

The Doctor, the Hag, and the AU, or, Bones and the Hallmark Christmas Movie Curse

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The Doctor, the Hag, and the AU, or, Bones and the Hallmark Christmas Movie Curse

by [spacedogfromspace](#)

Summary

Every year in December, the Enterprise's senior staff gather to watch 21st century Hallmark Christmas movies. Unfortunately for Bones, he hates Hallmark Christmas movies more than he hates the idea of being spaced. And this year, he is grumpier than usual. Luckily, the Christmas Hag appears and sends Bones on an isekai Hallmark adventure (against his will) to discover the true meaning of Christmas: Spirk.

Notes

So this is a (non-denominational) Christmas fic where I torture Bones by isekai-ing him into a generic Hallmark Christmas movie starring his friends.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Halloween Called

Chapter Summary

Bones temporarily escapes the Hallmark Christmas movie watch party only to discover that he's jumped out of the frying pan, into the fire.

This was by far Bones' least favourite tradition among the senior staff of the Enterprise. He had never understood his friends' fascination with generic, mass produced Christmas movies from the twenty-first century, and he supposed that he never would. However, every year around this time they all gathered together to watch a marathon of the stupid things.

"I think we've seen this one," Bones said as they started another, seemingly familiar vid.

Uhura, mastermind behind this god-awful tradition, shook her head with a wry smile. "You say that at least once every year," she said. "I promise, we won't be having repeats for a long while."

"I don't know why they had to make so many of the exact same film," Bones grumbled.

"Oh come on, Bones," Jim protested lightly from his spot on the floor. "They aren't all exactly the same."

"Yeah," Sulu agreed, adding, "there's at least twelve plots that they keep recycling over and over again."

"And yet, here we are, watching the hundredth--"

"-Hundred and fifth," Uhura interrupted.

"-one of these stupid movies," Bones finished, ignoring Uhura. "Maybe it's time we retired this tradition," he suggested, prompting a gasp from Uhura.

"No!" She protested, looking at him as if he had kicked a puppy. "They're fun! They're light hearted and fun to make fun of and they're all about the magic of Christmas and true love!" She proclaimed in an exaggeratedly sappy voice, knotting her hands together and holding them to her cheek, emphasizing her love for the terrible films.

Bones rolled his eyes, having none of it. "Christmas is a stupid holiday, and true love is as dead as y'all are to me right now."

"Jeez, Leonard," Uhura said, raising her eyebrows at him. "You sound like you need some help."

Bones rolled his eyes again, already having forgotten to quit doing that. "The only help I need is in liquid form. And some ibuprofen. These terrible movies and y'all's ridiculousness have made me roll my eyes so much that I have a headache. I'm going down to sickbay for some painkillers."

"Shall we pause the vid until your return, Doctor?" Spock asked snarkily.

"No!"

With the door to the officers' lounge shut behind him, he sighed and rubbed his temples. He was trying not to be such a sourpuss at Hallmark Nights, but that was a feat easier said than done. The movies were all around stupid and annoying, yes, but what annoyed him the most was the idiot main characters who somehow always managed to find their one true love in, what, three days? How stupid.

Shaking his head, he headed down the hall to the turbolift, in no particular rush to get to sickbay and back. He stepped off the turbolift on G deck and took the well known route through the corridors to sickbay, but stopped in his tracks after turning a corner and seeing a strange figure in the middle of the hall. They were standing limply, with their chin to their chest, looking as if they were being held up by the top of their spine by invisible wires, though their feet were planted firmly on the floor. Bones couldn't see the person's face, their long greying hair falling to shroud it. They wore some sort of dirty old nightgown that left their unnatural ashen arms, lower legs, and feet bare.

A few years ago he might have been shocked to have this sight before him unexpectedly, but he had seen so much shit during his time on the Enterprise that it was nearly impossible to spook him. Settling his weight on one leg and crossing his arms, unimpressed, Bones called out, "Hey, Halloween called, they want your lame costume back!" When the figure didn't respond, or even move, he squinted at them. "Hey, who are you?" He demanded, then with more urgency snapped, "Hey! I'm talking to you!" He grumbled to himself, striding towards them when they again offered no response.

When he reached the figure, he grabbed them by the shoulder, and tried to resist the urge to shake them roughly, as he wasn't entirely sure that this was indeed a joke. It was possible that whoever was in this ridiculous getup was in some sort of medical distress. However, the moment he touched the figure, their head shot up, the ashen face of a sickly looking woman staring at him, stray strands of hair falling in front of her face. Bones took a step back, startled, but didn't retreat any further.

"Hey, can you hear me? What's your name?" Bones asked. Now that he was up close, he saw that the ashy dry skin wasn't a practical effect, and that this person was likely very ill. When she didn't respond other than moving her eyes to trace his movements, he sighed, wishing that she was in uniform so at least he'd have some sort of identification to work with. He couldn't very well treat a patient without knowing who

she was and what ailments might be in her medical history. "Alright, I'm going to take you down to sickbay," Bones said, taking the unidentified woman gently by the elbow. "We'll get you all fixed up, don't worry."

"No," she said, surprising him. She raised her free hand, revealing what Bones recognized as a model truck shortly before she slammed it into his head, instantly knocking him unconscious.

When Bones came to, he rubbed at his aching head and slowly opened his eyes, a difficult feat under the bright lights of wherever he was. He could feel a throbbing bruise on the right side of his forehead. When his eyes finally adjusted, he was surprised to find himself on a park bench in a snowy town.

"What...?" He looked around frantically, which only made him dizzy, so he put his face in his hands until the feeling settled. Confused at the texture of his hands, he lifted his face to see that he was wearing a pair of wool mittens that definitely weren't there before. Upon examining himself further, he realized that he was fully outfitted for a chilly winter day, sporting a parka, scarf, and matching toque. "What is this?" He asked under his breath, slowly getting to his feet and walking through the park towards the street. He took in his surroundings more carefully, noting that many of the trees in the park were adorned with festive lights, which were illuminated despite it only beginning to get dark. When he reached the street, he noticed that the streetlamps and power poles had been given the same treatment, along with big red bows tied around them.

"This is obviously a dream," Bones decided out loud. "It's a dream, and I know it's a dream, so I can wake myself up." He stood there on the sidewalk for a long while, focussing. He didn't wake up. Nothing around him changed in any way, except for the occasional car driving by, snow crunching below the tires. "Okay..." Bones whispered to himself. "This is real. That.... That hag did something to me... Alright, think, McCoy, think. Where do I go, what do I do?" He looked up and down the street for any leads. His eyes caught on a sign and he laughed despite himself. "Well, I couldn't imagine a better place to start," he said, and started towards the green and black sign. The big white letters spelt one word:

Enterprise.

Enterprise

Chapter Summary

Bones encounters a familiar face, and runs into a friend.

When he got closer, Bones saw that the sign indicated a single storey, square building with the same green and black band across the top, its white text spelling out Enterprise. The front of the building and around one of the corners was entirely walled in floor to ceiling windows, and he could see a sparse room inside with a service desk underneath yet another sign bearing the name of his ship. Seeing that there was someone behind the desk, Bones walked to the glass front door, noting the 'open' sign hanging on the inside of the window. He nearly walked right into the door, but luckily noticed the little placard that read pull above a bar a little lower than halfway down the door. He took hold of the frosty bar, glad for the mittens he wore, and pulled the door open, hearing a chime as he walked in.

