shouldn't have let him do it," he said. "If anything -- "

"Wait a minute," said McCoy. "He's coming out of it."

Kirk walked around the bed anxiously, and Spock opened his eyes to stare directly up at the captain's face without a flicker of recognition. "Spock?" asked Kirk. "Are you all right? What happened?"

"Vandor lo plom'k," remarked Spock conversationally.

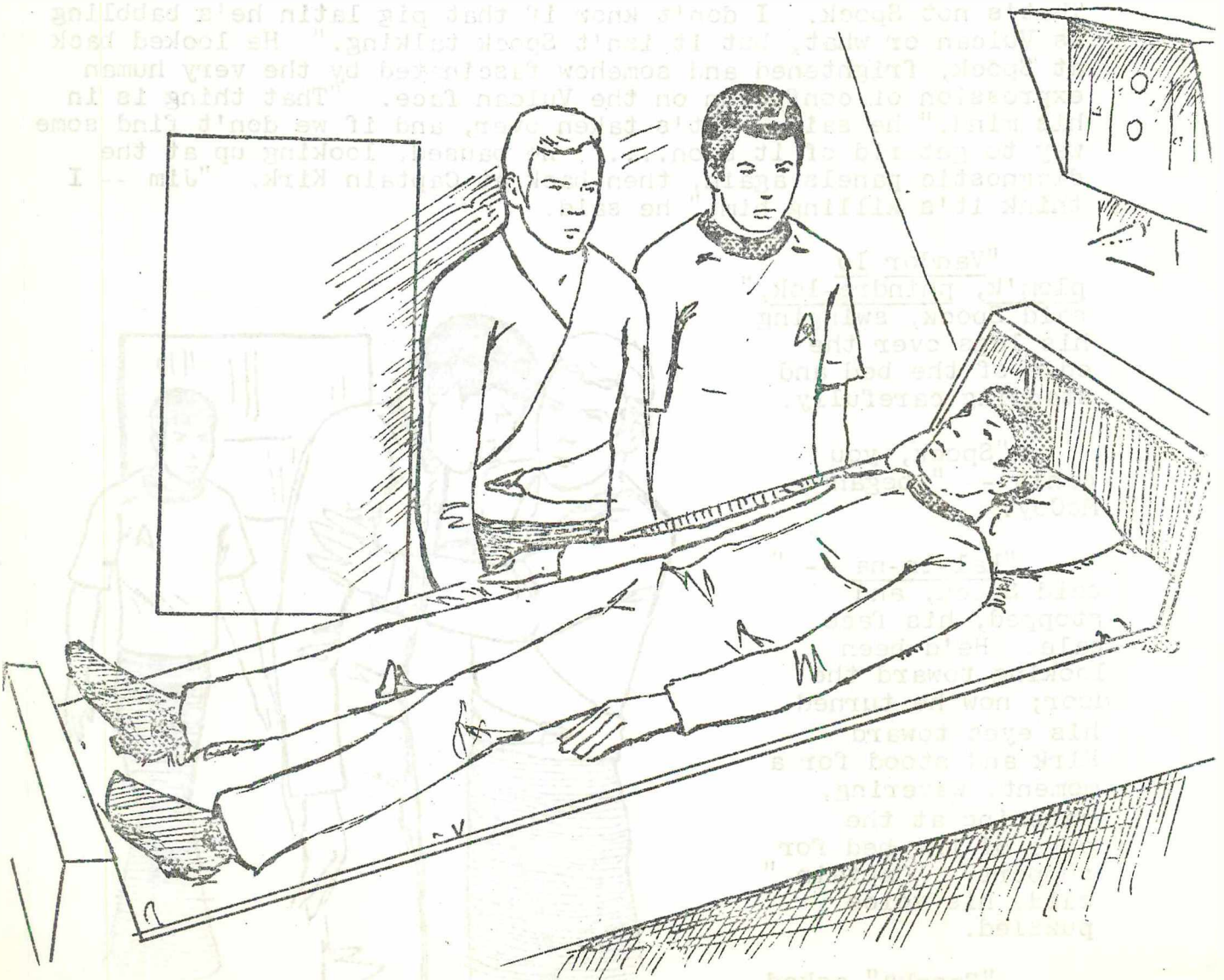
"Vulcan?" asked McCoy, looking across Spock to Captain Kirk.

"Sounds like," agreed Kirk. "Spock, are you all right? Can you hear me?"

"Phindre," commented Spock, smiling slightly.

"Spock, what's the matter with you?"

His smile fading, Spock stared at the captain. "Vandor," he said. "Ekathim-ut-fen-1?"



"Spock," said Kirk, "I can't understand you. Speak English, will you?"

Still staring at the captain, Spock sat up. "Lindop," he said. "Ekreck?" When the captain didn't respond, Spock turned worriedly to the doctor, his frown deepening when he saw that neither of them understood. "Phindre," he said mournfully.

"Bones, what's wrong with him?" demanded Kirk.

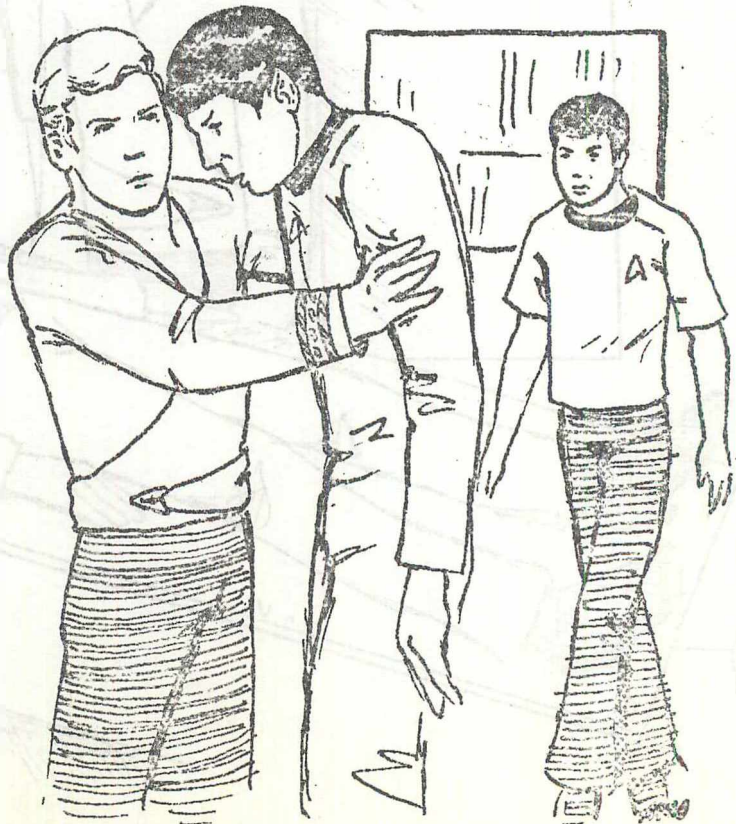
McCoy was watching the diagnostic panel above the bed. "I'm not sure, Jim. That...whatever it is...fouls up my instruments the way it did your communicators. I don't think we could even get a translator-machine to work in here. But I know one thing. That's not Spock. I don't know if that pig latin he's babbling is Vulcan or what, but it isn't Spock talking." He looked back at Spock, frightened and somehow fascinated by the very human expression of confusion on the Vulcan face. "That thing is in his mind," he said. "It's taken over, and if we don't find some way to get rid of it soon...." He paused, looking up at the diagnostic panels again, then back at Captain Kirk. "Jim -- I think it's killing him," he said.

"Vandor lo plom'k, phindre-lok," said Spock, swinging his legs over the edge of the bed and standing carefully.

"Spock, you can't -- " began McCoy.

"Kal-in-na -- " said Spock, and stopped, his face pale. He'd been looking toward the door; now he turned his eyes toward Kirk and stood for a moment, wavering, catching at the edge of the bed for support. "Captain," said, his voice puzzled.

"Spock?" asked Kirk.



"Captain, I cannot...." Suddenly his face twisted in pain, and he would have fallen if Kirk hadn't caught him. "Captain," he said, as they helped him back on the bed. "I cannot.... Illogical...." Desperately he fought against the alien, struggling for supremacy, horribly aware of Kirk and McCoy watching his lack of composure. "I cannot...I must go...It is... Illogical...I must...." In spite of himself, he closed his eyes, and couldn't open them again. "The sun," he said desperately. "I must...."

Very suddenly the tension left his face, leaving only bewilderment and pain. "Phindre lok," he said plaintively, and released his grip on the doctor's arm.

McCoy stepped back, rubbing his arm, watching the diagnostic panel.

"Bones, how long do you...." Kirk paused, looking at McCoy, unwilling to finish the question.

"Maybe a couple of days," said McCoy. "Maybe a couple of weeks. He's fighting it, but I don't even know if that's helpful or harmful. I don't know anything about it -- bad enough, if he were human, but -- "

"But he's not," interrupted Kirk. He stood for a moment, watching Spock, then turned to leave. "Do what you can, Bones," he said.

"That'll be little enough, grumbled McCoy. "I don't know how he stays alive under the best of circumstances, with his metabolism -- My training didn't prepare me to deal with walking, talking computers with green slime for blood, much less any of the other absurdities of a Vulcan's internal -- "

"Bones," interrupted Kirk.

