

Blazing Guns / Flashing Sword

The fanfiction magazine



Issue No 3, November 16, 2009

Cover art by Matt Wilson <http://mattwilson83.deviantart.com/>

And now, a word from our editor:

I said there wouldn't be an issue, and listed all the reasons there wouldn't be: it was a hard decision, and I felt real horrible about.

So of course, as soon as I told people there wouldn't be an issue, all the problems cleared up.

Welcome to my life.

And now, a bit of rant:

What is with people? Matt Wilson said he'd do the cover art, which is fine, but wanting to avoid what happened last time, when Epanthiras had to bail me out, I asked a bunch of other people if they wanted to do cover art.

A dozen people I asked; the only person who replied, only did so to insult me; she 'doesn't do requests' she told me, and 'even if' she did, she wouldn't do one for a 'sick' person like me.

Are these people so inundated with work that they can just ignore somebody with a request? Okay, some of them, at least, probably were off the computer, and haven't seen my note yet, but I asked a dozen people!

End of rant.

The drama should be in the stories, not the publishing, I know. I'm sorry.

This issue is small, I'm sorry for that too; I haven't had much time to canvas to the web lately.

On another note, I've decided to try to expand from just me with an old Mac to get some other people in on the action, to hopefully avoid this sort of drama issues in the future; if this is something you're interested in, please contact me.

Questions? Comments? I'd love to hear them: please send an email to:
fanficmag@gmail.com

Or, if you want to reach me personally, you can reach me at hans.mahler@gmail.com, or check out my user page at either <http://jochannon.deviantart.com> or at <http://warhammer40kfanon.wikia.com/wiki/User:Jochannon>

Jochannon Mahler

We have a wonderful selection of stories from a bunch of great writers here, so without further ado let's get to them.

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IN HIS EMPEROR'S SERVICE

Chapter 3

By Jonathan Taylor

Subject: Warhammer 40,000

*****ENCODED TRANSMISSION*****

*****TO: INQUISITOR RESTRICTED *****

*****FROM: RESTRICTED *****

SUBJECT: PROCUREMENT OF RESTRICTED

LOCATION: STATION MARAK ROGUE TRADER SPACE

□

*****MESSAGE BEGINS*****

The screams were getting louder, the cries of the innocent as they fell to madness. The city was in ruins, coupled with the seismic shifts and the warp spawned horrors that fell from the sky had left rubble and corpses piled in the streets. At first I ignored the screams, the cries for help I had to get back.

□

No not this again! I don't want to see her... But the dreams held me as they always did, I would watch unable to do anything.

□

I kicked down the door, brandishing my Lasgun as I called out her name. The walls were covered in filth, over and over again were the names of Chaos scratched and burned onto the surface by uncaring hands. I saw them then, their wretched faces twisted in maddened glee, blood scored their clothes. Cultists.

□

I fired, again and again until they had all fallen. Except one. Bent over the kitchen table, still clutching the hearts of her victims in her hands. I let my eyes fall to them, their wrists bound with wire faces contorted in pain and terror. Their chests had been roughly ripped open, my own knife lying aside their body's.

□

"Kale! I'm so happy you returned! We were just about to sit down for a feast, weren't we children?"

My two little girls lay unmoving on the table, I could see where the tears of betrayal had carved their way through the blood that marred their faces.

□

I looked to... it, the foul thing that dared to wear the visage of my wife. She smiled at

me, as if there was nothing wrong. As if there were not the bodies of our former friends littered on the floor. As if she did not hold the twin hearts of our children in her hands. My mind screamed at me to end it. I screamed for the vision to end.

I screamed at her to give them back, to give my family back to me.

□

"Kale!? Whatever is the matter with you?"

□

How could it stand there, and look like her, sound like her, even smell like her. I leapt at it striking furiously, screaming yelling begging. Jessica died at my own hands, her blood would never wash off.

□

Damn it.

□

The vision fractured then, falling away once more. Retreating back to the dark places of my mind... Until it became something else, something greater that encompassed my being. I felt myself falling back to it once more...

□

"I stand with Him in all things!"

"He doesn't even know you exist!"

□

The ground shook with a sudden fury, I fell from the blastwave before I even heard the yell of the artillery pieces. On that day, I knew that the Emperor still watched us. Smoke and dust filled the air with a suffocating shroud. I could hear the yells of the traitor guard as they desperately tried to get to their feet. Brom was already on his knees, his eyes having never lost their madness. He then rose to his feet, having drawn his sword.

□

"I'm gonna gut you and offer your skull to

Khorne!"

□

As he rushed at me, I leapt to the side narrowly avoiding his blade as he slashed at me. I pulled out my boot knife. Its 6 inches of hardened steel looking meaningless compared to Brom's Power Sword. He laughed then, and I threw the knife at him.

□

I missed, only making him laugh harder.

□

Taking the only chance I had, I rushed him catching him off balance I managed to grab a hold of him, twisting myself so that I stood behind him managing to wrap my arms around his head.

□

The heretic's neck snapped in my grip as my vision faltered.

□

I became aware of something hard beneath me, I seemed to be lying down. And it seemed something was lightly smacking my face.

□

"Ah geez, sorry. Din't mean to hit ya that hard."

Through my blurred vision I managed to make out a mess of red hair, a bandana and a set of grinning teeth.

□

I brought my legs up and locked them around my assailant's body. With a grunt of exertion, I pushed with my right arm and twisted myself and managed to flip my opponent over now on top of my assailant I raised my fist to strike.

□

It was at that moment my vision refocused.

□

Nux' looked back at me with widened eyes, her mouth was open slightly and I could make out a blue mouth guard. On her hands and my own were a pair of boxing gloves. Oh right.