The person behind the desk looked up at the sound, seeming surprised, but not as surprised as Bones was.

"Scotty!" Bones exclaimed in relief upon recognizing the chief engineer of the Enterprise. "Thank god, what the hell is all of this? Where are we?"

Scotty blinked at him from behind the counter, looking confused. "Uh... we're in Smalltown, USA?" He answered warily.

"Do you know what's happened?" Bones asked frantically, approaching the desk and failing to see Scotty recoil, clearly debating whether or not to press the panic button under the desk.

"I don't know of anything out of the ordinary, mister," Scotty said nervously, then gestured to the corded landline on the desk a few feet away. "Uhh... you can use the phone if you need it?"

Bones shook his head, a slightly manic laugh slipping out. "Alright, Scotty, come on. You're putting on a good act, but you're in on this, I know it!" He looked around the room, looking to see if there was anyone else hiding nearby. "The jig is up! I know a practical joke when I see one!" He called out to nobody in particular, before turning back to Scotty, leaning on the desk. "Come on, Scotty. Give it up."

Scotty was rigidly still and awfully pale, his nervous eyes the only thing that dared to move. "Uhh, right, right," he said with a shake of his head, snapping out of it and manipulating something below the desk with trembling hands.

When Scotty started piling green slips of paper onto the desk - which Bones recognized as an antiquated form of Earth currency - Bones raised his palms, taking a step back, suddenly aware that he was terrifying the poor man. "No, no, sorry. I'm sorry." Bones said hurriedly, and Scotty paused, looking at him with even more confusion than before. "It's just... You really don't know who I am, do you?" He asked, heart dropping at the prospect.

"I... I don't know who you are, I'm... sorry to say," Scotty said cautiously, fighting back a nervous stutter. "I've never seen you before in my life, I don't... I don't know how you know my name."

"Huh." Bones looked down at the floor, blinking, trying to process what was happening. He shook his head, exhaled sharply, composing himself before returning his attention to Scotty. "I apologize for my... behaviour. It's... I'm not from here," he said, wincing at the poor justification.

Scotty squinted at him, nodding slowly. "No kidding," he said, flatly.

Bones looked around the mostly empty room again, nervously. "Uhh... What is this place?" He asked. "This Enterprise?"

"This is a car rental agency," Scotty said, seeming to calm down a bit. "We also rent moving trucks," he said, wincing as if afraid that this crazy stranger might be moving to town.

"Car rental," Bones said, thinking. A vehicle might be of use. "Can I rent one?" He asked, doubting that he would be allowed after acting like a mad man and apparently trying to rob the place. Speaking of which, he was fairly certain renting a car involved money, which he did not have.

Despite Bones' doubts, Scotty nodded. "You can rent a car, so long as you provide a valid driver's license. And a driver's abstract dated no earlier than December first."

Not knowing what either of those were, Bones patted the pockets of the coat he woke up in. He raised his eyebrows in surprise when he felt something in one of them, and removed a wallet that wasn't his, yet upon opening it, found that it bore a photo ID with his face and the name Leonard Horatio McCoy inscribed on it. There was also a sheet of paper tucked into the leather pouch, and he unfolded it. Across the top of the official looking document read Driver's Abstract.

"Would you look at that," Bones said under his breath, handing over both the sheet of paper and the plastic card to Scotty. While they were being examined, Bones checked out the other contents of the wallet, finding a few more plastic cards with his name embossed on them, and some of the green paper currency he had recognized earlier. He checked his other pockets, and found what was shaped like a communicator, but had a screen and rows of numbered tactical buttons. He put it away, making a mental note to investigate the device later.

Handing back the documents, Scotty said, "and I'll need a credit card to keep on file."

Bones picked one of the other plastic cards, unsure which one was the 'credit card' Scotty had requested, and relaxed when it was accepted without any questions.

Honestly, he wasn't sure how any of this was accepted without questions.

Bones found that, though he had a driver's license and a clear driving record, he had not been magically given driving skills. Sitting behind the wheel of the little red car, he drove slowly and jerkily, sitting forward in his seat, jaw clenched tight in concentration. It took a few minutes to relax and drive more like a normal person, but he still drove slow and struggled with turns, taking them too wide, but he felt better having figured out the basics.

He decided he would drive around the town, searching for anything that might help him out. There had to be some way for him to get back to his own world – he had determined that where he was now was not in fact his world at all. Some sort of... alternate universe.

He had gained more confidence and was allowing himself to drive faster, though still adhering to the fairly slow speed limits that he noticed were posted every so often. There were few other cars on the road, which he was thankful for, but there were a number of pedestrians out and about, wandering in and out of shops and strolling down the sidewalks, bundled up like he was. It seemed that the town was small enough to be walkable.

He kept his eyes on the road to make sure that he wouldn't accidentally drive into the sidewalk and didn't pay too much attention to the people walking, but something caught the corner of his eye as he passed, and a shock ran through him.

"That hag-" he said, turning in his seat to look behind him, certain that it was her. He couldn't find her through the back window of the car, and was unfortunately so taken by surprise that he didn't think to stop the car when looking behind him. When he finally turned his eyes back to the road in front of him, it was too late to stop or swerve. He slammed on the brakes just before a man's body was knocked off his feet onto the hood of the car, then thrown several feet forward onto the slushy pavement as the car came to its sudden stop.

"FUCK!" Bones instantly forgot about the hag, suddenly very concerned that he had just killed someone. "Shit, shit, shit," he muttered, struggling out of his seatbelt and throwing the door open, attempting to exit the car. "Shit its gotta be in park, gotta put it in park," he hissed when the car lurched forward as his foot came off the brake. He promptly stomped back down on it, shifting the vehicle into park before rushing out of the car and running over to the prone body, sliding through the slush as he knelt down to help.

"Jesus christ, I am so sorry, are you okay?" He asked, frantically.

"Yeah, I'm alright," the guy said, seeming a bit stunned as he let Bones help him into a seated position. The man winced at the pain of moving his arm, and Bones knew at a glance that it was broken. "Or maybe not," the man changed his mind, holding his arm to his side.

Bones should have been helping him, but he was suddenly frozen, staring at him in disbelief. As luck would have it, the guy he had nearly killed was none other than Jim Kirk.

Screwed the Timeline

Chapter Summary

Bones takes Jim to the hospital and gets to Market Square just in time to sign Jim up for the annual ice sculpture competition. Spock is there. The Hag finally shows up to tell Bones what's what.

"I'm really sorry I hit you with my car," Bones said for probably the fifteenth time, carefully driving to the town's small clinic while Jim sat in the passenger's seat giving directions while cradling his broken arm.

"Really dude, don't worry, it's fine," Jim said, grimacing when a pothole jostled his arm.

"It's really not fine. I'm a doctor, this is kind of the opposite of my thing," Bones sighed.

Jim gave him the winning smile he always used when he tried to cheer him up, and Bones had to fight the urge not to roll his eyes at him, reminding himself that this Jim didn't know him. "Oh come on," Jim said. "Even doctors have to run people over sometimes. Besides, I've had worse."

Bones snorted. "Yeah, I believe you on that, Jim."

Jim squinted his eyes at him, curiously. "How do you know my name?"

