

POLICE CALL BOX

STAR TREK



**THE DOCTOR AND
THE ENTERPRISE**
By Jean Airey

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Edited by Bob Littlepage

Author's Prologue

In 1979 I started writing a *fanzine* story in which the Doctor (from the "Doctor Who" universe) met up with the crew of the "original" "Star Trek" series. It was the first thing I'd written since graduating from college fifteen years before, and, with the assistance of an excellent author and very good friend, Jacqueline Lichtenberg, was able to finish it. The result turned out to be an enjoyable reading experience to a number of people. The story was not intended to be a satire; it was intended to be an honest representation of what might happen if these two particular universes met. It was intended as a fanzine in the most classic tradition of that particular genre. Unfortunately that popularity resulted in the ultimate "ripping off" of the story without my permission into a highly priced "book" format (in one version) and to a complete travesty of the original in yet another. For some years now, I had been offering to make copies available at the cost of postage – and was willing to "post" copies to the electronic networks. However, I did not want to rekey the whole rather lengthy document. After a recent discussion of the 'zine on the network, Marc Barrett offered to scan the original into an ASCII file. (Many thanks to him!)

With some editing (Proportional Space type resulted in some unique versions of McCoy's name! along with some other anomalies), the following files are being posted to the net.

The following are the rules for use of these files.

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Paper copies with the original artwork (including the marvelous cover by Gail Bennett) are available from me. SASE for details. Some dealers may also have appropriately priced *authorized* copies available (STARTECH is one of them). Not everyone is on a computer network!

With regrets for being so picky -- but I've been burned on this enough. Read and enjoy!

November 8, 1991

Jean Airey

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Original Foreword

In the beginning... and it was The Beginning when this story first came into my grubby little hands. Doctor Who was a new world in fandom in 1979, so new that only a few devoted fans existed (if that can even be imagined nowadays). Those were the days when I was 13 and short, and Doctor Who was shown in Columbus. My parents shook their heads in sorrow at the kid who sat glued to the tube every day at 6:00, but my father took pity on me and introduced me to a co-worker who also watched the good Doctor devotedly.

And so I met Jean. Actually, we'd met before in Star Trek fandom, but this re-introduction made a significant difference, for Jean immediately gave me her story, "The Doctor and the Enterprise" (though at the time it had been titled "Ethel the Aardvark goes Quantitative Surveying" for reasons that will become clear in the story). After two read throughs, I immediately placed it on my list of classic "must-reads" along with Lord of the Rings and Space Cat, where it remains to this very day.

This story was first printed in the Trek fanzine, R&R 13 (which I had my parents buy for me). The story was a hit, and Jean became famous. When the Columbus group, The Prydonian Renegades, got organized, and some little twerp and his more stable friend Rhonda put together the now-legendary fanzine, Zeta Minor, it was decided to reprint "The Doctor and the Enterprise," claiming it for our own. Despite a horrible cover (both in content and color... the twerp responsible shall remain nameless), the 200 issue run sold like hotcakes. "Now," I said, "if only it could sell like a fanzine." So it was deemed necessary to run off another 200, and within hours, we were out of them again. It was, I thought, fairly impressive.

The real success, however, was with the number of fans Jean managed to single-handedly draw into Doctor Who, the fans who read the story and began to watch the show, and the fans who read the story and began to write because of it (like that twerp, for instance). It is, as far as I know, the best-selling story in all Doctor Who fandom. I'm 18 and tall now, and Doctor Who hasn't been shown in Columbus for years, but this story is, as I said, still on my list (and the lists of many others) of favorites.

Welcome!

Robert St. John
1982

Editor's Foreword

Oddly enough, I already own two paper copies of this story, one a compilation of its serialization in "Enterprise Incidents", the other, I suspect, being one of the "complete travesties" that Ms. Airey refers to (maybe both of them qualify in her eyes, no way to tell). I guess it's only because my copies are currently in storage, or at least where I can't get to at the moment, and I can't afford to track down those fairly sought-after back issues, that I went ahead and downloaded a copy (many thanks to **StarCruiser** on **TrekBBS** for posting the link! – which is, by the way, <http://www.scirev.net/who/archives/TheDoctorAndTheEnterprise.php>). And in the course of correcting the bizarre spacing (gotta love ASCII conversions!) I noticed a few errors and typos (I don't recall if any of these made it to the store bought copies, but they were certainly in the online version). And, with all due respect to the author, some odd syntax, questionable verbiage in places, too much use of a passive voice, and more than a few instances where it wasn't immediately clear who was speaking that just took me out of the story.

That's where the fun began.

With an audacity that could only be possible through having my own copy of the story on my own computer, and probably an ego worthy of a Time Lord, I went through the story and did a proper polish on the gem, with an eye towards only tweaking those errors that showed up and making some of the more awkward bits of dialogue (mainly dealing with technobabble or spoken numbers) flow a bit better.

Starting with the sniggling little matter of how in the original text, nobody really introduced themselves, or questioned the Doctor on that left turn at Albuquerque while on route to 1980 London that landed him in the *Enterprise's* transporter room, and moving on to setting up of scenes, descriptions of actions, throwing a few bones to the longsuffering Nurse Chapel, who's referred to frequently but never actually says a thing, snipping some bits that didn't really add anything to the story...in short, what started out as a simple proofreading exercise turned into a full blown rewrite, keeping as much of the original text as possible, but streamlining the prose so that it didn't get in the way of the story.

So, in the interests of full disclosure, the original text *has* been tampered with, sometimes significantly, but hopefully to good effect. How well I succeeded is up to you, dear reader. Hopefully, Ms. Airey doesn't consider this yet another "complete travesty".

What really started this is that I always had a problem with much of the artwork that accompanied this story, in whatever form that saw the light of day, and was only hoping to get my own copy that I could attach my own artwork to, starting with the front cover. It's supposed to be a serious crossover, it should have serious illustrations.

So, I present to you Jean Airey's "The Doctor and the Enterprise," polished to a slightly higher shine.

Enjoy

Bob Littlepage
Arvada, Colorado
October 2009 – November 2010

PS. I've started to give some thought to adapting this story into a script format, probably for a radio play of sorts. Stay tuned, sports fans...

THE DOCTOR AND THE ENTERPRISE

By Jean Airey

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The alien sound pierced Kirk's ears. He stopped, alone in the corridor, trying to pinpoint its origin.

The transporter room.

He turned and ran towards the door as the klaxon alarm of a red alert sounded.

Damn! he thought. The *Enterprise* couldn't even make the final trip back to Earth, after completing her five-year mission, without complications. First, an emergency rescue of a Cultural Survey and Contact team, and the crew of the liner that had been transporting them, then a freak magnetic storm that had buffeted the ship unmercifully and taken out the subspace radio. And now...

As he entered the room, Lt. Kyle was staring at a large boxlike structure that stood on several of the transporter pads. It was about eight feet tall with small opaqued windows at the top, a white light on the roof that was rotating slowly, and lettering above the windows that said 'POLICE PUBLIC CALL BOX'.

"Report, Lieutenant."

"It just...appeared, sir."

"The transporter wasn't activated?"

"No, sir. We were performing signaling tests, but it was not activated."

Kirk reached across the transporter console and switched on the intercom. "Security, send a team to the transporter room. Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy, report to the transporter room immediately. And bring your tricorders." Two security guards entered almost immediately, taking positions on either side of the transporter platform.

The door at the front of the box started to open. The security guards drew their phasers as a man emerged.

Over six feet tall, he was wearing a heavy coat over clothing that reminded Kirk of the Earth styles of the late nineteenth century. A long scarf was wrapped around his neck, hanging down in front on both sides to the floor. A floppy hat partially covered an abundance of brown curly hair. His blue eyes seemed to focus suddenly on Kirk and Kyle. One cheek looked bruised, and he swayed slightly.

"Oh, bother," he said with a decidedly British accent, "this isn't London, is it?"

"Just hold it there and keep your hands where we can see them," Kirk said. The stranger didn't seem to be a menace, but Kirk had seen his ship threatened too often to take any chances. "You're aboard the Federation starship *Enterprise*, I'm Captain James T. Kirk."

"No need to panic." The man raised his hands slowly and eyed the phasers as if he recognized them. "Federation, you say? Which one? There are so many, it's difficult to keep track sometimes."

The door behind Kirk opened, and McCoy and Spock came over to Kirk.

"Captain?" Spock asked, his tricorder already going.

"The box materialized in that position - and he -" Kirk motioned with his head to the stranger who was watching the proceedings with curiosity, "came out of it. He hasn't made any hostile moves."

"I take it that the object's appearance was not in accordance with the standard operation of the transporter?"

"Do you think Jim would've called us down here if we'd beamed this thing aboard?" McCoy groused.

The stranger eyed the assembly as if he were accustomed to weighing the odds against him. Kirk did not miss that look. In spite of the stranger's unimpressive appearance, Kirk felt uneasy. He heard the combined whirring of Spock's and McCoy's tricorders behind him.

"Spock?"

"The 'box' appears to be a representation of a mid twentieth century English police call box. However, there are some anomalies..."

"He's not human, Jim." McCoy interrupted.

"Captain," said Spock, "I am getting some unusual readings from inside the device."

As Kirk noticed that the 'box' had now become a 'device', the stranger moved quickly towards its door. The security guards fired instantly, but he still managed to close the door as he fell, collapsing on the transporter step.

"Kyle, see if you can get that door open. Spock, is he armed?"

Kyle moved up to the door of the device, but the door would not open. Spock was carefully analyzing his tricorder readings. "The pockets of his coat are filled with a great many objects. I am unable to ascertain if any of these might be some type of weapon."

"Empty his pockets." Kirk ordered one of the security guards.

"Sir," Spock interjected, "in view of the quantity of items present, it might be more expedient to remove the garment."

Kirk nodded and the security guards moved to comply. As the security guards were removing the coat and jacket, one of them let the unconscious body slip slightly. Spock caught the stranger's head just before it hit the floor again.

He stiffened suddenly as the contact was made, his head snapping up and his eyes abruptly glazing. It took a moment before Kirk realized that somehow, without willing it, Spock had mind-melded with the alien.

"Spock!" Kirk moved quickly and tore Spock's hands from their grip, letting the alien's head fall back to the floor. "Are you all right?"

Spock's eyes remained glazed for a second and then he responded, "Quite all right, Captain."

"What happened?"

"He has...unusual...psychic abilities. Even unconscious...I unwittingly established a mind-meld."

"What did you find out?"

Spock looked at Kirk reproachfully. "Captain, the mind-meld was made accidentally." Kirk realized that Spock had in some way violated his sense of ethics by entering the meld, and now Kirk was compounding the situation by asking questions.

"Does he present a danger to the ship?" Surely Spock could at least answer that.

"Negative." Spock had retreated behind the thickest wall of Vulcan reserve.

"Bones, what is he?"

"Nothing I've ever seen or heard of before." McCoy moved closer to the unconscious body, clad now in a white shirt, vest, pants, boots, and with the long multicolored scarf still wrapped around its neck. "Double circulatory system, literally two hearts, one on each side of his chest, some kind of a double breathing system, body temperature seventy degrees, blood pressure almost nonexistent. I can't tell you what he is, Jim, but even his response to the phasers was abnormal. He was still conscious as he fell. As a matter of fact, I believe he may have sustained some type of head injury." McCoy ran the medical tricorder over the stranger's head again. "Yup, he did, but it looks like it's an aggravation of a recent previous injury. And it must've been one heck of a hit, his skull is very thick, so whatever caused the original injury..."

"How long will he remain unconscious?"

"Jim, I can't say. Probably longer than normal, what with a combination of two phaser stuns and what at the very least looks to be a severe concussion."

"Doctor," said Spock, "your ability as a prognostician would seem to leave something to be desired."

Kirk and McCoy looked at the stranger. His eyes were open, and he was apparently very conscious.

"Gentlemen," he said, eyeing the security guards as they moved back into their 'alert' position. "Don't you think that some two sided conversation might be more informative than your one sided version?" He smiled, as if finding their reactions deeply funny.

Kirk noticed with surprise that the security guards were relaxing. "Do you feel well enough to talk to us?"

"Yes, of course. I love to talk...that is, if you are willing to talk and not shoot. I really do hate stun guns."

Glancing at McCoy and Spock and receiving an answering shrug of shoulders and a tilted eyebrow, Kirk turned back to the stranger and said, "We can talk in one of our briefing rooms." The stranger got up slowly, accepting McCoy's help. "Mr. Kyle, I want all other transporter personnel on the alert in case we acquire any other visitors." Kirk turned to Spock. "Have you been able to clear up that subspace communication problem yet?"

"Negative, but we have determined that the fault is not in the computer scanning system. Lt. Uhura and Mr. Scott are continuing to work on it."

"Let me know as soon as anything is found out about what the problem is - and I want it fixed."

"Aye, sir." Spock turned to relay the order to the bridge, informing them that the Captain could be reached in Briefing Room 4.

The security guards moved to either side of the man. He glanced at them and then over to Kirk. "Should I be flattered that you consider me so dangerous?"

"I have seen danger come to my ship in many forms. I prefer not to take chances." In spite of Spock's statement, Kirk was not ready to relax his guard. Their eyes locked, and the stranger smiled in amusement again. Kirk's eyes narrowed and then, returning the smile, said to the two guards, "Return to your posts." The two guards promptly turned and left the transporter room.

"Thank you, Captain."

"What is your name?" asked Kirk.

"Oh, I'm the Doctor."

"The Doctor?" said Kirk as the group left the room.

"Doctor *Who*?" asked McCoy.

"That's right," said the Doctor, beaming at McCoy. McCoy looked baffled.

"Doctor McCoy," said Spock, "I believe that his `name' *is* `The Doctor' - and I should assume that it is in the nature of a title, and can be most appropriately used without any surname."

The Doctor had been listening to Spock with an infectious smile impossibly growing on his face and Kirk began smiling too. Somehow an individual who could appreciate Spock at his most precise did not seem to be a threat to the *Enterprise*.

They entered the briefing room and sat down. The Doctor was looking at Spock closely. "You're not human, are you?"

"I am a Vulcan."

"Vulcan? From a planet called Vulcan?"

An eyebrow rose. "Yes. Do you know of it?"

"From somewhere...I'll think of it."

"Well, Doctor," said Kirk, "you must realize that the next question that we need answered is, what are you doing here?"



"I don't exactly know, Captain," the Doctor grinned as Kirk winced.

"You mean that you did not control the method of your arrival on this ship?" asked Spock.

"Exactly. I was expecting the TARDIS to return to London, in June of 1980 to be exact, and instead she materialized here."

"*Tardis?*" Kirk asked. "Is that the device in the Transporter room?"

"Yes, 'Time And Relative Dimensions In Space.' You know how engineers love their acronyms."

"June of 1980?"

"Yes."

"You're a time traveler?"

"Yes! You're acquainted with the concept?"

"Boy, are we ever," McCoy grumbled.

"We have had some experience in that regard," Spock added.

"Usually by accident."

"I suppose I can sympathize," the Doctor said, "Ever since I've been using the old girl, she occasionally doesn't go where I expect her to, and, Captain, I can certainly assure you that I was not expecting to arrive on your ship."

"What planet are you from originally?" asked Kirk, hoping to get a simple answer that might help solve the mystery.

"Gallifrey."

"Spock?" Kirk had never heard of it, but that didn't mean that it didn't exist.

Spock looked up from the computer console. "No record of any planet by that name, Captain."

The Doctor was studying Spock intently.

Under his breath, Kirk could hear the Doctor mutter "Vaksh, Vogan, Voord... *Vulcan!*" He turned to Kirk suddenly.

"Captain, what year is it? Earth calendar?"

"Twenty-two seventy-one," Kirk replied.

The Doctor looked puzzled. "Well, Captain, it would seem that we both have something of an enigma on our hands. You have me, and I have a Vulcan surviving centuries after his race, and his planet, was utterly destroyed in a massive civil war." Spock turned and stared at him.

"Parallel universes," said Kirk.

"You're familiar with the concept as well?"

"We've experienced that phenomenon before."

"Another accident?" the Doctor prodded. The lack of response prompted another toothy grin.

"Can you provide the coordinates of your planet?" Spock asked.

"Ten-zero-eleven-zero-zero by zero-two from galactic zero centre."

Spock entered the coordinates into the computer. "That planetary system was destroyed when its sun went nova approximately one hundred forty thousand years ago."

"So, my people do not exist in your universe."

"It would appear so. There are very few intelligent, space traveling races that are completely unknown, and the Doctor... Doctor McCoy, that is, has no record of any race of your type. What do you call yourselves?"

"Time Lords."

Spock's eyebrow raised, but Kirk decided to interrupt before his first officer's curiosity could be indulged further. "It would seem that what we need to do is to find out how to return you to your own universe."

"No, Captain, The *first* thing we must find out is just whose universe we're in."

"Good point."

The intercom whistled. "Bridge to Captain Kirk."

"What is it, Mr. Sulu?"

"Captain, we've got what appears to be a large group of ships just within scanner range."

"Anything on the subspace radio yet?"

"Negative. It appears to be working perfectly, but we've been unable to obtain any transmissions on any standard Starfleet frequencies."

"We're on our way."

Kirk turned to the Doctor who had been listening to the conversation with a curious mixture of interest and amusement. "Doctor, would you care to join us? This might prove to be the answer to our question."

"I'd be delighted."

McCoy scowled. "Jim, I don't think that the Doctor should be moving around too much until I can tell –"

"Oh, I'm quite all right, really. I've almost gotten used to being stunned by something or another." The Doctor smiled at McCoy.

"Given the circumstances, the Doctor's presence on the bridge could prove of some benefit." Spock interjected.

"Very well, then. Shall we, Doctor?"



On their way to the bridge, Kirk noticed that the Doctor took in the usual sights and sounds of the starship with interest but without amazement. He noted with somewhat increased interest the presence of two Andorians, commenting to Spock, "So, you have other alien species in the crew." Spock did not seem to think that the remark was worthy of response, but Kirk observed that the Doctor found Spock's lack of response an apparent cause for thought.

His only other comment came when they got into the turbolift system and Kirk said "Bridge," causing the turbolift to begin its usual forward and upward motion.

"Voice controlled," the Doctor commented, "How convenient."

"We find it so," said Spock.

"A logical approach?" said the Doctor smiling at Spock and, surprisingly, winking at Kirk. Spock did not respond, which seemed to afford the Doctor more amusement. Kirk began to wonder if the Doctor pictured himself as some sort of interstellar, time traveling comedian.

The doors opened on the bridge and Kirk moved to the command chair, Spock to the library computer station. McCoy stayed close to the Doctor, sneaking scans on his tricorder.

"Distance to those ships?" Kirk asked as he sat down.

"Just entering visual range now, sir," said Sulu, adjusting the controls.

"On screen, Mr. Sulu, highest magnification."

"Full mag, sir."



A swarm of small, globe-like ships came into view, filling the viewscreen like dozens of small stars. Kirk heard the Doctor take a deep breath. "Identification, Spock?"

Spock checked the readings in his hooded viewer. "Type of ship unknown, alien lifeforms within, also unknown."

"Now we know, Captain," said the Doctor, stepping down beside Kirk. "We're in my universe, and I would strongly suggest that you move away from those ships as rapidly as possible."

All traces of the comedian had left.

"Why?" Kirk asked.

"They're Sontaran, freight and shipping vessels from the look of them and the number, but they usually have armed escorts."

He glanced around the bridge, taking in the assorted personnel, seeming to weigh their experience and the possible reception of what he was saying. Having apparently made some kind of a decision, he continued.

"Captain, have you ever met a race whose greatest joy was to enslave other people? To conquer, kill, torture, maim, often merely for the joy it brings them? Who value their own individual lives as nothing, and the lives of other races as even less than that?" By now the Doctor was speaking with a seriousness that surprised and impressed Kirk with its deadly concentration.

Kirk glanced around the rest of the bridge. All of the crew had been listening intently, their attention completely on the Doctor. Even Uhura and Scotty had crawled out from under the communications panel where they were working.

As the Doctor finished speaking, eyes moved to the viewscreen, the alien vessels growing larger. That the Doctor was sincere Kirk could not question, and he didn't need to be told that sometimes discretion was the better part of valor.

"Yes, we've run into people like that. Spock, get as much information as you can from the sensors. Sulu, hard about, warp six. Uhura, Scotty, you can stop working on that radio. Start scanning for any communications on bands outside of the standard Starfleet channels."

The Doctor was smiling again as Kirk finished. "Well, Captain, you and your crew are certainly both quick and efficient." He glanced around with approval at the organized effort going on about the bridge.

"Doctor," said Kirk, "I think that you and I need to have a talk."

"But of course, at your convenience." The Doctor leaned casually against the bridge rail and smiled at Kirk as though he were in complete control of an ordinary situation.

With a feeling of exasperation, Kirk turned to Spock. "Have you been..."