□

"Uh, sorry." Damn it, whats going on? I noticed Nux' face was red, likely from exertion, or was she... blushing?

□

I got off her, and offered her a hand to help her up. After accepting my arm and then looking at me oddly for a moment her eyes then narrowed. She spat out her mouth guard into a glove.

□

"Hey! Dats no fair, I thought you was 'urt!" Now she just looked annoyed.

□

Why the hell did I agree to box with her? I spat out my own mouthguard, "I was, you knocked me right out. When I came too I just panicked." I paused, "Sorry." I hope she doesn't hit me again.

□

This seemed to appease her as she now grinned at me. "Yea, you went wight down, an' I hadn't even given you da ol' Catachan Kiss!" Her face was still red, "I mean a headbutt."

□

Heh. "I suppose that will teach me to box with a Catachan, hey?"

"You were doin' alright, your pretty mobile and you is stronger than you look."

□

"I am surprised you even agreed to it in the first place."

□

I turned to the speaker, it was Lask, along with everyone else. Ah yes I remember now. After Nux had asked if I would like to 'spar a little' with her and I had been stupid enough to agree everyone else had suddenly turned up in the gym, to 'encourage me'. Meh.

□

"I SEE YOU DID NOT PISS YOURSELF." Damn, I'm still not used to that.

"Oh yeah, yer right Jaegoos! Remember that last merc, Lincoln picked up? How he was strutting about like he owned the place?"

□

I could see where this was going, but I decided to ask anyway.

"The last merc?" I said.

□

Ohmi, walked over to me holding a towel which I took gladly.

"Lincoln picked up this merc a few months back. He was supposed to add some extra muscle for our last big job. Problem was, he was a real bastard. Kept hitting on Lask and stuff. Then there was an incident between him and Jaegoos. So we decided to have a chat with him."

□

"Jeanette knocked him across the room!" Lask began, "And he even had an accident along the way."

Nux laughed, "Felt right good to put him down!"

□

They all laughed then, even the normally silent Jaegoos her laugh sounding quite terrifying. When they had finished, Nux clapped me on the shoulder and suggested we hit the showers. I could not remember the last time I was able to think so clearly, Tartarus had barely been more than six months ago. But it had felt like years. I felt... felt like I was safe, or something.

□

After getting showered and dressed, following an awkward moment in the showers when Nux seemed to have forgotten I was there and had almost walked out of her shower naked, a sight I would not soon forget Mr Sandhammer called us all to the map room for our mission briefing.

□

The map room was quite impressive, with two Servitors jacked into the machinery directly and a large holo map dominating the room. Along with eight chairs circling the device. It looked far more advanced than the data slates I was used to working with. How did this man get such advanced equipment?

□

I hadn't spent much time with Mr Sandhammer up till now, he was always busy with one thing or another, actually running the ship I suppose besides I often seemed preoccupied with the other crew members. I noticed the crew appeared more focused when the Rogue Trader was in the room, they must really respect him.

□

"Right, as you all know, we are heading for a feudal world in the Charadon Sector, our objectives are two fold. First, we are to set up the automated mapping buoy graciously provided to us by our employer."

□

Mr Sandhammer then went on to indicate to one of the Servitors, which was fussing over the same piece of tech I remembered Ohmi had been busy with when she had first met When I had noticed how much she, shut up and concentrate.

□

"Of course, that is why I hired Mr Kale in the first place."

Oh crap, I just missed what he was talking about. Damn it, I need to stay focused.

□

"Mr Kale? Are you even listening at all?"

□

AHHH!!! "I'm sorry?"

□

Mr Sandhammer sighed, "I was asking you if you were confident in your abilities to handle the device."

□

What device? Oh right, the RESTRICTED . "Yes, of course."

□

"Excellent, now are there any further questions? No? Good, carry on then."

□

Everyone rose to leave, except Mr Sandhammer, who seemed intent on studying the map for some reason. Ohmi lingered by the door, it looked like she wanted to say something.

□

"Mr Kale? Would you wait a moment please."

□

Ohmi looked a little dissapointed before she turned and left. Oh great, I feel like the teacher has just called me back at the end of class. Which was stupid. As if I really needed to be worried about getting yelled at for not paying attention...

□

"Mr Kale!" For a moment I was back in Mr Hathaway's class, I could almost hear his voice in the back of my mind always telling me I would never get myself into trouble if I didn't start paying attention. Which was true because I cant remember what the hell the Rogue Trader actually wanted from me.

□

"If this is about me not not paying attention earlier, well I was."

"Ohmi warned me that 'switch off' a great deal, but that has nothing to do with why I called you."

Ah good. Wait, then why did he call me? He cant be after pay attention!

□

"You seem to be getting along with my crew quite well, which is rare thing indeed. In fact many mercenaries I have hired keep seeming to have 'accidents', I cant imagine why since they all seemed to be such amiable fellows."

Where was he going with this?

"Regardless, I have noticed that Ohmi in particular seems quite er, fond of you."

She does?

"So I believed it too be prudent to give you a word of warning..."

Ah yes, I could see it now Techpriests aren't like normal people, be careful of strange drills being left about and what not.

"If you hurt Ohmi, I will kick you out of the airlock into deep space before you can

say 'Emperor have mercy', for I most certainly will not!"

O okay, I hadn't expected that.

I should probably say something to re assure him. Er, like what?

"Point taken and understood." Oh crap that sounded like Servitor speak.

However it seemed to have the right effect, as Mr Sandhammer nodded and smiled, before curtly dismissing me.

Emperor preserve me, but I think I'm in over my head.