Fuck. "You told me," Bones said, trying to keep his cool. "Out on the road. I asked you your name," he lied.

"Huh. I don't remember that," Jim said, sucking air through his teeth when the car dipped into another pothole.

"Sorry," Bones muttered, cursing his terrible driving skills. "It's probably just the shock, kid. Not unusual to forget a conversation you had right after getting hit by a car."

"Well, you're the doc," Jim said, seeming to take him at his word. "Take a right here, it's just around the corner," he added as they approached the intersection. "I've forgotten your name, too."

"It's Leonard," Bones said as he made the turn, seeing the small hospital and immediately turning into its modest parking lot.

"Right," Jim said. Once the car was in park, he unbuckled his seatbelt, saying, "Thanks for the lift, Leonard."

Bones instantly regretted giving Jim his name, because that just felt plain wrong, but he had bigger fish to fry. Namely, Jim trying to wrestle the passenger side door open without jostling his broken arm. Rolling his eyes, Bones told him, "just wait, I'm gonna walk you in. I'll get your door, you're gonna hurt yourself," and he pulled himself out of the car, walking around it to help Jim out of his seat.

"You really don't have to come in with me, you've spent enough time driving me here," Jim said as Bones walked with him to the hospital entrance. "I don't want to be more of an inconvenience."

Bones rolled his eyes again. This fucking guy. "I hit you with my car, kid. Shut up."

When they walked into the lobby, the first thing Bones noticed was that aside from the receptionist, it was entirely empty. The second thing he noticed was Christine Chapel walking in through the double doors leading to the hall of treatment rooms. Noticing Jim clutching his arm, she made a beeline for them, and Bones bit his tongue to keep himself from talking to her as if she was the Christine he knew from his universe.

"That arm doesn't look too good," she said, siding up next to Jim and placing a comforting hand on his shoulder as she took a look at his arm. Bones shook his head. Of course Christine's bedside manner was leagues better than his, even in this universe.

Jim grinned at her apologetically. "Yeah, it's broken."

She nodded sympathetically. "Let's take you back and get you patched up." She took him by his good elbow and led him towards the treatment area.

Before they passed the double doors, Jim turned around, locking eyes with Bones. "Actually, uh, if you aren't busy, do you think you could do me a favour?" He asked sheepishly.

"Shoot, kid," Bones agreed.

"Could you go down to Market Square and sign me up for the ice sculpture competition? That's actually where I was heading when, you know," he gestured with his head towards his broken arm. "Registration closes in twenty minutes, I'm pretty sure I'm not going to make it in time," he said with a short laugh, as if he had made a joke.

"Not a problem," Bones said, keeping himself from shaking his head as Jim's face lit up. As if I would say no after breaking his damn arm.

"Great! Thank you so much. Hang on, let me write down my name and phone number, you'll need those, ah..." he looked around stupidly before looking at Nurse Chapel. "Do you have paper and a pen?"

Christine opened the small notebook that hung from her lanyard and produced a pen, then gestured to Jim to dictate to her, since she knew he wouldn't very well be able to hold a notebook and a pen with his busted arm. When she had finished jotting down the information, she tore the page cleanly from her notebook and held it out to Bones between her first and middle fingers. Bones took it from her and pocketed it.

"I'll get right on that," Bones said, as Nurse Chapel began to guide her patient through the double doors. "Good luck, kid."

"Thanks, Leonard," Jim called back. Bones grimaced. That wasn't going to be easy to get used to. When he got back in his rental car, he looked at the note, then fished the cellphone out of his pocket and clumsily sent a message to the number Jim had provided:

Let me know when you're all patched up, I'll come get you.

It took Bones nearly the whole twenty minutes to get to town square. He had driven slowly and kept his eyes peeled for any pedestrians crossing the road, not wanting to hit another person. As he pulled up to the square, he risked a glance at the digital clock on the dashboard, and cursed. He parked the car in what was probably an illegal spot, and dashed out to the table that was set up in the middle of the square, sporting a vinyl sign that read 'Smalltown Annual Ice Sculpture Competition - Registration.' Behind the table sat two pretentious looking organizers, bundled up in mittens and toques and cradling empty go-cups of coffee as if they were still giving off heat. They looked like they were counting down the seconds until registrations officially closed and they could pack up and retreat to somewhere warm.

"Hi, registering on behalf of Jim Kirk?" Bones said, slapping down the paper with Jim's name and phone number scrawled in Christine Chapel's handwriting. The two organizers looked at him with poorly concealed annoyance, and he worried that they would tell him that they were no longer accepting any registrations.

"Cutting it a bit close, aren't we?" The blonde woman said dryly. Bones felt a wave of relief as she pulled off a mitten to add Jim to the roster.

"There was ah... something came up last minute," Bones explained lamely, shrugging as he took back the slip of paper once she had finished copying it.

"Whatever," the woman sighed. Her partner had begun to pack away their supplies, but she addressed Bones tiredly. "Just tell him he needs to be here at three o'clock sharp on the twenty-third or he'll be disqualified. He'll have four hours and not a minute more."

"Right," Bones said. "I'll tell him," he retreated from the table as the organizer joined her partner in hastily packing up the table and chairs, ending their conversation.

He walked briskly back to his car, hoping that nobody had noticed that he had left it where he shouldn't have. He opened the driver's side door of the little red car and was about to get in to blast the heat when he was stopped by a voice. It was a familiar voice, but he wasn't used to hearing it used so politely so he didn't recognize it immediately.

"Excuse me, are you James Kirk?"

Reflexively, Bones replied, "No, sorry," then blinked in surprise when he turned to look at who he was speaking to and found himself face to face with Spock. "What are you doing here?" He asked before he could stop himself, but luckily it seemed that Spock thought nothing odd about the question.

"I'm a journalist for Bigcity Weekly. I'm on assignment to write a piece on this year's ice sculpture competition. I was hoping to interview James Kirk, the defending champion, though I suppose that will have to wait for another day," Spock explained plainly.

Bones blinked at him dumbly for a minute, needing the time to process everything. It was strange seeing Spock dressed this way, in a fashionable long coat and jeans. He wore a toque but it didn't conceal his ears, which were still pointed despite this very human universe. He shook his head to snap himself back to attention when he noticed Spock eyeing him warily.

"You're from the newspaper for an ice sculpture competition?" He asked, mostly just parroting back what Spock had told him to buy him a few more seconds to compose himself without just staring at Spock in silence like a lunatic. "Seems like a strange use of resources," he commented, trying to push them into a normal conversation.

"Indeed," Spock said dryly, perhaps even bitterly. "I admit that I am not pleased by this assignment. Fluff pieces are not worth my time, but try telling that to my employer."

A chuckle escaped Bones at the ridiculousness of this entire situation. "That sucks, man," he said, shaking his head, mostly at how strange Spock was in this universe.

"It does," Spock sighed, then gathered himself, standing straight and making to leave. "I'll let you go, I've already taken up too much of your time."

"It's not a problem," Bones said, still standing in the wake of his open car door.

"Goodbye," Spock said, turning back to the square.

"See you," Bones said before slumping in his car, slamming the door shut against the cold, and starting the ignition. As he waited for the heat to kick in and warm the interior of the vehicle, he sat in quiet confusion.

When the car had warmed up sufficiently, Bones took a breath and put his foot on the brake so he could throw the car into reverse. But before he did, his phone pinged, so instead he dug it out of his pocket, and saw that it was a message from Jim.