Kirk heard a crash behind him. As he turned around, he saw that the Doctor sprawled on the deck and McCoy bending over him, medical scanner whirring. "Bones?"

"Cerebrovascular hemorrhage. We need to get him to Sickbay immediately."

Kirk smacked the intercom on the arm of his command chair. "Bridge to Sickbay, medical emergency. We need a team up here now!"

Spock stepped down next to Kirk.

"Captain, several armed vessels from that fleet were attempting to pursue us. We have outdistanced them, but long range sensors indicate similar vessels throughout this area."

"How long can we maintain evasive action?"

A pair of medical orderlies entered from the turbolift with a gurney and immediately moved to assist McCoy with the unconscious Doctor.

"Difficult to say," Spock continued. "We have no familiarity with these ships, or their capabilities. If this is indeed a parallel universe, we have no way of determining with any degree of certainty where we can go in relative safety until we can effect our return."

"In other words, we need the Doctor."

"If he does possess the knowledge he claims, and if he is willing to assist us, which appears to be the case, then yes, we need him."

The medical team entered the turbolift with their patient. Kirk looked at the unconscious form.

"Scotty, you have the con. Keep us clear of any involvement with anything. Spock and I'll be in Sickbay. If we can get any more information from the Doctor, we'll let you know."



Down in sickbay, McCoy scowled at the indicators over the Doctor's biobed.

"How bad is it?" asked Kirk, concerned that the only source of information about this alternate universe would be unavailable.

"Jim, I don't know what normal *is* for him, so I can't tell how badly the hemorrhaging is effecting him, except that he's unconscious, and I would say that if the injury is doing that, then it's pretty bad. There appears to be previously damaged areas in that part of the brain, and while he seems to have a remarkable healing ability, what's happening now is more than he can handle on his own."

"What are you going to do?"

"Well, I suspect that, even with this much damage, given time, he might recover without my doing a thing."

"Bones, we don't have time. He's the only clue we have about where we are, possibly how we got here, and maybe how we can get back in one piece. I need him conscious, and well, as soon as possible."

"Jim, there's a large blood clot between his skull and his brain. It covers a large area and there is active bleeding from inside the brain to that area. That clot has to come out and the bleeding stopped."

"You've treated that kind of thing before."

"Yes, but I know what medications I can use on our people, even Spock, for the most part. But I wouldn't dare use any of them on him. I have absolutely no way of determining what the possible side effects would be. The only possible thing I could do is operate to surgically remove the clot and cauterize the bleeding."

"Then do that."

"Without anesthesia? I've got the same problem with painkillers, I don't know what I can and can't use on him. Even phasers don't have the normal effect on him. If I use a drug, I could kill him. If I don't use one...Jim, I'm a doctor, not a butcher."

"Doctor?"

McCoy turned. The Doctor's eyes were open but still slightly glazed. He looked at McCoy. "What appears to be the problem?"

"You have a severe subdural hemotoma and a massive blood clot pressing against your brain. It has to come out, but we have no idea what anesthetics or painkillers to use in your case."

The Doctor blinked twice and swallowed before answering. "Normally...I could tell you what would be effective...but I don't think I'm quite up to that. I have been trying to...get into a catatonic trance, which would enable you to operate humanely...but I suspect the area involved..."

McCoy nodded. "It's interfering with your ability to do that."

Kirk noticed that the Doctor's speech had become slightly slurred. It was obviously an effort for him to talk, and the pain indicator was rising higher with each effort.

"You are proposing a manual procedure?"

McCoy nodded.

The Doctor sighed. "That would seem to be...the acceptable alternative."

"There's a possibility that you'll be conscious during the operation."

"I quite understand that...but from what I saw out there...we have little time to spare."

McCoy still looked reluctant.

"Come now!" he snapped impatiently, "Surely you're as skilled a surgeon as your own Incan physicians! The operation must be done! I would suggest...that you...strap..." He slipped into unconsciousness again.

"Okay, Jim, we'll try it. Only pray that he stays unconscious."

"I thought the brain doesn't have any pain receptors," Kirk said.

"Ours don't," McCoy said grimly.

With the restraints in place and the Doctor turned on one side to expose the operating area, a sterile field was established and McCoy began the delicate operation, opening the skull.

The Doctor's eyes opened again.

Kirk saw his hands move against the restraints. Suddenly Spock moved and took them. The eyes of the two aliens met and something was exchanged between them.

"Sometimes it helps to have someone to hold on to."

Did Kirk really hear Spock say that?

An almost answering smile came as the Doctor's eyes closed again. But Kirk saw the pressure of the hands grasping Spock's and knew that the man remained aware of McCoy suctioning out the clot. Only when the laser cauterizer was used did the hands relax again and full unconsciousness return.

"That seems to be it. Nurse Chapel, were you able to make a repair patch from those skull fragments?"

"Yes, Doctor."

McCoy carefully fitted the `patch' into place. Only a small area of bone had been removed, and the patch, made from the patient's own tissue and bone, rapidly fused the open area with as much protection as the original.

McCoy looked at the indicators carefully. "Jim, I think we did it. Pain is down, both hearts in sinus rhythm, blood pressure stable, alpha rhythm flowing. Please tell me he wasn't conscious at any point."

"He was."

"Damn. I still feel like a butcher having to operate like that."

"Not at all, Doctor," came the voice from the bed. "It was a very well done job, thank you." The Doctor looked as though he was going to get up as soon as Nurse Chapel finished removing the restraints.

"Oh, no, you're staying right there," barked McCoy.

"But, Dr. McCoy," the Doctor said in an injured tone, "I'm feeling very well now and there are things..."

"Don't tell me how you feel. You're staying right here for at least another 24 hours, and if I have to keep the restraints on you, I will."

The Doctor's gaze and McCoy's clashed. The Doctor raised himself to a half-sitting position and McCoy moved forward. Kirk looked at the indicators; they were starting to move again.

Spock stepped between the Doctor and McCoy. "Doctor, I would suggest that you follow Dr. McCoy's instructions. The time need not be wasted. We can provide you with a tie-in to the library computer from here. If you are going to help us, you will need to know quite a bit more about us."

McCoy glared at Spock.

"Bones," Kirk said, "you know that he isn't just going to lie there."

"All right," McCoy turned back to his patient. "But you're to stay in bed, is that understood?"

"Oh, completely, Bones," and traces of the old smile appeared as the Doctor lay back. Spock started toward the door. "Oh, and Spock."

Spock turned back and looked at the Doctor questioningly.

"Thank you. I have not often come upon a gesture made as appropriately and as willingly." Without waiting for a reply the Doctor turned and smiled at Nurse Chapel. "What's your name, dear?"

"Christine."

"Christine, do you have a listing --"

"Nurse Chapel," McCoy interrupted. "I want the biolab to do a full analysis on him. And Doctor, before you start playing around with the computer, I want you to tell Nurse Chapel all about your medical history. So long as you're here, I need to know how to treat you."

For a moment Kirk thought that Spock was going to make another remark, but he turned and went out the door.

"Bones," from the grin on the Doctor's face, Kirk suspected that he was about to say something that would provoke a reaction from McCoy. "Do you really think it essential to have all my medical history? After all, I'm seven hundred and forty-nine years old, and as charming as Christine is, that might take quite a bit of time."

"Just the pertinent facts, Doctor. I'm sure that in seven hundred and forty-nine years, you've learned to restrain yourself when it's necessary."

Score one for McCoy, thought Kirk.

"And in the next twenty-four hours, I expect you to rest, or sleep, or whatever it is you do, for at least eight," McCoy continued.

The Doctor looked quizzical and McCoy paused.

"Six?"

No response.

"Four?"

"Four hours should be sufficient." The Doctor looked over at Kirk. "At the end of my stay here, Captain, I would suggest that you and I and your chief officers get together."

Kirk had an uneasy feeling that control of his ship had just been transferred, but reminded himself that the Doctor was only expressing what he himself had already decided. "As soon as McCoy says you're fit, I'll call the meeting."

Kirk and McCoy left sickbay and entered the nearest turbolift.

"Bridge," Kirk said.

"What was that last part to Spock about, Jim?" McCoy asked.

"If the Doctor travels around alone, as he would seem to, he must often find himself fighting on his own in unpleasant situations. How old did he say he was?"

"Seven hundred forty-nine."

"Spock should find that..."

"Fascinating."

As Kirk and McCoy entered the bridge, Spock got up from the command chair.

"Report, Mr. Spock?"

"We appear to have outdistanced the Sontaran fleet. However, sensors indicate considerable activity in most of the space in this area. We have been following a path that would seem to lead to an area of comparative inactivity. When the Doctor recovers..." He tilted a questioning eyebrow.

"We can expect the Doctor to be available to us in twenty-four hours. Until then, we will simply have to avoid making any sort of contact with the anyone else in this universe."

"Captain," said Uhura, "I've been detecting transmissions from vessels in the area, but we're having trouble trying to translate them. Nothing matches up with the universal translator."

"Very well, Lieutenant. Let me know as soon as we can tell what they're talking about. I want all senior officers in Briefing Room Two in one hour."

"Aye, sir." Uhura turned back to her communications panel.



Inside the briefing room, Kirk looked around at the officers already gathered. McCoy was late, and they were waiting for him.

For five years I've been with this crew through all sorts of adventures - bizarre and commonplace, Kirk thought. I've lost ninety-two crewmen, and for all my command experience, I'll never accept those deaths as being necessary. This ship and its crew is my life, and whatever it takes, I'll see that they get back to their own universe. It's part of my mission, any responsibility. No glory in doing that, it's part of the job. And when it's completed? He decided not to try to guess what Starfleet would do then

"Sorry I'm late, Jim," McCoy said as he came in and sat down at the briefing table. "I finally managed to get my patient settled."

"Was there a problem?"

"Not much more than I'm used to," McCoy looked at Kirk and Spock accusingly. "Although I must say that you two don't generally make a point of entertaining my entire staff with fantastic tales of wild adventures, or persuading them and all my other patients to join in a feast of jelly babies.. ."

"Jelly babies?" asked Kirk.

"Some kind of chewy gelatin candy, about two centimeters long, shaped like a swaddled infant, and in assorted flavors. A little something from twentieth century Britain, although Scotty says they're still being made; he remembers eating them as a kid in Aberdeen. The Doctor seems to have an infinite supply of these things, and he's got everyone in Sickbay munching on them. In between passing out candy and talking to Christine, he's been running through the data on the library computer at an incredible speed. I finally had to tell him that I'd put him in isolation with no computer access before he agreed to rest."

"Will he be able to talk to us tomorrow?"

"Yes, but if he disrupts my sickbay much more, I might just let you have him earlier."

"If I might make a suggestion, Captain," Spock said.

"I think that both Dr. McCoy and I would welcome it, Spock."

"May I remind you that when we rescued the passengers and crew of the liner *Crotone*, there was a Cultural Survey and Contact team on board."

Kirk nodded. CS&C was a recently created specialized division in Starfleet. They had their own chain of command, but while on his ship they were under his command. Since the rescue, they had been quite helpful in keeping the *Crotone* crew and passengers out of his own crew's way. The addition of some two hundred fifty 'passengers' had stretched the *Enterprise's* normal resources to an uncomfortable limit.

"Do you think they can help us, Spock?"

"The lieutenant in charge of the team has an exemplary record in initial survey expeditions, and on this last expedition was credited by the other members of the team of enabling them to be retrieved by the *Crotone* after their captain was killed. Since we have a member of a new culture on board, it would seem logical to assign her to 'study' him."

"What's her background, Spock?" McCoy asked.

"She has a PhD in Xenobiology and is also a certified paramedical technician."

"Well, I'd certainly be glad to have her assigned to him." McCoy said. "What's her name?"

"Lt. Dorcy Stephans," Kirk answered. "As soon as we're through here, I'll notify her of her new assignment."

McCoy nodded with relief. "The sooner the better."

"Now, if we could come to the point this meeting. Scotty, damage report."

"We had some minor problems immediately after that storm, mostly caused by the vibration, but they've all been checked and cleared. The main problem now seems to be somethin' going off balance in the matter-antimatter mix when we're at warp speed. And as long as we stay at warp speed, I canna fix it."

"So, you want to go to impulse?"

"Aye, sir."

"Spock, any sign of an enemy vessel in scanning range?"

"Negative. In fact, we are presently in an area of space which shows no signs of any lifeform activity whatsoever."

"Very well, Scotty, cut us back to impulse power, but remember that we might have to cut in warp drive on short notice."

"Aye. We'll leave an emergency cut-in, but we won't be able to tolerate anythin' above warp two until we find the main trouble."

"Captain," Spock said, "There is another problem. The computer control to life support."

"I thought that was all in a separate system with full emergency backup? Wasn't that what we just had installed?"

Spock nodded. "An independent primary control and a secondary control which is a complete duplicate of the first, along with a tertiary system, which can provide up to two hours of full support. During the storm, however, the programming on the primary control was erased. It will take thirty-five hours to reprogram and reinstall the primary system."

"So we're running on the secondary system with the tertiary is the backup."

"Affirmative. However, if something happens to the secondary system, and the tertiary system exceeds its life span, a failsafe back to the main computer will start a half-hour countdown to self-destruct the ship."

"Now who was the headquarters genius who thought up that bright idea?" McCoy asked.

"It's supposed to force an organized abandonment of the ship's crew to the nearest Class M planet, with a distress beacon deployed, and no chance of the ship falling into the 'wrong hands'." Kirk smiled at McCoy. "Starfleet is apparently discouraging heroics."

"Jim, we don't have enough environmental suits or evacuation equipment for everyone, especially not with the people from the *Crotone* on board."

"And there are no Class M planets within transporter range," Spock added.

"Besides, what good would a beacon do us here?" McCoy continued.

"Gentlemen, we're looking at the worst case scenario," Kirk said. "In thirty-five hours we'll have the primary system back up, and by then Scotty will have us underway at full warp power, and in only twenty-two hours the Doctor will be able to at least guide us around this universe in safety. That should be ample time to figure out how to get back to our own universe. All we have to do in the meantime is to stay out of trouble."

"Aye," Scotty said, "it would be a mighty strange set of circumstances that would get us into trouble again that quick." He stopped and thought for a moment. "But Cap'n, do ya really think we can trust the Doctor?"

"What do you think?"

"Well, his travelin' device is of a type we've never heard of. We dinnae know anything about him or his people, but he assumed that we'd both be on the same side against a bunch o' people like the Sontarans. He seems to have had considerable experience in dealin' with humans, but we dinnae know how he got it."

"Interesting," Spock commented. "Mr. Scott, why do you assume that the Doctor has had such extensive contact with humans?"

"Well, Mr. Spock, it might not be your kind o' logic, but anyone who knows that the natural reaction of a security guard is to shoot has got to have been around humans for quite a while."

Kirk saw Spock nodding in agreement. He knew better than to ask Spock outright how far he felt the Doctor should be trusted, but he knew his first officer. "We've given him complete access to the library computer. In spite of his disruption of sickbay, he seems to be as concerned with our situation as we are."

Scott nodded. "Aye, we're gonna need all the help we can get to get back to our own universe in one piece."

"And if we're going to do that, Scotty, we'd better get to work on what we know we have to do. Dismissed."

As the group got up to leave, Spock walked over to Kirk. "Captain, I could not help but notice that at times the Doctor seems to have a very charismatic effect on humans."

"I've noticed that, Spock, but I don't think it's going to be a problem." Spock turned to leave. "Did you hear how old he is?"

Spock turned back, an eyebrow raised. "Indeed, Captain. Have you determined what his total life span would be?"

"No. You have any idea?"

"I would venture to say that he is still quite young according to standards of his race."

Kirk stared at Spock's departing back and shook his head in amazement. If Spock was right, and the Doctor was still 'young', perhaps that explained the seemingly inappropriate bursts of humor. Maybe all Time Lords went through this stage before stabilizing into serious adults. At least he did not seem to demonstrate the childlike cruelty that Trelane had. Somehow Kirk felt that his reasoning might not be completely correct, but it was a comforting thought. All he needed on the ship at this time was a comedian, and an alien one at that.



In the briefing room the next day, Kirk, Spock, Scott, and Lt. Dorcy Stephans waited for Dr. McCoy to arrive with the Doctor. McCoy had reported that Lt. Stephans and the Doctor were working quite well together and that there had been no further major disruptions in Sickbay.

"Kirk to bridge."

"Bridge, Lt. Uhura here."

"If you pick up any significant transmissions while we are here, alert me and patch them through."

"Aye, Captain."

The door opened and the Doctor and McCoy entered. Kirk noticed that the Doctor had reacquired his overcoat, jacket, and floppy hat. Well, he thought, with such a low body temperature, the Doctor might well feel cold in the earth normal environment of the *Enterprise*.

"Good morning, everyone," said the Doctor blithely, taking the seat at the table opposite Kirk. Kirk noticed as he sat down that it was as if the 'head' of the table had suddenly shifted. Well, Spock had warned him. Whatever the Doctor had, it was there, it was 'natural', and it effected humans - Vulcans too? He wondered.

"Good morning, Doctor. I don't think you've met our chief engineer, Lt. Commander Montgomery Scott."

"Ah, Mr. Scott," the Doctor responded, rising and offering his hand to Scott. Somewhat surprised, Scotty responded in kind. "And Lt. Stephans and I have been having some fascinating conversations." The Doctor smiled. The lieutenant smiled. The Doctor glanced over at the Captain quizzically. "Well, Captain, could you fill me in on our present status?"

McCoy snorted. Kirk gathered that the Doctor had not been idle during his confinement in sickbay, even after the disruption had stopped. He probably knew the situation as well as anyone else.

Kirk decided to pass. "Mr. Spock?"

"Thus far, we have successfully avoided all contact with any alien vessels. This is our present position." The triple screened viewer in the center of the table glowed, indicating the *Enterprise*

and the present star position. "In our universe, this was part of the area controlled by the Klingon Empire."

"Ah, yes, we have those here, too," the Doctor observed, "a bit like the Mongol hordes, but not much of an empire, too many other players around to keep them in check. So I take it you don't have much information on the region?"

"Very little. Are you familiar with it?"

"Oh, yes, I've been around here before. In this universe, the Sontarans are trying to conquer this area from the Rutans, in that interminable war of theirs."

"Our long range sensors indicate considerable vessel movement."

"Doctor," asked Kirk, "What would happen if we met up with a Sontaran fleet?"

"It would depend on how many of them there were. With your offensive and defensive weapons you could probably escape an attack of, say, twenty to forty of their ships. More than that, though, and they could destroy you." He cocked his head at Kirk.

"Twenty to forty?" queried Spock.

"Difficult to give you a more precise number." The Doctor smiled at Spock. "There are a significant number of random factors."

"How large are their fleets?" asked Scotty.

"Well, it depends on what they're attacking. A massive effort and they'd think nothing of sending out four hundred."

Spock looked skeptical.

"Oh, they don't care how many are destroyed in the effort," the Doctor went on, "they only want to win."

"Don't they value their own pilots and crews?" asked Kirk.

"Oh no. You see, they're all clones."

"Clones?"

"Yes. They reproduce by cloning. Individual life means nothing to them, and they don't really think much of races who *do* respect individual life. Especially humans."

Stephans was frowning. "But cloning would..."

"You must allow for the environmental factors, Lieutenant," interrupted the Doctor, leaning forward on the table. "Some are raised to be leaders, others to follow orders and die in service to the Great Sontaran Empire."

"Doctor," Kirk said, trying to return the attention of the conversation to the topic he felt to be of primary concern. "You realize that our primary interest at the moment is to return to our own universe without any entanglement in yours."

"I can certainly sympathize with that." The Doctor leaned back in his chair and put his feet on the table. "If our positions were reversed, I should certainly feel the same way." He grinned.

"And a further consequence of this interest is that we don't want to do anything that might alter the course of events in this universe."

"Ah yes, that desire to be detached observers," the Doctor said with a hint of disdain, "Your 'Prime Directive,' I believe you call it. That might not be so simple." He sat up straight again. "The Sontarans' scanners have a slightly longer range than yours, and if you have been detected, they will not choose to be nearly as high minded and merely observe you. And, Captain, I can also tell you this, and I cannot stress this enough, you cannot, under any circumstances, allow your ship to fall into Sontaran hands."

"What would be the possible effect?" asked Spock.

"With the knowledge they could gain from the engineering and weaponry of your vessel, you would enable them to conquer the entire galaxy quite easily." He leaned back again and glanced around the table as if weighing the quality of the people he saw.

"I see," said Kirk.

The Doctor leaned in closer to the viewer. "As a matter of fact, you might check the activity in the area surrounding your ship, at the very edge of your scanner range."

"Spock," snapped Kirk.

"Checking...alien vessels at extreme range, bearing three one seven degrees, mark twenty-eight. Most likely Sontaran."

The intercom whistled. "Bridge to Captain Kirk." It was Sulu. "We have vessels closing in on us at about warp one. We're still unable to translate their transmissions."