*****MESSAGE ENDS*****

Author's comment:

This Chapter was something of a hit and miss for me, Its mostly character interaction and some more insight into Kale's past but I really could have made the dreams come across clearer. Or perhaps even tried another medium entirely. Nevertheless, writing this fic was good practice I learned a lot from writing it. And for anyone who says the move Kale pulls on Nux in the opening is impossible, well it is possible so shut up. ;

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Siblings in the Dark

Pt. 1



Christian Vedsø

Subject: World of Darkness

My name is Celene Marie Henderson.

I'm a renowned photographer and painter, manager of business dealings and researcher of the occult.

Well, the last one is not on my calling card... it's more like a hobby, actually.

I mentioned it for one reason: It's directly linked to what I'm about to tell you.

A few days back, on July the 3rd, I was going through all my doings as usual.

Scanning through contracts nearing their deadlines, or searching for architectural photos among fashion magazines and year old issues of "Science Illustrated".

I never really saw my life going that way.

Never thought that I'd be living alone, buried in work.

I never thought I'd lose my dad like that, either...

As for Adam... I was just about getting used to the idea of his death.

I mean, it **had** been a year since he died on July 1st.

Another thing I didn't expect, however, was that when I dug around for the calling card of a certain Mr. Brey, boring guy, I won't even begin to list the reasons why I should stop working with him, I stumbled upon a magazine I didn't quite recognize.

When I saw it, it dawned on me: Tarrence Grennsfield, a friend of my dead brother who swore to discover the true cause of death for both my brother and father, had handed it to me one day, telling me that it was connected to Adam's death somehow.

Well, I'm embarrassed to admit it, but the

magazine had apparently been both out of eye and out of mind until I found it again, purely by chance.

I immediately forgot about Mr. Brey and looked through the magazine, starting with the front page:

"Shades of Grey Your gateway to the otherworlds!"

I scanned the cover, looking for something related to my brother, when I found a small headline:

"Adam Henderson When a man knows too much"

For obvious reasons, this piqued my interest, so I immediately looked up on the right page, finding an article:

Adam henderson, Dead by mauling. A headline, which could quickly attract attention. More annoying is it, that most people just left it at that. I am convinced that he was not just murdered for revenge, but murdered by a certain group of people. So convinced, that i actually mention them here, even though it may grant me the same fate. Another thing to note about the murder is that nobody could figure out how he was killed, exactly. Legendary adam could be seen depicted in graffiti, murdered by a weird cross between a bear and a dog. Is it really how he died? Very well, let's just go with that... but use your heads, people! Everyone knows that there is no such thing as a beardedog! AND what's more, he has been ridiculed badly, as the creature who murdered him has often been displayed as a mix of a koala and a chibuabua. Only i can see the truth! Nobody ever considered what i will now suggest, apparently. Else, they have just been too frightened to talk. Or they could just be blind? Fear no more, simple minded people! The answer will be revealed now. He, adam henderson, was killed by a creature of the night, a being so foul, we would wish it only existed in nightmares! Even i, safely sitting in my office, shake in fear as i think of it, even though some of you may just laugh, and call this being a myth.

Myth or not, my answer is this: adam henderson was killed by a werewolf!

Upon finishing the article, I was badly disappointed. It had seemed like nothing but mad ramblings from a fan of horror movies. More than that, I was angry. Angry at Tarrence for handing me a piece of paper, which did nothing but make fun of my brother's death, but even angrier at the writer for doing so. The wound, which opened when Adam died, the wound which had just seemed closed, opened up again, and the tears welled up in my eyes. A single drop fell from my eye and onto the paper, before I could catch it, landing on the words: "Adam henderson, Dead" .

Suddenly, I realized something.

I wasn't sure, as the article's writer was already an idiot in my eyes, but it seemed off that Adam's last name was not capitalized, especially when the word "dead" was.

I read the article through again, and quickly caught up with the idea. My second read through looked like this:

"ADAM HENDERSON IS ALIVE AND ONE OF THEM"

I blinked a few times and sighed, seeing as this did nothing to bring me closer to the answers I wanted.

Just then, I heard a rustle from behind. I spun around, but it was already too late. As soon as I spotted a man in a black hoodie, his face completely covered by the hood, I was grabbed by the neck.

I slowly felt my feet let go of the floor as the pressure on my neck increased. I flailed wildly, but the man didn't seem to tire. He held me up, seemingly just awaiting my death, until the second I got lucky.

One of my fingers touched the edge of his hood, and I strained to quickly knock it off him, which I managed to do.

He immediately let go of me and I landed, dizzy and confused, in my stacks of magazines and paperwork.

The man, who had pulled back to the

corner of the room and covered his face with his hands. I noticed his black hair, messy because the hood had apparently been on it for too long, before he spoke slowly.

"It's nothing personal... but I can't let you live"

The voice seemed to darken the room, as if the light from the lamp in the ceiling faded a bit with each word.

I was scared...

Because of the strange power even his words had.

Because he threatened to kill me... but also for a third reason.

"A ...Adam...?" I asked slowly, keeping my distance to the man in the corner.

He looked up, and I saw a quick glimpse of his green eyes peering between his fingers. He didn't answer, but I took a step towards him, not willing to let him go should he really be my brother.

"I... I'm not sure, but you sound like my brother. There's something about your voice..."

"Celene..." he whispered as I slowly got closer to him, step by step.

"It **is** you!" I shouted, just as his hand took a firm grip on my jaw, across my mouth.

"Quiet" he hissed, but his grip immediately slacked and he let go again.

"Adam..." I whispered, the tears appearing again. Only this time, it was not sorrow and grief which forced them out.

"No. Adam Henderson died, just over a year ago" he said slowly, then turned away from me and put his hood back on.

He had not allowed me to see his face properly. I noted that as strange at once, but decided to let it slide for the moment.