"All right," said McCoy. "I know. 'Do what you can.' What did you think I'd do, walk off and forget him? But somebody'd better find out more about those damned aliens, Jim, because I really don't know if I can do enough."

*

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Captain Kirk was resting in his quarters, making a personal log entry, when Dr. McCoy called him.

"Kirk here," said the captain, switching off his log recorder.

"This is McCoy," said the doctor. "I'm in sickbay, Jim -- but Spock isn't!"

"What!"

"I just went out for a minute, and when I got back he was gone."

"I'll be right there," said Kirk, but before he could get up, the intercom signaled again. "Kirk here," he said impatiently.

"Sulu on the bridge, sir. Someone's in the hangar deck, opening the bay doors!"

"Over-ride it."

"It's too late, sir. One of the shuttlecraft is on its way out. It's shielded, so we can't use a tractor beam, either. There's just one person aboard.... Sir! It's Mr. Spock!"

"I'll be right there. Signal sickbay; tell Bones I'm on the bridge."

But when he got to the bridge there was nothing he could do. He tried to communicate with the shuttlecraft, but got no response, and as long as the craft had its shield up they couldn't use tractor beams to get it back aboard, or the transporter to recover its passenger. All they could do was watch.

"Sickbay to bridge."

Kirk closed his eyes. "Kirk here," he said.

"Jim, what's happening? Have you found Spock?"

"I've found him." He opened his eyes, staring at the view-screen. "He's taken a shuttlecraft, with the shield up so there's no way to stop him."

"Any idea where he's headed?"

"He's on a direct collision course with the sun."

McCoy stared at the intercom speaker in confusion. "The sun?" he said. "But, what the.... Have you tried to contact him?"

"He doesn't answer," said Kirk.

"How long before contact?"

The craft will touch the sun's ionosphere in 52 hours. The life-support systems will have burned out sometime before, of course. We'll follow as long as we can, but that's all we can do."

Spock, on his way to the sun. Was it entirely the alien's idea, or could Spock stop it if he wanted? Was it a death of Spock's choosing? If he could choose, thought McCoy, he'd choose this. A fiery death in an unfamiliar star half the galaxy away from his home worlds and his birth.... But did he choose it?

If he did, then damn him and welcome to it, he added, turning to stare absent-mindedly at the bed Spock had vacated. It won't be the first time he's upset the Enterprise with his damned emotionless Vulcan ways, but maybe it'll be the last. You might know that even for dying he'd choose a way that would hurt us most, because we have emotions, and we've got to sit here and watch and can't do anything....

But he wouldn't think of that, damn him.

"But why did he do it?" demanded Kirk. His voice brought McCoy to himself with a start; he'd forgotten the intercom connection was still open.

"God knows," muttered McCoy. "Or maybe Spock."

"That thing must have control of him, but why would it want to kill him? And itself? It's illogical. Bones, get the medical department on the information we've got about those aliens. We've got to find an answer while there's still time."

"Illogical," repeated McCoy.

"What?"

"Nothing," said McCoy, shaking his head. "Only, I guess you're right, it can't be Spock's idea. Killing himself would be illogical. Unless he considered himself in some way a threat to the ship, because of the alien. I wish we knew what he was talking about earlier when he was babbling pig latin."

"Maybe we can find out," said Kirk. "Let me know if you come up with anything, Bones. Kirk out."

Kirk stared at the viewscreen for a moment, watching the rapidly receding shadow against the brightening sun. Very soon they'd be unable to watch him any longer; the sun would become too bright for the viewscreen to handle, and they'd be able to follow him only by sensor readings.

"Get me a tie-in with the computer, Lt. Uhura," he said, forcing himself to look away from the viewscreen.

"Done, sir," said Uhura.

"Computer," said Kirk. "Is there any member of the Enterprise personnel who speaks Vulcan on board?"

"Working.... Negative."

Kirk tapped his fingers on the arm of the command chair, his eyes closed.

"Maybe there's someone near enough to reach by sub-space radio?" volunteered Sulu.

"It's an off chance," agreed Kirk. "Computer, where is the nearest human -- correct that; the nearest sentient being who speaks Vulcan?"

"Working.... The nearest humanoid is Commander Spock," replied the computer. Kirk stifled an un-commandatorial moan of frustration. "The nearest sentient being," went on the computer, "is this computer. Commander Spock has programmed me for the purpose of --"

"You -- Stop!" gasped Kirk. "You speak Vulcan?"

"Affirmative."

"Computer," said Kirk, "I could grow to love you."

"Sir?"

"Strike that," grinned Kirk. "Contact Commander Spock, in Vulcan, on the shuttlecraft, and put it on the audio; if he responds, I'll give you further instructions."

"Working.... Connection made."

"Uhura," said Kirk, as the computer began to spout paragraphs of unintelligible sounds, "call Dr. McCoy to the bridge. If Spock does answer, I want Bones here. And tell him to bring some headache pills."

"Yes, sir," said Uhura, reluctantly turning her back on the viewscreen, where Spock's craft had become a barely discernible dot on the face of the ever-brightening sun. Just as she turned, the viewscreen dimmed another level to compensate for the light intensity, and the shuttlecraft disappeared.

"Sa hal," said Spock's voice.

"Computer!" snapped Kirk. "Translate!"

"It is real," said the computer.

"...Van las elu..." said Spock.

"Into sight of the sun," repeated the computer.

"...mo si lat ma nai...e la hai?...dre...varan..." said Spock.

"...Has just sung on me...Are you there? ...he...(was?)... poet," translated the computer. "The message is garbled, due to malfunction of the communication unit on the shuttlecraft."

"Tell him to come back," said Kirk.

The computer gave the order in Vulcan, waited a moment, and repeated it.

"Van las elu," repeated Spock.

"Into sight of the sun," translated the computer.

"Tell him to stop," said Kirk.

"Kroyka!" ordered the computer. "Spock, Kroyka!"

There was a very long pause, during which McCoy arrived and started to speak, but Kirk gestured him to wait. At last, much weaker than before, Spock replied, his voice hoarse with the effort. "Cannot," he said. "Captain...e la hai?"

"Spock! Can you hear me? Spock, stop! Kroyka! That's an order, dammit, come back!"

"I vande las elu...sa hal, sa las...."

"Spock, can you understand me? Why -- "

"Not..." interrupted Spock. "Spock. Fraen, sa toren. I van las elu, keroq."

"Fraen leads," interpreted the computer. "We go into the sun for life. Keroq is a word of the Old Tongue; hence its meaning is ambiguous. I translate it as life, but there are other --"

"For life!" interrupted the captain.

"Phindre," said Spock tiredly.

"Spock, don't give up!" demanded McCoy. "Fight it! You've still got a chance, but you've got to regain control -- "

"Sa hal," interrupted Spock, suddenly laughing. "Keroq. Van las elu."

At the sound of his laughter, McCoy turned away, his eyes tight shut against the image of Spock's death, and Kirk sat down again listlessly. "Don't give up," he said quietly. "Don't give up, Spock...." But his only answer was laughter.

"Captain," began Lt. Uhura.

"Computer," said Kirk. "Turn it off." He sat for a moment, forcing himself to relax, to think clearly. "Computer," he said at last. "Maintain contact with Spock. Tell him to come back. Or to lower his shield. Tell him to fight that thing...I don't care. Tell him anything, but get him back here."

It was too ambiguous an order, he knew, but he couldn't think anymore; not with Spock's laughter echoing in his ears.

"Working...Advise against instruction to lower shield. At his present acceleration he will be too near the sun in exactly ...working..."

"Stop," said Kirk. "I don't want to know how soon. Strike the order to lower his shield. Instruct him to return, or to establish contact with the Enterprise in English and return..."

"Here're your headache pills, Jim," said McCoy.

"Thanks, Bones," said Kirk, swallowing the pills and closing his eyes.

"He's cut his engines," said Sulu. "But he's not stopping. He'll still move toward the sun, unless he reverses power."

"So it'll take a little longer," said Kirk hopelessly.

"Jim," began McCoy.

"No, Bones," he said. "Don't tell me. I know. It wasn't my fault, and it doesn't matter whose fault it was, and I shouldn't give up hope, and...." He opened his eyes and tried very hard to focus on the instrument panel before him. "And... what?..." Anything. Anything, to escape the echo of that laughter. To escape the image of Spock alone in the shuttlecraft on the way to such an awful death. "Bones, what were those pills?"

McCoy bounced on his toes innocently. "A headache pill," he said. "Isn't that what you wanted?"

"And the other?"

He shrugged. "A tranquilizer. You needed it, Jim."

Very slowly, Kirk smiled. "I guess you're right," he said. "One of these days, Bones! Spock's been -- " His voice broke as he realized what he was saying, but he forced himself to finish it. "Right about you...all along. You're a quack...." He gave it up and began rubbing his forehead.

"Jim," said McCoy. "Stop worrying. He'll get out of it, somehow, and you know it. He's too damned stubborn to die."

"It would be illogical," agreed Kirk, attempting a smile which failed miserably.

"Exactly," said McCoy. "He's still got two days to work something out. Have you ever known Spock to take that long to solve a problem?"