"Red Alert, Mr. Sulu. We're on our way." Kirk switched off the intercom as he rose from his seat. "Well, Doctor, if you're right, it looks like we'll be fighting our way out of this one." He turned to leave, Spock following close behind.

"Captain," the Doctor said, raising his voice slightly over the alert klaxon, "If you take a heading of one eight five degrees, mark seven, that should get you into a relatively safe area."



On the bridge, the glow of the red alert light gave an eerie highlight to the area.

"Mr. Scott, do we have warp speed?"

"I can give ya up to warp two, sir, but beyond that, there's still an unstable factor in the matter anti-matter mix."

"How fast are the Sontaran vessels, Mr. Spock?"

"Still maintaining a speed of warp one, Captain."

"Increase to warp two, Mr. Sulu."

"Aye, sir."

"The Sontarans can reach the equivalent of your warp three, Captain." Kirk looked around and saw that the Doctor had seated himself on one of the bridge steps. *Wonderful*, he thought, *now I have a back-seat driver.*

"Sontarans increasing to warp two also, Captain." Spock studied his science console viewer closely. "Now at warp two point five and closing."

"Mr. Sulu, turn us about and slow to warp one."

"Aye, sir."

The *Enterprise* turned smoothly and as she headed back toward the small globe-like ships; they scattered in front of her, eventually forming a circular pattern around her.

"Drop to impulse, Mr. Sulu. How many of them are there, Spock?"

"Fifty-three, Captain."

"Well, we'll let them look us over. They haven't done anything overtly hostile so far, let's return the favor."



"Captain," the Doctor said, "the Sontarans are going to decide fairly quickly that a vessel of this size cannot be ignored. If you fire now, you could catch most of them by surprise." The Doctor looked quite serious. "That is, unless, you enjoy playing sitting duck."

Kirk ignored the statement. "Mr. Chekov, arm photon torpedoes, wide dispersal. Sulu, set the phasers for a maximum sweep. Be ready to fire on my command."

For several moments, it looked as though the stalemate would be indefinitely maintained. Then simultaneous bursts of fire emerged from all the Sontaran vessels.

"Photon missiles, Captain," Spock reported, "time to impact, twelve seconds."

"Fire!"

Between the wide sweep of phaser fire and the spread of torpedoes, most of the Sontarans' missiles were destroyed before they reached their target. A number did get through, however, and Kirk could hear the damage reports coming in.

"Mr. Chekov, lock photon torpedoes on those ships. Mr. Sulu, get any stragglers with the phasers."

Thirty-five of the small vessels fell to the coordinated offense. Some of the others, however, began moving rapidly directly toward the *Enterprise*, making no effort to fire their weapons. Their swift zig-zag motions enabled them to evade any direct hits.

"They're going to smash into your shields, Captain," the Doctor said, "putting all of their weaponry and their ships' reactors into a direct explosion."

"Kamikaze?" Kirk said in amazement.

"That's what you call it. They call it fighting for the glory of the Sontaran Empire."

"Scotty, full power to the shields! Sulu, get them before they reach us. Chekov, maintain fire on the perimeter ships."

A sudden violent rocking warned Kirk that the kamikaze technique was proving effective. "Report, Mr. Spock."

"Hit on the main power link between Engineering and secondary computer control. Extent of damage unknown."

Another blast rocked the ship, as Sulu and Chekov simultaneously fired their weapons.

"All enemy ships destroyed, Keptin."

"Very good, gentlemen. Stand down to yellow alert. Mr. Sulu, heading one eight five degrees, mark seven, ahead warp two. Damage report, Lt. Uhura."

"Sickbay reports thirty wounded, two dead. Life support systems damaged further in that last attack."

Scotty regarded his display panels with dismay.

"How badly, Scotty?"

"Less than 60% life support capability left, Cap'n."

"Captain," Spock turned from his scanners, "The computer area has received extensive damage to the secondary life support control system. With the direct damage to life support itself, we have two hours, nineteen minutes of life support left on the tertiary system."

"Time to repair?" Kirk asked.

Spock and Scott exchanged glances, then Scott spoke. "On the life support system itself, about three hours. On the secondary computer memory system, about five."

Kirk looked over at the Doctor who was still perched on the bridge steps. "Doctor, can you get out of here in your TARDIS?"

"I could but..." The Doctor gave Kirk a quizzical look.

"Doctor, if we can't complete our repairs in two hours and get the secondary system back up, this ship will begin a self-destruct sequence. So I would suggest that you be prepared to leave."

"That is one option, Captain, but there might be another." The Doctor said calmly. "Tell me, Mr. Scott, Mr. Spock, how many people would you need to complete repairs on your systems?"

Scotty thought for a moment. "About five for life support."

"And the Computer systems?" The Doctor turned to Spock.

"Myself and one other. The working area is small, and most of the time would be involved in testing."

"Well then, Captain," the Doctor stepped down to stand next to Kirk's chair and lean on the arm. "If you only had a crew of, say eight, in three areas, I assume someone would have to control the bridge, and you could shut down all other areas completely, how long would your life support last?"

Kirk nearly made a remark about pointless questions, but there was something in the Doctor's tone of voice. "Scotty?"

"With everything else shut down, ten hours."

"So there's your answer." The Doctor exclaimed gleefully, turning around.

"Doctor." Kirk tapped him on his shoulder and waited until he was facing him again. "We have a crew of four hundred and thirty, plus an additional two hundred and fifty passengers. We don't have enough environmental suits for everyone."

"But you're forgetting, we have my TARDIS." At Kirk's blank look he hastily continued. "Put the rest of your crew, and your passengers, inside her, and the rest should be able to make the necessary repairs."

Kirk took a deep breath before speaking. "Doctor, are you trying to tell me that that box of yours can hold over six hundred people?"

"Oh, she's quite a bit bigger on the inside than it would seem from the outside. Dimensionally transcendental, you might say. She'll hold your people quite comfortably, *and* she has her own life support."

"Captain," Spock said, "I have calculated the time required to evacuate to the TARDIS and we would require full life support for the majority of the time. Estimating that against the repair

time shows that we will have total oxygen depletion one hour and six minutes before repairs could be completed."

"Spock," the Doctor offered, "you require less oxygen than a human, correct?"

"Affirmative."

"Mister Scott, how about your engineers?"

"Aye, three of them are from low oxygen planets."

"And I can manage quite comfortably with far less life support than you presently provide."

The Doctor turned to Kirk. "And I trust you have enough space suits for the humans involved?"

Spock turned back to the computer. The Doctor smiled at Kirk.

"Mr. Spock?" Kirk asked.

"The Doctor's calculations are correct, Captain. The time margin would be sufficient." He

looked at the Doctor. "You would be assisting me, I presume?"

"I am somewhat familiar with duotronic computer systems."

Kirk turned to Uhura. There seemed to be no doubt that the command decision had been made; he was simply to enforce it. "Lieutenant, order all crew and passengers, except Mr. Scott's engineers, to evacuate to the TARDIS." He turned back to the Doctor. "Doctor, if you will open her for us, we will proceed."



When they arrived at the TARDIS, they found McCoy waiting.

"I take it you'll be taking your injured in first?" The Doctor asked.

"That's right," McCoy said, looking skeptically at the box, "if you're sure there's room."

"Oh, yes, quite enough." The Doctor opened the door and led Kirk and McCoy into what seemed to be a very modern control room. Kirk looked around with amazement. The room was well over twice the size of the box they had entered and several doors indicated even more rooms beyond.

"Now, Dr. McCoy, if you go through that door, turn right, then right again, there is an area which you will find suitable for caring for your people while we fix your ship."

He turned back to Kirk and Spock who were looking at the large six-sided control panel in the center of the room.

"Fascinating," said Spock, circling the device. "I would like to discuss its principles and functions with you sometime, Doctor."

"Well, the TARDIS *usually* does what I want her to." Kirk had a feeling that Spock was not going to be able to satisfy his curiosity about this device very easily. "Why don't you start on the computer repairs, and I'll join you shortly."

"A logical suggestion," Spock turned and left.

"Curious little devil, isn't he," commented the Doctor to Kirk. He apparently accepted Kirk's silence as agreement as he went on. "Now, Captain, in case we don't succeed, I assume that there will be some time to evacuate those of us left once your ship begins the self-destruct sequence?"

"Thirty minutes, assuming that part of the system isn't also damaged."

"Yes, well, In case there isn't – who among your crew could quickly learn some of these," he motioned toward the button and lever studded panels, "to get the TARDIS and the everyone on board to safety?"

Kirk smiled. The Doctor knew that he would be the one remaining on the bridge until the last minute. "Lieutenant Sulu."

"Your helmsman, very good. If you would get him down here, please."

Kirk opened his communicator. "Mr. Sulu, report to the transporter room."

"Aye, sir."

McCoy appeared at the door looking stunned. "Amazing - there's a whole city in here!"

"Not quite, Bones," the Doctor said cheerfully, "but it will serve your needs. I would suggest that you begin your evacuation." The Doctor stepped over to the control panels and began setting some of the controls.

Kirk and McCoy exchanged glances. It was clear from the Doctor's manner that he was accustomed to people being amazed at his ship, and he was delighted in that amazement.

The evacuation was orderly. Once the injured had been moved in, the rest of the crew started to come. Lt. Stephens was the first inside and the Doctor turned away from the controls.

"Oh, Dorcy - if you would be so kind to lead the rest of this group down the stairs, turn left, right, then left and right, there is an area that you all should find satisfactory. Help yourselves to the food supplies, you may have a long wait. Oh, and please don't touch any control panels you come across."

Lt. Stephens look at Kirk who nodded. "Very well, Doctor."

When Lt. Sulu came in, the Doctor was standing back from the controls apparently satisfied with what he had done.

"Ah, Mr. Sulu, over here." The Doctor motioned Sulu over to stand next to him. "I have preset the controls so that you all you need to concern yourself with are these." He motioned to an array of buttons and a single lever in one of the control panel sections. "If you should have to take off, just push these buttons, and then this lever. Understood?"



"Yes sir."

"I have programmed the TARDIS to land on a small Earth-type planet, near Barnard's Star. You should be able to handle yourselves there."

"Mr. Sulu," Kirk said.

"Yes sir."

"If we don't make it back, you are to follow the Doctor's orders explicitly. Keep your communicator handy, and remember, if I order you to leave, you leave. Do not risk the TARDIS on my account. Understood?"

"Aye, sir. Good luck, Captain."

"Thank you, Lieutenant."

Kirk watched as the crew continued to file past and down the stairs. He could hear laughter coming from the lower level.

"Well, Doctor, I suggest that we get to work."

"My sentiments exactly."



On the Bridge, seated in the helmsman's position and wearing an environmental suit, Kirk had the feeling that he was piloting a ghost ship. Behind him he could hear Uhura moving around as she systematically shut down life support, section by section, as each area of the ship was cleared.

"All areas evacuated, sir. Life Support shut down except in engineering, computer control, and here on the Bridge."

"Have you picked up any transmissions?"

"Negative."

"Very well. Get down to the TARDIS, lieutenant. Once you leave I'll shut off life support here."

Once Uhura was gone, the 'ghost ship' feeling became even more oppressive. In an effort to dispel it, Kirk called Scotty to check on how the repairs were going. Scotty informed him that his crew was progressing 'as well as might be expected' and from the tone of his voice, Kirk knew that any further interruptions would not be welcome.

Kirk had heard nothing from Spock and the Doctor. Neither one would be inclined to report until something decisive had happened, and, even more so than Scotty, would resent any 'unnecessary interruptions'. Instead, Kirk decided that he to just open the communication link to the Computer Memory area and listen. If he couldn't be there, at least he could hear what was going on.

"Are you ready to retest this bank again?"

Spock's voice, as calm as if this were routine maintenance check.

"Quite ready."

"Running diagnostic program now. If everything checks out, the diagnostic should complete in five minutes."

"Or fail in less."

"Exactly." Spock paused for a moment. "Doctor, why did you leave your people to go to Earth?"

"What makes you think I did that?"

"While you were unconscious in the transporter room, I inadvertently entered into a mind meld with you. That information was there."

"You're a touch-telepath?"

"Yes. I must apologize..."

"Oh, nonsense, don't bother. I've had my mind invaded by far nastier beings. Why did I choose Earth? Well, I rather like Earth people - compared to most of the other races I've met."

"They are a most emotional race."

"Do you think so? They're certainly not as emotional or as illogical as some I've met. They're a bloody nuisance at times, but quite indomitable. They can also cause more trouble than almost any other race if you let them get started. Of course, things may be different in your universe."

"Actually, Doctor, that is a very apt description of humans in my universe as well."

"I suppose human behavior is a universal constant. But what I like most about the Earth people is that, by and large, they care."

"Is caring such an important thing to you?"

"Absolutely, when it means that the people can reach outside themselves to care for others, and especially for others not of their own species. That's extremely rare, in my experience. And, somewhat surprisingly, Earth people can quite astonish you and do just that."

"And what of your own people?"

"They stopped caring about anything a long time ago. That's why I left."

"Did your people agree with your leaving?"

Kirk suddenly had the feeling that he was listening to a bi-level conversation. Was Spock trying to interrogate the Doctor - or the Doctor, Spock?

"Not exactly. I...borrowed...the TARDIS and then eventually, they caught me and exiled me on Earth. That is, until they needed me."

"Needed you?"

"Well, they were determined not to interfere. Much like your Prime Directive, only far more severe. But, when you know what is going to happen along a hundred different possible timelines, depending on what does or doesn't happen, interference is sometimes needed. So I helped them out."

"And now?"

"Well, I could go back to Gallifrey, settle down, take my place on the Council, even teach in the Academy, but I'm not ready for that. There still seems to be so much more to learn. Whatever a professor might say, you don't learn, especially about yourself, in some ivory tower." The Doctor paused. "What about you?"

"Me?"

Kirk could almost see the uplifted eyebrow.

"Yes, you. You know, one of the reasons I left was because of Vulcan. When the Time Lords refused to step in and stop that insane war that annihilated your world, I felt that a very valuable people had been lost, needlessly. I am very glad to see that my supposition was correct. Although I suppose I shouldn't base my decision on you alone. After all, you're half human."

"I am a Vulcan."

"You mean that you chose the Vulcan way over the human way when you had to, I know that much about you at least. Apparently the mind meld worked both ways. Why weren't you allowed to become the best of both worlds, instead of having to choose one over the other? Become a living embodiment of that IDIC philosophy your people seem to value so highly?"

"It is not possible to be both Vulcan and Human."

"Has anyone ever tried before? I suspect that you may be... is that board supposed to be smoking?"

Spock muttered something that Kirk couldn't catch. "Powering down. There must be more damage than our first analysis showed."

"If the person who did your last maintenance servicing had used the right servo-fuse, that power surge wouldn't have affected this area at all."

"It is unfortunately a common human characteristic to use the most expedient way and avoid the difficulty of the required way."

"Surely a characteristic not limited to humans."

A pause. "Agreed."

"That board looks pretty bad. Do you have another replacement?"

"We have no more spare memory storage modules of this type."

"Spare parts, then?"

"There is a bench testing system over there and spare parts are available. The new memory bubble domes will also have to be reprogrammed."

"I'll start on it now."

Kirk turned off the intercom link and analyzed the conversation carefully. While not an expert in the hardware maintenance of the *Enterprise's* computer system, he did have enough basic knowledge to realize what had happened. During the last scheduled maintenance, someone had used the wrong servo-fuse in the secondary life support control. The 'new' fuse was unable to prevent a power surge from coming through and damaging what had at first appeared to be the three boards that Spock had identified. The *Enterprise* carried a number of spare boards for the computer system, but not an infinite supply.

Apparently additional damage done by the power surge had resulted in what would be a longer repair time than Spock had originally estimated. He looked at the chronometer. Half an hour left before the tertiary system would begin the self-destruct sequence.

The intercom sounded.

"Kirk here."

"Repairs completed in engineering, Cap'n. Waiting for computer control."

"Very good, Scotty. Computer Control isn't repaired yet. Can you handle things down there 'till it is?"

"Aye, sir. No problem."

"Then send the rest of your people to the TARDIS. They'll have to wear environmental suits until they get there. Kirk to Spock."

"Spock here, Captain."

"Scotty finished on his end. What's the estimated time for repair of the computer system?"

"Previously undetermined damage to the backplane area has necessitated rebuilding one of the spare memory boards that was damaged. I am about to replace the backplane now. Repairs should be completed within fifteen minutes."

Fourteen minutes later Spock's voice came over the intercom. "Diagnostic test on computer systems successfully completed, Captain. Engaging computer control."

"Scotty, Mr. Spock is bringing up the computer system."

There was a pause before Scott responded. "Negative, Cap'n, asynchronous signal interface monitor is still dark."

"Spock, did you hear that?"

"Affirmative, Captain. There appears to be an additional problem. We are investigating."

Kirk could hear the sound of someone whistling in the background as Spock was speaking. He wondered what the hell the Doctor could find to whistle about.

"Spock," the Doctor said, "Look at this."

"The drivers on the fiber optic bus cable?"

"Looks like they were hit in the power surge. What's your replacement procedure for them?"

"Difficult. We have to run a new bus cable over to engineering through the inside conduits of the ship."

"You don't use a cable connector?"

"Not with this cable. The bus bars get hung too easily."

"But you do have a spare bus cable?"

"Yes."

"Then let's get going."

"Spock," Kirk broke in, "in twelve minutes the tertiary system will default to the main computer and initiate the self-destruct."

"And we cannot bypass the main system to halt the self-destruct after that point, Captain. The Doctor will attempt to connect the cable from here to engineering. I will remain here to bring up the computer system if the connection is completed in time."

"Very well, Mr. Spock. Doctor, you realize the risk you are taking?"

"He has already left, Captain. However, I can assure you that he is well aware of the risk involved."

The minutes crawled by. Five minutes left. Kirk had a sudden vision of living out his life on an earth-type planet, with no way to return home, and the *Enterprise* destroyed. It would be as though all he had struggled for during the last five years had counted for nothing.

Four minutes.

"Cap'n, the Doctor's comin' through now, an' I've got the cable."

Two minutes.

"Cable attached, Mr. Spock."

"Bringing up your computer control, Mr. Scott."

One minute.

"Secondary support system is activated, Captain. Tertiary is cut off."

Kirk looked at the chronometer. There had been thirty seconds left.

He opened his communicator. "Mr. Sulu, as soon as life support has been restored, you will evacuate the TARDIS."

"Yes, sir!"

In the background he could hear what seemed to be party noises - laughing, singing. Well, whatever the crew was doing, at least they hadn't had to wait alone through the agony of the last hours. And one of Spock's and Scotty's first projects when they were out of this mess was going to be to find some way to bypass that tertiary system self-destruct. He'd be the one to decide what heroics were suitable to his ship.



As the *Enterprise* wandered among alien stars, most of the crew was involved in repairing the damage from the storm and the subsequent battle. But all their duties were routine compared to the assignment of the Science and Engineering officers - find the way for the *Enterprise* to return home.

Both Spock and the Doctor were on this team, and their first efforts were devoted to analyzing the physics of the *Enterprise's* entering the alternate universe. Once they figured that out, the team could decide what needed to be done to reverse the effect.

Neither Spock nor the Doctor needed as much sleep as the humans on the team. Spock, of course, spent his time in additional work and research, but the Doctor did not seem to be so inclined.

Kirk offered the Doctor his choice of a room on the *Enterprise* or staying on his TARDIS. The Doctor had chosen the *Enterprise*. The Doctor said he'd be in closer touch with the happenings by being closer to the *Enterprise* communication system - and anyway, he'd never been on a ship like the *Enterprise* before.

Kirk was beginning to wonder if he was really taking the work he was supposed to be doing seriously, or if he took anything seriously. He seemed to 'work' with the scientific team for only ten to fifteen minutes at a time. When Kirk sat in on the sessions, he noticed that most of the Doctor's time was spent in looking at the results that the *Enterprise* team had generated, staring into space for a few minutes, making some minor change in one of the currently generated equations, and then leaving the room. While the team did not seem to be upset with this 'working style', Kirk was beginning to seriously wonder just what the Doctor was contributing.

He would be walking down one of the *Enterprise* corridors and spot the Doctor doing tricks with a yo-yo, usually with a crewmember watching. He had also managed to find out from someone how to program the food computers to produce what seemed to be his major source of sustenance, the ubiquitous jelly babies. Unfortunately, his programming had resulted in everyone else who ordered something getting at least one jelly baby too. Kirk suspected the programming was deliberate. He stared at the small red shape next to his fruit salad, looked at the other crewmembers, happily eating theirs, and decided that he had better discuss the situation with McCoy.

"Jim, I've still got twenty-three seriously injured people to take care of - and I can't say that anything in the Doctor's behavior has bothered me in my job."

"I just have this feeling that he may be helping himself more than us."