"What do you mean? You're right here!"

"I'm not your brother, Celene... Your brother is dead"

The words hit me hard, but I wasn't about to let him get away that easily.

"Then who are you?" I asked. My voice was clear and sharp and gave no hint that I was about to cry.

"I am Areus" he replied briefly, then turned to me.

Then I saw it.

His face.

I looked down, but quickly faced him again. My stomach twisted as I looked at

him, but my eyes focused on his, and I opened my mouth to speak when he just said

"I have to go... I'll be back" then disappeared without a trace.

Vanished into thin air.

At that moment, I started wondering how he had gotten in in the first place.

At that moment, I didn't really care.

Adam Henderson was dead... It was a fact I learned to live with.

But Areus was my brother. No doubt about that.

Author's Comment:

Well, for anyone who read my story in the first issue of the magazine, here's a continuation. The story is continued on deviantArt or hopefully in the next issue. If you like this story, feel free to comment on it on deviantArt or via my e mail.

You can reach the author at: christian.vedsoe@get2net.dk, or visit his home page, at www.christiane.v.deviant.com

CRUSADE PART 2

By A.J. Croft

Subject: Warhammer 40,000

“They are still coming!”

“Hold the line brother, they are not to breach or every civilian in that city dies.”

Castellan Tyron stood side by side with Sword Brethren Barus, two Astartes in a line of several dozen standing before a tide of Greenskins.

“Castellan, the scouts report the Orks have found a pass in the canyon we did not notice, they will be both behind and in front of us in a matter of minutes. We must fall back!”

“HOLD brother! Do not allow the Greenskins ahead to overwhelm the line, I will deal with the Orks coming down the passage.”

Charging down between the canyon walls towards the path the scouts had found, Tyron couldn't help remember what had gotten his fighting company into this mess. After killing Warboss Kazhragaz with the assistance of his late friend and mentor Chaplain Fior, and routing the Greenskin warband, the tide had turned. The Greenskins regrouped in much larger numbers under the leadership of another Warboss.

“Damned beasts, where there's one there's a thousand.”

From the passage the Orks began stepping out. Castellan Tyron charged in, slicing his power sword through the first two enemies. The next Ork faltered and ended up looking at the inside of its own chest as Tyron ran his power sword through it. The fighting had now become close quarters and confined within the tunnel itself. For the Black Templar who had trained for many decades at melee combat, it proved a great advantage. In a place like that a single warrior could hold off an army.

“Castellan, too many brothers have fallen, we cannot hold the line much longer,” Barus spoke to Tyron over the vox unit.

“Very well Barus. Fall back to my point. I am almost finished here.”

Tyron unclipped a Krak Grenade from his belt and launched it further down the tunnel. A Krak Grenade in such a confined space would be devastating to anyone caught within so the Black Templar headed for the entrance of the tunnel at full speed. Tyron however was not fast enough to escape the full concussion of the blast and was thrown several metres away as the Krak Grenade detonated and caved in the tunnel.

“Nice entrance sir,” Sword Brethren Barus was standing over Tyron and leaned down to assist his superior up.

“You know me brother, I like to make a statement,” the Castellan replied with a grin.

“Marshal Tranismund has reported he is sending Castellan Maldrecht and his supporting fighting company to assist us,” Barus explained looking up towards the approaching Warband, “If we live that long.”

“If we do not then we shall die fighting!” Tyron roared advancing towards the enemy, “Form a line.”

In orbit Maldrecht was preparing his fighting company for their drop.

“You are Black Templars, the Crusaders of the Imperium and it is your duty to defend the honour of the chapter and of your brothers. Prepare to go to the aid of those brothers of yours that are now fighting and dying on the planet below us.”

With that final speech a roar went up from the assembled Astartes, followed by all entering their Drop Pods. The plan of attack was simple. Drop into the middle of the Greenskin Warband and sow confusion amongst the simple minded brutes by killing any nearby. The simplicity of the plan was typical of Maldrecht.

The Drop Pods could be seen screaming through the atmosphere. Castellan Tyron looked up to see a dozen fall from the sky and impact the ground amidst the Orks.

“Rally brothers. Fight your way to the fighting company of Maldrecht.”

The Drop Pods opened and many Templars sprang out, cutting a swathe of destruction through the massed beasts. Ork Blood splattered as entrails were left exposed from Bolt rounds exploding in the bodies of the Orks they hit. Meeting in the centre of the Warband, Maldrecht and Tyron exchanged greetings.

“Have you not seen a more beautiful sight than that of an Ork being blown apart young Tyron?”

“You have always had poor taste Maldrecht.”

“Lighten up Tyron, You should enjoy your work.”

The Exchange was cut short as a mob of Orks charged the two Castellans. The battle progressed well from that point. A hundred Astartes were more than a match for a thousand Orks. Forming into small groups the Black Templars fought in support of each other, when one of the Marines lunged forward another would

hold back to protect the flank. This tactic was one used for millenia by the chapter due to its effectiveness.

Moving forward, Tyron located Barus back to back with one of the Initiates from Maldrecht's Company.

“How fares the fight Sir?” Barus asked his superior.

“The fight goes well. Maldrecht is using his regular humour to enjoy this situation.”

Tyron jumped on top of a nearby cropping to further observe the battle. Castellan Maldrecht was too busy fighting to lead the company. A thought occurred to Castellan Tyron and he decided to act on it.

Over his vox he communicated, “All Templars, fall back to my position.”

Standing down from his perch Tyron assisted in forming a line with all Astartes that moved to his position.

“All units. Frag them!”

