

## Click

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by [lah\\_mrh](#)

### Summary

Kirk discovers a camera that can expose people's true desires.

### Notes

Written for debirlfan in the 2015 Trick or Treat exchange. Originally posted on AO3.

It arrives in a box of supplies beaming up from Starbase Thirteen. Kirk is sorting through the various supplies and sending them off to their respective departments when he comes across it, sitting at the top of a box of medical supplies. A camera.

But this isn't like any camera he's familiar with. The only reason he knows what it is is because he once saw a picture like it in a history book. He examines it closely, then does what any human being would do when confronted with a strange camera; he raises it to his eye and takes a picture.

*Click.*

A small square of paper pops out of the front of the camera as he lowers it, and Kirk remembers that these old time cameras sometimes printed their own pictures, in two dimensions and sometimes not even in colour. He looks at the paper, but it's just black, and he is disappointed for a moment before lines begin to appear. He watches as the paper changes slowly to show a full-colour rendering of the cargo bay in which he's standing.

All things considered, it's a very primitive system, but Kirk has always been fond of antiques. He raises the camera to his eye again, but this time aims at an engineer working on a shuttle at the other end of the cargo bay.

*Click.*

This time, however, the eventual image makes him frown. When he took the picture, the man in question was examining the wiring in a side panel, but in the picture he is sitting in front of a computer in what looks like his quarters. Kirk brings the paper closer and examines it. There is no doubt that the man in the picture is Lieutenant Monroe, the same man he took a photograph of. But how could the camera have produced an image he didn't take?

Shaking his head, he decides someone must be playing a joke on him. And he has a distinct, doctor-shaped culprit in mind.

He sets the camera aside and continues sorting through the supplies. Finally, after he's gone through everything and sent it all off to the correct departments, he picks up the camera and heads down to sickbay.

He finds McCoy working in his office. He looks up as Kirk walks in and nods a greeting. "Jim. What brings you here?"

Kirk sets the camera on the desk. "You'll be happy to know you almost got me," he says. "I have to say the effects are impressive. Did you get Scotty to help you?"

McCoy looks at the camera, then back at him with a confused look. "I don't have any idea what you're talking about. What is that?"

Kirk stares at him, but McCoy's expression doesn't change. He frowns. "You're not playing a trick on me?"

McCoy holds up his hands in surrender. "Hell no. I haven't played any tricks in months. Not since the mouse incident."

That had been an awkward couple of days. Kirk nods slowly. "I believe you," he says. "But there's definitely something strange going on."

He picks up the camera again. "I found this in the supplies we beamed up. It's a camera, an old one. It prints pictures on little pieces of paper, but there's something strange about it."

"Besides printing pictures on paper? That went out of fashion centuries ago."

Kirk gives him an exasperated look. "I'm serious, Bones." He considers briefly, then adds, "Maybe it'll be easier if I just show you."

He raises the camera to his eye and takes a picture of McCoy.

*Click.*

"Hey, warn a guy before you do that!" McCoy demands as Kirk lowers the camera. "You didn't even get my best side."

Kirk pulls the paper out of the front of the camera and waits for the picture to form. When it does, he can't hold back a snort. "Oh, I don't know, it has a certain charm."

He hands over the picture and watches McCoy's face carefully as he takes it in. The photograph shows McCoy lying on a deckchair in nothing but swim trunks, his eyes closed and one hand wrapped around a glass.

McCoy stares at the photo for a long moment, then says slowly, "Do you remember that planet we visited a few years back, where anything you thought about came into being?"

"Of course," Kirk replies.

McCoy waves the picture at him. "I was just thinking about shore leave. How I'd like to be on a beach somewhere warm, with nothing but the sun and a mint julep."

Kirk stares at him. "Are you saying the camera picked up what you were thinking of?"

"I'm just saying it's strange."

Kirk thinks for a moment, then holds out the camera. "Take a picture of me."

McCoy takes the camera and studies it for a moment. "How?"

"Press the button on the top."

*Click.*

When this picture appears, it shows Kirk on the bridge, in his captain's chair.

"Were you thinking about being on the bridge?" McCoy asks.

Kirk shrugs. "Not exactly. But I did think I should probably get back there."

McCoy hands the camera back to him. "Maybe you should contact the people on the Starbase. See if they know anything about it."

"That's a good idea." Kirk nods, weighing the camera in his hands. "I guess I'll see you later. Don't work too hard."

He can hear McCoy grumbling behind him as he leaves the office.

Unfortunately, the workers on the Starbase have no knowledge of the camera, and no idea where it might have come from, or who might have put it in with the supplies. The general consensus is that since the *Enterprise* has it, they might as well keep it. *Out of sight, out of mind*, Kirk thinks, mentally rolling his eyes. Still, their loss is his gain.

Over the next few days he takes numerous pictures of the crew.

*Click.* A picture of Lieutenant Uhura standing outside her quarters shows her in the rec room singing, surrounded by people.

*Click.* A picture of Lieutenant Sulu conversing with another crewmember shows them fencing.

*Click.* A picture of Scotty working on the engines shows no change.

There are surprises, too.

*Click.* Security chief Giotto's picture shows him holding a baby, which Kirk learns is his new granddaughter. He's able to organise some time off so that the man can go be with his family.

*Click.* A picture of Spock bending over the science console, in the middle of a shift, shows the two of them playing chess in his quarters. Kirk had expected that, like Scotty, there would be no change, but he can't say he's unhappy to be wrong.

Not all the pictures are positive, of course.

*Click.* A supposedly calm discussion between several crewmembers turns into an image of them brawling on the floor, fists and blood flying.

But, as McCoy tells him, just because someone thinks about doing something, doesn't mean they're actually going to do it. And, indeed, the

discussion never goes further than some raised voices. Still, Kirk is more circumspect about taking pictures after that.

Eventually the novelty wears off, and the camera is consigned to a shelf in his quarters. It isn't until some weeks later, when he's preparing to beam down to a newly discovered planet as part of a mission to determine whether the inhabitants should be offered Federation membership, that he picks it up again.

He looks it over, then shrugs and puts it in with the rest of his things. According to the briefings the N'bal appreciate novelty and new experiences. Maybe it'll help to break the ice.

He beams down as usual with Spock and a small security team. A group of senior N'bal greet them at the main council building and show them around, asking endless questions about the Federation and its people, as well as answering questions about their own culture. They are friendly and intelligent, and Kirk finds himself liking them a lot.

As he suspected, their reaction when he brings out the camera is one of curiosity and excitement. Kirk admits to a little curiosity himself as he raises the camera to his eye and takes a picture of the group all together.

*Click.*

Like every time before, the paper shoots out of the front and Kirk waits for the image to show up. When it does, however, it's like nothing he could have imagined.

The picture shows the landing party lying dead on the ground, torn open with the N'bal covered in their blood. Kirk swallows hard, unable to believe what he is seeing.

"Well?" one of the N'bal asks, sounding honestly curious. "What does it show?"

Kirk crumples the photograph in his hand. "It didn't come out, I'm afraid. I'll take another."

He raises the camera to his eye again, forcing his hands not to shake. *It doesn't mean anything*, he thinks desperately. *Just because someone thinks of doing something doesn't mean they'll actually do it.* But he's no longer so certain. Heart pounding in his chest, he closes his eyes and presses down on the button.

*Click.*

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