"No," said Kirk. "But then, I've never seen him faced with a problem like this." Suddenly, realizing the presence of several crew members on the bridge, and the example he must set for them, Kirk straightened in his chair and forced his eyes to focus on the control panel before him. "I'll be all right, Bones," he said firmly. "I'll let you know if anything new develops. Meanwhile, you'd better get back down to the lab and see if you can find out anything about those aliens. I want an answer within 24 hours. Is that clear?"

Yes, sir!" said McCoy in relief.

"And, Bones," said Kirk, as McCoy started for the elevator.

"Yes?" asked McCoy, turning to look back.

"Thanks."

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But they found no answer in time. At the end of 30 hours, communication with the shuttlecraft was almost impossible because of its proximity to the sun. In that time Spock had said nothing that did them any good; only repeated scraps of what seemed to be poetry about the sun. Twice he managed to gain sufficient control to speak English, but even then he could say nothing useful, though at one point he came as close as a Vulcan could to apologizing.

The periods during which he was able to speak English were extremely short, and he had no time to try to reverse his course, even if he was physically able. Nor would it have made any difference, since as soon as the alien regained control of him it would have caused him to turn back toward the sun.

They could no longer follow him in the Enterprise; he was much nearer the sun than they dared to go, and, by then, even if he could have lowered the craft's shield, he was so near he would have been dead before they could have beamed him aboard. All they could do was follow his course with sensor probes, and the whole ship was tense with waiting.

Captain Kirk sat in the command chair, his back stiff and his face set in what he desperately hoped was a neutral expression. One more thing Spock could have taught him, if....

"Captain!" It was Lt. Uhura, who was following Spock's course on the sensors.

"What is it?" asked Kirk, his voice hoarse. It could only be one thing. In a way, it would be a relief; at least the waiting would be over.

"Captain, he's fired his engines!"

"It's in a hurry," he said bitterly. Set an example, he thought, and squared his shoulders. "Computer connection," he demanded.

"Done, sir," said Uhura.

"Computer, how long -- "

"He's changed course!" exclaimed Uhura. "But -- he's too close. He's not even trying to reverse. He's changed the angle, but he's still too close."

"No," exclaimed Kirk, "not reverse, Lieutenant. He's trying to go around. But he can't make it. The necessary acceleration would be impossible. We've got to help him! But how?" He didn't realize he'd asked the question aloud until the computer answered.

"Working..."

"I didn't mean -- " began Kirk, but the computer interrupted.

"Change course to galactic polar co-ordinates 7 mark 4, warp 2.3. Ready transporter beam, co-ordinates 1-3-4, 0-6-1, 7-3-5. Energize exactly 942 standard seconds from this tone: Bleep."

"What?"

"Change course to galactic polar co ordinates -- "

"Stop. I heard you. But -- "

"Change course to glactic polar -- "

Kirk punched a button on the arm of the command chair. "Sulu, implement course change," he said. "Transporter room, ready transporter beam, co-ordinates 1-3-4, 0-6-1, 7-3-5. Energize on the computer's instruction. Computer, repeat revised second count."

Energize exactly 897 standard seconds from this tone: Bleep."

"Transporter room ready," came the reply, and Kirk broke the connection. "Now," he said. "Computer. What are we transporting aboard?" Because he wanted to be certain before allowing himself to be pleased.

"Humanoid," said the computer. "Name and rank, Lt. Commander Spock, First Officer -- "

He didn't hear the rest of the computer's reply. He knew the rest of it.

"His engines are dead," said Uhura. "He must have run out of fuel. Captain, what's he doing? Is there something wrong with the computer?"

"I don't think so," said Kirk, trying to keep his voice steady. "I -- " He broke off, because what he had been about to say was not the sort of thing a captain ought to say to a crew member. "Computer," he said instead, "upon what do you base the supposition that Mr. Spock will be at the given co-ordinates at the given time?"

"Working...He has entered hyperbolic orbit around the sun. It will take him the stated length of time to reach the given point, which is the first point at which he will be distant enough to safely lower the shield of the shuttlecraft, and at which the Enterprise will be within beaming distance. The assumption is made that the shuttlecraft will survive the gravitational pull and radiation from the sun to this point, because the stress is only .08% beyond terminal design allowance, although it rapidly increases beyond the given co-ordinates because any gravity stress damage sustained on the pass will exponentially increase as time and distance increase and -- "

"Stop," said Kirk. "The rest I think I can figure out for myself. Lt. Uhura, call Dr. McCoy. Tell him to meet me in the transporter room in five minutes."

"Yes, sir," she said, and turned to call Dr. McCoy.

Less than 15 minutes later, Mr. Spock was safely tucked back in bed in sick bay, though he insisted he was quite well, thank you.

"Fine," said Dr. McCoy. "Then it won't hurt you a bit if I examine you, and, if you're really quite well, you'll be back at your post in no time." He frowned at the diagnostic panel.

Captain Kirk stood at the foot of the bed, watching Spock and grinning like a fool. "What was that all about, anyway?" he asked.

"The being which unintentionally merged with me was at the time on his way to his sun," explained Spock. "He was quite puzzled by my presence, but unwilling to let it delay him, and unable to understand my danger. For him the journey was one of rejuvenation: the creatures are born of their sun, are composed of its energy, and return to it at given times to merge with it in an almost religious ceremony of life giving and taking.

"When we came near enough the sun to cause me physical discomfort, the creature became aware that I could not merge with the sun; at the same time, its attraction to the sun became sufficient for it to be able to leave me, and I promptly changed course and accelerated with the last of the fuel, in an attempt to achieve a hyperbolic orbit." He closed his eyes, and Kirk noticed for the first time the pallor of his face.

"That's about what the computer told us," said Kirk. "We very nearly didn't get there in time, you know; the shuttlecraft broke up just behind you."

"Mr. Spock," said Dr. McCoy, "as it happens, you're not 'quite well, thank you'." Catching Kirk's anxious look, he smiled slightly and shrugged. "Just exhaustion," he said, "but he'd going to stay in bed for a few days."

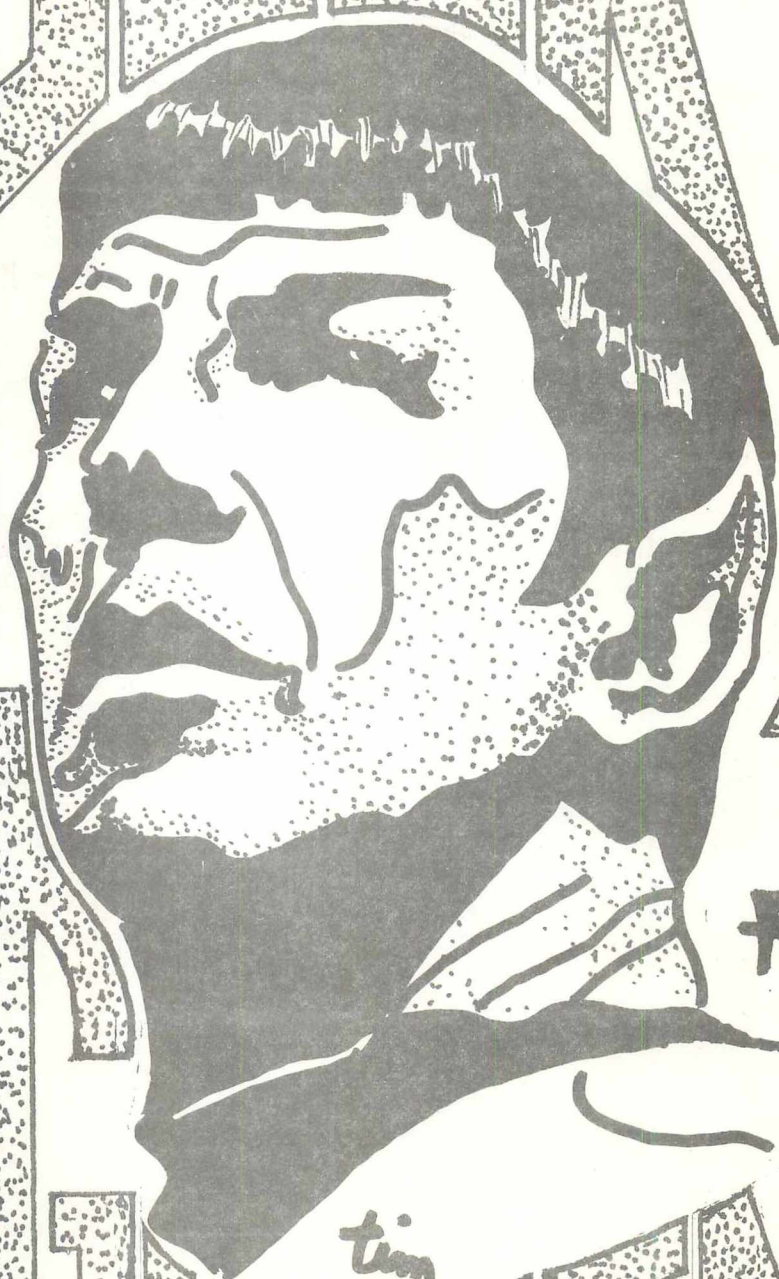
"Doctor," began Spock.

"That's final, Mr. Spock," said McCoy.

"What I wonder," said Kirk, "is how the computer knew what you were doing?"