In unison Frag Grenades were tossed into the Greenskin ranks followed by a charge by the chapter. The Grenades helped confuse the Orks enough for the Black Templars to push them back. The Orks up front turned and fled into those behind them, packing the Greenskin Warband tight enough so they could not move. By the dozens the Warband was mowed down by the combined might of the Black Templar fighting company.

Tyron was pleased with how the battle had turned. It would be a long day but by the end the Black Templar would again be victorious.

Author's comments:

After seeing how my first part 'CRUSADE' turned out I decided to add on to it, may possibly make it into a series of short stories. Enjoy

You can contact the author, at Ordoslord@hotmail.com, or at his homepage <http://warhammer40kfanon.wikia.com/wiki/User:NoFuryLikeMine>

TOMORROW LINGERS

Chapter 3: this is a continuation of a story that began in issue #1

By A. Reynolds

Subject: Star Trek: The Original Series

'Christine, why don't you sit down for a bit?' McCoy asked half heartedly, not expecting her to listen.

She had been working feverishly from the moment she had returned from weapons control, even as she told the doctor in short, staccato sentences about what had happened down there. McCoy was almost finding it difficult keeping up with her, but she had finally settled on taking an inventory of the supplies in the ward drug cabinet.

The look she turned on him at his words would have sent most people running from the room in fear. Her eyes seemed to have an unnatural blue fire burning somewhere behind the irises. She turned back to the supplies she was sorting, her back set solid with tension.

'You could have my licence, you know,' McCoy continued, almost conversationally. 'Breaking a medical confidence. Not for the protection of the ship, not for anything like that. Just because I thought my friend should know. I thought you were in danger, and he should know.'

She wheeled round again, some kind of furious retort hovering on her lips and then she caught herself, and gave a forced, strained smile.

'I don't blame you, Doctor,' she said quietly. 'And I don't want your licence, and you were right to tell him. I just didn't expect...'

McCoy sighed. He walked over to her and rested a hand on her shoulder.

'Spock's different. You know that, Christine. He needs time.'

'He needs something,' she said bitterly, turning back to the cupboard.

'Spock's a good, decent man,' McCoy said

firmly, every jibe or criticism he had ever made of Spock fleeing in his desire to defend one friend and reassure another. 'He won't let you down.'

'Won't he?' she asked, turning round to face him, the strain of the last few hours lending a look of exhaustion to her face. 'Are you sure of that, Doctor? Because, however I imagined it would be, I didn't imagine it'd be like this.'

'When I told him you were in danger down in weapons control Spock took precisely fifty three seconds to make the distance from the bridge to where you were,' McCoy told her firmly. 'The internal sensors told me that. He moved debris that four of the captain's best security men couldn't move together. For *you*, Christine. No one else.'

'Not for this *thing*?' she asked darkly, placing her palm over the slight swelling of her abdomen. 'Are you sure it wasn't just for that?'

McCoy took her hand and pressed it between his own.

'That thing is a life,' he said, his doctor's instincts to protect the foetus momentarily overtaking his concern for the nurse.

She made a small noise of dissent, turning her head away briefly. Sometimes it seemed like a life inside her. Sometimes it seemed like nothing more than a parasite, a faceless monster, that was conspiring to eat her life away.

'I know Spock,' McCoy said, fixing his eyes on hers. 'And no, I don't think it was just for that. He's never been indifferent to you. But right now he's shocked and hurt, and probably guilty too. He needs time to process the news. You've had four months. He's had about forty minutes.'

She sighed, sitting down suddenly on a

chair nearby.

'I'm sorry,' she said tiredly. 'You know what it's like. Hormones all over the place. I never expected it to be like this. I never expected to be alone...'

'You're not alone,' McCoy assured her.

She smiled at him through tearful eyes. 'I am though, really...'

The intercom whistled, sounding startlingly loud as it cut into their conversation.

'Damn,' McCoy muttered, striding swiftly over to the unit on the wall. 'I'm sorry, Christine. What is it?' he asked tersely as he pressed the button.

'Bones,' Jim's voice replied with a mixture of curiosity and surprise. 'Bad time?'

McCoy sighed, glancing over at Christine and then back to the intercom. 'No, it's fine, Jim. What did you need?'

'I just wondered how Spock was?' Kirk asked him. 'How soon will his hands heal?'

'His hands?' McCoy echoed. 'I'm sorry, Jim I'm not getting you.'

Christine looked up suddenly. 'Oh he injured his hands getting us out of that room,' she said, her voice just a little more enlivened by the reminder of duty. 'He said he'd come down here to have them seen to.'

'Oh, er ' McCoy began, uncertain as to what to say. Jim would immediately guess that something was wrong if he thought Spock had deliberately avoided medical attention. 'Sorry, Jim. It's been a tough afternoon. I didn't see to Spock's hands. I'll just take a look at the report...'

He looked meaningfully at Christine, then put his hand over the intercom, and asked softly, 'You saw these injuries, didn't you?'

She nodded. 'Just minor lacerations, I think,' she said. 'I didn't get a close look. He should have them seen to, but it didn't seem severe.'

McCoy nodded, then moved his hand from the intercom. 'He'll be fine in a day or two, Jim,' he said. 'I'll check up on him later, and let you know.'

'All right, Bones,' Kirk replied. 'Thank you.'

McCoy came back to Christine. She had gone back to the supplies again, and was focussing her energy on feverishly noting down names and amounts on a datapadd.

'You're not alone,' he repeated, taking the padd out of her hand. 'Come on,' he said, leading her into his office. 'You've done enough for today, after that work down in weapons control. Sit down and I'll fetch you a nice stiff synthahol. I think you need it.'

She laughed suddenly as she settled herself tiredly in the chair he offered her.

'I'd rather have a large whiskey,' she said.