"Have you talked to Spock about it?"

"Spock is busy."

"Look, if there was a problem with the Doctor and the help he's supposed to be giving the team, then Spock would have said something. You may think that he isn't doing anything, but Spock may find that what he is doing is exactly what the team needs. And I can tell you this, from the tests that we've been able to run on him and from Lt. Stephens' reports, his mind is at least the equal of Spock's, if not better. Have you read any of the Lieutenant's reports?"

"No. Not yet."

"Well, instead of worrying about what he is or isn't doing, why don't you read them? You're expecting him to act as though he was human. Believe me, Jim, he's not."

"Excuse me, Captain."

It was Uhura.

"Yes, Lieutenant?"

"Sir, the crew was wondering if we could have a party for the Doctor?"

"A party?"

"Yes sir. We would like to thank him, all of us, for helping us with the life support problem, and letting us use his TARDIS and..."

"Lieutenant Uhura, the Doctor is supposed to be trying to find out how we can get this ship back to our own universe. I hardly think that a party would be in any way appropriate."

"Come on, Jim," McCoy said. "Considering what the crew has gone through, why don't you let her check with Spock and the Doctor? If they have time, it might be a good idea."

Uhura was looking at Kirk expectantly. He shot an annoyed glance at McCoy. "Very well, Lieutenant. If Mr. Spock says that he can spare the Doctor and if the Doctor accepts, you may have your party."

"Thank you, sir."

The party started off in an orderly fashion. The Doctor turned up for the occasion in a black velvet coat, solid white scarf, and top hat. Kirk assumed this was his concession to formality.

While appropriate beverages and food were in ample supply, everyone, including the Doctor, seemed to be on their best behavior. Kirk was somewhat surprised to see Spock join the party, but also relieved. The presence of his first officer usually kept an *Enterprise* party from turning into a raucous affair.

Spock had brought his Vulcan lyre with him, and Kirk was not surprised to see that he and Uhura were going to perform. What surprised him was the performance. Uhura had found an old Earth song – never popular - called "My Friend the Doctor". With somewhat revised wording, it had the Doctor laughing in one minute and the rest of the crew with him in two.

From that point on, the beverage consumption increased considerably.

Kirk left halfway through the evening. The Doctor had borrowed Spock's lyre, with Spock's approval, Kirk noticed. Urged on by Lt. Kyle, he proceeded to teach the crew some early English drinking songs. Kirk heard that the evening wound up with a spontaneous limerick contest.



Kirk made a point of turning up in the briefing room the scientific team was using early the next morning. To his surprise, the whole team was there, and working, and, a few moments later, the Doctor walked in. He seemed to be unusually somber.

"I am afraid that you people are going to have to get out of this universe."

Spock turned and looked at the Doctor with raised eyebrows. "Indeed?"

"Look here, Doctor, this team has been working on that problem for nearly a week now," Kirk said angrily. "What makes you say that...?"

"I believe that the operative words in the Doctor's statement are 'have to'," Spock interrupted. Kirk looked at him and then at the Doctor in surprise. "What have you discovered?" Spock continued.

"I ran some studies last night in the TARDIS, and unless you're out of here in three weeks, there will be serious disturbances in the space-time continuum, the repercussions of which will have the gravest consequences for several of the races native to this universe and result in your ultimate destruction."

Kirk looked at Spock. His science officer accepted the Doctor's statement. *Well, Kirk thought, at least it might get the Doctor working on the problem with more dedication than he had previously exhibited.*

Spock turned to the computer and displayed an equation. "I believe that this is the effect that has brought us here."

The Doctor studied it. "Yes, that would do it."

"So how do we reverse it?" asked Scotty.

The team studied the figures. Kirk noticed that the Doctor seemed to be falling asleep. Then he suddenly sat up. "Of course!" He changed some of the figures in the equation.

"That would seem to be the desired effect," Spock said.

"And we've got just enough power to do it," said Scotty.

Kirk breathed a sigh of relief. At last there seemed to be a way out of the trap. And if he had to thank the Doctor for it, he would.

"Wait a minute," the Doctor said, staring intently at the display. "There's something wrong."

"I see no error," said Spock.

"You're not a Time Lord," said the Doctor, still frowning at the display. "No, you can't use that, but I can't..." He got up abruptly and paced around the table. "The Matrix!"

"The Matrix?" Spock asked.

"Yes, the Time Lord Matrix, the summary of all Time Lord experiences. The answer's there."

"Can you obtain it?" Spock inquired.

The Doctor stood still for a moment, his head flung back. Then sweat broke out on his face and he stumbled back into a chair.

"Doctor," Spock said, "are you all right?"

"Yes, and no." The Doctor looked around the table and managed a faint smile. "I have been exposed to the Matrix, but it was contaminated, and I ... I do not have full access to all the knowledge that is there."

Spock raised one eyebrow.

"Can you explain that more completely, Doctor?" Kirk asked.

The Doctor hesitated, then, shrugging his shoulders and exchanging a brief glance with Spock began speaking. "When I became a ... a renegade, that portion of my mind was made inaccessible to me, by the Time Lord Council. Since then...there are times when I seem to be able to access part of it, but not consistently. Unfortunately, this is one of those times when I can't."

"Spock?" Kirk knew that mind blocks of this kind were more likely to be familiar to the Vulcan than to anyone else on the ship. Spock's eyes met Kirk's and then he turned to the Doctor, who was now staring at the computer display in obvious frustration.

"Doctor," The Doctor turned to look at Spock. "You state that there is a block on certain portions of your memory."

The Doctor nodded. "It was their right to place it on me, their means of punishment."

"Does the need for the block still remain?"

The Doctor looked surprised and suddenly thoughtful. "No. No, there is no more reason for it. No one thought about it, until now."

"Can the block be removed, then?"

"Are you a Time Lord, Spock? Is there another Time Lord on this vessel?" The Doctor got up and paced to the other side of the room. He turned back and stared at Spock. "Can you reach into my mind and remove it? Oh, I know that you are a touch telepath, but can you destroy what Time Lords of the First Rank, with infinitely more experience, made?" He sat down again and this time his smile carried no humor.

"Doctor," said Spock, templing his hands. "*You* are a Time Lord. Do you believe that the block should be removed?"

There was a pause. The Doctor looked at Spock, obviously puzzled.

"Or do you still accept it as part of your punishment? Would your fellow Time Lords *now* consider it necessary?"

"Necessary? No, in fact, I doubt they even remember it. And until now, I really haven't needed it." He looked at the computer display again with annoyance.

"As you have observed, Doctor, I am only a touch telepath. However, Vulcans have some ability in these matters, if you can cooperate fully with me."

"You think you can remove it?"

"Not by myself, but with your support, I might. Without your full cooperation, your own psychic abilities could interfere and negate our purpose."

"Then it also carries some danger for you." The Doctor looked directly at Spock.

"There is that possibility. The melding of one mind to another, especially between different species of varying psychic abilities, and attempting to remove or change something in one of the minds, can be hazardous. Either or both of our minds could be lost. There is therefore a risk for you too."

"Not a causal encounter, then." The Doctor said, and Kirk thought that he almost seemed to be laughing.

"No." said Spock, maintaining the tension. "Is it your wish to make the attempt?"

The Doctor thought for a moment, then turned to Kirk. "Captain, is what Spock proposing as dangerous to him as I think?"

"It could well be. Spock has never used the mind-meld casually." Kirk felt frustrated. The Doctor was acting as though he could understand everything about his first officer, and in this area Kirk knew that his knowledge was incomplete.

"If it were possible for you to remain in this universe without harm - or if the time we had to work in were longer, I might suggest a delay. As it is ... what must be done?"

"I would suggest that we go to Dr. McCoy and utilize the isolation ward of Sickbay."

McCoy was not pleased at the idea of the attempt, but set up the isolation area as Spock requested, a single bed and a chair alongside it and full medical monitoring. He looked at the room grimly.

"Jim, you realize that we could lose both of them."

"They've already discussed that possibility. Our major concern at the moment has to be to find a way to return the *Enterprise* to our own universe. Even the Doctor admits that."

"Even the Doctor? Jim, I think that..."

Lieutenant Stephens walked into the room and McCoy did not finish his statement. Kirk decided not to ask him to - if it were important, McCoy would find some time to talk to him about it. The Lieutenant eyed the isolation area with as much distaste as McCoy. Kirk studied her for a moment. Of all the crewmembers, she had spent the most time with the Doctor since he had arrived. He was curious about her reaction.

"Lieutenant, you seem to share Dr. McCoy's misgivings about this experiment."

She looked up at him in amazement. "Captain, you do realize that of the two, we are much more likely to lose Mr. Spock if the experiment fails?"

Kirk studied her. While all her records indicated a levelheaded practical approach on her field missions, her reports on the Doctor had a slight tinge of gullibility. Obviously, the alien Doctor had had as much an effect on her as on the other crewmembers. "What makes you say that?"

"Because of the Vulcan regard for the mind-meld, Mr. Spock has had the least experience in effecting a strong mind probe. That is an ability that develops with practice. The Doctor, on the other hand, has not only exercised his ability to create and maintain a strong probe, he has also experienced and resisted mind probes from other alien species."

"And how do you know that?"

"Because I have been studying, talking to, and observing him ever since you made that my assignment. Oh, he doesn't brag about it, Captain, but obtaining such information is my field. Believe me, his experiences are not conducive to permitting an alien probe into the depths of his mind. I doubt that he would even easily tolerate such a probe from his own species."

"With Spock then, what could happen?"

"It all depends on the Doctor. If he truly trusts Spock, not just consciously, but unconsciously, enough to allow the probe to reach its intended goals, then they will succeed. If he does not, or cannot, the defense mechanism of his mind could snap shut and destroy Spock's mind." She started to add something else but stopped when Spock entered the room.

"Is the Doctor here?" Spock asked.

"Not yet," McCoy answered, "but the room is ready. Spock, are you certain that this is necessary? Lt. Stephans believes that it is highly dangerous."

Spock hesitated for a moment. "It is quite necessary." He had withdrawn into his most Vulcan image. Kirk looked at him. Could the danger the lieutenant had suggested be real? He started to say something to Spock, when the Vulcan turned and went into the isolation room. He sat down in the chair, hands templed, withdrawn.

"You can't stop it now, Jim." McCoy said. "It's between them."

The Doctor came in. He had discarded his coat, scarf, and hat and was once again wearing a Cossack-style white shirt, tweed trousers, and boots.

"Is everything ready?" he said cheerfully.

McCoy nodded grimly toward the room and the silent Spock within. "If you two are determined to proceed."

The Doctor smiled at McCoy and started to enter the room when Lt. Stephans stopped him. "Doctor." He looked down at her in surprise. "Remember, you must give up control to Spock." Their eyes met briefly and he nodded and went into the room.

Kirk felt a sudden chill of fear, realizing that more than the life of his first officer, of his friend, lay in the hands of this alien whom he did not trust.

McCoy closed the door and turned on the intercom system. The medical monitors were on. He looked at Kirk again, shaking his head. "You can't stop it now, Jim."

The Doctor stopped just inside the door and looked at Spock. Without disturbing him, he lay down on the bed, closed his eyes for a moment and then said "Mr. Spock, if you're ready?"

Spock's eyes opened slowly and he looked at the Doctor. The Doctor smiled and closed his eyes. Spock untempled his hands and then spread them on the Doctor's face.

"My mind to your mind..." came the familiar words.

The Doctor's body stiffened momentarily. Spock's grip tightened.

"The Doctor has to drop his own telepathic blocks," Lt. Stephans whispered.

Sweat broke out on the Doctor's face and Spock's eyes closed tightly. The Doctor's body relaxed.

"My thoughts to your thoughts..." Spock's body seemed to encircle the Doctor's although he did not move. There was silence from the room. Kirk was waiting for the outpouring of words he was used to hearing during one of Spock's mind melds. But nothing seemed to happen. He looked down at Lt. Stephans.

"What's going on?"

"They are both natural telepaths, Captain. This is quite unlike what you have seen before."

Perspiration gleamed on Spock's brow. The Doctor's body alternately tensed and relaxed.

Suddenly the eyes of the two opened and met. Kirk could almost see some kind of exchange take place.

"They are in close contact now, " said Lt. Stephans. "There is only the barrier to be broken."

The eyes of the two closed again. From his own experience, Kirk remembered the feeling of another mind in his, and he was not telepathic. *What would it be like if that mind was attacking yours?* Kirk wondered. *And if you had a real ability to defend yourself* -- for the first time he realized the danger Spock was willingly encountering was formidable. Everything dependent on the ability of another to relinquish control, the whole dependent on the tightest of disciplines of the minds involved.

Discipline - and the Doctor?

"Heart rates increasing, Jim," said McCoy.

The Doctor's head began to move restlessly in Spock's grip. A scream emerged from the Doctor's mouth but it was Spock's voice that sounded.

"No, it must remain, it is the penalty. The penalty no longer exists: the penalty has been paid." Spock's voice now in the familiar mono-duologue. *"The punishment must be complete. The punishment is no longer required. You have earned the right to be free. I am the President. The Matrix is mine. The Matrix is invaded. The Master. Death to all Time Lords! My people. There is danger. I cannot release the Matrix. I must drive out the enemy!"*

"Heart rates still increasing. I don't know how much longer they can take it."

The Doctor's eyes opened and stared blindly at the ceiling. Spock's voice continued, monologue this time. "Layer by layer, opening..."

Another 'voice' - this time exploding in Kirk's mind.

"Broadcast telepathy," said Lt. Stephans, wincing. "Spock has opened some new ability the Doctor has."

"The enemy has gone, the way is open."

Spock's hands broke contact. Grabbing the Doctor's shoulders, he caught the Doctor eyes with his own. "You must proceed. I will not probe your knowledge."

"I must have your support, or the barrier will not be fully broken."

Spock paused and then resumed contact. The Doctor's eyes closed again.

"So...in this way, slowly..." The Doctor's head jerked fitfully in Spock's grasp. "You are there, the path is open. I enter."

An uneasy stillness descended on the room.

"Heart rates going down, " McCoy noted.

The Doctor was sweating again; Spock seemed to be in a passive trance and Kirk was reminded of the first, involuntary contact Spock had made with the Doctor.



"Readings back to normal, Jim."

"If they can break the bond now..." said Lt. Stephans.

Both sets of alien eyes opened and met again. Spock's head jerked back. The texture of the mental voice changed. "Yes, you have joined with us."

"No." Spock's hands moved to break the meld but the Doctor's hands quickly held them in place. "I am my own. I am Vulcan."

"You are still that. But you are more. It has been earned."

Spock's eyes closed. The Doctor's hands reached up to Spock's face assuming the Vulcan contact points. "Accept."

Spock seemed to nod in the Doctor's grasp. Spock's hands fell away from the Doctor, then the Doctor's from him. The Doctor came to a half sitting position. Spock's head was still bent, his eyes closed.

"Spock!" cried Kirk, heading for the door. McCoy and Stephans stopped him.

"No, Jim!" McCoy said. "You've got to let the Doctor finish now."

The Doctor took hold of Spock's hands, which were lying limply on the bed.

"Spock," the Doctor called, then louder, "*Spock!*"

Spock's eyes opened. There was a depth to them that Kirk had rarely seen before.

"What have you given me?"

"More than you had before, but nothing you haven't earned, were not entitled to, or more than you can handle. Why not ask what you have given me?"

Spock's eyes met the Doctor's. The Doctor smiled. "Spock, I am whole again. I think that you can realize what that means. I know you, now, and I know what you risked. I risked no more than I have risked before, and for no more reason. Accept my gift, my friend. Look on it as repayment for what my people failed to do in this universe for your people." Spock looked intently at the Doctor and nodded.

The Doctor turned to the window. "Captain, I believe that I have the solution to the problem."

McCoy opened the door.

Spock got up slowly. Kirk went to him. "Spock, are you all right?"

"I believe so, Captain. It was a ... most unusual experience."

"Spock," called the Doctor, "come on, we've got to get this thing solved."

"Coming."

The two left the room. Kirk and Stephans followed. McCoy decided that he was going to review the medical records of the happening again.

"Lieutenant," said Kirk, walking behind Spock and the Doctor as they headed toward the briefing room, "What has Spock got now that he didn't have before?"

"It's difficult to say, Captain. Certainly some expanded knowledge or awareness normally unique to Time Lords. Perhaps an increase in his own telepathic abilities, perhaps some of the Doctor's sense of humor."

"Lieutenant, I don't find that particularly amusing."

"No, sir," she replied with a sheepish smile, "but don't you think it would be interesting?"

"No."

"Well, sir, you should be aware that it's not uncommon after such a melding for the participants to take on each other's characteristics, for a time."

Stephans nodded her head at the two ahead of them. Kirk saw that Spock was accepting one of the Doctor's jelly babies.

"Well, Lieutenant, if it gets us out of this universe and back into our own, I can tolerate anything."

"I hope that your tolerance is up to it, Captain."



Back in the briefing room, both the Doctor and Spock resurveyed the computer display. After a few minutes, the Doctor started smiling. Leaning on the table, he turned and looked at Spock.

"Do you see it?"

Still looking puzzled, Spock indicated an area of the equation. "There?"

"Exactly."

It seemed to Kirk that Spock was smiling back at the Doctor, but no change was visible except the disappearance of puzzlement. He glanced at Lt. Stephans and she nodded. So he wasn't the only one to have noticed something!

The Doctor started entering some new figures into the computer and the display changed. "You could probably work it out, but you can see where using that formula would have been disastrous to you."

"Indeed." Spock nodded.

"What was the matter?" Kirk asked.

The Doctor looked at Spock and gestured as if giving him the center stage.

"The time factor, Captain."

"Time factor?"

"Yes, in transferring between universes there is always an inherent time factor. Had we tried to return to our universe using the original formula, we would have arrived in the correct universe, but three hundred years before the time we disappeared." Spock turned to the Doctor, one eyebrow cocked.

"A somewhat simplified explanation, but correct. With this change, you should return within five minutes of the time you left and you will not need to return to the Sontaran area."

Scotty had been eyeing the changed equation and suddenly spoke. "Cap'n, it looks like this'll do the trick, but we haven't got the power for it."

Spock and the Doctor surveyed the equation. Spock nodded. "Mr. Scott is correct, Captain. The new formula calls for at least one third again as much power as our systems will give us."

"Could we reverse the polarity?" the Doctor asked.

"Doctor, ye can't be serious," exclaimed Scotty.

"I do not think that will work ... this time." Kirk could have sworn that Spock was trying to keep from laughing.

"Well, well, never a solution but another problem," said the Doctor. "What will you need to solve this one?"

"At least six more dilithium crystals. I can jerry rig a system so that we could run the matter/antimatter reactor at fifty percent above maximum and give us the power when we need it, but we've got to have the dilithium."

Kirk noticed, without a great deal of surprise, that everyone in the room turned to the Doctor. Well, after all, this was his universe, and he seemed to like playing the *deus ex machina* and pulling the *Enterprise* out of difficulty.

"Well, Doctor, any ideas about where can we get the dilithium?"

"There is a planet in this area which has a supply of dilithium crystals."

"Can we buy, or trade with them to get the crystals?"

"I don't know." the Doctor sat forward pensively, templeing his hands in front of his face. Kirk felt a slight shock at this Spock-like gesture. He glanced over at Spock and felt his shock compound as he saw that Spock was leaning back in his chair looking ready to put his feet up on the table.

He felt Lt. Stephans touch him gently on the arm and heard her whisper, "Tolerance, Captain."

The Doctor untempled his hands and stood up.

"This planet is highly unusual, even for this universe. Apparently a humanoid race started to settle it about a thousand years ago. It should have been a normal settlement, everyone working together in the early years, wars and other problems coming along later, you know the patterns."

Kirk saw Lt. Stephans nodding. Apparently what the Doctor was saying was something familiar to CS&C.

"Except in this case, a split occurred very early. Some of the colonists were determined to maintain a high level of technology in spite of almost impossible difficulties, and others wanted to live the basic 'back to nature' life that seemed to fit the planet."

"So we have to deal with one group or the other?" Kirk asked.

"More than that. There were certain aspects about the planet that caused an abnormal development of what you call psychic powers in some of the people, on both sides. The 'back to nature' group accepted these and encouraged them. The technologists ignored and repressed them. The two groups have now developed two totally opposite ways of dealing with any type of problem."

"How does that make a difference." Kirk felt that the Doctor was seeing problems where there weren't any.

"It wouldn't - if it hadn't been for the invasion."

"Invasion?"

"Yes, an utterly ruthless race recently tried to conquer the planet and both sides ultimately joined together to defeat the invaders."

"Then we only have one side to deal with."

"Well, when the would-be conquerors left, they wanted to take revenge on the planet and the people that had withstood them, to prove that ultimately they could win, make an example of them. You know the type."