Hey, I'm all patched up. If you're not busy could you give me a lift to my truck?

Bones typed out a response, awkwardly on the numerical keys.

Yeah, be there in a few.

He put the phone down on the console, and put the car in reverse. His eyes flicked up to the rear view mirror, and he nearly jumped out of his skin when he saw that he wasn't alone in the car. He slammed the car back into park before he could panic and step on the gas, then spun around to confront the intruder.

"You!" Bones shouted, pointing an angry finger at the hag who knocked him out back on the Enterprise. "Who the hell are you? Did you send me here?" He demanded.

"Chill, man," she said, raising her gnarly grey palms to him, blinking slowly. She was no longer wearing a dirty nightgown, but was instead wearing a casual Santa-themed dress, which only looked stranger on this greying old hag. "I'm the Christmas Hag, and I brought you here to learn the true meaning of Christmas," she said in a sarcastic, sing-song voice, garnished with unenthusiastic jazz hands.

"I don't want your jokes," Bones snapped.

"No, really," the hag said, adopting a more serious tone. "I really am the Christmas Hag, and I really did bring you here so you can discover the true meaning of Christmas. Sorry, I've done this spiel so many times - you have no idea - and it's starting to drive me crazy."

Bones just squinted at her for a long moment. "Is this one of those damn Hallmark movies?"

The Hag snapped her fingers. "Bingo," she said, sounding bored. "Welcome to Hallmark AU, I'm gonna cut to the chase here. Jim and Spock were supposed to meet in Market Square this afternoon, but they didn't. Wanna tell me why that is?"

Bones rolled his eyes. "Because I hit Jim with my car while he was walking to the square," he answered, sounding annoyed, then angry as he suddenly remembered what caused him to hit Jim with his car. "Hey! It was your fault! You were there!"

The Hag smiled lazily. "Regardless of whose fault it is, this movie has gone off script. You've screwed the timeline, Bones. And it's your job to fix it."

"What are you talking about?" Bones asked, throwing his hands up in frustration. "This is your fault, I didn't ask to be here, and you need to send me back to my ship. I have a life to get back to, I won't play your stupid games!"

"If you ever want to go back to your life, you'll listen closely," The Hag said, returning the intensity of his glare. "If those two idiots aren't kissing each other by the end of the ice sculpture competition, you will be stuck here forever."

"Now wait just a damn minute," Bones protested. "I thought I was here to learn some dumb Christmas lesson. What in god's name does this have to do with Christmas?"

"That's for me to know, and you to find out," the Hag said, and before Bones could retort, she flashed a peace sign and vanished into thin air.

"FUCK," Bones shouted, slamming his head down on the steering wheel and letting the car horn drown out the thoughts running through his head for a long minute.

Meet Not-Cute

Chapter Summary

Bones comes up with a plan to have Jim and Spock meet each other.

“Wanna sign my cast?” Jim asked cheerily as he swung himself into the passenger’s seat of the rental car. He had been waiting just inside the hospital doors when Bones pulled up to collect him.

Bones let out a breath of a laugh. “Yeah, sure, kid,” he said. Alternate Universe or not, broken arm or not, Jim was still Jim. He checked the console looking for a pen. Unfortunately, there wasn’t anything there, but he was in luck when he opened the glovebox and found a sharpie. Jim took his arm out of his sling for access, and Bones signed his name in block capital letters.

Jim looked at it and laughed. “Did you just label my arm? I thought a doctor might have been a bit more specific.”

Bones looked at Jim in confusion for a moment before he realized that the name he had written on Jim’s cast was ‘Bones.’ Damn habits, Bones thought, this is all Jim’s fault. The other one. What he said was, “It’s what my friends call me.”

Jim grinned. “Oh, I get it. Like sawbones,” he said without missing a beat.

Bones blinked at him. He felt stunned, but he didn’t know why. After all, it was Jim, or rather a Jim that had come up with the nickname in the first place. “Yeah,” he said dumbly.

Jim was chatty on the drive back to where his truck was parked, but Bones wasn’t paying much attention to what he was saying. Jim didn’t seem to take any offense, assuming that Bones was concentrating on driving so he wouldn’t hit another pedestrian. But really, Bones was busy thinking about his encounter with the Christmas Hag. Before he drove away from the hospital, he had used the cell phone to check the date. It was December 20th, and the clock on the dash reported that the time was nearly seven o’clock. Comparing that with the date and time that the ice sculpture competition would end, he would have almost exactly three days to fulfill his task. He grimaced inwardly. Three days wasn’t much time, especially since Jim and Spock hadn’t even met yet. He knew had a lot of work to do, but he didn’t even know where to start.

“That’s my truck there,” Jim said, pulling Bones back to reality. He spotted the truck that Jim was pointing at, and parked along the curb behind it. He got out of the car with Jim, intending to see him off and assure him that if he needed anything over the next few days that he could give him a call. But Bones got distracted by the logo on the side of Jim’s truck, marking it as a company vehicle.

Bones gestured to it, asking, “work truck?”

Jim shrugged. “Personal truck turned work truck.”

“What do you do for work?” Bones asked, curious as to what Starfleet’s youngest captain did for a living in this universe.

“I do deliveries,” Jim said.

“What do you deliver?”

“Whatever people need delivered,” Jim replied. “Whole company is just me and my truck. A bunch of businesses around town have me bring their supplies in from the city.”

Bones nodded. “Keep you busy enough?”

“Yeah, well enough,” Jim said. “Actually, tomorrow’s pretty busy. I gotta run to the city early to pick up a shipment for the coffee shop and have it back here in town by the time they open at seven AM,” he said. “But I have to leave extra early because I also have to pick something up for the country club that they need delivered that afternoon. Sorry, I’m rambling. I’ll let you go, thanks for the ride,” Jim said, seeing how Bones’ eyes glazed over at the details of his job.

But it wasn’t disinterest that sent Bones deep into his own thoughts. He had an idea. “Jim, wait,” he said, stopping Jim as he was climbing into his truck.

“Yeah?” He turned back to look at Bones.

“Where do out-of-towners stay around here?” Bones asked.

“Probably the motel on the east side of town,” Jim said, gesturing in a general easterly direction. “Not really any other options, I’m afraid.”

“Perfect,” Bones said, mostly to himself. “Thanks,” he said over his shoulder as he distractedly headed back to his car.

“No problem?” Jim said back, a little confused. Bones didn’t hear him.

Bones sat in his car in the corner of the Smalltown Motel parking lot. The motel was small, with only six rooms, and luckily for Bones, all the doors were on the same side of the building. It made his stakeout much easier than he thought it would have been. As he waited, the air inside the car grew colder, so he put on his mittens and burrowed deeper into his coat, reluctant to turn the ignition on in case someone noticed him

lingering and assumed that he was up to something suspicious, which he was.

He checked the time impatiently every few minutes, using the display on the cellphone. He had been watching the motel room doors for nearly an hour now, and there was still no sign of his quarry. Come on, he couldn't have turned in for the night before I got here, right? That would have been too early, he thought. On the other hand, this was Spock that he was talking about. Spock wasn't particularly known for participating in the night life. Though, it was still early for the night life to be getting started.