'I'd get you one,' McCoy smiled. 'But then I really would have to strike myself off. Don't they say synthahol tastes just like the real thing?'

'They say that,' she nodded doubtfully. 'But they're wrong. Could I just have a cup of black tea?'

'You remind me of Spock,' McCoy muttered, turning to the replicator, then suddenly caught himself, turning back and saying, 'Sorry, Chris.'

'Oh, I don't mind,' she murmured. 'I still love him, you know. That's the crazy thing. I haven't stopped loving him for a moment, no matter how little he cares for me. And we've come this far, and I still love him, and he still barely notices me.'

McCoy carried the gently steaming cup of dark tea to her and put it down on the desk beside her.

'He does notice you,' he assured her. 'He binds it up in logic and stoicism but he notices you. I've seen his eyes follow you across a room. I've seen him wake up from unconsciousness and look about, and only relax when he sees *you're* the nurse on duty. Give him some time. He'll process

everything in that computer brain of his, and see that he's being a bone headed idiot, and then he'll come. And if he doesn't do that then you *can* have my license, because I'm no judge of human or Vulcan nature, and I have no right practising medicine on people I can't understand.'

Spock sighed. His thoughts were going nowhere. He lowered his hands, his fingers cramping after being held in the meditation position for so long. How long? What was the time?

He blinked, looking about himself, registering that he had been sitting for two hours trying to reconcile himself to a reality he could barely comprehend. His hands were not just stiff from the meditation. They were sore from the self tended cuts. His whole body was sore, he realised as he moved. There was a hot stabbing in his side as he moved, and his shoulders were stiff with pain. He sat for a moment analysing the pain. No broken ribs, as far as he could judge. Nothing serious. Just the pain of moving objects far too heavy for him to manage without extraordinary incentive. A reminder of the immutable physicality of his body. A reminder of the incentive that had sent him racing through the corridors of the ship...

He reached out to activate his computer.

'Computer, play ' He considered for a moment. String music was most calming to his mind, and it was the precise tones of baroque that most easily focussed his thoughts. 'Play Bach, Johann Sebastian. Cello Suite number one in G.'

He leant back in his chair again and closed his eyes as the taut, mellow tones filled the air. He let each note enter his mind, catching it, analysing it, mentally cogitating how it could be reproduced on the Vulcan lyre. But into that analysis kept swimming a face with blue eyes, haloed with golden hair, the look of betrayal and disappointment fixed there as if it were a death mask. The recurring image of him, as Henoah, pressing over her body, fevered with lust. And then there was the bewildering, unknown future, the faceless

child...

'Computer, stop music,' he said sharply.

Solitude was not proving beneficial. Who on the ship would understand what was going through his mind? Spock sighed. Jim. Jim would understand. Jim had hosted Sargon's lifeforce, and Jim was his closest friend.

He glanced at the time. The captain's shift would have ended ten minutes ago. He often went to his quarters for a few moments of privacy after a shift, even if he planned on venturing out again later.

Spock found himself standing outside Kirk's door with his hand on the buzzer. The door slid open, and Kirk welcomed him in.

'Spock, how are the hands?' he asked with a smile. 'You've certainly given some fuel to ship gossip, with that little feat.'

Spock looked at him sharply. 'I fail to understand how,' he said tautly.

'Spock, you moved debris that four men couldn't lift,' Kirk laughed. 'People humans like to talk about that kind of thing. Why? What else would they be talking about?'

Spock exhaled. 'I do not know. My hands are healing,' he said. 'I anticipate being quite fit for duty tomorrow morning.'

'What brings you here, Spock?' Kirk asked curiously, gesturing him further into the room and fetching another glass to go with its partner and a bottle of Romulan Ale that was waiting on his desk. 'You look like you've got a cloud hanging over you. Not annoyed at having to leave your shift early, surely? You can't help doctor's orders.'

Spock looked up at him briefly. Obviously Jim thought he had received medical attention, and been ordered not to return to duty. Perhaps McCoy was being unusually discreet.

'Thank you,' he said as Jim handed him a glass of pale blue liquid. Ordinarily he might have refused, but the alcohol was quite welcome at that moment. 'No, Jim. I

am not annoyed at missing the end of my shift. But I I wished to talk to you.'

'Sit down, Spock,' Kirk urged him, registering Spock's unusual reticence. The last time he had seen Spock like this he had been suffering the onset of pon farr. He took a seat behind the desk as Spock sat opposite. 'What's wrong? It's obvious there's something wrong.'

Spock closed his eyes momentarily, taking a sip of the ale and letting it spread down his throat in a burning wave. He sat in silence as seconds ticked away, trying to muster a logical opening to this difficult topic.

'Captain, you recall the events of four months ago,' he began, rotating his glass between his fingers and staring intently at the transparent liquid.

'Four months ago,' Kirk mused. 'There was John Gill and Ekos, wasn't there? The Nazi problem...'

'That was three point seven two months ago,' Spock said almost without thinking. 'Four months ago we encountered '

'Sargon!' Kirk said quickly, slapping a hand down on the desk. 'Sargon, Henoah and Thalassa that was it, wasn't it? That was an odd few days...'

'Yes,' Spock murmured. He cleared his throat, and said in a stronger voice, 'Yes, it was a unique experience, Captain.'

'Lingers on in the mind, too,' Kirk nodded. 'Have you been having strange dreams as well, Spock? I keep I don't know having these dreams where I *am* Sargon. Not even Sargon in my body, but Sargon here, on this ship, with his own corporeal form...'

'There is an explanation for that, Captain,' Spock said, almost relieved by the opportunity to stall a little longer. 'Sargon's memories impressed on the engrams of your own brain...'