"It was the only logical alternative," said Spock, pushing himself up on his elbows to glare at Dr. McCoy. "Doctor, I am really quite...well...." His elbows slid out from under him, and he began to snore faintly.

SPUNK'S ART VOLUMEN



PART TWO

SPOCK'S ARGUMENT, Part II, by Jacqueline Lichtenberg

"And the leadership is hereditary?" said Kirk.

"Correct."

"Then how can anyone challenge T'Urianne's right to it?"

"Her father also has a son. If he can demonstrate superior competence, he will succeed to her position. Such an argument will be the only permitted public debate at that time."

"How can you be sure that he doesn't share her attitude?"

A shadow of Spockian amusement colored his expression as he answered, "Captain, I believe I am familiar enough with my own opinions to make such an evaluation with absolute certainty."

It took one very long moment for the implication of that to sink in. Then Kirk said, "I didn't know you had a sister?"

"A Half sister, Captain. My father's daughter by his first wife. She left the family when my father remarried. We've never met, but when my father was declared legally dead she automatically succeeded him, and of course she retains the position."

Kirk was stunned. A 30-odd...nearly 40-year family estrangement...and from what the captain knew of Sarek, he'd wager a year's pay he'd never exchanged a word with his daughter in all that time. Undoubtedly she'd objected to Amanda. And she was in a position to destroy the pan-species solidarity of the Federation. Could a Vulcan do something like that simply because she disapproved of her stepmother? It hardly seemed likely.

Kirk sat down heavily in his chair and looked up at the impassive Vulcan. And you propose to impeach her on competency charges?"

Spock blinked assent. "Because I believe she made an error in overlooking the long range effect on the Logic Element of Surak's Construct. To prove the charge I must demonstrate the error. The only way I can see to do that is to present T'Rruel's Motek in its entirety. Such a Council Session will be viewed in every home on Vulcan. But it can take place only the day before the scheduled vote...the day we arrive."

Kirk shifted his attention to the girl who'd remained poised but at ease, feet slightly apart, hands behind her back. "Tanya, do you think you can do it?"

She said calmly, "I estimate a ninety two point -- "

"Never mind." Kirk held up one hand and turned back to his First Officer. "Mr. Spock, you can tell Scotty to fabricate whatever hardware you'll need. Commandeer whatever space you need."

The two turned to go, and Kirk added, rising, "Oh, and Spock..."

"Yes, sir?"

"Good luck...to both of you."

"Thank you, sir," said Spock evenly.

As the door closed behind them, Kirk saw Tanya's expression. Long association with a Vulcan had taught Kirk to know that look, and he pitied Spock the long explanations she would exact. Fleetingly, he regretted that impulsive "Good luck." But then he thought better of it. They were two of a kind. In fact, Kirk was willing to bet a month's pay that Spock's report on the children's story would be on his desk by morning in spite of any long explanations.

And it was. The Trantu had been carrying a group of Vulcan spice merchants and their families to establish an agricultural station on an otherwise useless desert planet. Vulcan Space Central would undoubtedly have all the other details on the Trantu he'd need to complete his log. The log the new Enterprise didn't have a single incomplete or unsatisfactory entry. In fact, any captain would be proud of it. But Kirk was getting restless. He'd become accustomed to the wild adventures and hair-raising mysteries of the last few years.

However, Scotty was still enjoying the quiet, smooth efficiency they'd experienced during the last few months. The new Enterprise had rooms full of new gadgetry for him to work with, and nothing had happened yet to blow his circuits or ruin his crystals or modify his machinery to some alien's specifications. Everything was in mint condition and sounded like it. It left him with precious little to do, but he hadn't yet begun to chafe.

Nevertheless, when Spock came into Engineering looking like work, Scotty perked right up. "Would you be needing something, Mr. Spock?"

"I need some items fabricated from a special alloy."

"Do ye now? Right this way." Scotty almost strutted across the room to the corridor. "Mr. Perkins can build any solid solution, alloy or cryocrystal soup, if you just give him the recipe. He knows his metals, that laddy!"

Scotty led the way down the hall to the gleaming, spacious crystallurgy lab that had the orderly look symptomatic of either lack of work or an impending Admiral's Inspection. The lanky young man who rose from the desk was new to Spock, and, after introductions, Spock presented his problem with painstaking attention to detail.

Perkins ran a bony hand through his ash-blond hair and rubbed one bushy eyebrow with a callused forefinger. Then he took his courage in his hands, gulped down his prominent adam's apple, and interrupted the First Officer. "Uh, Mr. Spock...if I follow you accurately, you're describing the alloy used to activate tokiel sensors...?"

Spock blinked and raised both eyebrows. Perkins shot Scotty a glance that said, "Did I put my foot in it?" Scotty just stood by the door, arms crossed over his chest, wearing his most inscrutable expression.

Spock said, "Correct, Mr. Perkins. You are familiar with the preparation?"

Perkins swallowed again. "Yes, sir."

"Very good, then." Spock pulled a blank clipboard across the desk. "This is the list of items I'll want fabricated." He began to write on the crystallurgy lab's work-order form, with Perkins watching. As the columns of dimensions grew, Scotty could see that Perkins was ahead of the Vulcan again, and the corners of his eyes crinkled in anticipation.

Finally Perkins interrupted. "Sir, you'll want a full set of leads from finger bands to anklets?"

Again Spock eyed the young human evenly. "Correct, Lieutenant."

"Who's it for? Couldn't I get the sizes from Personnel?"

Spock blinked once and turned back to the order form to write across the top, Lt. Tanya Minos. "You may complete the form at your leisure, Lieutenant. Send it through channels; the captain will initial it." He straightened. "Let me know if you have any difficulties, and call me when you've finished."

With that Spock left the lab with Scotty close on his heels. "You see, Mr. Spock. I told you the lad was good!"

Scotty was as proud as if Perkins were his very own invention. But Spock marched down the hall toward the turbolift, scarcely glancing at the Chief Engineer. "Merely adequately informed, Mr. Scott."

At the engine room Scotty peeled off to check on his crew, making a mental note to soothe Perkins' feelings and explain the Vulcan's abruptness. A lad like that deserved a pat on the back.

During the next week Spock worked out a schedule that left T'Aniyeh with a bare five hours' sleep a day. It was a grueling routine, but they'd done the like before, when T'Aniyeh had tutored Spock for his sortie into Romulan territory.

Daily, T'Aniyeh would wake the children up and get them breakfasted, dressed and drilled. Then Spock would take over for lessons while T'Aniyeh went to the gym to practice the previous day's material and look over the new sequence Spock had recorded. During the children's study period, Spock and T'Aniyeh would go over the new material. While she fed the infants, he conducted the afternoon exercises. After the evening meal, Spock would put them to bed while she would go back to the gym. Later, he'd join her, and they'd work through the day's material and then spend the last hour in a total review of the composition.

After four weeks of this, Tanya had lost seven pounds she couldn't afford to lose, and dark circles rimmed her bloodshot eyes. McCoy was exerting enormous self-control in refraining from offering comments only because Kirk had pled the urgency of the situation. And they'd both seen Tanya's nearly limitless vitality. But on that occasion the routine had involved the tedium of sustained intellectual effort, not a daily physical exertion to the point of collapse.

One night, just before midnight, two weeks out of Vulcan, T'Aniyeh and Spock were completing their intensive study of the last section of the composition. T'Aniyeh had executed the entire sequence several times, and each time a different error crept in.

Spock was standing in front of the improvised platform, arms folded, head cocked critically. "Try it again, T'Aniyeh, this time from the quantifiers."



She nodded, took her position, and began the intricate movements again. Then she circled the edge of the platform, gathering the threads of the argument into the conclusion. She was slowly spiralling toward the center when she suddenly lost her balance and fell sprawling across the stage with a resounding thump.

Spock reached her in two enormous bounds, but was too late to break her fall. He knelt beside her, grasping her shoulders. "Damage?" he snapped in Low Vulcan.

"Negative." She sat up but made no move to rise.

Still squatting beside her, hands on his knees, Spock reprimanded, "You must be more careful. A fall in this gravity can be dangerous for human bones."

She met his eyes, nodding. "Yes...." Then she crumpled and turned away, burying her face in her hands. "Oh, Spock, I can't do it! I'm not good enough! It's no use...." She choked back sobs of despair, overwhelmed.

Spock sat for a moment observing the heaving shoulders, marshalling his inner defenses against the torrential flood of emotion. But he soon discovered he had no defense short of severing the tie between them. Bewildered, he said, "But, T'Aniyeh, we've finished. You know it all now."

"But I'll never be able to get through it all without a mistake! What if I fall like that with all Vulcan watching?"

Shaking his head, he shrugged. "Then you'll pick yourself up and go on from where you left off."

Her sobs became uncontrollable hysterics. Spock rose and went to the pile of things in the corner of the gym cubby to find a towel. He brought it to her and waited while she wiped her face. In all the weeks they'd struggled together, she'd never once complained, never once shown any emotion. He'd almost forgotten she was human.

When she seemed to have regained control, he bent to raise her to her feet and capture her gaze. "Dress," he commanded gently. "We'll stop for tonight and finish off that prookle you saved. You're tired. You'll sleep and rest tomorrow. There's no hurry now; you've done splendidly, and we still have two weeks to perfect and polish."