Bones perked up when someone walked off the street and through the small parking lot towards the motel. Even though the sun had long gone down and the street lamp in front of the motel wasn't working, Bones recognized Spock from his posture and his long, even gait. Perfect. He watched as Spock headed to the left side of the building and climbed the stairs to the room on the second storey. Bones waited three minutes before getting out of his car and retreating to the motel room he had booked just over an hour earlier. It was the middle room on the ground floor.

Once inside, he pulled the mittens off and blew into his hands, trying to warm them. Once some of the dexterity returned to his hands, he gathered the motel-provided plain notepad and a ballpoint pen and sat down at the small table in the corner, and wrote:

If you're interested in a story more important than an ice sculpture competition, meet me in front of the print store on Ingal's street at 0645.

He folded the paper in half, concealing the text, and wrote Spock's name on the outside. Then, he left the room and crept up the stairs to Spock's door, cursing at every creak in the old wooden stairs and wishing that Spock's room was on the ground floor. Each unit had a large window for natural light, but the blinds were drawn to block anyone from seeing in. Bones taped the note to the window so the part with Spock's name written on it faced into the room, and then he quietly walked back down to the ground level. He stepped back from the building so he had a good view of the window, and picked up a handful of the gravel from the parking lot. He threw one rock at the window, then another, both creating a moderately loud clacking sound. Then he waited for a moment, holding his breath.

Though the blinds were closed, they were thin enough that Bones could see that the light inside the room was on. He was about to throw another rock when a tall shadow was cast on the blinds, prompting him to run up to the building, hiding under the stairs out of view of Spock. He waited, listening closely, and sighed with relief when he heard the sound of a door opening above him, followed by a couple footsteps before the door closed again. Bones wouldn't dare check, in case Spock had left the blinds open and was looking out the window, but he knew that Spock had taken the bait. He went back to his own motel room, making sure he opened and closed the door silently, and set an alarm for 0400 the next morning.

Bones yawned from his hiding spot in the alley beside the print store on Ingal's street. He knew that if Spock decided to come to the meeting place that he would show up early, so Bones had gotten up especially early to ensure that he beat him to it. This was no random meeting spot. Bones had scoped it out after dropping Jim off at his truck the day before, choosing it for its cluttered alleyway and narrow sidewalk on a narrow street. It was also certainly on Jim's delivery route to the coffee shop.

Bones checked the time. He knew that he may not have timed this properly. Jim could drive through earlier than anticipated. Spock could have decided not to show up. But Bones had his fingers crossed that his plan would work. Spock hadn't shown up yet, however, Jim's truck hadn't gone by yet either, so the plan hadn't fallen apart quite yet.

At six forty, five minutes before the proposed meeting time, Spock walked past the alleyway, presumably to wait for his mystery informant in front of the print shop. Bones crept quietly up the alley towards the street, holding his breath in an attempt to not be heard by Spock's keen ears. He peered around the corner and saw Spock exactly where he wanted him, standing on the sidewalk close to the mouth of the alley.

It's all coming together, Bones thought as he crouched down just inside the alley, staying hidden from Spock but having a good view of the road in the direction that Jim should be coming from. Bones just hoped that Jim would come by before Spock lost patience and left.

The stars had aligned. A surge of adrenaline ran through Bones as he recognized Jim's truck as it rumbled down the narrow street. He stood up and tip-toed closer to Spock, his heart beating faster with anxiety. He would only get this one shot.

Not yet, not yet.... NOW. As Jim's truck was just about to pass them by, Bones stepped out of the alley and gave Spock a hard shove, sending him stumbling into the street. He didn't stick around to see what happened, if he was caught he would probably be detained, and he didn't have time for that. As he dashed through the alley he did hear the sound of tires sliding through the snow as the truck suddenly braked, and he heard the impact. He flinched, hoping he didn't get Spock hurt too badly.

Once out the other side of the alley, Bones ran around the block, stopping only when he got back to Ingal Street, where he casually walked around the corner. The headlights on Jim's truck shone in his direction from down the block. The silhouettes of Jim and Spock standing in front of the truck gave Bones a minimal idea of what was going on. He also couldn't hear what they were saying from this distance, but they were standing close together, which Bones took as a good sign. When both Jim and Spock got into the truck, Bones allowed himself a moment of quiet celebration. The first step to escaping this Hallmark hell was done.

Flower Power

Chapter Summary

Bones buys some flowers and writes the worst apology letter known to mankind.

Bones followed the truck as best as he could on foot. If he was lucky, Jim would take Spock for coffee as an apology for driving his truck into him, and the timeline would be fixed well enough that Bones wouldn't have to do much else. Hell, it would even be a win if Jim was giving Spock a lift to the hospital, that would probably achieve the same result. However, it quickly became clear that Jim was just giving Spock a ride back to the motel.

Great, Bones thought as he dashed back to the motel, taking shortcuts to try to beat them there. He had hoped that would have been more effective. Now he would have to improvise... again. He probably shouldn't involve a vehicle this time.

He made it back to his motel room and closed the door just before Jim's truck came into view. Bones crouched by the window, watching through a gap in the blinds. He kept the lights off so that he was virtually invisible to anyone who glanced at his window. As a last second thought as the truck pulled up to a stop in front of the motel, he shoved the window open a crack so he could hear anything they said.

The passenger's side door - furthest from Bones - opened, and Spock stepped out. There was a definitive thunk as he shut the door, and as Spock walked through the beam of the headlights Bones was relieved to see that he didn't appear to be injured.

Jim rolled his window down and asked, "are you sure you're okay?"

Spock stopped, pivoting so he could nod back. "I am fine, thank you."

"Because I can take you to the hospital," Jim said, sounding unsure. "It's not far, it wouldn't be a problem at all."

"I assure you, I am uninjured," Spock told him. "Thank you for driving me here."

"No problem. Sorry I hit you with my truck," Jim grimaced, scrubbing a hand across the back of his neck.

Spock shook his head. "Apologies are unnecessary. There is nothing you could have done to prevent the collision, as I have explained to you four times already."

"Right, I... sorry... I mean," Jim stuttered, trying to figure out what he was trying to say. "Uh... well, I'll see you around then?" He asked awkwardly.

"It is likely." Spock responded. "Due to the size of this town I calculate that there is a fifty-seven percent chance that we will encounter each other again."

"Cool. Yeah, uh..."

For fuck's sake, Bones groaned inwardly, putting his face in his hands in second hand embarrassment of Jim's utter lack of charisma in this moment.

Thankfully, Spock came to Jim's rescue and put all three of them out of their misery. "I have taken enough of your time," he said, which seemed to be his signature exit phrase. He turned towards the motel. "Goodbye."

"Right," Jim said. "Bye." Bones saw Jim shake his head at himself before rolling up the window and driving away, the sound of crunching gravel and snow fading into the distance with him.

Bones let out a long breath. "This isn't going to be easy, is it?" He said quietly to himself. He sat down at the table, wondering what he could do next to push these two idiots towards each other. There was a sparse local newspaper on the table, and he flipped through it idly, stopping when an ad caught his eye, and suddenly he had an idea.

There was a delicate chime as Bones opened the door to the small storefront. He was immediately overwhelmed with the strongest floral scents he had ever encountered, and mentally crossed his fingers that he wasn't allergic to anything in here.