Kirk saw Spock nod out of the corner of his eye and, glancing over at him, saw that his feet were up on the table now. He was about to say something when a kick on the shins diverted him. He glared at Lt. Stephans who was staring innocently at the Doctor.

"At any rate, Captain," the Doctor went on, "the invaders placed several fission type bombs around the planet in such a fashion that at irregular periods for the next five years the orbits will decay and a bomb will come down."

"An' if they explode the bombs in orbit," Scott adds, "they'll set off a chain reaction of all o' them, and create a ring o' radiation around the planet that'll eventually destroy them all."

"Exactly."

"Sounds like we might be able to help." Kirk said.

"We can remove the bombs from their orbits with the tractor beam and dispose o' them somewhere else safely." said Scotty.

Kirk turned back to the Doctor. "Would that be sufficient for a trade for dilithium?"

"Possibly." The Doctor seemed to be studying his hands again. "Does your Prime Directive prevent you from helping other people?"

"No. Just from interfering with the natural development of an indigenous culture." responded Lt. Stephans.

"Well, on this planet, the dilithium crystals are mined and controlled by the back to nature group. The Norms, as they call themselves. They use the dilithium to expand and amplify their psychic abilities. And it was one of their cities that was hit by the first bomb that fell." The Doctor looked at Kirk expectantly.

"Are you suggesting that we supply medical aid?"

"Yes. Can you agree to that?"

Kirk responded without hesitation, "Absolutely."

"Very well, then, let's get to the planet and do some horse trading. The coordinates..." The Doctor punched up some figures on the computer display.

Spock sat upright again. "What is the name of this planet?"

"Lightunder," said the Doctor. He started out the door and stopped. "One more thing, you remember I mentioned that some of the people had psychic abilities?"

"Yes." Kirk failed to see why the Doctor was reemphasizing a point.

"Well, apparently the ability is tied to a recessive gene, because you can usually recognize a psychic by their physical appearance too."

"How?" Lt. Stephans asked. Kirk supposed that such an item might be of interest to a xenobiologist.

"By the color of their hair." The Doctor started out the door.

Stephans looked puzzled for a minute and then shouted, "What color is it?"

The Doctor's head reappeared around the corner. His grin reminded Kirk of the Cheshire cat in the old story.

"Green." He said and disappeared.



Kirk was concerned about his crew's morale. They had, after all, been overdue for R&R before starting the return trip to Earth, and had gone through a succession of emergencies in a rather short period of time.

He spent the evening walking around the ship, visiting areas where the crew was stationed and gathered.

In the gym Sulu was practicing what appeared to be a new and difficult series of fencing moves. "Improving your technique, Mr. Sulu?"

"Yes sir. The Doctor showed me some offensive moves that I'd never heard of before. The trick is to try to master them."

"The Doctor?"

"Yes, sir. He said he learned them from a captain in Cleopatra's army."

Kirk watched as Sulu went back to his practicing. He knew his history well enough to know that at the time of Cleopatra the swords used were not the epee Sulu was using. But Sulu seemed to find the whole thing credible, so Kirk decided not to try to argue about it.

Passing through the Engineering section, Kirk saw that Scotty seemed to be involved in analyzing a silver object about thirteen centimeters long and three centimeters in diameter. The silver object was something he'd never seen before.

"Something new, Scotty?"

"Aye, Cap'n. It's a sonic screwdriver, and it's a beautiful wee bairn."

"A sonic screwdriver?" The term sounded more like an exotic bar concoction than something that would fascinate his chief engineer.

"Aye, it's the Doctor's."

"The Doctor's?"

"Aye. I've been tryin' to persuade him to let me look at that TARDIS of his, but he doesnae seem to want to."

"So how did you get this - sonic screwdriver?"

"Well, he said that if I can duplicate it, he'll let me look at the TARDIS."

"Can you?" Kirk was confident that nothing mechanical was beyond Scotty's skills.

"Not yet. Oh, it's a bonnie gadget, an' so far I've found about thirty uses for it, but I cannae yet make another one."

"Did the Doctor make it?"

"Well, he designed it."

"Well, Scotty, keep at it, you'll find the secret."

"Och, if only, Cap'n. This is pure engineerin' genius. An' an honor it is to be working on it."

Kirk walked out shaking his head. The Doctor certainly seemed to have found the way to keep Scotty away from the TARDIS.

One of the rec rooms had been turned into what Lt. Kyle explained to Kirk as the site of the First Annual Starfleet Yo-Yo Championships.

"Where did all these yo-yos come from, Lieutenant?"

"Oh, the Doctor gave them to us."

"Did he set up the rules for this competition?"

"Set them up? No, sir. He just told us what the rules were back on Earth."

"Will he be participating?"

"No, sir. He said he'd already won his championship in back in 1923."

Kirk watched an Andorian ensign attempt a 'walk the doggie.'

"The Andorians are very good at this, sir. They seem to have a knack for it."

"That would certainly be helpful."

"If you'll excuse me, sir, my turn is coming up."

"Of course."

On his way to Rec Room 4, Kirk mulled over what he had seen. His crew was alert, happy, and there certainly seemed to be no cause for alarm. He decided to see if Spock would join him for a game of chess. Certainly they could both use the break.

In Rec Room 4, Spock was already playing chess. With the Doctor.

Kirk walked over and looked at the board. It was obviously near the end of the game, and as Kirk got closer, the Doctor made a move.

"Check and mate, I believe."

Spock studied the board. "You have learned the game well."

"It's much more challenging than the one dimensional version I'm used to. I'll have to teach it to K-9 when I get him fixed."

"K-9?" Kirk asked.

"My dog."

"Your dog? Plays chess?" Kirk looked at Spock in hopes of some explanation of the strange statement.

"Actually, K-9 is a highly sophisticated robot." Spock said, resetting the pieces on the boards. Kirk relaxed, at least his first officer was back to normal.

"And he is really a very good dog," Spock concluded.

The Doctor had looked slightly disappointed at Spock's mundane explanation and now smiled across the Board at him. Kirk was shocked to see his first officer smile back.

"Spock," Kirk began.

Spock turned to look at him, his face expressionless again.

"Um, would you say that the Doctor plays as illogically as humans?"

"Captain," one Vulcan eyebrow raised, "the Doctor's mind works in a unique fashion. I would not compare the processes."

"Would you care for the next game, Captain?" asked the Doctor, starting to get up from his chair.

"No, no." Kirk motioned him back down. "Mr. Spock and I play quite often." Of course, as their mission was ending, he and Spock... *Well*, he thought, *at least the Doctor was out of mischief*. He went back to his cabin determined to have a talk with McCoy the next day.



"Bones, are you sure Spock is all right?"

"Jim, he's fine. He just had me give him a complete physical."

"He *asked* for one?"

"Jim, it was the ... logical thing to do. He wanted to be sure that there were no after effects from that mind-meld experiment. Made me give the Doctor one, too. Not that I needed to add any more of those strange readings to my records."

"Don't you find that ... unusual?"

"Before this whole thing happened, yes. Now, well, I don't know what you're worried about, but Spock is healthier - in body and mind than I've ever seen him. What are you so worried about?"

"Bones, I don't know. I just have this strange feeling that something is wrong, with the *Enterprise*, and that the Doctor is somehow related to it."

"Jim, he certainly has done nothing but help us since we got in this mess. The crew likes him, I like him, and Spock likes him. You're the only one having problems dealing with him."

"Dr. McCoy," Nurse Chapel called from the next room, "Lieutenant Caffrey is fibrillating again."

"Damn. Jim, I'll talk to you later."

Kirk started glumly at the door as McCoy left. He couldn't believe that he was the one out of step. Every feeling that he'd learned to rely on told him that something was wrong.

"Bridge to Captain Kirk," Sulu's voice called from a nearby intercom.

"Kirk here."

"We're now entering the Lightunder system."

"I'm on my way."



Orbiting the planet the next day, the selected landing party met in one of the briefing rooms. Lt. Stephans had been working with the Doctor gathering information about the planet through a linkup of the TARDIS and the *Enterprise* sensors.

"Luckily the Techies – the technologists - and the Norms are still speaking to one another," she said. "We don't want to get involved in a civil war. Only one bomb has fallen on a populated area - the first one. It destroyed the Norm city of Metebe and left strong radioactive aftereffects. The population in the area is suffering from radiation exposure. The Norms were able to deflect the second bomb as it was falling, but burnt out - lost - five of their best telekenetics to do it. The area it landed in was unpopulated, but we will need to do a clean up of the radiation. The bombs are too distant for the Norms to move them further out, or keep them up, and the Techies don't have a clear enough understanding of how the internal mechanism works to enable the Norms to defuse one as it comes down. They are in a desperate situation and they know it. However, they are very proud and will resent any intrusion even though it is intended to be helpful."

"Full diplomacy, then, Lieutenant," said Kirk. He noticed that McCoy was staring at him but he had been too caught up in the plans for the planetary contact, including a possible use of the Doctor's TARDIS as the 'hospital base' to get back to talk to him. It would have to wait.

"Diplomacy in spades, Captain, if we hope to accomplish anything."

"Doctor, if you're ready?"

The Doctor had his feet up on the table and his hat over his head. Kirk was convinced he had been sleeping.

"What? Oh yes, are we ready?"

"We will be beaming down into the meeting room of the capital city of the Techies. The leaders of both sides should be there." Spock said.



As the group materialized, Kirk could see the surprise of the men and women in the room. He hoped that this display of superior technology would give them a bargaining advantage. He

looked around at the people. Even from their clothing he could distinguish between the two groups. The Techies wore military type one-piece suits, while the Norms wore leather and fur garments and all carried swords.

"We come in peace." Kirk said, spreading his hands to show the absence of weapons. "We offer our assistance..."

"We do not wish the assistance of aliens!" shouted one of the Norms, a short but powerfully built man. Murmurs from the others in the room indicated that they agreed. Kirk was starting to frame another sentence when the Doctor abruptly stepped forward.

"I am the Doctor, a Time Lord of Gallifrey," he said calmly. "We have determined that without our intervention your planet will be destroyed in sixteen months. We have decided that we will intervene to save you. For a price."

Kirk thought that the arrogance in his tone was unmistakable.

The man who had refused Kirk stared at the Doctor. His green hair seemed to bristle. "A Time Lord. We have heard of you." A small polished dilithium crystal that he wore on the inside of his left wrist began to glow as he lifted his hand. When his hand was level with his eyes the crystal suddenly flashed. Kirk felt what seemed to be a momentary pressure on his mind and heard Spock take a sudden deep breath. The Doctor seemed amused.

"So. It is true. What is your price? And who are these people with you? They are not Time Lords."

"Our price is six large energy crystals, the size you do not use because you cannot control them." The scorn in the Doctor's voice hung in the air. "These people have been chosen to assist me."

"What do you offer us?"

"Medical help for those of your people suffering from the effects of the first explosion. And the removal of the remaining devices from your skies."

"Will you treat our people in our own land, without bringing in large machines?"

"We will land our dwelling place at a location of your choosing. The machines we use will be no more to you than a black box that makes noises. What machines we have in our dwelling place will be of no concern to you."

"Will you teach us so that we may avoid something like this happening again?" one of the Techies asked.

The Doctor looked at him as if he was some kind of lower species of insect. "We will teach you enough to better defend yourselves." The Doctor looked at the group. "Do accept our offer?"

"We must discuss..." murmured the Techie.

"What is there to discuss?" said the Norm. "This is a Time Lord and he speaks the truth! Must we discuss if we wish to live or die?"

There was no dissenting voice from the group as they looked ruefully at each other. The Norm turned back to the Doctor.

"Very well, Time Lord. We will agree to your bargain. But those of you who come on our land must agree to abide by our customs."

"Agreed." said the Doctor. "Where do you wish us to place the medical treatment center?"

"We have established a place of healing in Besteco."

"Then we will land there. After we remove the devices orbiting your planet, we will send people to meet with you." The Doctor nodded at the Techies.

One of the Techies stepped forward. He was tall, with blond hair and a beard. "I am Lif d'Lewis, leader of my people. We will be honored to learn all that you are willing to teach us."

The Doctor nodded an acknowledgement of the Techie's statement. Kirk could not help thinking that if they had to deal only with this man and his people instead of the feisty Norm who had taken over the proceedings, the whole thing could have been handled better.

"Captain, if you would be so kind as to call for the beam up." The Doctor turned back to the Norm. "Alert your people at Besteco. We will be there in one hour." He turned and nodded at Kirk, obviously concluding the conversation. Kirk opened his communicator. He felt as though he was an Ensign again.

"Kirk to *Enterprise*, ready to beam up."

As the transporter beam locked onto the landing party, Kirk felt a sudden surge of anger. What right did the Doctor have to step in like that? He could feel the emotion pulsing through him as the group materialized on the *Enterprise*. As he turned to the Doctor, prepared to express his rage, Spock stepped forward.

"An excellent job, Doctor. I believe you accomplished everything we desired."

"Even what you offered the Techies is well within the limits of the Prime Directive. How did you know that was the way to approach them?" Lt. Stephans asked. The Doctor looked slightly surprised.

"It was the logical thing to do." He smiled at Spock, shaking his head slightly.

Kirk felt as if a bucket of ice water had been dumped on him. Spock and the Lieutenant were right. What they wanted to do was done. Why did it matter *who* had done it? Suppressing an uneasy feeling of having been in the wrong, he turned to McCoy. "Bones, are you and your medical team ready?"

"As ready as we can be, Jim. It's a good thing that we'd already expected that we'd have to use the TARDIS as our base. We've already installed some of our medical computers and laboratory equipment. The Doctor and Mr. Spock have also arranged to implement a direct link between the TARDIS' computer system and our medical computer."

"You're satisfied with the arrangements, then?"

"They're better than most I've had to work with under the Prime Directive on a primitive planet."

"Bones," said the Doctor. "If you could have your medical team at the TARDIS in, say, fifteen minutes? Lt. Stephans and I want to review some of the customs of the local people. Dorcy has a feeling that certain aspects of the local culture were not emphasized strongly enough in the standard briefing tape she made earlier. The Norms are very set in certain ways, and we cannot afford to offend them."

"We'll be there."

"Captain, if you are planning on coming down to the planet, you should hear this." The Doctor said.

"I'll have to get it later, Doctor. Right now, we need to get ready to dispose of these orbital bombs."

The Doctor looked at Kirk and, with a slight smile, nodded. "Of course, Captain."



Beaming down the TARDIS was a learning experience for Lt. Kyle, even under Spock's direction. Apparently something of the unique nature of the TARDIS had to be calculated for

during transportation and Kirk was thankful that the beam down with his crew aboard was successful.

He looked at the now empty transporter pads and turned to Spock.

"Spock, wouldn't it have been simpler for the Doctor to just take the TARDIS down on its own?"

"With the TARDIS in its present condition, there is always the chance that it might not land where it was directed."

"You mean that the Doctor can't control it."

"His level of control of the TARDIS suits him, Captain. In this situation, I preferred that we handle the transportation."

"Spock, there are some things that I don't understand."

"Indeed, Captain?" Kirk saw his first officer looking at him expectantly.

"Not now, Spock, we've got some bombs to get rid of."

"But of course, Captain."



The removal and defusing of the orbiting bombs was time consuming, but relatively simple for the *Enterprise* crew. The defused bombs were dumped into a sun of a nearby uninhabited planetary system. Kirk was pleased to see that his crew was handling the situation in their usual efficient fashion. Apparently with the disruptive influence of the Doctor removed, things were going to return to normal. Within a week, the *Enterprise* had returned and was orbiting Lightunder again.

Scotty, a team of *Enterprise* engineers, and selected members of the CS&C group beamed down to meet with Lyf d'Lewis. Another group was assigned to decontaminate the unpopulated area of the second explosion. Kirk decided to go down with Spock to see how the medical group was getting along.

In the transporter room, Spock placed a small black box on the transporter console.

"Lieutenant Kyle, initiate signaling sequence." Spock said.

"Yes sir."

"What's that all about, Spock?" Kirk asked as they walked toward the transporter pads.

"Without the adjustment and amplification that box provides for our signals, we would not be able to beam down inside the TARDIS. The Doctor has specifically requested that landing party at Besteco beam down directly into the TARDIS and await further contact."

"Are you saying that without that device, we wouldn't be able to transport into the TARDIS?"

"The TARDIS has unique defensive capabilities."

Kirk sighed. He was back in the strange world of the Doctor's again. They materialized inside the TARDIS control room, in a section cordoned off by a velvet rope, like an old style night club, just as the Doctor was coming in through the outside door.

"Oh, Spock," he said, "I'm glad you're here. Come on down to the workshop. I want to you to look at something."

Spock and the Doctor started through one of the other doors when the Doctor stuck his head back through the door.

"Oh, Captain, don't leave the TARDIS until you check with Lt. Stephans." Then he disappeared again.

Kirk waited for some time, his impatience growing. Other members of the medical team came hurriedly through the TARDIS control room, apparently to and from the area where the Doctor and Spock were. They barely acknowledged his presence. Lt. Stephans did not appear.

His patience finally exhausted, he decided that it would not hurt to go and look for the lieutenant or, preferably, McCoy. They probably just wanted to reemphasize some of the local customs. He had already seen the briefing tape twice, and had been taking care of himself on alien planets several years longer than the lieutenant, but if they wanted to make some special point, he'd find them and let them make it.

As he stepped out of the TARDIS, he noticed the 'hospital' seemed to be a converted large stone building. The TARDIS had actually been located in a room in the building.

The other rooms he saw as he walked down the hall were filled with patients. The medical personnel, both *Enterprise* personnel and some from the native population, seemed to be constantly busy. He didn't see McCoy or Stephans anywhere.

Eventually, his wanderings took him to the front door of the building. The sunlight and open air outside looked inviting after the closed-in aura of the hospital. He even seemed to be experiencing a slightly nauseous feeling from the strange pungency. All hospitals smell, he thought, and decided to step outside and look around.

Leaning on the beast-shaped stone structure at the foot of the hospital steps, he looked out at what seemed to be a town square. There were shops on three sides and the normal activity of people going in and out with and without parcels. Horses, or a very close facsimile of the Earth animal, aside from the cloven hooves and horn, and carriages were tied up by the stores.

He took a deep breath of the planet's air. It tasted good.

He noticed a girl, a young woman, standing by one of the shops, apparently waiting for someone. He looked at her intensely.

Her hair was a dark green, so dark as to be almost black. The slight breeze blowing against the lightweight rose fabric of her ankle length gown outlined a figure of delightful proportions.

She suddenly looked up at him, revealing dark black eyes formerly masked by thick and curly downcast eyelashes. Her skin was fair, highlighted by a natural rose shading on her cheeks and lips that Kirk could tell owed nothing to artifice. She met his gaze for an instant and then cast her eyes down again momentarily. He was not surprised when, after a brief moment, the open and provocative gaze met his again.

How lovely she was, and would be on any planet he had ever visited. The rose of her cheeks seemed to deepen and a faint smile appeared on her lips and the black eyes seemed to sparkle. He could not speak to her, he remembered that from the briefing tape, but he continued to smile into those brilliant eyes and it seemed that his smile was echoed back to him. It had been a long time for him, and his thoughts became more specific. Her body and his, meeting, blending... a horrified look appeared in the lovely eyes and she turned and ran into the shop. *Well, you can't win them all*, he thought wistfully.

He felt slightly dizzy and was turning to go back into the hospital when he saw Spock, McCoy and the Doctor coming out.

"Jim," said McCoy, "Have you seen Lt. Stephans?"

"Not yet, Bones." He replied, smiling.

Spock and McCoy exchanged glances of ... irritation? Why should seeing Lt. Stephans be such an important matter?

"Blithering idiot!" said the Doctor. "Get back inside and let us look at you!"

Kirk bristled. What right did the Doctor have to give such an order and, anyway, they could just as well look at him out here.

There was a commotion across the street. The four on the hospital steps turned.

Three men were approaching rapidly. Kirk saw the girl he had been looking at being bundled into a carriage with some other women.

The men paused, face-to-face now with the Doctor and the *Enterprise* crew. Kirk recognized one as the Norm who had been present at the meeting in the Techie capital.

The Norm looked at the Doctor. "You said that your people would abide by our customs."

"I did."

"This man," he motioned to Kirk, "has violated one of our women."

The Doctor seemed to take a deep breath. Spock and McCoy simultaneously exclaimed "Captain!" and "Jim!"

Kirk looked at them and, with a shock, realized that they seemed to be accepting the justification of the charge.

"Bones, Spock...I just got here!" He felt a wave of dizziness sweep over him.

"Time is relative, Captain," said the Doctor. He turned to the man who had stated the charge. "You are Raul d'Colm'n, head of the clan d'Colm'n, and you are making this charge."

"On behalf of my kinswoman, Namona d'Colm'n, I am."

"The one charged has the right of defense by challenge."

"With swords and knives." d'Colm'n looked scornfully at the Doctor.

"Will your clan accept the challenge of defense?"

"We will - and the best of our warriors will face this pervert personally."