The mixture of gentle encouragement, optimism, and praise raised her spirits. She said, "You're becoming a fair human psychologist, Spock."

Spock allowed a smile to quirk one corner of his mouth. "Quiet!" he commanded in mock severity. "If the admiralty finds out, they'll promote me."

For a moment Tanya just stared up at Spock's face. Then she broke up laughing, held on her feet by the strong arms of the impassive Vulcan. It was just the medicine she needed, and, later, as she composed herself for the disciplined Vulcan sleep, she allowed the amusement to burble about within her. She knew that, unlike his colleagues, Spock considered promotion a disaster. She suspected that the only reason he didn't have his own ship already was that he never let on just how well he understood humans.

The next day, Spock handled the children alone. He'd ordered T'Aniyeh to sleep, and she did, rousing only for meals and necessities. The Vulcan disciplines included not only how to work but also how to rest. Somehow, Spock found time during the day to draft a message, and, after he'd gotten the children to sleep, he went up to the bridge for the first time in weeks.

Surprisingly, Uhura was on duty. She winced as the doors swished open with a high-pitched screech and turned to see who'd entered. Spock glanced behind him to watch the doors close and said, "I thought the captain had that fixed?"

"He did. Three times. It started again this afternoon."

Spock nodded thoughtfully and then handed her his tape. "This one you can send by squirt, Lieutenant. But I'll expect an official, signed confirmation in return."

She inserted the tape and glanced at the address. "Executive Assembly, Planetary Capitol, Vulcan. A confirmation would have to come from...uh...the Planetary President's office, correct?"

"Correct, Lieutenant." Assured she knew what to do, Spock turned to survey the bridge. Lt. Rorvix was in the command chair, and Lt. Hadley was at the helm. All else was quiet.

As he caught sight of the First Officer, Rorvix rose, but Spock motioned him back. "Carry on, Mr. Rorvix, I was just leaving."

But he took the long way out, via the library computer, pausing for a half hour to give the sensors a thorough calibration check. Satisfied finally, he toured the rest of the bridge and then headed for Engineering. He had a memo from Perkins that the hardware he'd ordered had been completed.

For the remaining two weeks, Spock canceled T'Aniyeh's daytime practice sessions, and they worked together only three hours a night. He'd installed the field generators under the practice platform, and she rehearsed with the metallic sensors all over her body to get the feel of the field's drag though they didn't even attempt to adjust color or tone register on their homemade platform. She'd have almost two hours' dress rehearsal on the Council Chamber's tokiel just before the Debate.

The circles disappeared from under her eyes, and she put on weight. As some of the blisters healed on her feet, the spring came back into her step, and she looked even healthier than when she'd come aboard.

Three days before their scheduled arrival, Spock took to haunting the bridge every spare moment, waiting for the confirmation of his Council Call. Somehow, he always found some excuse to be there. One night, he took a tool kit and dismantled the turbo-lift door and put it back together. It took him three hours, and when he tested it there was no squeak.

Uhura turned around and said, "Wonderful! Thank you, Mr. Spock." Then she spun back to her board alertly. When she removed the phone from her ear she faced around, awed. "It's your confirmation, Mr. Spock. From the Planetary President, personally."

Spock leaned over the plucked the cartridge from her board. "Thank you, Lieutenant." He hefted the toolbox and entered the lift.

Rorvix and Hadley turned to watch as the doors wooshed open even more quietly than they had on the old Enterprise. Somehow, nobody on the bridge could believe that screech would ever return.

Two days later the Enterprise assumed standard orbit about Vulcan. The Planetary Space Central gave them the parameters for a clear orbit and assigned them a communications spectrum slot.

Kirk was in the command chair, and Spock and T'Aniyeh were on his right. It was late afternoon, ship's time, and Uhura had just come on duty. Chekov and Sulu were at their stations, and McCoy came through the lift doors, a routine report on his clipboard for Kirk's signature.

As the doors closed behind him, McCoy swooped around in a circle to watch. No screech. He cocked his head with a little smile and went to Kirk to present his clipboard.

Uhura said, "Message for you, Captain. From the surface."

"Put it on the main screen, Lieutenant."

The semi circle of the planet's bulk vanished to be replaced by the head and shoulders of Amanda. "Captain Kirk, may you live long and prosper."

Kirk answered, "May you live long and prosper, Amanda. What can I do for you?"

"Sarek has asked me to invite you to our home to watch the Council Session. If Dr. McCoy is available, his presence is also desired."

Kirk glanced at McCoy, who nodded, and then he said to Amanda, "We'd be delighted."

"Good. Transmitting co-ordinates to beam-down point." She worked a control beyond the scanners' range. "It will be local noon here. We'll expect you."

"Spock is here. Would you like to say hello?"

Amanda nodded, and Uhura widened the scan for her. When Amanda's eyes met Spock's, she said something the translator couldn't handle.

Without change of expression, Spock said, "Yes, Mother."



Returning her attention to Kirk, Amanda said, "Thank you, Captain. End transmission."

As the image faded, Uhura announced, "I've got an official of the...uh...Bureau of Child Welfare?...on the other frequency, sir."

"Put him on the screen." When the man appeared Kirk said, "I'm Captain James T. Kirk of the U.S.S. Enterprise, and this is my First Officer, Mr. Spock."

The man raised his hand in salute. "May you live long and prosper, Captain...Spock. I understand that you have some children aboard who may fall under my jurisdiction?"

"That is correct," answered Kirk.

"Very well, then, if you and Spock will beam down with the children, we'll get the legal problems straightened out."

"Ah...." Kirk objected with one hand as the Vulcan was about to cut transmission. "As I'm sure you're aware, Spock has other commitments of an immediate nature...."

"I am very well aware of that, Captain; however, this takes priority. Transmitting beamdown co-ordinates. I'll be expecting you momentarily. End transmission."

Kirk sat dazed by the man's abruptness.

Spock stepped forward. "He's quite correct, Captain."

"Correct!? But it's...uh...." He checked the chairarm readout. "...only three hours until the Council meeting. What happens if you're late?"

"They'll wait."

"The whole planet is going to wait by their viewscreens while some bureaucrat grinds through his red tape?"

"Of course." At Kirk's incredulous expression, Spock continued, "Sir. The Council is going to meet to attempt to build a world suitable for these children to live in. Does that effort have any meaning if we fail to attend to the more immediate needs of the children? The whole world will wait... for a week if necessary...until every one of these children has been rendered into the custody of proper guardians. However, I doubt if it will take more than a couple of hours. Arrangements have already been made. I suggest we get on with it."

Kirk rose. "Mr. Sulu, you have the con. Maintain orbit. Issue routine shore leave passes only to the Federation Preserve." He headed for the door.

Six hours later, Kirk and McCoy materialized in the spacious main hall of Sarek's home. Even before his vision cleared, Kirk's first impression was of that deep silence lapping at his nerves, soaking up all his tensions, combing the emotional kinks out of his thoughts, and leaving a reverberating Peace within. It was as strong, and as inexplicable an effect, as it had been the first time he'd encountered it.

When his vision cleared, Kirk saw that the hall was exactly as he remembered it, save that at one end of the long room the hangings had been pulled aside to reveal a wall-sized viewscreen, and in the center of the richly patterned area rug that held the room's lone grouping of seats stood Sarek and Amanda. They were dressed formally, and Kirk felt out of place in working uniform. "May you live long and prosper, Captain Kirk...Dr. McCoy."

The humans returned the greeting, and Sarek motioned them to chairs. "The proceedings are about to begin."

Grateful for the airconditioning, McCoy allowed Amanda to install him in a chair with a Saurian brandy and said, "Some four hours late, though."

"Four days would not be too long to wait considering -- " said Sarek.

Kirk interrupted. "Yes, Spock explained...it would be -- " He suppressed a wry smile. " -- illogical." He declined Amanda's silent offer of a drink with a wave of his hand. "Tell me, Mr. Ambassador -- "

"I hold no poast at the moment, Captain. Just call me Sarek."

"All right, sir. What I wanted to ask...will the issue be decided by the members of the Council today?"

"Possibly."

"Who are the members of the Council?" asked McCoy, swirling his drink and settling into the straight-backed but well-upholstered chair.

"Membership is hereditary, Doctor, and restricted to Kataytikhe who trace their lineage back at least as far as the Reformation, in unbroken tradition."

"Sir," said Kirk, "may I ask a personal question?"

"You may ask."

"Ah...well...what are Spock's chances...in your opinion?"

Sarek glanced at the screen which still showed only a sign in unadorned Vulcan script. As he watched, moving letters crawled across the top of the screen and disappeared. "Yes. Another delay. It won't be long, though." He continued thoughtfully, "There are many factors to be considered, Captain. T'Uriamne has the advantages of age and gender. Also, on her mother's side, she has an inheritance which Spock doesn't share. That may be decisive." He glanced at Amanda, who remained pleasantly impassive. "However, Spock is an unknown quantity. He is a law unto himself. He has surprised me often in his short life. But I doubt if he would have registered this Challenge if he hadn't judged a fair chance of success."

"But he doesn't know T'Uriamne."

Sarek threw Kirk a sharp glance. "True. But he knows her arguments. They've been a part of this family all of his life."

"So I understand."