'You mean I really am remembering what happened when Sargon was in my body?' Kirk asked in astonishment, a brief shudder running through him. It was a

little like possessing the memories of a ghost

'Perhaps,' Spock nodded. 'It is likely that Sargon would visualise himself looking as he once did, rather than looking like his host body. It may explain your experience. I have a more disciplined mind,' he continued in a distracted tone. 'Henoah would more likely see himself precisely as he was at that moment. As myself...'

'Then you *have* been having these dreams?' Kirk asked, intrigued. 'Fascinating, wouldn't you say, Mr Spock?'

Spock raised an eyebrow. 'That is one term for it.'

'What is it, Spock?' Kirk asked, recognising the Vulcan's emotionally ruffled expression.

'Have you wondered, Jim, about the use Sargon made of your body?' he asked carefully. 'Obviously he was carrying out his plan to construct android hosts but when he was off duty, so to speak...'

'Well, as far as I could make out he wasn't up to doing much, with Henoah sabotaging the treatment,' Kirk pointed out. 'He spent a lot of time in sick bay, I think...'

'Yes, of course,' Spock nodded. 'But in my body, Henoah was not unwell,' he continued. 'He was far from it.'

'And you think he did something, off duty?' Kirk asked curiously, reading the intention behind Spock's awkward, stalling conversation.

Spock bowed his head, his hands tightening on his glass. The pale blue liquid seemed to quiver with the intensity of his grip.

'Well, whatever Henoah did, Spock, it couldn't be that bad,' Jim said with a smile. 'I mean, it's not like he killed anyone, or assaulted them, or got someone pregnant.'

Spock started at those last few words, his grip tightening again until his knuckles were white. Kirk stared at him, concern suddenly building in his mind. Spock suddenly seemed to realise what his hands

were doing, and he put the glass down on the table, clenching his hands in his lap, instead.

'Did Henoch get someone pregnant?' Kirk asked carefully. 'Spock, Dr Mulhall'

Ann Mulhall had requested a transfer off the ship not long after those strange events, despite her admirable performance during that time. Kirk thought she seemed perfect starship material and regretted her departure but he had agreed to the transfer, assuming she simply found it awkward serving under a captain that she had, in some way, been intimate with. If she had been having the same dreams that he and Spock had he was not surprised.

'Not Dr Mulhall,' Spock said, shaking his head, his eyes fixed firmly on the glass of ale on the desk before him. 'I cannot break the lady's confidence, Captain. But yes, Henoch did use my body to'

He broke off, unable to verbalise the events even in front of his friend.

'Spock' Kirk began. He was astounded, but he knew such a reaction wouldn't help the Vulcan, so he tried to suppress it as far as possible. 'Spock, whatever Henoch did, it wasn't your fault.'

Spock met his eyes. 'Are you certain of that, Captain? Are you certain that Henoch did not prey upon certain of my personal circumstances, or was not influenced in some way by my own natural inclinations?'

'Spock, it wasn't your fault any more than if someone stole your ship and used it to commit piracy,' Kirk protested quickly. 'In case you've forgotten, you, your soul, whatever you want to call it, was residing in a nondescript ball in sickbay. You can't be held responsible for anything Henoch did while he had control of your body.'

'I did give him the keys, so to speak,' Spock said in a low voice.

'In good faith. You didn't expect this,' Kirk said firmly. 'You didn't expect anything of the sort. Besides, I'm the captain of this ship. I gave the go ahead. Anything that happened, if it's anyone's responsibility, it's mine.'

Spock shook his head. 'The child will be *mine*,' he said heavily.

'She intends to go ahead with it?' Kirk asked carefully. He had no idea what the Vulcan viewpoint on abortion was, but he didn't imagine it being favourable.

'This occurred four months ago, Jim,' Spock said, something almost like laughter edging his voice. 'It is rather late for second thoughts.' He shook his head tiredly. 'I have barely exchanged words on the subject with her. Before today I was in complete ignorance of this.'

'Spock, *who is it*?' Kirk asked unable to restrain his curiosity. There seemed to be something even deeper than the distress he would expect of Spock in such a situation.

Spock shook his head resolutely. 'Jim, I *cannot*. Please don't ask me.'

Kirk gazed at him in silence. Spock's face seemed lined with tiredness and tension. What was it he was here for precisely, he wondered. Reassurance? Absolution? Advice? He wanted to give him all of those things, but he wasn't sure what to say. How did one give emotional solace to a Vulcan?

'Spock, whatever happens, whatever you, or she, decides to do, I'll stand behind you,' he said firmly. 'You're not alone in this.'

Spock looked up, an expression of gratitude warming his eyes.

'Thank you, Jim,' he said simply.

He lifted his glass again, taking another sip of the strong spirit and letting it burn into his stomach.

'Spock, whoever looked at your hands before, they didn't do a very good job,' Kirk said as the Vulcan replaced the glass on the desk. 'You're bleeding.'

He couldn't help but be glad of an excuse to steer the subject away from this seemingly insoluble problem. He could see a thin smear of green on the clear glass, sponged onto it through the bandages on Spock's right hand.

Spock turned his hand palm upwards, staring as if momentarily baffled at the seeping green blood that was coming through the white bandage. He must have provoked the bleeding by clenching his hand on the glass.

'It's nothing,' he said quickly, closing his fist.

'Spock, you walked in here as if you hurt in fifteen different places,' Kirk told him firmly, 'and now your hands are bleeding. You need to go back to sickbay and get yourself checked out.'

'Really, it's not necessary to attend the sickbay,' Spock protested. 'I will be quite recovered by morning.'

'Spock,' Kirk began, a light suddenly dawning in his mind. '*Why*, precisely, don't you want to go to sickbay?'