"Where will the challenge be met?"

"In the hall of the d'Colm'n. We will take the accused there now."

"I am liegeland to the accused. I shall go with him."

"It is your right. But only you as liegeland may do so. And you must leave all of your alien machines behind. We have extra horses; we will leave now. The challenge will be on the morrow."

Kirk found himself clinging to the sculpture. The dizziness seemed to be getting worse. Was this a dream?

The three d'Colm'n went back across the square. Kirk heard the sound of a tricorder behind him. He turned and saw McCoy and Spock looking at something on the screen of McCoy's tricorder. They both looked grim. The Doctor was coming out of the door carrying a sword and knife in a curious double scabbard and a leather jacket. He started for Kirk when McCoy stopped him.

Odd, the three seemed to be blurring – had he been drinking? They were talking. He heard the words but didn't want to bother trying to make sense out of them. The stone sculpture felt cool and comfortable.

"How serious is the challenge?"

"Very. Don't worry, I'll take care of it. He'll be back to you in two days."

Now that was the Doctor talking - he'd take care of it! He thought he could handle anything. Well, James Kirk could handle this, and his ship, and his crew, and his friends. He'd show them – handle this situation the way he had all the others there had been and everything would be fine.

The blurring seemed to be getting worse and he could barely recognize McCoy's shape coming toward him with a hypospray. He felt the hypospray going in, but nothing seemed to happen. The Doctor was putting a leather jacket on him. He tried to shrug it off. He wasn't cold;

it was too hot on this damn planet. Spock's face suddenly came into focus and he realized that the Vulcan was pulling the jacket back on him.

"Jim?"

Was that Spock? He hadn't called him Jim in a long time. He tried to listen.

"Jim, you must do what the Doctor says. Do you understand?"

Kirk nodded. He felt Spock removing his phaser and communicator. Of course, even Spock wanted the Doctor to be in charge.

"Doctor, there is a problem."

The Doctor had been getting some medical supplies from McCoy and was stuffing them in his pockets.

"Problem, Spock?" Kirk felt the blue eyes focus on him. He turned away from the penetrating look. "If he doesn't cooperate, we will both be lost."

Spock turned back to Kirk who had now decided that he wouldn't look at any of them. The dizziness seemed to be passing, but the feeling of estrangement continued. He felt the Vulcan's hands grasping his head, turning it so they were face to face, the hands shifting into the mind-meld position.

"No, Spock!" Had he said that, or just thought it? The Vulcan's eyes, now close to his, seemed to soften, but he felt Spock's mind enter his.

You must return to us alive. You must do what the Doctor tells you to do

....has turned all of you away from me...he is an enemy...

He is not an enemy...he is our friend

...has fooled all of you...he has not fooled me....

Jim! You must not think that. Now, look back on what has happened. Review all of it. Is our friendship so fragile that you can no longer trust me?

I trust you.

Then trust the Doctor also. If you do not, we will never meet again.

Your word?

My word.

An alien touch - mind? - entered.

They are returning.

Spock broke off the meld. "He is in your hands, Doctor."

The Doctor nodded.

The dizziness had gone now, and Kirk was able to get on the horse without help. As they rode off, the Doctor rode next to Kirk, both surrounded by armed men.

Raul led the group through rough paths and rocky trails. Kirk was spending most of his time trying to stay on the horse. He was thankful when they arrived at their destination.

A castle-like structure, heavily fortified, stood on top of one of the smaller mountains. He noticed banners flying from the turrets, which matched the banners that several members of the party were carrying. A white sheep on a yellow and blue striped background with a bell inside a double ring in one corner seemed to be the emblem displayed.

"Why a sheep?" He could not resist asking the Doctor as they got off their horses in the courtyard of the castle.

The Doctor glanced at him. "You don't know the sheep on Lightunder. It is quite an appropriate emblem for this clan."

The armed men escorted them to a large chamber. They left and Raul stood facing the Doctor. Kirk's knees felt oddly weak again and he sat down in one of the high-backed chairs.

The little man looked up at the Doctor and said, "While you are not of our people, we will give you the guessting appropriate to the challenge."

"You honor us," said the Doctor.

Raul looked over at Kirk. "Is your man not well?"

"It has been a long trip and he has drunk too heavily."

Raul seemed to be weighing the Doctor's words. Kirk debated protesting that he had not been drinking at all but the effort seemed too much.

"That is no excuse." Raul made the statement definitive.

"It was not given as one."

Raul nodded as though the answer satisfied him.

"Food will be sent. The challenge will be fought at cock's crow on the morrow. You will be summoned."

"Who will be fighting for the d'Colm'n?"

"I shall be."

"As is my right, I shall fight for my liegeman."

"As you wish. I would not have thought him worth it."

Raul turned and left the room. Kirk suddenly realized that he limped. Then the significance of the last remarks sank in and the lethargy was swept away.

"What do you mean, you're fighting for me? I can fight for myself!"

"Captain," the Doctor came over and forced Kirk back into the chair. He leaned over one arm. "How skilled are you at fighting with sword and knife?"

"I've used those weapons."

"Against the most skilled man on a planet which uses those weapons?"

"Him?"

"Don't judge by appearances, Captain. For all his size and his injured leg, he is the best that this planet has produced. You could not win against him, particularly not in your current condition."

The dizziness seemed to be returning. Kirk shook his head, trying to clear it. "Can you?"

"Yes, most likely. It's our only chance. How do you feel?"

The words seemed to come out of a distance. Spock had said 'trust him'.

"Weak and dizzy. What's going on?"

The Doctor began rummaging in the pockets of his coat and pulled out one of McCoy's hyposprays. Kirk heard it hiss against his arm.

"That should help. I'll wake you when the food comes."

Kirk awoke to find himself supported by the Doctor's arm. He was lying in one of the beds. The Doctor was spooning some kind of broth into his mouth. He started to pull away but then relaxed.

"Well, I'm glad to see that Spock got through to you." Once the broth was finished, the Doctor offered Kirk a chunk of some type of whole grain bread and propped him up in the bed. "Eat as much of it as you can. You need the energy." The Doctor sat back in a chair and took out a bag of jelly babies.

"Doctor ... what the hell is wrong with me?"

"You didn't see Lt. Stephans before you left the TARDIS, did you?"

"No. I..."

"No, you didn't really think it was necessary. Well, because you didn't see her, you didn't receive the immunity injection you humans require for the current virus that's floating around. So now you've caught the disease."

"Then the shots I've been getting are part of the cure."

"The shots aid in relieving the symptoms, but we haven't yet found the cure. The mortality rate is ninety-seven percent."

Kirk suddenly lost his appetite. The Doctor reached out and took the remaining bread out of his hand.

"You know, Captain, there are times when it pays to listen to someone you don't like."

"Doctor, I..."

"Don't try to excuse it, Captain. I can understand what happened, and after all the years I spent with a certain brigadier, I should have recognized it earlier. You were about to wind up your mission in a blaze of glory, when you get sidetracked into this." The Doctor made a vaguely circular motion with his hand.

"I certainly wasn't prepared for anyone like you."

The Doctor chuckled. "But surely, Captain, you must realize that one of the things I did, however inadvertently, was to trigger some of the fears you have about what will happen when you *do* complete your mission."

"Changes."

"Yes, changes." the Doctor said cheerfully, "separation, loneliness, no more dragons to slay. And you're so bound to your ship that the separation..." He became oddly pensive. "I think you'd better tell me what happened in the square that got us into this mess."

Kirk related the events as he recalled them, noticing that the dizziness and the fog seemed to be approaching again. As he finished his story he felt the hypospray against his arm.

The hissing sound of another hypospray awoke him in the morning.

"Dr. McCoy won't be very pleased with what I'm doing, but you've got to stay on your feet during the next several hours. Here, drink this." The Doctor held out a small vial of liquid. Without hesitating, Kirk drank it. The effect was immediate; a feeling of normalcy returned. He got out of the bed and saw the Doctor strapping on the double scabbard. He was wearing only the spotless, flowing white shirt, tweed pants, and boots. The rest of his clothes were laid in a neat pile. "Can you carry those?"

"Yes."

The Doctor pulled the sword from the scabbard and looked at it. A curious shape, one edge curved slightly, while the other was straight. Both edges were honed to a fine sharpness. The strange blend of direct and curved line met in an elongated point.

"That's an unusual sword." Kirk commented.

"It's designed for great efficiency. Because of the curved edge, you gain an impetus to your blow if you decide to swing at your enemy, but the point still allows for the thrust." His voice seemed quite academic. "Do you see these grooves?" He indicated two channels in each side of the weapon. "They're blood grooves. Sink your weapon into your enemy to that depth and then quickly remove it, a suction is created, causing an even greater loss of blood than with a flat sided weapon."

With a sudden intuition, Kirk said, "You don't like weapons, do you?"

"Aren't all men supposed to enjoy the fight?" the Doctor asked grimly.

"You don't even travel armed. You were completely defenseless when you came out of the TARDIS."

"It has been my experience that if you go about armed, more people are apt to attack you than otherwise. You humans seem to feel an absolute compulsion to have some weapon or another on you."

"I think for us it's a form of security, that we expect more attacks than welcomes. To leave all weapons behind, consistently, would be a step beyond our understanding ourselves."

"I didn't picture you as a philosopher, Captain."

"Not a philosopher, but as a starship captain, I have to have some understanding of any crew, and most of them are human, like me." Kirk smiled wryly.

The Doctor looked at Kirk with puzzlement and Kirk wondered what he said that surprised the Doctor in some fashion.

A knock sounded at the door.

"Our escorts." said the Doctor.

They were led down into a large circular hall. The seating was all around the sides, sloped so that all could have a good view, with the entrances from the front and back. It all reminded Kirk unpleasantly of the ancient Roman gladiatorial contests.

The Doctor and Kirk stepped onto the floor, their escorts falling back. The Doctor motioned to Kirk. "Stand back away from the combat area and *do not interfere!* ***Whatever happens.*** If I'm killed, they'll be required to let you go."

"Then you're not certain about winning."

"Of course I am," said the Doctor huffily. "The probability that I can defeat Raul is at least, oh, ninety percent." He seemed to think for a minute, then added, "Well, seventy percent anyway." He started out for the center of the room and then turned back to Kirk, smiling. "At the very least, it's a hundred percent better than your chances!"

As Kirk watched the Doctor turn and walk into the center, he realized that he was nearly laughing. All his fears and distrust of the Doctor seemed to have vanished. The Doctor was what he was and was worthy of all the trust that Spock and McCoy had placed in him; now Kirk would place his trust in him, too. If he had been the better swordsman, the Doctor would have made him fight his own battle. As it was, the Doctor would fight for him.

Raul emerged from the other door, dressed in full swordsman's outfit - leather, silver, the sword and the knife. The two men accompanying him stepped to one side and Raul, his green hair blazing, walked to the center.

A gong sounded and both men drew their weapons.

The fight began slowly, both men circling, taking cautious feints at each other, looking for weaknesses.

When the action finally began, Kirk had a few uneasy moments as the Doctor seemed to be outclassed, facing the skill of a man trained to live and die with bladed weapons. Then he noticed the Doctor was consistently moving more rapidly than Raul, forcing Raul to turn on his injured leg. While Raul was making frequent thrusts and passes at the Doctor, the Doctor rarely had to block them. He seemed to be moving one step ahead of his opponent. Then, unexpectedly, the Doctor went on the offense, driving Raul around the floor. Within seconds, the Doctor gained the advantage. Kirk saw Raul fall, disarmed, with the Doctor's sword at his throat.

"Your life is forfeit to me and mine, Raul, and the innocence of my man is proved by your own laws."

"Then kill me quickly, in honor."

"In honor, I shall not do that. I would establish the truth of this matter. All we have proven here is that I'm the better swordsman. I give you leave to probe the mind of my leigeman for the truth. If you agree to verify it by putting your cousin Namona under the truthspell."

"This is not in accordance with our ways."

"Is death then more important to you than truth?"

The Doctor's sword remained steadily at his exposed throat.

"I will grant you what you ask."

A murmur rose up around the hall.

Raul glared at the Doctor. The Doctor moved his sword to one side and Raul stood.

"*Quiet!*" Raul commanded the onlookers, "It will be as I have said!" He turned to the Doctor. "Call forth your man." He then turned to his escorts. "Summon Namona and El Donna."

"Captain." The Doctor motioned Kirk to the center of the floor as he unbuckled the scabbard, letting the weapons fall to the floor. Kirk moved quickly.

As he handed the Doctor his coats, he whispered, "What's going to happen?"

"We're going to let them find out what really happened." The Doctor shrugged into his longer outer coat, wrapped his scarf around his throat, and settled his hat on his head. "Raul will mind-probe you. Just concentrate on what happened. He isn't interested in anything else."

Namona, dressed all in white, eyes cast down, entered from the other side, accompanied by another woman, slighter, darker, with a dilithium crystal worn in the hollow of her neck.

The two women joined the men in the center of the hall.

"El Donna," said Raul, "Place Namona under the truthspell."

"As you wish, Raul." The words were submissive but Kirk felt that had she so wished, a refusal could just as easily have been granted. She turned to Namona. "Child, look at me."

Namona's eyes rose. As they met El Donna's, the crystal at El Donna's throat pulsed with energy. Namona stood, eyes fixed on space.

El Donna turned back to Raul. "It is done."

Raul faced Kirk. Kirk looked down into the dark eyes and was suddenly thankful that the Doctor had been the one fighting this man.

The mind contact was sudden and sharp, like a knife burning in his mind, quite unlike the feeling Kirk had ever had with Spock. For a moment, Kirk tried to resist. Then, remembering what the Doctor had said, he concentrated on the happening in the square.

The contact broke off. Kirk felt weakened and was thankful when the Doctor moved over and took his arm.

Raul turned to the wide-eyed girl. "So, then, is this how it was?"

Kirk felt that he could almost see the exchange between the two minds.

"Yes, it is as he remembers."

Raul's hand flew forward, Namona reeling under the blow.

Kirk started toward Raul, but the Doctor restrained him.

"Fool!" Raul turned to El Donna. "Return her to the nursery for another year until she is prepared to live with adults!"

"As you wish." El Donna motioned and two women came and removed the now sobbing girl.

Raul faced the Doctor and ceremoniously bowed. "All honor to you and your liegeman. My home is yours."

"Honor to you for being willing to make a change," the Doctor replied, bowing in return. He stood for a moment, looking at Raul questioningly. "If you can accept change, then I would talk to you for a moment before we leave."

"Very well." Raul called toward the door. "Pad!" A young man stepped forward from the group on the far side. "See that horses and an escort are provided for our guests. El Donna, while the liegelord and I speak, will you accompany the liegeman to the horses?" El Donna nodded her head in agreement. Raul turned back to the Doctor. "No doubt your liegeman will wish to check that everything is in order."

"No doubt," replied the Doctor wryly, glancing at Kirk.

The Doctor and Raul walked off together. Kirk noticed that while his legs still seemed to be stable, the fog had returned, edging his thoughts.

"Captain?" It was El Donna. "Will you please come with me? We can await Raul and the Doctor outside."

She turned and led the way through the building. As they reached the entrance, Kirk was thankful to see that there were some stone benches in front. The horses and escort were not yet there.

"May we sit while we're waiting?" Kirk asked.

El Donna nodded. He was thankful that she did not seem disposed to chatter, yet he wanted to ask some questions.

"You have questions, Captain?"

"Yes, if it would not be offensive. I don't understand all of your ways."

"I think that you understand very few of our ways, but you may ask your questions."

With an effort, Kirk tried to concentrate on the main point. The fog seemed to clear for a minute; he noticed that the crystal at El Donna's neck was glowing. "Why did Raul hit Namona?" *God*, he thought, *that was blunt*.

"A blunt question is preferable if it enables the appropriate answer. Raul hit Namona for two reasons. First, it is customary among our women, especially those with high powers, not to look at any man other than one's own family until after marriage. You seem shocked, Captain, but I can tell you that her bold glances of themselves would have been sufficient to require punishment. As it was, her worst crime was in claiming forced violation after she read your response to her given invitation."

"You're saying she read my mind? What I was thinking about her?" Kirk felt a sudden sinking feeling. His thoughts? A mental rape ... and they said *she* was guilty? "Well, I did..."

"Captain." The lithe figure turned to him and dark eyes gazed sympathetically but with some hint of amusement into his. "Have you ever physically raped a woman?"

"No." *Never had to*, he thought and felt himself flush as he saw by the answering gleam in her eyes that she caught that additional thought.

"Our custom of not looking at strange men is for our own protection. There are some whose thoughts would be without doubt, rape. Your thoughts, on the other hand – oh yes, Raul read them, so have we all - were flattering, stimulating, and exciting, for any woman who was the direct object of them. You are embarrassed. There is no need to be. We all have our passions and desires, and yours for Namona was not in any way perverted or debased. Her reaction, on the other hand, showed that she does not yet deserve to be called woman, but is still a child, and will now be treated as such. What she did could have caused at least one needless death, had it not been for your liegelord. Do you understand this?"

It was strange but... "Yes...although I must say that I'll be thankful to leave this planet. I don't like the feeling that my mind is open to everyone."

"Not to everyone. That would be dishonorable, and exhausting for the true telepath. I have just been scanning your surface thoughts, to facilitate our conversation."

With a clatter of hooves, Kirk saw the horses being brought around, and wondered if he was going to be able to make it back. He felt the fog disappear and a soft strength enter his body. He turned to the woman beside him. Her eyes were closed and the jewel at her throat was pulsing. The dark eyes opened and looked into his.

"You will make it back, and to your home." A gentle smile seemed to caress him. "I must go now. Raul and the Doctor are coming."

Kirk eyed the horses without enthusiasm. While he was feeling better, the thought of subjecting his still sore muscles to another trip on the beast was not appealing. Beside him he heard El Donna sigh. "This much, too, then, Captain." He looked back down at her to see the crystal pulsing again.

"What?"

"It is a small thing, Captain. A gift from me to you. That you may have some not-so-unpleasant memories of this planet." The Doctor and Raul were coming out of the door. She turned and left.

"Coming, Captain?" said the Doctor as he moved past Kirk and mounted.

Kirk followed, getting on the horse behind the Doctor's. As he mounted, he realized that somehow his body seemed to know how to ride and handle the animal. Things seemed to fit. The double reins, the saddle and stirrups. He was a part of the animal. Kirk looked over to the doorway where El Donna was standing. An enigmatic smile was on her lips as the group rode away.

Riding through the hills, he thought about her. The Doctor had pulled slightly ahead and was talking to the leader of their escorts, the young man Raul had called Pad.

Why was the armed escort needed, Kirk wondered. There had been no trouble on the way up and the countryside certainly seemed peaceful. Now, at mid-morning, there was not even the need for the leather jacket he had worn on the ride up.

A flash of light and shouting broke his thoughts. Phasers? The leading members of the party and their mounts had gone down. The Doctor was reining his horse sharply around. Without hesitation, Kirk followed.

"Pad!" the Doctor called, "Get out of here!"

"We do not retreat!" The remaining party pulled out their swords, preparing to attack.

Swords against phasers? Kirk kicked his horse into a gallop and headed down the trail after the Doctor. The light flared again and the Doctor looked back. He shook his head and led the way off the trail into a rocky pass.

The Doctor dismounted and gave his horse a slap on the rump, sending it on its way. "Let the horses go. They'll be good decoys." Kirk quickly followed suit. As his horse galloped away, he followed the Doctor up the side of the mountain and joined him, crouching behind a large rock.

"What was that all about?"

"Daleks," said the Doctor grimly.

"What are Daleks?"

"The ones who invaded this planet before. Apparently, they left a small group behind to keep the pressure on as the bombs came down." The Doctor cautiously stood up and looked over the top of the rock. Kirk stayed down, watching him.

"YOU! ARE! THE DOC! TOR!" A metallic artificial voice frantically echoed from the rocks. The Doctor stood completely still, motioning Kirk to stay down.

"EXTERMINATE! THE DOC! TOR!"

"NO! I WISH TO QUESTION HIM FIRST!"

At least two of them out there, Kirk thought, probably more. There was an utterly vicious tone in the voices.

The Doctor moved to the front of the rock.

No time for plans or signals. Did the Doctor expect him to follow and attempt a rescue or leave?

"PUT! THAT! DOWN! OBEY!" said the metallic voices. A brief flair of light flickered among the rocks.

"What, this? It's only a toy," said the Doctor plaintively.

"YOU! WILL! COME! WITH! US! YOU! WILL! KEEP! YOUR! HANDS! IN! SIGHT! NOW!"

"Now, now, no need to shove."

Kirk heard noises as the group moved away. He peered cautiously around one corner of the rock. He could see the Doctor and four strange dome shaped metal creatures about five feet high moving down the path. He waited until they went around a bend and started to follow.