"What I do not understand, Captain, is exactly how Spock intends to make his point. I have found no flaw in T'Uriamne's proposal."

"If he fails...." Kirk didn't know quite how to put it. "Will you remain here?"

Sarek looked at Amanda as he answered, "Yes. I must."

"And I," provided Amanda, "will have to leave."

McCoy said, "And Spock...."

"That, Doctor, is a very good question." Sarek glanced again at the screen as the crawling string of characters reappeared. He rose and detached a control box from the panel under the screen, then resumed his eat.

The sign vanished, revealing a long, richly decorated, rectangular room. The floor was flat, but around the sides were banks of seats. The chairs were carved of a translucent blue-green stone polished to a finely textured finish. Kirk thought the mineral must have a high copper content and considerable bound water to achieve just that hue.

At the far end of the room, three chairs were raised five steps above the surrounding chairs. They were more ornate than the others but made of a paler, blue-green stone, and the tops of the high backs were set in multicolored gemstones.

In the center of each side of the room, the three chair motif was repeated in miniature. In the center of the floor, a low fire burned in a shallow pit. Around it, chairs were arranged in lines. At first Kirk thought these chairs were placed randomly. Then the view shifted, and he saw that they outlined the idic symbol.

The ancient flavor of the Ceremonial Hall was achieved with so much rich and strange detail that, at first, the captain didn't notice the other end of the room. Here, also, three chairs were raised, but they were a startling white that seemed to catch the highlights of the fire in a twinkling dance like a Denebian sundiamond. The tops of these chairs were decorated only in fiery red stones. On the floor in front of the white chairs an oval platform was raised a single step above the floor.

As the view shifted again, Kirk noted that the straight-backed, armless chairs that formed the idic were all facing outward from the fire, so that the people thus seated faced in every direction. There was a distant sound of bells...many bells, faintly familiar to the captain. Yes! The ceremonial bells he'd heard at Spock's wedding. But at least an octave deeper.

Sarek turned to the humans. "Loud enough?"

Amanda said, "A little louder, please."

Two bellbanner bearers entered from two doors on either side of the blue-green chairs at the far end of the room. Pacing slowly, they circled the room twice and exited the way they'd come. But the sound didn't die out. It increased. And presently six bellbanner bearers marching in pairs entered through one of the doors. Behind them came four strong men in ceremonial dress bearing an ornate litter.

They marched directly to the white chairs. The curtains parted, and a very old and frail woman appeared. She was dressed in a plain black robe with a hood that covered her head. As she ascended the dais, Kirk recognized T'Pol. She looked years older than when he'd seen her last. Age overtook the Vulcans very swiftly near the end of their long lives. But when she spoke her voice was strong and clear.

Sarek said, "Are you getting any of that?"

"No," said Amanda.

He adjusted his controls, nodding. "The translator is keyed in, but even so much of this will be fairly unintelligible to you. That's the best I can do."

They watched the scene unfold. T'Pau finished her speech and snapped a command to the bannerbearers. They tramped out the other door and came back in slow march with a tall, thin, dark-haired beauty of a woman. She marched so smoothly she appeared to float a half inch above the floor. Every few yards the procession stopped and turned toward the fire pit for a few seconds while the banners were shaken to a vigorous rhythm.

At one point, the group faced the pickup Sarek had chosen, and Kirk had a chance to examine her costume. She was dressed in sparkling white robes under a cloak that fell from shoulder to ankle. The high, white collar stood almost to the top of her piled hair in neat contrast to its blackness. Under her cloak, her body was hung with loops of heavy, golden chain. Kirk could see that each link was carved with an intricate design and supported a tiny medallion. When she moved, there was a euphonious chiming that blended with the different chords of the bellbanners. It looked like a heavy burden for such a frail body.

After two slow circuits of the room, she stopped at the fire pit and approached the rim of the circular depression. Sarek switched channels to get a closeup of her face as she bent to pick something from the rim of the pit. Now Kirk could see the family resemblance. The high cheekbones and distinctive jawline, and the thin, wiry physique were similar to Spock's. But the complexion was far more "Vulcan."

When she straightened he saw that she'd taken a long rod from an array beside the pit. To the accompaniment of vigorous shaking of the bellbanners, she dipped the tip of the rod into the fire, held it for a second, and raised it, planting the bottom firmly in a hole in the stone floor. A tiny red flame blossomed from the rod, a good six inches above her head.

Suddenly the banners were silenced as T'Uriamne aboutfaced and stood gazing up at T'Pau. T'Pau uttered one crackling syllable, and T'Uriamne quick-marched straight toward the center white chair, up and over the low dais as if it weren't there, and up the five steps as T'Pau descended.

T'Uriamne seated herself as T'Pau re-entered the litter and was borne out of the hall. Then she nodded to the bannerbearers who'd waited beside the pit, and they split into two groups of three, formed two triangles, and marched out the doors.

Presently, they returned leading two lines of men dressed in white tunic and sandals but cloaked in blue-green...the exact hue of the chairs of the idic. They formed a large circle around the firepit, outside the chairs. The bannerbearers resumed their position in front of the pit.

Sarek switched to an overhead view of the pit with its single taper burning. Then one of the men detached himself from the circle, slow marched to the rim of the pit, chose a taper, lit it, and placed it upright. Then he faced T'Uriamne, who issued a command. He took a position before one of the chairs of the idic, but remained standing.

Slowly, this was repeated and apparently would continue until each had taken a post. Sarek turned to Kirk and McCoy. "We use fire as a multivalued symbol. Here, fire gives of itself without being diminished, as one mind may give ideas without diminishing its own knowledge. These men are pledged Guardians of the Philosophy of Nome."

Amanda said, still watching the screen, "Sarek, I think she's lost weight."

He shifted his gaze to his wife. "T'Pau is nearing the end of her life."

"Not T'Pau, T'Uriamne."

"I hadn't noticed."

"Well, you should. She is your daughter."

"That, my wife, is debatable."

A furious shaking of bellbanners drew their attention back to the screen. All the seats of the idic were claimed now, and, as silence descended, the Guardians seated themselves. The bannerbearers formed triangles again and retired to return in a moment with six more men, three trailing behind each triangle in a line.

Halfway up the sidelines, they stopped, and the bannerbearers formed a line between them and the firepit, one banner in front of each of the men.

Then, one at a time, each bannerbearer escorted one of the men to the pit for the taper-lighting ceremony. These men, Kirk noticed, were dressed in blue-green tunics and white cloaks. Instead of placing the lighted brand in a holder at the rim of the pit, each one slow-marched back to a chair on the dais at the side of the room where he planted the taper on his left.

But, instead of seating themselves, they remained standing beside their lighted tapers. The bannerbearers, without further command, formed a double line and went to the left-hand door, the opposite one from which they'd escorted T'Uriamne.

While they were gone, Sarek said, "These are the Guardians of the Dominations of Logic, Reverence for Life, and Privacy."

The two lines of bannerbearers reappeared with another lone figure dressed all in blue-green, the lighter hue of the chairs at the far end of the room, but without any other insignia. They slowmarched all around the room twice. Kirk didn't need to see the face in the scanner as they passed by. He knew those sloping shoulders and that balanced walk. Spock's expression was somber, withdrawn, grave, wrapped in severe dignity. Here he was not the First Officer of the Enterprise but a Guardian of an ancient tradition. There was no trace of the humanity that had been there a few hours ago.

The bannerbearers escorted him to the pit the same way they'd brought T'Uriamne, but he took two of the unlit brands and lit one. Then, still carrying both tapers, he about-faced and marched through the seats of the idic, across the low platform, and up the five steps, presented the unlit brand, and backed down the five steps, holding the fire-tipped shaft to her level. Kirk wasn't sure, but he thought he detected the slightest hesitation before she lit her taper from his and placed it in the holder to her right.

The bannerbearers moved forward and slowmarched Spock around the room and to the light blue chairs at the far end. He mounted the dais, planted his brand, nodded to the bannerbearers, and seated himself. Simultaneously, the six Guardians on the sides of the room seated themselves.

Then the bannerbearers retired swiftly and returned leading two lines of men and women dressed all in a dark blue-green with twined yokes of multicolored rope that gleamed with a satiny sheen. These marchers kept coming until all the seats along the sides had been filled. The bannerbearers split into two lines and formed dividing barriers before the two doors to the chamber.

T'Uriamne rose, placed her right hand on the shaft of the taper, and began to speak. The translator garbled most of it, but Kirk got enough to understand that this was a formal call to order. Then the translator slipped and skidded so badly that he presumed she was speaking High Vulcan.

She went on in the rapid-fire mode for about half an hour. Finally, Sarek said, "She's sketching her argument and proposal

for the record. There's been so much public discussion of her position the last few weeks that she doesn't need to give a completely detailed presentation. There isn't a citizen watching who isn't intimately familiar with every aspect of it."

Kirk estimated that it was fully an hour later that she finished her "sketch" and sat down. Silence descended and grew into tension. Then Spock rose. There was another pause as heads turned toward him. When he had everyone's attention, he said, "I claim the right to speak in Guardian Council."

Kirk could feel the held breath, the electric tension building to crackle pitch. So far everything had been ceremony, predictable routine. This was what everyone had been waiting for.

T'Uriamne spoke without rising. "If there be no objection, that right is acknowledged."