The small room was full of floral displays. The entire window display showed off pots and pots of poinsettias, but there were other small conventional arrangements on display on the front counter and on the shelves that lined the walls. He looked around for a moment before the proprietor made an appearance from the back room. Bones really shouldn't be surprised anymore, because of course Sulu would be the flower shop guy in this godforsaken universe.

"Hello," Sulu greeted him. "What can I do for you this morning?"

"Hi," Bones said awkwardly, trying to pretend like he didn't know the guy. It was harder than he would have thought. "I'm wondering if I could get some flowers," he said dumbly.

Sulu raised an eyebrow at him. "I mean, yeah. That's kind of my whole thing, here."

“Right,” Bones said. “Sorry. It’s too early in the morning.”

Sulu chuckled. “Don’t worry. Happens all the time.”

“I just need something simple that I’d be able to get right away,” Bones said. “A bouquet or whatever. Doesn’t need to be fancy.”

“Ah. Emergency flowers?” Sulu asked.

“What?”

“You know,” Sulu said with a wry smile. “You do something stupid so you buy some nice flowers for your wife so when she finds out she isn’t quite so mad?” When Bones just blinked at him he added, “Not that I have experience with that, but it’s what most guys are aiming for when they come in here looking for flowers on the double.”

“Uh, no,” Bones said. “Not emergency flowers.”

“Fair enough,” Sulu said. “Well, there aren’t a lot of options on rush orders, but I’ll see what I can do. What do you want it to say?”

“What do you mean?” Bones asked.

“Flower language, you know?” Sulu replied. Bones did not know, and it must have shown on his face because Sulu went on to explain. “Different flowers are used to convey different meanings.”

“Right…” Bones said, nodding. “Are there flowers for saying ‘sorry I hit you with my truck?’” he asked.

Sulu seemed taken slightly aback. “Did you… hit someone with a truck?” He asked hesitantly.

“No,” Bones said. Not today, at least. “I was just curious if the flowers were that specific. I do need apology flowers, though.”

“Hmm, let’s see what I have on hand. Wait here. I’m sure I’ve got something that’ll do.” Sulu said, eyes already glazed over with thought. He rushed into the backroom, out of sight. Bones waited at the counter, checking the time and hoping Spock wouldn’t be leaving the motel for a while yet.

Before long, Sulu reappeared with a modest but elegant cluster of flowers. “Well, I did my best. White tulips for an apology, daisies for innocence, and I was hoping I still had some gladiolis for sincerity, but I’m out, so I used lilacs for some colour.”

“Perfect,” Bones said, which is what he would have said to any arrangement Sulu had come up with. He didn’t particularly care about flower language, or think that it mattered, but he wasn’t about to tell Sulu that. That guy could use a sword and Bones didn’t want to end up on the wrong end of it.

Sulu rang him up, and Bones headed back to the motel with the flowers. He glanced up at Spock’s window as he approached the building, and saw that the blinds were drawn, but he could tell that the lights were on. Good, Bones thought. He’s still here. He stepped into his own room briefly to write a note on the card that had been provided with the flowers. He wrote:

Sorry I hit you with my truck. - Jim Kirk

“Good enough,” Bones said. He was no poet and he knew it, but this would have to do. He walked up to Spock’s door, doing his best to keep the stairs from creaking, and placed them on the doorstep. He knocked on the door with the intention to run and hide, but he realized too late that the stairs would slow him down too much. He could hear Spock approaching the door, and knowing that he only had seconds to conceal himself, he vaulted over the railing and fell very ungracefully into the bushes below.

The door opened, and Bones would have held his breath if it hadn’t already been knocked out of him. Through the tiny spaces between the boards of the steps, he could vaguely see Spock bend down and pick up the flowers, pausing for a moment to presumably read the note before going back inside. The moment the door shut Bones rolled out of the bushes gasping for air as his lungs finally allowed him to inhale again. After taking stock of himself, he found that nothing was broken, but he knew he would be sore as all hell from the fall. I sure hope this was worth it.

Apollo's Dodgeball

Chapter Summary

Bones makes up some rumours. Spock gets suspicious. Everything in this universe has a stupid name.

Bones walked down the street, hands stuffed in his pockets, grumbling about the large flakes of snow that were falling - seemingly on purpose - down the back of his jacket. He had sat around doing nothing all morning and was unhappy about the waste of time, but he didn't want to risk losing track of Spock. Finally, after hours of waiting, his quarry emerged from his motel room, and Bones tailed him at a distance through the snowy town.

Not only was it cold and snowy, and not only did he waste precious time that he couldn't afford to lose, but he also had no idea what his plan was. He was following Spock, but now what? He hoped he would come up with something soon.

Half a block up the street, oblivious of his follower, Spock stepped into one of the shops. Bones kept walking, noting that it was the coffee shop, which was aptly named 'The Coffee Shop.' He walked past and only stopped when he reached the street corner, where he stood casually against the brick siding of the building, watching the door to The Coffee Shop from the corner of his eye.

He wasn't sure whether Spock would be staying inside for any amount of time, but if he was, Bones didn't want to show up too soon. He meant to wait twenty minutes before following Spock into the store, but after five minutes he decided that it was too cold to just stand around, and if Spock was just stopping in for a moment he would have been out by now.

A row of jingle bells jostled when Bones opened the door to The Coffee Shop. He started to wonder if every business in this town had a make-shift alert system, but instead he changed tactics and wondered if every business in this town was run by his friends, because the aproned barista behind the counter was none other than Uhura. A quick glance around the room was all it took to locate Spock, who was sitting alone at a small table along the wall, engrossed in some archaic, folding computer. Bones decided to order a coffee. It would keep suspicion away from him, and also he was tired as all hell and could use some caffeine.

Uhura turned her attention from cleaning some kind of machine and raised a hand in greeting when he approached the counter. "Hey there," she said with a friendly smile. "What can I get for you?"

"Just a black coffee, thank you," Bones said, deciding that it would probably not be appropriate to get a little extra something added to it when it was only noon.

"Sure thing," Uhura said. As she rang him up she added, "Haven't seen you around town before. Passing through?"

Bones nodded. "Something like that," he answered with a shrug.

She smiled knowingly and gave him a nod. "Stay or to go?"

"Stay, please."

She passed him a ceramic mug of dark coffee. "Enjoy," she said.

"Thank you," Bones nodded to her, and chose a spot where he could keep an eye on Spock. He snagged the daily paper from the modest pile on the magazine rack and sat down, opening it but only pretending to read. He put it down once in a while to sip at his coffee - damn good coffee, it turned out - and used the opportunity to glance over at Spock and run his eyes over the rest of the room. He noticed that Spock showed no signs of moving anytime soon. He also noticed a pair of ancient looking computers at a counter in the corner under a sign that read 'internet.' Interesting.

He returned to pretend-reading the newspaper, wracking his brain for a course of action. He knew that time was of the essence, and nothing was more frustrating than not having any semblance of a plan. With a quiet sigh, he shoved a hand into his pocket to anxiously check the time on the cell phone. A piece of paper fluttered out of his pocket as he withdrew his hand, and he leaned down to pick it up, flipping it over and seeing that it was the scrap of paper with Jim's phone number written on it. Suddenly, he had an idea.

"Scuse me," he asked, approaching Uhura at the counter. "Could I use one of your computers for a moment?"

"Of course," Uhura said. "First ten minutes of internet is free."