As he came out, he saw a mark on one of the rocks and, looking down, saw the Doctor's yo-yo on the ground. He picked it up. A child's toy, but the Doctor had risked something to leave it. There might be a purpose for it.

He continued trailing the Doctor and his captors. *These Daleks seem like some type of robot, but with an independent mind,* he thought. *Certainly an eminently practical design; not at all anthropomorphic.* The weaponry seemed to be built in as one of the projections from the center of the bullet-like body. The other projection was probably a 'hand', although it bore no resemblance to anything humanoid. More like some sort of suction cup. A third projection near the rounded top rotated as if the creature used it as an eye. He couldn't tell how they moved. The base of the body was so close to the ground that nothing could be seen. *Couldn't be wheels in this terrain – maybe some type of an air suspension system?* However they came about, their creation was inspired and, with the attitude they exhibited, diabolical.



The group came to a circular stone structure. A brief noise and an opening appeared in one side and they went in. The opening closed. *Some kind of a force field*, he thought. He crept cautiously up to the sides. Solid rock, but the structure stopped about nine feet up. *Where there's a wall, there's a way*, Kirk thought and realized that the fog was pressing on his mind again. *No*, he thought, *not yet*, and pushed it back. *These Daleks don't have feet or legs or real arms, they might not be prepared for someone attacking from the top of the wall*. Finding hand and footholds in the rough rock, he made his way to the top, the yo-yo held tight in his mouth. *Like a weapon*, he thought. *Could it become one?*

Lying down flat on the top, he looked down inside. The Doctor was standing in the middle of the structure. A strange light surrounded him.

"WHY! HAVE! YOU! COME! HERE! ANSWER!" asked one of the Daleks and the light around the Doctor changed color. The Doctor did not respond and the light flickered again. It seemed to be tightening on him. *Another force field*, Kirk thought.

"I was just looking around. What are you doing here?" The Doctor lifted his head and smiled at the nearest Dalek.

At least he was conscious, and if he was conscious, and if the force field could be removed... Kirk moved slowly along the wall looking for some type of control panel inside the complex.

"I! DO! NOT! BELIEVE! YOU! YOU! WILL! TELL! THE! TRUTH! OBEY!"

"EXTERMINATE!"

"NO! HE! MAY! HAVE! INFORMATION! WE! NEED!"

The light changed color again and Kirk heard the Doctor gasp. If he didn't act quickly, the Doctor wouldn't be able to get out. Kirk spotted what looked like a control panel - switches, buttons, flashing lights. He crawled so that he was directly above it. *Now, one leap down*. He glanced over at the Doctor and caught a definite glance that said 'no'.

"Do you still like blue?" the Doctor said to the Dalek who was questioning him.

"THAT! IS! NOT! AN! ANSWER!"

The light changed again.

Blue? There was one panel glowing that color. Kirk looked at the Doctor, then gauged the weight of the yo-yo in his hand. *Heavy - maybe not just a normal yo-yo then. And on a string*. Kirk smiled. *Method in the Doctor's madness*. He slipped his finger through the loop at the end of the string and sent the weight down toward the panel.

Missed. He snagged it as it rebounded back up and tried again.

"YOU! WILL! TELL! US! WHAT! WE! WANT! TO! KNOW! OBEY!"

"Difficult without breathing."

Kirk slung the yo-yo down, and felt the weight rebound as it hit the panel, smashing it. The power over the complex died and the Doctor ran for the opening. Kirk slid off the wall as the Doctor ran around to meet him. The Doctor pulled him down behind another rock. "Stay here. They'll be looking for us to be running."

They remained hidden until dusk came, saying nothing. The Doctor motioned and Kirk followed him further into the mountains. The Doctor ducked into a small cave.

"Hm. Acceptable," he said, as he motioned for Kirk to follow him inside. Kirk collapsed on one wall while the Doctor leaned against the other.

"The Daleks," Kirk began, "What the hell are they? Robots?"

"No, not quite. Inside that pepper pot shell is a nasty, foul tempered, xenophobic cephalopod, whose only goal is the ultimate dominance of the Daleks over every other sentient being in the universe, no matter how many millennia it takes. Quite relentless."

"Doctor," said Kirk, "Don't you know any nice people?"

The Doctor turned to Kirk. "Where did you learn to ride an alien horse like that in one day?"

Kirk looked at him, suddenly at a loss. *Oh no*, he thought, *he's off on a tangent*. The blue eyes looking into his were quite serious.

"I think that El Donna did something to me before we left."

"Psychically?"

"I think so. I felt better and I suddenly knew how to handle that horse. I can't think of any other way for that to have happened. These horses are pretty different than the ones on Earth."

"That last bit of riding probably saved your life. And now..."

Kirk waited patiently. The Doctor seemed to be in another world, but now Kirk accepted this as part of the way the alien's mind worked. They were alone, in a wilderness, with no weapons or communication devices, pursued by Daleks. Anything the Doctor could think of would help.

"Do have any psychic abilities?" the Doctor asked.

"No. I've always tested negative."

"Tests aren't always the whole answer."

"What are you thinking of doing?"

"There is one possibility." The Doctor stopped and looked down at his hands. Kirk realized that one of them had been burned by the Dalek's weapon.

"Well, whatever you've got, I'm willing to give it a try."

The Doctor studied Kirk carefully as he said, "El Donna is the most powerful psychic on this planet. You have recently been in telepathic contact with her. For her to do what she did, she obviously felt some attraction to you." He stopped.

Kirk waited and when the Doctor did not continue said, "The problem is, I'm not a telepath, so I can't reach her."

"Yes, that is the difficult part of this."

"Can't you reach her?"

"I haven't had the contact I need to establish a link. I know *of* her - I don't *know* her." The Doctor seemed to be studying the side of the rock.

"Doctor, if you'll tell me what you want me to do, I'll do it."

The Doctor looked at Kirk and smiled.

"I want you to try to reach El Donna mentally. I will tap into your mind, enable your signal, boost it, and then talk to her through your mind."

"You want me to be a link between the two of you?"

"More of a telepathic conduit. Essentially, I'd be the transmitter, you'd determine the broadcast frequency. I should warn you, it won't be easy."

Kirk looked at the Doctor intently. He was still serious.

"Okay, let's try it. What do I do?"

"Picture her in your mind. As clearly and as accurately as you can. When the picture is sharp, call her name."

Kirk nodded, and leaned back against the wall and closed his eyes. He felt one of the Doctor's hands resting lightly on his head. *Odd*, he thought, he could easily accept the idea of telepathy through touch, *but over a distance...*

It can be done. The Doctor's thought in his mind was as unique as his voice. Not like Spock at all.

Mind-touch is a matchless muteness means of identification. Think of El Donna.

Kirk tried to remember her. The dark eyes, the smile, the tilt of her head, the mass of dark green hair, the image swirled in his mind but he couldn't stabilize it. He realized he was breathing more rapidly and the Doctor's hand dropped away.

Kirk opened his eyes and looked at the Doctor. The Doctor was looking at the opposite wall of the cave. He seemed almost discouraged.

Damn, Kirk thought, we can't give up now.

"Try again?" Kirk said lightly.

"Do you feel up to it? This may turn out to be physically painful to you, and in your present condition..."

"I'll make it."

He closed his eyes again and felt the Doctor's hand come back on his head.

He summoned the image again. It came, moving, refusing to become firm. He felt weak. No wonder Spock was leery of using the mind-meld if it was this tiring. *Come on, he thought, when have you ever had trouble remembering a pretty face?*

Something is missing, the Doctor thought.

Missing? Kirk tried not to look at the image but to think about the woman he had just left.

The crystal? he thought at the Doctor. *Of course, the crystal is part of her.*

Kirk grabbed the floating image and placed the dilithium crystal at her neck. Immediately the image became sharp and clear. As if she was in his mind, looking at him. He felt the Doctor's mind move in his.

NOW! - call her!

El Donna...El Donna!

Without warning, another mind touched his. He felt his body double over in a spasm and the Doctor's other hand catch and cradle his head.

Captain? Why are you calling me? The spasm seemed to ease slightly as he felt her mind settle into his.

The Doctor needs to talk to you.

The Doctor? Your liegeland?

Yes. Here... Kirk felt the Doctor's mind move forward and meet El Donna's. Now he could sit back and let these two handle it.

The invaders - the Daleks - are still here. A rear guard, in the mountains.

So, the machines have not gone.

They have killed our escort. We must all join now to destroy them.

Before, myself and others of the greatest power joined with the machine lovers - those whom you call the Techies. Now the others of the Power who joined with me are gone. Our powers are diminished. Our weapons cannot equal theirs. What can we do??

It is possible that an avalanche could be triggered on their camp. Do you have enough of the Power left to do that?

I would need the assistance of others. They will have to come from afar. It will take time.

Kirk felt himself being stirred from his bystander role.

Doctor. He could sense that his body was objecting to the effort it was taking to enter the conversation.

What?

You are not alone in this.

What do you mean?

There is the Enterprise.

The Doctor did not respond.

Had you forgotten?

What about your Prime Directive?

To hell with the Prime Directive!

He could feel the Doctor's laughter and it somehow made the pain in his body ease.

Captain, I think I like you.

Can we reach her?

Who is this "enterprise"? El Donna questioned sharply.

It is his ship.

Strange, to love a machine so.

Doctor.

Kirk realized that if they did not act quickly his body would collapse from the effects of the linking. *Can we reach Spock?*

Image him for me, Captain, and I shall reach him. El Donna's mental voice was brisk and quite matter-of-fact.

Kirk again tried to summon a mental image. *This time, Spock.* His muscles were quivering as if he had been running too long.

With this image I can help. The Doctor's mind swept into his.

The image he had been striving for sharpened and became clear.

Captain, I can drop you from the link now.

No, Doctor. This time he was the one laughing. *If you want the Enterprise to fire her phasers on this planet, I have to give the order.*

Even if it costs you your life?

If it does – then it does. He felt his muscles contract tightly, almost in a spasm.

Captain...as you wish it.

One part of his mind felt the Doctor holding him, the other brought the image of Spock into focus again.

El Donna. The Doctor called. *The image - can you reach this man?*

Yes.

And Spock was there.

Captain - Jim?! Spock's mind seemed reassuringly familiar.

Spock. Full phasers ... El Donna's mind was there, linked with the Doctor's and coordinates appeared in his mind.

Captain - the Prime Directive?

Spock -- No good to give Spock the answer that had so readily satisfied the Doctor. *The Daleks, the ones who invaded this planet before - still here - are the violators.* He felt his body spasm violently again and knew that the three minds in his felt it too.

Jim! Doctor, get him out of this!

My decision, Mr. Spock. You have your orders.

And the world slid away.



He came to lying on the floor of the cave, wrapped in Doctor's coat. The Doctor was standing at the entrance looking out.

"Doctor?" He tried to lift his head.

The Doctor moved back and made him lie down.

"Don't try to move. You won't have the strength. Don't even try to talk. Spock will never forgive me if I don't get you back safely."

Kirk took a deep breath. The Doctor was right. He didn't have any strength left.

"You missed the fireworks. That's the easiest time I've ever had with Daleks."

Odd, Kirk thought, he would have thought that the Doctor would be exuberant, but he seemed strangely subdued. He was taking a metal object out of his pocket, the sonic screwdriver Scotty had been trying to analyze.

"I'm setting this to a signal your transporter will be able to home in on. We should be having company soon." He smiled at Kirk, as a small section of the screwdriver seemed to extend. "At least you won't have to ride a horse back."

There was the familiar shimmer of the transporter beam and Spock and McCoy were there. McCoy moved quickly over to Kirk, the medical tricorder going. From the look on his face Kirk knew that the results were not good.

"Is this from that damned mind-meld of yours?" McCoy said, turning to the Doctor who was undeniably looking guilty. Kirk caught Spock's eye.

"Doctor McCoy, the decision to attempt the telepathic contact was the Captain's."

"He couldn't have known it would have this effect!"

"Bones," Kirk felt that he had to stop the argument. What was done was done. "It was my choice." He had to stop to take another deep breath. "Check the Doctor."

McCoy looked at him for a minute and then swung the tricorder over toward the Doctor. Kirk nearly laughed as he saw the burned hand disappear into a coat pocket.

"I'm fine," said the Doctor defiantly.

"Like hell you are. You've got second degree burns on your right hand, three broken ribs and what amounts to a punctured lung."

"Nonsense, I feel fine." The Doctor smiled at McCoy.

"Ha! At least this time I can treat you properly. And *that's* what I'm going to do!"

"Doctor McCoy," Spock interrupted, "I would suggest that we return to the hospital with your patients." Kirk closed his eyes again as he saw the Vulcan bending down to pick him up. In spite of the gentleness of the touch, he was unconscious again in seconds.



His next memories were nightmares. Strange but familiar faces hovering over him shouting, "Hang on, Captain, hang on, Jim, hang on. Hang on."

Damn it, I am hanging on!

He sensed a presence that was not shouting. He opened his eyes to see Spock standing by his bed.

"Thanks" he said.

"Captain?"

"You're not shouting."

"What did he say?" Another presence - he turned his head - the Doctor.

Kirk looked around the room.

Still on the planet. Well, that was where all the medical people were.

"He said something about shouting." Spock said, puzzled.

"Shouting?"

Kirk closed his eyes again.

"There has been no shouting in here." Spock said.

"Maybe not. Your medical indicators are showing an improvement now. Lt. Stephans! Come in here!"

The shouting started again. Worry, concern, fear echoing in his mind. "What's happened, what's wrong?"

"See? There! Thank you, Lieutenant, you can go."

The shouting stopped.

"Spock, with the changes in the DNA patterns..."

"Uncontrolled telepathy..."

"Why we're losing all the children..."

He opened his eyes again to see Spock and the Doctor staring at each other. The Doctor smiled and Spock nodded. They turned to leave the room and the Doctor turned back.

"Don't worry, Captain, there won't be anymore shouting."

And there wasn't. From his accidental remark the two had been able to link the effect of the infection to the use of uncontrolled psychic abilities - a relationship that had McCoy muttering for days.



Once McCoy was satisfied that the raging viral infection had finally been routed, Kirk was pronounced well enough to be beamed back to the ship and to the treatment of the medical crew still on board. Watching the medical team making preparations to transport him up, he rejoiced in being able to think clearly again, even though lifting a hand was exhausting. Then he had a thought.

"Bones." At least speaking wasn't so bad.

McCoy came over and stood by the bed.

"Jim, don't try to talk. It'll be quite a while before you get your strength back."

"It's okay. I want to talk to Spock."

McCoy looked at him with relief. "Well, I suppose you'll cause more trouble if I don't let you see him. You can have one minute." He went out the door and came back with Spock. "One minute, that's all."

"Of course, Doctor." Spock said and looked quizzically down at Kirk.

"Spock, I don't want the Doctor to leave until I get a chance to talk to him." Kirk looked up at Spock intently.

"Indeed, Captain?"

"I suspect he might try to slip away without saying goodbye. I have to talk to him before he goes."

Spock smiled slightly and Kirk was relieved to see that some of the influence of the Doctor's mind melding was still at work. At least he wasn't going to get a lecture on the illogic of wanting to say goodbye.

"Captain, Mr. Scott has not yet completed the design for the additional dilithium crystals. Even with the Doctor's help, it will take at least another two days. I am quite certain that the Doctor will not leave until the engineering is completed."

"Very good, Spock. Just have him see me before he goes."

"I will see to it, Captain."

Kirk smiled as his first officer turned and left. McCoy was right. Spock was easier with himself than he ever had been.

Still, once the Doctor has left, and they've returned to their universe and the effect of the meld had worn off ... could there be a whiplash effect to this? he thought as the medical team transferred him to a stretcher and the transporter brought them up to the *Enterprise*. He would have to talk to McCoy about it. If Spock suddenly took it into that Vulcan head of his that behaving as he had been was aberrational, Spock could wind up throwing away everything he had finally started to put together. Kirk wondered if there were any nut cults on Vulcan – probably not. Still, with Spock's tour of duty coming to an end, he would be quite free to leave Starfleet. Well, whatever Spock decided, he'd back him. *At any rate*, he thought, as they transferred him to the bed in Sickbay, *I wasn't going to be in any condition to command a starship for some time. And my hair was falling out.* He felt a hypospray against his arm and as he fell asleep thought of the Doctor blithely saying "Changes."



The next day Kirk awoke from a catnap to see McCoy standing by the bed.

"Good morning." McCoy said.

"Is that what it is? I've lost track."

"It's not surprising."

"Was it that bad?"

"We nearly lost you."

Kirk looked at McCoy and smiled. "Glad I missed it."

After a moment McCoy smiled back. "I'm getting too old for these close calls." McCoy paused for a moment. "I'm also getting too old to get used to another Spock."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Did anything ... unusual happen on that little trip you took with the Doctor?"

"Nothing you don't know about. I've seen the Doctor's report, it's quite accurate. Why?"

McCoy shook his head. "I can't tell you anything specific, but I'm positive that something happened that wasn't reported."

The events of the last days on Lightunder were unexpectedly replaying in Kirk's mind.



After getting Kirk settled, McCoy found that his other patient had disappeared, which didn't surprise McCoy at all. The Doctor had demonstrated that he had as strong an aversion for being confined for treatment as Kirk and Spock. He finally tracked him down in one of the TARDIS' laboratories, where he and Spock were studying the results of the latest tests.

"Doctor," McCoy said, "if you could tear yourself away for about two hours, I can treat you and send you back to work."

"I've got more important things to do," the Doctor snapped irritably. Spock looked at the Doctor with surprise.

"Doctor, it is illogical for you to assume that you can work with normal efficiency while you are in pain."

"In pain? Don't be ridiculous, my body heals very rapidly, my pain threshold is considerable, and lying about won't speed things up at all."

"While Dr. McCoy's medical treatment is quite primitive, I do not think that he will simply have you recline in a passive state and wait for your own healing process to function. Now, are you going to accompany him?"

"Spock, I'm fine. I don't need any medical treatment. I've got work to do." The Doctor turned back to the electronic projection he had been studying.

With one fluid motion, Spock administered the Vulcan neck pinch and caught the Doctor as he fell.

"Very efficient, Spock," McCoy said, smiling. "Ever considered working as an orderly?"



One of the rooms in the TARDIS had been converted into an emergency treatment area, with portable equipment from the Enterprise that enabled McCoy to treat almost any emergency. It only took a minute to remove the Doctor's outer coats and shirt and get him on the treatment table. Thankfully, the Doctor remained unconscious; the mood he was in, he would have been loudly protesting the whole time. As much as McCoy disliked reluctant patients, he disliked noisy reluctant patients even more. By the time the Doctor regained consciousness, McCoy completed his analysis of the damaged area involving the Doctor's rib cage and was calibrating the Berthod Ray Attenuator to speed up mending.

The Doctor's eyes snapped open "Why is a mouse when it spins?" After a second, his blue eyes went from McCoy, to Nurse Chapel, then focused accusingly on Spock. "You did something to me."

"It is quite illogical for you to attempt to work in a physical condition that is less than nominal." Spock replied quite calmly. "If you will excuse me," he said, turning to leave.

The Doctor looked ready to dispute Spock's statement when McCoy intervened. "Now, Doctor, there's no sense in getting angry at Spock."

"Angry? I never get angry," the Doctor said brusquely. "Even when people interfere with what I want to do, I don't get angry!"

"Well," Chapel observed, "you're doing the best imitation of a man about to get very angry that I've ever seen." She turned the attenuator on. "Trust me, if Mr. Spock hadn't dropped you, Dr. McCoy would have."

The Doctor looked at McCoy in surprise.

McCoy said, "I can now lay my hands on at least ten things that'll put you to sleep like a baby. And when, in my medical opinion, Doctor, you need medical treatment in order to remain a viable part of this team, I will not hesitate to use them. You may be the Doctor, Doctor, but I have the full medical responsibility for this team and I will not evade that responsibility by allowing any member to go off on some masochistic ego trip and ignore his body's own natural warning signs! Now, since your body is so much better than a human's, it probably won't take a couple of hours to heal under the Berthod ray, but you are going to stay here until Nurse Chapel confirms that your ribs and lung have healed. Now, let me see that hand."

The Doctor had listened to McCoy with an awed fascination and promptly held his hand out.

"Bones," he said, a wicked grin lighting up his face, "When you were in Medical School, what sort of a grade did you get in 'bedside manner'?"

"D minus," McCoy replied as he ran a scanner over the Doctor's injured hand. "That's a nasty burn."

"The Daleks do not have a reputation for being especially nice," the Doctor said wearily.

"This won't hurt, but your hand may be a little stiff until it heals." McCoy sprayed the burned area, put the Doctor's hand down, and glanced at the bruised area on the Doctor's side. "Good, the discoloration is already starting to fade. Now, I know you're going to get edgy just lying there, so I'm going to give you a sedative that will keep you quiet for about an hour. By the time you wake up, you'll be back to normal."

The Doctor did not protest as McCoy administered the hypospray. "Bones, I wish..."