The pause seemed eternal. But eventually she added, "And it is so."

Spock placed his right hand on the taper that held its flame above his head and spoke. His voice was low-pitched, level-toned, almost a formula recitation. The translator slipped and slid through this more than it had when T'Uriamne held the floor. But every eye in that hall was on him, and not a muscle stirred. Kirk knew the scene was virtually the same in every Vulcan home.

The tension, the absorption, the total concentration of the Vulcans underlined the vital importance of what Spock was saying, but there was no clue as to whether he was convincing them. It wasn't long before boredom made Kirk and McCoy drowsy. Fighting drooping eyelids and cramped muscles through more than two hours of unintelligible speech was the occupation of diplomats, not starship officers, and Kirk was acutely miserable by the time Spock was interrupted by an undisciplined babble among the council members.

Jerked to alertness, Kirk had no idea what was going on. Sarek said, "T'Uriamne will certainly contest T'Aniyeh's credentials. This could take all night. Amanda, I believe it is time to offer our guests refreshment."

She rose and left the room. Then the sudden shaking of bell-banners silenced the council members, and Kirk watched intently. T'Uriamne rose and called a series of names, both male and female, and around the room people rose. There were representatives of each group that had entered separately. They stepped out onto the floor and formed a line. Kirk counted 20 in all.

Then Spock called names, also representatives of each group, and they formed a line across from T'Uriamne's designates.

The bellbanner bearers assumed flanking positions and marched the groups out of the hall. As the bells died away, people got up to mill around and talk to their neighbors. Soon the hall was swallowed by a milling throng. Here and there small groups gathered about various individuals, talking and listening.

Sarek rose. "The committee may take hours to return a recommendation. If they admit her, and she can do what he says she can, it will be an historic occasion."



They went into the dining room where Amanda had set a buffet with many small dishes filled with colorful Vulcan delicacies. Kirk felt as if he'd come home after being away too long. Gripped in the routine of a Vulcan meal, he seemed to relax to the silence, more aware of his reactions to pleasant tastes, aromas, and the all-pervading peace that rang silently through every nerve. During the weeks he'd lived here, Kirk had learned his table manners well and knew better than to engage in attempts at communication. He'd learned what to combine with what and was really enjoying the familiar symphony of tastes. This was a true home to him such as he had nowhere else in all the galaxy.

And his home was threatened. If T'Aniyeh and Spock couldn't convince the Council...he'd never be able to come here again. He felt the terrible desolation that such a rejection would hold and the frustrated helplessness that there was nothing he could do to affect the outcome. It was the same fierce sense of loss he'd experienced when he'd relinquished the flame.

He shook himself out of the mood. He was a guest here. This home was foreign to him. The threat was to the stability of the Federation, not to him personally. The Enterprise was his home. And his soul would just have to find Peace without crutches!

Kirk looked up to find Sarek staring at him from across the table. They'd finished eating. Sarek blinked, nodded approvingly, and rose to walk around the table to where Amanda sat. He held out two fingers to her. She rose to meet him, matching his gesture.

Sarek said softly, "My wife, your son is a brilliant man, a credit to this household."

She regarded him levelly. "You noticed that?"

They stood looking into one another's eyes for several seconds. Then the distant sound of bannerbells drew their attention. Sarek said, "Come. They are about to reconvene." He dropped his hand, and the humans followed back to the viewscreen.

When they reached their chairs, the screen was filled with a swift scurrying amid flying capes. Within seconds, everyone was back in his place, and silence reigned briefly before the bellbanner bearers escorted the 40 committee members back into the hall. They drew into two lines, one on either side of the hall, and then broke ranks and went to their seats, each leaving one representative on the floor.

T'Uriamne rose. "Credentials Committee report."

The man on her right, dressed in blue-green tunic and cloak, took one step forward and said, "We have examined the candidate, T'Aniyeh, and have found that she has Affirmed the Continuity, that she is an accomplished tokiel performer, and that she is adequately prepared to present a version of the Motek. We recommend that she be admitted."

The man on T'Uriamne's left took one step forward and said, "We have examined the candidate, T'Aniyeh, and have found that she has Affirmed the Continuity, that she is not an accomplished tokiel performer, but that she is prepared to attempt to present a version of the Motek." He paused, and Kirk could feel everyone, himself included, holding his breath. "We recommend that she be admitted...conditionally."

Amid a flurry of bannerbells, the two retired to their seats on the sidelines. T'Uriamne said, "You have heard the report of the Credentials Committee. If there be no objection, T'Aniyeh will be admitted, conditionally, to present a version of the Motek."

She waited. There was total silence. McCoy dared to ask, "What does she mean...conditionally?"

Sarek said, "If she makes an error, even the slightest hesitation, she will be given no second chance. The issue will go directly to a vote." He looked at his guests. "Is she adequately prepared?"

Kirk said, "I only wish I knew. They've certainly been working hard enough."

T'Uriamne said, "Since there be no objection, it is so." She nodded to the bellbanner bearers and sat down.

The bannerbearers came together in two lines and, when they parted, three of them held two banners and three held nothing. Two of the bannerless escort busied themselves at a panel on the wall while the third retired to the right-hand door. The three other bellbannerbearers retired to the left-hand door and took up positions there.

As the lights faded, the bannerless escort returned with T'Aniyeh. He led her to the platform and then went to join the other two at a console that had mysteriously sprung out of the floor beside the platform. The lights went out.

Then the tokiel platform lit up from its own field, a kind of glow that pervaded the whole stage area but didn't illuminate the rest of the room. T'Aniyeh, her skin-tight coverall a golden

shimmer in the dimness, mounted into the tokiel field accompanied by a rippling sound and an explosion of rainbow colors, sharp clear vibrant colors almost too bright to look at.

The colored streamers died around her, leaving her enrapt in a golden flame that shaded slowly to purple and went black. Kirk noticed immediately the differences between this stage's effect and those he'd seen on the small, portable tokiel platform T'Rruel had used aboard ship and the outdoor installation he'd visited with Amanda. Evidently, this platform was geared to the ultimate in precision. There was another difference. Where T'Rruel had been invisible most of the time, T'Aniyeh was always visible. And T'Aniyeh would dance solo, as this was a completed composition and no questions remained unanswered.

The rhythmic tolling of a large bell announced the start of the pyrotechnic display of rhythm, form, and sound that was becoming familiar to Kirk. But here the effect was different. T'Aniyeh, always visible within the structure of colored shapes she built, seemed always to be a split second ahead of the music her movement created. Some of the figures of living light were strange to Kirk, and he was certain he'd never seen them before. He'd surely have remembered that purple spiral wrapped in pink smoke.

But, still, something in the forms reminded him ever more sharply of T'Rruel, and, by the end, he'd almost forgotten the dancer was Tanya Minos. When she made the long gossamer streamers dance and swoop like mating eel-birds and then spun around, reaching high to end in the forward lunge of T'Rruel's signature, he knew he was watching a brilliant imitation of T'Rruel's style. Then she stood back, poised in the center of the stage, until the music had died. She raised her hands over her head, trailing rainbows, then dropped to one knee, sweeping her arms around and back in wings of glowing fire to the echoing sound of plucked strings...her own signature.

The fire died to black, and she was invisible. The hall's lights had come on before Kirk realized she must have gotten through the whole performance perfectly. He was seized with an impulse to applaud and whistle and jump up and down. But he held still as she was escorted silently from the room, and the bell-banner bearers resumed their positions.

Sarek was changing the viewpoint constantly, examining the reactions of the council members. It took a Vulcan to read a Vulcan, so Kirk turned his attention to Amanda. Perhaps she could tell what effect Spock's ideas had had on the council.

But she was watching Sarek. Soon Sarek sat back and glanced briefly at Amanda with the barest shadow of a nod that made her

relax, a very human smile playing gently about her eyes. He turned his attention back to the screen.

The scene there was frozen so that, at first, Kirk thought he was viewing a still photograph. Then he noticed the attitude of the councilmembers. Most of them sat, hands clasped, staring at their own steepled fingers. As he watched, several lowered their hands and turned their gazes to the man who occupied the center seat on the dais at the side of the room to T'Uriamne's left.

Minutes trickled by, punctuated by the occasional lowering of hands and turning of heads, until, about half an hour later, the last member of the council turned to T'Uriamne's left. The man rose, glanced at Spock, who nodded, and then said, "By Sitar's Lemma I call a poll of the Electorate."

He remained standing as T'Uriamne rose. She said, "If there be no objection, the Electorate will be polled."

The pause lengthened until Kirk was sure she was hoping for an objection. Finally she added, "And it is so," and sat down.

In front of the man on the side, a pentagonal pedestal rose out of the floor and grew to waist height. He worked some controls on the top of the pedestal, and a cylindrical column descended from the ceiling directly over the firepit. The column was a deep, midnight blue.

When the column stopped descending, leaving a bare few inches between it and the tops of the still burning tapers that surrounded the pit, the man turned to the bannerbearers. As they responded amid random jangling, Kirk noticed that the tapers that had been burning for hours had strangely not become any shorter.

As Kirk puzzled over this, the bannerbearers assembled before the pedestal, and the man said, "You will invite the Electorate."