'It is not necessary,' Spock repeated. 'It would be a waste of Dr McCoy's time.'

'Spock, Hensch kept Nurse Chapel very close during those days, didn't he?' Kirk continued curiously. 'On the bridge at the end, she was almost his first lieutenant, wouldn't you say? He had her completely under his thumb.'

Spock's face had grown white, and his hands were clenched into fists on the desk.

'McCoy asked for a reduction in her hours recently,' Kirk persevered. 'He wouldn't explain why. He said it was an ongoing medical issue...'

Spock closed his eyes, looking almost as if he was praying for divine intervention.

'Spock, is Nurse Chapel pregnant with your child?' Kirk asked directly, refusing to move his gaze from Spock's face.

Spock drained his glass, and then nodded silently.

'Hensch took advantage of my mental abilities, of her attraction to me...'

'And of your attraction to her?' Kirk

hazarded with great caution. When Spock remained silent he said softly, 'Spock, you're my closest friend, and I hope you give me the same privilege. If you can't talk about this with me, who can you talk to?'

Spock exhaled with something like a nascent laugh, and nodded slowly. 'That is, in essence, what sent me to your door,' he said.

Kirk smiled, reaching out silently to refill Spock's almost empty glass. Again, Spock did not demure, but instead immediately took a sip of the strong liqueur.

'I'm glad you see me in that way,' Kirk said, quietly. 'But, Spock, if you want to count a person as your close friend, you have to back that up with your actions. You have to *share* something burden me as much as I burden you. That's part of what friendship is about.'

The Vulcan nodded slowly.

'I know,' he said. 'Perhaps human friendship is not my forte. Jim, I have never been certain of how I feel about Miss Chapel. I notice her, it is true. She has many attractive qualities. She is intelligent, aesthetically pleasing, and of a remarkably rational temperament. She stands out against the mundane backdrop of the other female crew on board.'

'Well, from a human standpoint, I'd say you were attracted to her,' Kirk said seriously, trying his best not to smile at Spock's very Vulcan description of a very human woman.

Spock clasped his hands together, leaning back in his chair.

'Perhaps,' he said. 'Jim, in Vulcan society, on the rare occasion where pregnancy occurs outside of a bonded relationship, the parents of the child almost always immediately enter such a relationship, provided they are not already involved with another person.'

'Yes, it used to be like that on Earth, too,' Kirk nodded. 'Thankfully those days are long gone.'

'Vulcans find it easier to establish such

relationships on a foundation of logic,' Spock said. 'Although it is not the ideal. But I am, according to the laws of my people, obliged to offer Miss Chapel a bonded relationship. Jim, how can I tell if that established societal norm is interfering with my perceptions? I had given no serious thought to the idea of a relationship before I knew of the pregnancy. It had never seemed advantageous in logic.'

Kirk laughed softly. 'I'm not used to approaching relationships from the angle of whether or not they're advantageous in logic. It's usually more a matter of mutual attraction and opportunity.'

Spock raised an eyebrow. Jim certainly seemed to find plenty of opportunity for relationships, considering the demands of his job and the fact that he spent most of his time within a pool of only four hundred and thirty people, less than half of whom were female.

'Yes, I have noticed that humans enter relationships with considerably more ease and go through them with considerably more turmoil than do Vulcans,' he said pointedly.

'Spock, do you feel obliged to offer Miss Chapel a relationship?' Kirk asked curiously.

Spock tilted his head to one side, pondering the question.

'It is what is expected of me,' he said.

'On Vulcan, to a Vulcan woman. You're not on Vulcan, Spock,' Kirk reminded him. 'Have you considered just offering her support, in a purely platonic way?'

'It is possible,' Spock nodded.

'But you don't want to?'

Spock shook his head. 'Therein lies my difficulty. I simply do not know. And if I were to offer her more, would she feel as obliged to accept me as I do to offer? And how could I offer a human woman an emotionally satisfying relationship?'

'Your father seems to manage,' Kirk

pointed out. 'Spock, you seem to forget that she's always known you as a Vulcan she's always loved you as a Vulcan. She doesn't expect you to suddenly become human, and she probably wouldn't want you to. She has no more interest in any of the other men on board than you do in the other women.'

'Perhaps,' Spock said sombrely, draining the last of the drink from his glass.

Kirk took the cue, putting the bottle back on the shelf behind him and getting to his feet. He smiled briefly as he looked down at his first officer. Spock was strong, confident, and supremely capable. He was also vulnerable, and in some ways incredibly innocent. He never seemed fitted for plunging into a world of human emotion.

'Let me give you some advice,' he said, moving around the desk as he spoke. 'Don't rush into anything. Don't put any pressure on yourself or on her. You're not on a time limit here. Whether that child's born to a secure couple or two separate, loving parents, the most important thing is that you're both there for it. Go to the sickbay,' he told Spock gently, putting a hand on his arm as the Vulcan got to his feet. If he didn't steer Spock in the right direction he wasn't sure that his friend would stop theorising and actually address the problem. 'Get those injuries treated that part's an order. And *talk* to her. That's just a suggestion from a friend, but I hope you'll take it.'

Spock looked at him briefly and nodded, a mixture of gratitude and reluctance in his eyes.

'I'll be asking McCoy for a report on your condition later,' Kirk said firmly. 'A *real* one this time so I'll know if you've been down there or not.'

'I will go,' Spock promised. He was not sure at that point whether he would have the composure to talk to the nurse, and whether or not she would be willing to listen but he had no choice but to obey his captain's order about seeking treatment. He would end up in the sickbay, one way or another.

Author's comments:

This story follows on from events in the Star Trek: The Original Series episode Return to Tomorrow.

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