"Great, thank you." He gave her a nod before heading to the computers, choosing one and hoping he could figure out how to operate it.

He had a plan, and this time it didn't even involve attempts at vehicular manslaughter. But he did have to come up with a convincing lie, and that required a little bit of research. When he finally figured out how to bring up an internet browser, he searched for country clubs in the Smalltown area, hoping that he would be able to deduce which one Jim was supposed to be driving to. As it turned out, it was easy, since there was only one country club even remotely close to the town. It was called Big Country Country Club.

"Is nothing named properly in this godforsaken universe?" Bones muttered under his breath. He spent a few more minutes clicking links and skimming pages, but didn't find anything that would help enforce his lie, and decided that he just had to hope that Spock would jump on a chance to investigate a random rumour. He took his chances and left the computers, crossing the shop and sitting in the seat across from Spock without asking if he minded.

Spock's eyes flicked up from his laptop in irritation, and he blinked slowly in recognition. "Can I help you?" He asked, not unkindly but clearly unimpressed with the intrusion.

"You'd rather be investigating something important than write a fluff piece about a small-town ice sculpture competition, right?" He asked, cutting straight to the chase.

"Yes?" Spock answered hesitantly.

"Have you heard the rumours about the country club just out of town? The Big Country Country Club?"

"I have not," Spock said, slowly closing his laptop. "But I'm listening."

"Good, because you're going to want to check this out," Bones said, lowering his voice. "Apparently, the very wealthy owners of the club are in negotiations to bring a big box store to Smalltown. You know, the kind that puts small businesses six feet under."

Spock raised an eyebrow. "Smalltown is nothing without its small businesses. A store like that would destroy the town as we know it."

"Exactly!" Bones said, thumping a fist on the table for emphasis, but not too enthusiastically. He didn't want to draw attention.

Spock's brow furrowed in thought. "But if it were true, why haven't the townspeople been vocal about their concerns?" He asked. "I doubt that they would just stand by and watch their livelihoods be destroyed by some corporate conglomerate."

Bones nodded. "Well that's another thing. The negotiations have been under tight wraps, so most people haven't heard a thing about it. And frankly, the rumours that have gotten out are so lacking for evidence that almost everyone who has heard about it thinks it's a hoax."

Spock hummed. "So you want me to investigate baseless rumours that, for all I know, you may have made up yourself minutes ago?" He asked flatly.

Bones struggled to keep his composure. "I don't want you to do anything," he declared calmly, raising his palms. "I'm just the messenger."

"Messenger of what, exactly?"

"That there might be something far more interesting going on around here than a stupid ice sculpture competition," Bones said impatiently, rolling his eyes. "Take it or leave it, I just thought you might want to know."

Spock's jaw tightened as he thought about it for a moment, and Bones could tell by the look on his face that he had been convincing enough. Spock was never one to pass up a challenge, especially from him. But then Spock narrowed his eyes at Bones and asked, "Are you the one who tried to set up a meeting with me early this morning on Ingal's street?"

Shit. "No?" Bones said, sounding far less confident than he meant to.

Spock glared at him for a while longer, and Bones thought that he was busted, but eventually Spock sighed. "Does this town have a taxi service? I suppose I have the time to do some investigating this afternoon."

Bingo. "No taxis," Bones said, unsure if that was even correct. "But I know a guy who's making a delivery there this afternoon," he took out the scrap of paper and slapped it down on the table, pushing it towards Spock with his fingertips. "He'd be glad to give you a lift."

Spock examined the piece of paper, then regarded Bones with skepticism for a moment. "Right. Thank you for this," he said, tucking the paper into his coat.

"Not a problem," Bones said, taking out his cellphone and pretending to check the time. "I gotta go," he lied, getting up. "Good luck."

The door jingled again as Bones walked out into the cold air. It was still snowing. He walked down the street until he was out of view of the coffee shop window, then stopped to catch his breath and wait for his heartbeat to slow down, muttering grumpily to himself. "I can't believe that pointy-eared bastard is on to me already."

Manicular Vehicleslaughter

Chapter Summary

Jim and Spock go on a car ride to the country club. Bones is there too.

"Alright, if I were Jim, where would I be right now?" Bones asked himself, walking through the main thoroughfare in hope of spotting either his idiot or his idiot's idiot truck. "Huh, would you look at that," he said in surprise when he immediately spotted Jim parking his truck along the curb in front of a row of shops. Bones really didn't expect to find him at all, let alone this soon.

Jim stepped out of his truck and jogged across the street. Bones noticed that he didn't look both ways before crossing and felt slightly less bad about hitting him with a car the day before. He shook his head and walked quickly towards Jim's truck, glad to see that there wasn't really anyone around to see him breaking into the truck.

He stood at the passenger's side door, realizing he had no idea how he would get in without breaking a window. He briefly considered hiding in the box of the pickup, under the tarp with the supplies that Jim was going to deliver to the country club, but he knew he'd be discovered there eventually, if he didn't freeze to death first. Bones looked up and down the sidewalk to see if anyone was watching. When he was sure that the coast was clear, he stepped closer to the truck to investigate the lock. Unfortunately, he knew nothing about lockpicking.

"I don't suppose..." he muttered to himself as he pulled the latch on the door, not expecting the door to open. To his genuine surprise, the door clicked open. He stood there dumbly for a moment, baffled that the truck would just be unlocked, but was jolted into action when he spotted Jim out of the corner of his eye as he returned to his truck.

Without thinking about whether it was a good idea or not, Bones jumped into the truck, shut the door with a grimace as it slammed a little too loudly, and dove over the seat, landing on the floor of the backseat. "Ow, fuck," he cursed as he landed on a toolbox. He shoved it aside and looked around for a way to better conceal himself. Luckily, the backseat was full of junk. Along with the toolbox was a pair of boots, a pile of gloves of different materials, a spare tire, and a pile of blankets. He snagged a blanket and pulled it down on top of him then froze when he heard the driver's side door open.

Bones couldn't see anything from his position on the floor of the truck, and had no indication of where Jim was driving, but he noticed when the twists and turns stopped and they accelerated up to a speed too high for driving in town. Shit, Bones thought. They were on route to the country club, but Spock wasn't with them. Bones was mentally cursing at his failed plan, wasted time, and the abundance of potholes on the gravel rural road when Jim's cell phone rang.

Jim pulled over and parked on the side of the road, unable to drive and answer a phone when he had one arm in a sling. "Hello?" He answered. Bones couldn't hear who was on the other end of the line, but he breathed a sigh of relief when Jim said, "Oh, Spock. Hi. What's up?" Shortly followed by, "Yeah, sure. That's no problem. I'd be glad for the company. Where are you?" Then, "Great, yeah, I'll see you in ten." He hung up, and Jim shifted the truck back into drive, then did a six point turn that was extremely awkward due to having to turn the truck and shift between gears with the same arm. Bones wondered if Jim should even be driving, really. He wasn't sure about this universe's Jim, but his Jim was a terrible driver even when he had the use of both his arms. Suddenly he wasn't too sure if any of this was a good idea.

"So, why do you need to go to the country club?" Jim asked after they were once again on their way, only this time with Spock.

"I have been informed that it may be worth investigating the country club's affairs." Spock answered distractedly through gritted teeth. "James, perhaps you should allow me to drive."