With a great shaking of banners, the escort pivoted until they faced various ways and then scattered in all directions as the whole room climbed to its collective feet. Kirk was at a loss to keep up with all the things that happened then. The first thing he saw was that one bannerbearer was escorting Spock to the pedestal while another led T'Uriamne. They timed it so that T'Uriamne arrived first.

When she placed her hand on the pedestal, a curtain of blackness surrounded the scene and then blinked away...obviously a light interference effect, for privacy in the casting of ballots. A few seconds later Spock arrived to do the same. Then there were lines forming around the pedestal in every direction

as the council members gathered to ballot. Kirk wondered how they knew whether a "yes" vote was for T'Uriamne or for Spock. Or if, indeed, that was what they were voting on.

Sarek moved to the screen controls on the wall in front of them, opened a compartment, and made some adjustment within. Kirk assumed he'd cast his ballot. Presently, he returned to his seat, saying, "Now we shall see what the future holds. Watch the cylinder. If it turns white, T'Uriamne's viewpoint prevails. If it turns blue, Spock has made his point."

Kirk looked, but the cylinder was still a deep midnight blue. The votes weren't registering yet. He said, "What's Sitar's Lemma?"

Sarek seemed to welcome the opportunity to talk. "When the Guardian Council was established, there was no technology for polling the entire adult population of the planet, so no provision was made for anyone but Council members to participate in decisions. Sitar introduced the theoretical basis for allowing total participation, and his Lemma provides the criteria by which each individual's opinion is weighted by his personal Achievement Factors."

McCoy said, "Achievement Factors?"

"Yes. Academic, social, economic...but especially in this instance competence in understanding the intricacies of Tsai-chrani."

McCoy was incredulous. "You mean your vote is worth more than someone else's?"

"On this issue, yes. On another issue, it might be relatively worthless." Something on the screen attracted his attention. "Look, votes are registering already."

The cylinder had flashed white momentarily, then blinked to the light blue-green color of Spock's chair. Now rainbows chased themselves up and down. Finally, the bands of color smeared into one another producing a muddy mixture that gradually cleared to gray.

After a few minutes, the cylinder began to pulsate, fading gradually from blue-gray to white-gray and back again. As the minutes dragged by the period of pulsation lengthened until the change was so gradual Kirk couldn't really tell which way the vote was going.

Finally, Kirk became aware that all the Council Members had resumed their seats, and the pulsations had ceased, leaving the cylinder a pearl gray...possibly just a bit on the blue side.

Sarek sat forward abruptly, seized the screen's control box, and punched out a new setting that focused their viewpoint on T'Uriamne. The excessive strength the Vulcan used gave Kirk the first hint he'd had that Sarek actually felt some of the tensions ...emotions...that a father watching his only two children fighting such a battle must feel.

Now Kirk became aware that all eyes were focused on T'Uriamne. McCoy said, "It's a draw?"

Sarek answered tightly, "There is no clear majority. The decision is hers alone."

T'Uriamne sat utterly still, her gaze apparently fixed on the gray cylinder.

Kirk said, "But that's impossible! If Spock is right, then everyone should see it his way! Isn't that only...logical?"

"Logic does not distinguish between 'right' and 'wrong'... nor between 'true' and 'false' either...it merely designates the clearest path from premise to conclusion. One must add values to formulate judgments...and, in this case, nearly half of the electorate judges that the long-range weakening of the social fabric is a lesser immediate danger than contact with humanity is. I disagree, but I cannot impugn the logic of those who hold that view."

T'Uriamne's hand moved on the arm of her chair, and Sarek switched views to obtain a closeup of the cylinder. A white band had appeared at the top, and a blue at the bottom. As they watched, the whole length of the cylinder was converted to bands, the top white and bottom blue. Kirk counted 40 bands, 20 white ...20 blue. Then the whole cylinder blinked off and came on again. Part of the bottom white band had turned blue.

Sarek said, "Yes, a slight weighting in Spock's favor," and flicked back to a close view of T'Uriamne.

She rose and gazed about the room soberly. Then her hand moved to the point at her waist where the golden chains joined. When she brought it away, the chains parted and slid to the floor. She stepped out of the circle of gold, and placed the chains on the seat behind her.

A ragged sigh escaped Amanda's lips.

T'Uriamne descended to the floor of the hall, carrying the burning taper that had stood beside her. She went directly to the fireplace and threw the whole brand into the fire. Then she picked up two unlit rods and stood back. Sarek changed views, this time to a closeup of Spock.

Sarek said incredulously, "He's reluctant to accept her terms! He should know better than to expect more than a stipulation of error."

Finally, Spock rose, picked up his taper, descended to the floor, and marched directly to the firepit. He threw his taper into the fire and took two steps back to stand empty handed, facing his sister through the forest of upright brands that encircled the pit.

T'Uriamne began to circle the pit to her right while Spock walked left until they'd changed places. Then he about-faced and went to the white chair she had vacated. He picked up the chains and stood, waiting. Kirk thought he could read pain and a little regret in his friend's face, but he wasn't sure.

T'Uriamne lit one of her tapers and ascended the dais to present the other to Spock. As he dipped the point of his taper into the fire she held to him, his eyes met hers, and Kirk was now certain of what Spock felt: pain; the anguish of unfathomable loneliness.

Undoubtedly, Spock had hoped that she would change her mind and come home to her father...and her half-brother. The disappointment was an emotional pain that the half-Vulcan was barely trying to mask. At least, it was plain to Kirk and McCoy. And they both silently resolved to ease that pain or at least teach their friend what little humans know about living with it. Loneliness without laughter would have broken any full-blooded human long since.

When T'Uriamne had seated herself in the chair Spock had vacated, Spock nodded to the nearest bannerbearer and, amid the symphonic jangling of the banners, the election paraphernalia was retired, and the two lines of bannerbearers formed before Spock. Still holding the golden chains, he descended into the midst of the escort and was marshalled out of the room. By the time he'd reached the doors, orderly lines had formed, and the rest of the Council was leaving the hall.

Amanda rose. "He'll be hungry when he gets here. It's almost dawn. I'll fix breakfast." She started away and then turned back to Sarek. "So Vulcan will remain in the Federation. That means you'll be busy for the next fifty years hunting for another solution to the problem. I'll fix you some breakfast, too. You'll need your strength."

She walked a few more paces toward the dining room, then turned back to Sarek with an afterthought. "He won't resign from Star Fleet, you know."

Bushy Vulcan eyebrows climbed. "We'll see...."

Kirk couldn't interpret the tone of that. Threat? Promise? Or merely uncertainty?

T-WAVES

from Jacqueline Lichtenberg

Upon reading T-N 12's half of "Spock's Argument," I find there are certain elementary facts about the story which may make it utterly incomprehensible to the casual reader, and I'd like to take this opportunity to put these facts on record for T N's readership.

Firstly, "Spock's Argument" is the third major story in a very long series which I call the Kraith Series and number Kraith I, II, III, IV, etc. There are potentially VIII such stories of the Main Series. Many of my stories which have appeared in other zines are part of the secondary series and occur between these major stories. They are, consequently, Kraith IA, IB, etc. (Kraith IIIA is a novel, Federation Centennial).

The casual reader who encounters a fragment of this series may be confused; therefore, I used an extensive system of footnotes to inter-related the series and point out where further information could be found. Since you've chosen not to print these footnotes, I would like to drop a few clues in at this point.

Pertaining to "Spock's Argument": Spock's relationship with T'Rruel and her Motek was narrated in Kraith I, "Spock's Affirmation." This appeared in T-N 8, which is no longer available, so collectors will have to await the hypothetical appearance of Kraith Collected (or a reprinting of T-N 8). Spock's relationship with T'Aniyeh was described in Kraith II, "Spock's Mission," which appeared in T-N 10. She is an important character in the series and will continue to be with us for several more stories. The theft of the Kraith is narrated and the nature of the Kraith is dealt with, in "Spock's Affirmation."

There are so far seven stories of the secondary series, and more are being written by authors other than myself. A bibliography should be available soon from Mike Sobota. In addition, one person is seriously considering using an alternate Kraith Universe diverging from mine somewhere after "Affirmation," but adhering to the general background; quasi fact articles explaining some of the technical points of the background are also proliferating; a Vulcan art form introduced in a short story called "Zyeto" may soon be appearing in various zines; a series of short essays for potential Kraith authors who want to use unpublished background ideas has begun to coalesce into a Kraith Writer's Manual.

This will explain why readers may be encountering weirdly variant Kraith-ish ideas in other zines under other names (I ask other Kraith authors to use their correct names). Each story that I approve into the series is assigned a number, but editors don't always print the number, so it may be difficult to orient the story within the series. If anyone finds such a story and wants more information, write me, and I'll be happy to provide what information I can.

May I take this opportunity to solicit the comments of the readers? I seek to improve my writing and can do so only with your help. My address is 9 Maple Terrace, Monsey NY 10952.

from R. G. Van Treuren

You must have gotten carried away on page 40 of T-N 12. Malachi Throne played Commodore Mendez in "Menagerie," not Decker. Ha.

from Danielle Dabbs

Could you mention that Triskelion #4 is available for \$1.00 at PO Box 3923, Bryan Texas 77801?

from Luanne Hofschulte

Could you correct my address for the William Shatner Letter Exchange Journal? It's 534 Inca, Denver Colorado 80204 (not 435 Inca).