"Wish what?"

"Well, you know," from the Doctor's voice, McCoy could tell that the medication was taking effect. "No one gets too old to learn a new way of being stupid."

McCoy looked at the now sleeping figure in puzzlement. He had no idea what occasioned that remark, and he knew any attempts to pursue it would be rebuffed.



During the next several days, McCoy became convinced that the Doctor was determined to demonstrate his superiority over the human members of the team. He worked without sleep, running test after test, building on the discovery of the relationship between the virus and uncontrolled psychic abilities, trying to find a clue to the control of the deadly elusive virus. The only sign of fatigue that McCoy could pinpoint was that his joking remarks were devolving into the lowest level of humor.

When an effective treatment was developed, McCoy was convinced that they were now in complete control of the situation. The Doctor's natural exuberance returned as patient after patient was successfully treated.

Meanwhile, each day saw Kirk's condition worsen.

McCoy could not enter the room where Kirk lay isolated, so he waited outside while the Doctor and Spock administered the treatment. After a longer time than any of the other patients had taken to respond, the Doctor emerged alone. His face was deadly serious.

"He's not responding."

"Not at all?"

"Well, he's not worse, but he's not at all better."

"Even if he doesn't get worse, he can't..."

"Three hours, maybe four." The fatigue that McCoy had been expecting was suddenly there in the Doctor's voice.

"Come on, Doctor," McCoy said, "I think we'd better sit down."

The Doctor did not protest as McCoy led him into a nearby vacant room. Once inside, however, another frantic burst of energy caused him to pace back and forth in the narrow space between the bed and the wall.

"It should have worked. Every test, every calculation, every other patient proved it." He stopped and turned to McCoy. "He's an unusual man, your Captain."

"He is." McCoy stated calmly. No sense in both of them getting upset. "He'll be the first starship commander to complete a five-year mission with ship and crew virtually intact."

"The first?" The Doctor looked surprised. "Why's that?"

"Because he knows when to go by the book, and when to throw it out."

"And we're going to lose him here."

The Doctor turned to the door, and McCoy was not surprised to see Spock come in, carrying one of the Enterprise's recording tablets, his expression tight, even for a Vulcan. The Doctor reached out and took the tablet from Spock's hand, looked at the notes and with a suddenness that made McCoy jump, then flung the tablet to the floor. He looked at it lying there and then looked at Spock.

"I know," the Doctor said, as if in response to an unspoken comment. "It doesn't change anything. But then again," he smiled wryly, "What's the point of being grown up if you can't be childish every once in a while?"

"Jim?" McCoy whispered to Spock.

"Still alive," Spock said evenly, "but the treatment is definitely ineffective."

"So now what?" McCoy asked.

"Try something else." The Doctor bent to pick up the tablet. "There's always something else."

"For what?"

McCoy looked over to see Lt. Stephans standing in the door behind Spock.

"I don't mean to interrupt, but it sounded as though someone was throwing things around."

"The Captain seems to be immune to the only treatment we have." The Doctor said bluntly. He offered Stephans the tablet. "Care to throw something around?"

"If it would help, I would. However, I don't think I'd be of much more help here."

Spock and the Doctor exchanged swift glances. "Explain," Spock said.

"My field is Xenobiology. The Captain's human..."

Spock's eyes lit up and the Doctor shouted, "That's it!" With a leap he was shaking her hand and patting her exuberantly on the back. "Good girl," he said, beaming at her.

"Doctor," McCoy said, "knowing why Jim doesn't respond to the treatment doesn't help us find a treatment he will respond to."

"Logically..." Spock said.

"Oh, pooh," interrupted the Doctor. "Logic merely enables one to be wrong with authority. We've got the same disease, curable in individuals of the same species and intractable in an individual of another species. All we have to find is the denominator of difference."

"Exactly," Spock said.

The Doctor looked at him and laughed. McCoy and Stephans smiled at each other.

"Now then," the Doctor said, "We have our best research sources right here." With one swift movement he had McCoy and Stephans seated next to each other on the bed and perched himself backwards on a chair opposite them. Spock pulled up a chair and sat down too.

McCoy looked at them. One was sitting in a proper and correct posture, leaning forward slightly with interest, the other was sprawled over and around the wrong side of the chair. Like two sides of a coin, he thought, and glanced at Lt. Stephans, wondering if the same thought had occurred to her.

"Now then," said the Doctor, "What do we know about this virus?"

"Its effectiveness is directly linked to the use of psychic abilities." McCoy answered.

"The uncontrolled use of psychic abilities." Spock corrected.

"Exactly," commented Lt. Stephans. "An individual with no active psychic ability, or a superior control, only contracts a mild case and recovers rapidly."

"We haven't had many of those," McCoy said.

"But I don't recall that the Captain was ever identified as even marginally psychic."

"He isn't... or at least he wasn't," McCoy said. "Now, the problem seems to be that what ability he does have is literally feeding the virus."

"But most of the adult Lightunder people we've seen have managed to pull through," the Doctor countered. "The major problem has been with the children, both in catching the virus and combating it."

"Not just 'children', Doctor," Lt. Stephans continued. "Specifically, the break occurs exactly with the completion of puberty."

McCoy looked at her in surprise. He hadn't realized that she'd had the time to do any research into the basic biological cycles on Lightunder.

"Quite right, Dorcy. Now, what're the differences during this time between Lightunderans and humans?" asked the Doctor.

The lieutenant nodded and abruptly stared into a corner of the room. McCoy looked at her in increasing astonishment.

"Doctor McCoy," Spock said dryly, "I believe we are about to see an example of Cultural Survey and Contact's new eidetic memory control training."

"Difference during pubertal transition - Lightunder and Terra." The lieutenant's voice had flattened somewhat, but with human control over the generation of the data. "Onset of puberty, the Lightunder humanoid experiences a flux in the production of an adrenaline-like hormonal substance. As production ebbs, the individual's psychic abilities, when present, overcome the natural balance and cause dizziness, spacial disorientation, hallucinations, and, in extreme cases, death. As the flux stabilizes to the adult level, the individual gradually acquires some level of control over the now active psychic abilities." She blinked and looked at the Doctor expectantly. "Does that sound helpful?"

The Doctor beamed at her with pleasure.

"What's the chemical formula for this substance?" McCoy asked.

"Carbon trinitrous hydroxide bonded in a trinitrous base of boron curzium carbonate."

McCoy shook his head. "Any mixture like that would kill Captain as surely as the virus." The four of them sat in silence. McCoy felt a sudden empathy for the Doctor's desire to throw things.

"But it's still a question of control." Spock said, leaning forward in his chair. "If the psychic abilities the captain has could be controlled in some other way..."

"Of course!" McCoy said. "If one of you could duplicate the chemical effect in a chemical fashion..."

Spock and the Doctor looked at each other.

"Can you do it?" McCoy asked.

He knew the answer from the look on the Doctor's face.

"No," Spock said.

The Doctor shook his head. "I seem to be good at starting things, but stopping this takes tremendous power under superb control." His voice was bleak.

"Is there someone on this planet who could?" The lieutenant asked in a level voice.

The Doctor's face brightened. "El Donna!" he said gleefully.

"Of course," Spock said. "She could do it ... but will she?"

The Doctor hesitated for a moment. "Yes, I think she will. She took a quite liking to your Captain ... I expect most people do." His voice had the same edge of defiance McCoy had heard before. This time Stephans picked it up and glanced questioningly at McCoy, who shrugged his own puzzlement.

"Can she be reached quickly?" Stephans asked, "our time is increasingly limited."

"I think I can get her attention," the Doctor said, turning to Spock, "with your help."

Spock nodded and the Doctor stood up.

"If you two are going to link up again, Doctor, you'd better lie down." McCoy said.

"Oh, very well, if you think it's necessary."

"I do, Doctor," said Spock.

The Doctor laid down on the bed. Spock sat on one side and placed his hands in position on the Doctor's head. The Doctor smiled at Spock and closed his eyes.

McCoy took a deep breath as he walked around to the foot of the bed and watched them establish their mental communication.

"This might be 'natural' to you two," McCoy growled, "but it sets my teeth on edge." He opened his medical tricorder and, hearing a hum behind him, noticed that the lieutenant had started hers.

"Monitoring the Doctor," she said.

"I've got Spock, then," McCoy replied. He winced when he saw the medical graphic display.

"They're both on the edge of exhaustive collapse," the lieutenant remarked.

The readings on McCoy's tricorder went suddenly askew, before assuming the pattern he had seen before when the two had melded.

"They're in the meld now," he said. "I didn't hear Spock say anything."

"He doesn't need to any more with the Doctor. If they were together much more, this kind of thing would be routine. Both hearts stabilizing rates."

"Blood pressure normal. Alpha and Gamma waves peaking."

Spock removed his hands from the Doctor and turned to McCoy. "She is on her way."

McCoy looked at the Doctor. He was lying very still and his eyes were still closed.

"What about the Doctor?"

"She and her escort will be teleporting here. The Doctor is acting as a location beam."

There was a multicolored burst of light near the bed and, with a slight popping noise, a woman and two men appeared. The lieutenant quickly shut off her tricorder and McCoy followed suit. *Damn! but she is lovely*, McCoy thought. Petite, with a slim lithe figure, great dark eyes, a mass of curly dark green hair set off by a floor length flowing yellow gown, and a glow that gave her a regal presence.

The Doctor got up from the bed. "El Donna," he said respectfully, "thank you for coming."

One of the armed men with her stepped forward. McCoy recognized him - Raul d'Colm'n.

"We have come at your request, Time Lord, to handle that which you cannot," Raul said.

"Raul," El Donna said firmly, "you will speak no more of this. I have already spoken with the Doctor on it."

Raul stepped back.

"Your pardon," he said, bowing to the Doctor.

The Doctor brushed the apology aside. "The Captain is in here." He started toward door. "Some of our medical machines are also in the room."

Raul started to speak but El Donna interrupted. "He is yours - not ours. The machines will not interfere."

"Spock," said McCoy, "Would it be possible for me to be there?"

Before Spock could answer, El Donna turned and looked up at McCoy, the crystal at her throat glowing dimly. "You are his friend and his physician. You may be with us." She turned to the lieutenant. "And you?"

"El Donna, I would have no reason to be there save curiosity."

"An admirable trait, but not to be indulged on this occasion." The two women smiled at each other and the selected group left the room.

They entered Kirk's room and El Donna stepped close to the bed. McCoy looked at his friend, then up at the medical indicators for reassurance. The body in the bed was emaciated, the hair thinning, no visible sign of life. Yet the medical indicators showed that Kirk was still alive.

The Doctor walked around to the other side of the bed, glanced down at Kirk, then looked at El Donna. She did not look at the medical indicators; her gaze was fixed on Kirk.

McCoy swallowed reflexively and realized that Spock was standing next to him. The tension in the room was palpable.

El Donna stretched her hands out over the bed, palms down. The dilithium crystal at her throat gave off a pulsing glow. A swirling phosphorescent fog appeared between her hands and Kirk's body. She moved her hands, the glow followed, spiraling in a tumbling pattern between her hands and Kirk's head. For a moment, the flow hesitated and Raul raised his hand to his head, the crystal on his wrist glowing. The flow stabilized, moving in a pulsing rhythm toward Kirk, then, abruptly, flowing back. Three times it pulsed between the two, growing brighter each time. Then its movement from Kirk to El Donna's hands slowed, seemingly pulling something from Kirk with it. It then broke free and dispersed its brilliance around the room.

Kirk's body convulsed. McCoy started for the bed, but the Doctor was closer and held Kirk's body as the spasm subsided.

McCoy looked at the medical monitors. "That did it! He's winning the battle. The antidote has taken effect." He felt Spock's hand grab his arm. "He's made it, Spock." McCoy whispered.

The Doctor, still holding Kirk, looked at McCoy and Spock.

"Bravo, El Donna!" he said with a smile as he laid Kirk down.

With a start, McCoy saw that El Donna's eyes were full of tears.

"This is a terrible thing that I have done for you, Time Lord. Had you summoned me earlier, I could have left the power with him. Now he is totally bereft."

"El Donna," said Spock, "the captain will not miss what he never knew he had. And you have saved his life."

"For my people, Mr. Spock, what he has lost is more than life. It may come back in time, but it is still a death and destruction now."

"He is alive." The Doctor said.

"That is because of your choice, not his. You stand as his liegelord, and you must answer to him for it. You speak of change, Time Lord, and urge such change on us, but will you be prepared for the change that you must face?" Without waiting for a reply, El Donna stepped back between her two escorts and, with a hissing noise, they disappeared.

As they disappeared, McCoy heard the Doctor take a deep breath and Spock moved quickly over to the bed and looked down at Kirk.

"Pompous, puffed-up psychics!" said the Doctor, "always having the last word. What does she know?"

"Doctor," said Spock. "I thank you."

"You're not everyone, Spock."

"She is not the captain," Spock replied.

"Nor is she speaking for me or anyone else on the *Enterprise*." McCoy said. "The captain is alive, we're all going to return to our own universe, and *that* is because of you."

"Because of me?" the Doctor said, surprised. "Oh, nonsense, anyone could have ... well, almost anyone..."

McCoy shook his head, smiling. "Well, if you two could go find something better to do, I'd like to take care of my patient."

Spock said, "Mr. Scott has apparently encountered some difficulty in the design for the use of those additional dilithium crystals." He then turned, walked toward the door, then hesitated. "We also need to begin the disengagement of the computer link with the TARDIS."

"Oh," the Doctor said, feigning surprise, "well, I suppose you have everything in hand here, so..."

McCoy watched them leave and resisted the impulse to tell them both to get some rest. He took out his tricorder and began to analyze Kirk's condition.



"Obviously, that's an experience you don't want repeated, Bones." Kirk said. "But what makes you think that the Doctor is like Spock?"

"Well, I know he was hurt by what El Donna said. And I'm also sure that something else happened to him on the trip with you. I don't think that he quite accepted what I said, but since then I haven't been able to convince him that I really mean it."

"Why not?" Kirk was perplexed. "The Doctor has always been pretty accessible."

"Y'know how Spock uses that 'I am a Vulcan' bit when he wants to shut you out?"

Kirk nodded.

"Well, I may be completely out of line, but I'd be willing to bet that the Doctor uses that clown act of his in the same way. You can't touch him with a ten foot pole."

"So you're frustrated."

"Well, I keep reminding myself that he's not a member of our crew, and he's apparently quite capable of taking care of himself, but..."

"He's a friend. And you don't like to see your friends hurt." Kirk was beginning to feel tired again.

"You'd better get some more sleep." McCoy said. "One other thing, though. What did El Donna mean by the Doctor having to face a change?"

"I don't know Bones. It sounds like she's seeing something that the Doctor is going to have difficulty dealing with." He remembered the Doctor going off with Raul after the duel. "I suspect that he's been trying to get their culture to accept the changes the war has made them face, and I don't think she approves of that."



"Spock said you wanted to see me, Captain," announced the Doctor as he swept into Kirk's room and sprawled into the chair next to Kirk's bed. In spite of the toothy smile, Kirk sensed that some of the Doctor's surging exuberance was repressed. He looked carefully at the man in the bulky clothes slouched in the chair, who suddenly became fascinated by his shoes.

"Doctor."

The head came up and the blue eyes stared at him warily. The look was familiar.

"Doctor," Kirk said, shaking his head and laughing, "you are a fraud!"

The Doctor's eyes widened in astonishment.

"For all your carrying on, you don't like emotional scenes any more than Spock does. You're embarrassed!"

"I am never embarrassed." replied the Doctor haughtily.

"No, of course not." Kirk smiled. "Then you're not going to object if I apologize to you."

"Apologize?"

"I misjudged you and I do most sincerely regret that."

"Oh. That," the Doctor got up and walked over to the monitor by the other bed. Still facing away from Kirk, he said, "Don't feel so bad. It's very difficult to judge people properly all the time."

"I nearly died because of it."

"Captain," the Doctor seemed to square his shoulders and turned around. "If I had not stimulated your latent telepathic abilities, the virus would not have been able to gain the hold that it did."

"Doctor McCoy has already been through that with me. I would remind you that I would have died at the end of Raul's sword had not been for you."

The Doctor's eyes studied Kirk carefully.

Kirk went on, "And Doctor, you never made me do anything. And what I did by choice, I would do again. Except for skipping that briefing, that one I'd do differently."

The Doctor seemed to be considering Kirk's words. Kirk wondered how many humans the Doctor had outlived.

"Well," said the Doctor, "It might have been his knife." He smiled luminously at Kirk.

"You're incorrigible." Kirk laughed.

"Yes, that's what all my teachers said."

Spock and McCoy came into the room.

"Doctor," Spock said, "We will be warping out of here in twenty-two minutes."

"Is there anything we can do for you before you go?" Kirk asked.

"For me? Oh, no, the TARDIS is quite self-sustaining." He settled his hat to the back of his head.

"I don't suppose we'll meet again," McCoy interjected.

"Doctor McCoy, there is a sixty-one point seven two five percent probability that the Doctor will arrive at some time in our universe."

Kirk looked at Spock in amazement. The Doctor seemed to accept the statement.

"Spock," the Doctor said, "perhaps you should explain."

"Of course. In entering the Doctor's universe, we have created a weakness between this universe and our own. Leaving will only increase this weakness. Since the TARDIS utilizes the same principle as our warp drive, and it is this particular use of power that enables transfer between universes, coupled with the fact that the Doctor's level of control of the TARDIS is not completely reliable"

"I like it the way it is," interrupted the Doctor indignantly.

"Be that as it may, as long as it remains in its present condition, there is a sixty-one point seven —"

"All right, Spock," Kirk said. "Doctor, do you agree with Mr. Spock's conclusion?"

The Doctor paused before answering. "I won't dispute it, Captain."

"Then I think that there is something that I can do for you."

"Article One Ten, Captain?" asked Spock.

Kirk smiled. His first officer was certainly reading his mind today. He looked at McCoy.

"Jim, you've never used that before."

"I never had any reason to, Bones. Don't you think that it would be an appropriate...gift?"

"Perfect." McCoy smiled as smugly as if he had had the idea himself. The Doctor looked uneasy and Kirk wondered how many times in his adventures he had ever been thanked by anyone he helped.

Kirk switched on the computer monitor at his bedside. "Computer."

"WORKING."

"This is Captain James T. Kirk - acknowledge."

"ACKNOWLEDGED."

"Prepare to implement Command Decision under Article One Ten."

"READY."

"The individual known as the Doctor is to be considered a citizen in full standing of the United Federation of Planets, and is to hold the honorary rank of Commander in Starfleet. Standard identification patterns as follow." Kirk nodded at McCoy who took one of the computer input cartridges from his files and entered it in the slot. The computer hummed as it digested the information.

"ACKNOWLEDGED. ARTICLE ONE TEN COMMAND DECISION IMPLEMENTED."

The Doctor was looking at Kirk in amazement.

"Now, Doctor," Kirk said, handing the Doctor the data card, "this obligates you to nothing, but if you should run up against some other mule headed starship captain, or a government bureaucrat, you give them that record. Not only will it identify you, but provide you with some measure of authority. Once they run it, the record of what you have done for us will be there as well."

"Captain, I . . ." Kirk realized that the voluble Doctor was at a loss for words. He abruptly shrugged his shoulders, stuck the bright orange card into one of his pockets, shook his head and looked at the three men who were watching him.

"Thank you." He stepped forward and offered his hand to Kirk who took it without hesitation. The warmth of the handshake said more to Kirk than the Doctor could have possibly expressed in words. "Thank you," he said again and glanced around at all of them.

"Doctor," said Spock, "you have ten minutes before you have to leave."

The Doctor stepped back and settled his hat at a rakish angle on his head. He smiled brightly. "Since you people place such a high priority on saying goodbye, I'm going to go and say goodbye to Lt. Stephans. I'll see you down at the TARDIS in five minutes."

Kirk watched the tall figure leave the room with regret.

"Spock, if the Doctor does land in our Universe, what are the chances ... no, on second thought, don't tell me."

"Jim," said McCoy, "You don't need Spock to figure out that if we ever run into the Doctor again, either we'll be in some kind of trouble, or *he'll* be in some kind of trouble. Either way, we'll all wind up in trouble!"

"Dr. McCoy," said Spock, "If you are implying that the Doctor has a knack for landing in the middle of unpleasant situations...you are quite correct in your assumption." A slight smile curved one corner of Spock's mouth.

McCoy laughed. "Spock, I wish we'd run into the Doctor five years ago."

Spock cocked a quizzical eyebrow at McCoy.

"Gentlemen," Kirk said, "if you want to see the TARDIS off, I would suggest that you be on your way."

Kirk watched the two leave and laid back in the bed staring up at the ceiling. It had all started five years ago, and now this time had come and there was the unknown future still ahead.

As an alien sound echoed through the halls, Kirk knew that the Enterprise was finally going home.



THE END



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