Bones wanted to shout out in agreement as the truck struck yet another pothole.

"Don't worry, I've got it," Jim said as he drove directly through another pothole. "And please, call me Jim."

"Jim, I insist that you let me drive." Spock said sternly.

After a beat of silence, Jim took his foot off the gas, bringing the truck to a stop. As the two got out of the car to switch places, Bones let out a deep sigh of relief. His kidneys could only take so much. The doors slammed shut one after the other, and Bones heard the deep clicks of the gear being shifted into drive. They were on their way again, driving through far fewer potholes with Spock as the driver.

"So, investigating?" Jim asked, conversationally.

"Yes. I am a journalist from the city. I'm here to write a piece on the ice sculpture competition, but I was informed of a rumour regarding the country club that I found I couldn't ignore in good conscience."

"Huh. I'm signed up for that competition. I actually won it last year," Jim said.

"I know," Spock said. "I have been meaning to interview you for my article." Bones rolled his eyes. He could couldn't see either of them, but he could feel Jim's stupid grin.

"An interview, eh?" Jim asked, and Bones rolled his eyes again at his flirtiness. Though he supposed that was the point of all this.

"If you agree to it, of course," Spock answered.

Jim hummed, pretending to think about it. "I'll let you interview me if you tell me about this country club rumour." Jim was teasing, but Spock proceeded to tell him everything that Bones had fed to him earlier. Spock was concise and only needed a couple sentences to fill Jim in.

"Jeez," Jim said when Spock finished, his voice taking on a grim tone. "If that's true, it'll ruin the whole town."

"That is precisely what I thought," Spock answered.

"This is the first I'm hearing of this," Jim said, sounding frustrated. "Who told you?"

"He did not offer his name," Spock said, and Bones celebrated his anonymity for exactly one second before Spock added, "But I believe you know him. He signed up for the ice sculpture competition on your behalf."

Shit.

"Oh," Jim said, sounding surprised. "Yeah, Leonard. That's strange. He isn't even from around here. I wonder how he knows something like that. Turn left up here."

"I won't lie to you, Jim," Spock said, taking the turn at Jim's indication. "I am ninety-one percent certain that this 'Leonard' made up this rumour specifically to send me out to the country club on what is colloquially known as a 'wild-goose chase.'"

Oh shit oh fuck-

"Why would he do that?" Jim asked.

Spock sighed. "I have come to the conclusion that there is no logical motive for doing such a thing," he admitted.

"So if you think it's fake, then why are you checking it out?"

"I can't risk the other nine percent."

Bones sat up, peering out the window of the truck, staying low. They had arrived at the country club a few minutes ago, and while Spock walked off on his wild goose-chase and Jim started to unload the box of his truck, Bones had decided he would forcibly extend Jim and Spock's time together.

Seeing that the coast was clear, Bones snagged a screwdriver from the toolbox he had bruised his ribs on earlier and quietly stepped out of the truck, keeping low. He dropped down to his hands and knees, wincing at the cold snow, and looked under the truck, hoping he would be able to recognize what he was looking for.

Bingo, Bones thought when he saw what could only have been the fuel tank. He laid down on his back and pushed himself under the truck, so that he had easy access to the exterior of the tank. Grasping the screwdriver in his fist and bracing himself on the bottom of the truck with his other hand, he gritted his teeth and punched the sharp end of the screwdriver into the tank with as much strength as he could muster. He cursed when the screwdriver glanced off the rounded tank. After a couple of tries with no success, he rolled out from under the truck and changed tactics, grabbing a hammer from the toolbox before returning to the slush below the truck. Holding the screwdriver to the tank like a chisel, he aimed his hammer and rammed it into the butt end of the screwdriver. He repeated it a few times, keeping the screwdriver in one spot, driving it further and further into the walls of the metal tank.

"Oh, shit, jeez," Bones sputtered as the screwdriver punctured the tank and a thin stream of gasoline shot out directly into his face. He quickly crawled out from under the truck and sat in the snow gagging, trying to wipe the noxious fluid out of his face. He picked up a handful of snow to try and scrub the smell of gas off his face and coat, but he abandoned the task when he heard voices. Not wanting to get caught, Bones scrambled into the backseat of the truck, shut the door behind him, and covered himself in the blanket. Once again, he had hidden himself just in time as Jim and Spock re-entered the truck, though this time he was cold, wet, and nauseous from the slush and spilled gasoline.

Two Guys, Chillin' in a Pickup...

Chapter Summary

The truck breaks down in the middle of nowhere. Apollo's dodgeball finally hits. Spock gets hypothermia. Bones becomes aware that he makes very poor decisions.

"It smells like gasoline," Spock said, sounding concerned. Bones wished that he had had the time to scrub off some of that nasty scent, and worried that they would investigate.

"Oh, yeah," Jim said dismissively. "That happens sometimes."

Spock accepted this and started the long drive back to Smalltown, and Bones reflected on how weird it felt to be grateful for Jim's tendency towards stupidity. Eventually, once they were far out in the middle of nowhere, the truck started to sputter.

"I assume that this isn't normal," Spock said flatly as the truck died, rolling to a stop.

"Uh, no. No it is not," Jim said, confused. He leaned towards Spock to check the gauges on the dash. "Oh, what? How are we out of gas? I fueled up before we left, what the hell?" He exclaimed in despair before opening his door and flinging himself outside to go investigate. Spock reluctantly followed him into the wind and snow.

Bones could hear the wavering metallic twang produced when the hood of the truck popped open, and he felt the truck's weight shift as Jim leaned forward onto it, searching for problems. He eventually gave up, slamming the hood back down, and Bones used the crunch of Jim's boots to track his movement as he walked around the truck. After some hesitation, Jim grumbled and got onto the ground, scooting under the truck to take a look at the undercarriage.

"Dammit!" Jim huffed in frustration, dragging himself back out from under the truck.

"What is it?" Spock asked.

Jim stood up and brushed the snow off his clothes. "There's a hole in the bottom of the gas tank," he grumbled. "No idea how that could have happened. Sorry Spock, we're gonna have to hang tight for a bit."

There were more footsteps as Jim walked back around the truck, then the sound of two doors opening and closing once again as the two got back inside. They sat in silence for a minute, letting themselves warm up in the shelter of the cab.

"I'm gonna call Scotty, he'll rescue us," Jim said decisively, shifting to the side to fish his phone from his pocket.

"Who is Scotty?" Spock asked.

"Roadside assistance," Jim answered, before correcting himself. "Well, he's the de facto roadside assistance. He's the vehicle rental guy, and the best mechanic this side of the Mississippi." There was a series of beeps, then a minute of silence before Jim snapped the phone shut and sighed. "More bad news," he announced. "I don't have service out here."

There was a shuffle before Spock said, "I don't have service either," before clicking his own phone shut and sighing. "We can hail a passing vehicle. Someone is bound to pass by soon, right?"

"Uh... maybe," Jim said nervously, as if he knew that nobody ever drove down this middle-of-nowhere road and he was trying to sound optimistic for Spock's sake, but failing.

Spock ignored Jim's uncertainty, changing the subject. "I have discovered that the rumour I was sent to investigate unfortunately appears to be true," he said gravely.

"What!?" Jim exclaimed in shock.

What!? Bones thought, nearly saying it out loud but biting his tongue at the last second. But I made that shit up!

"The country club owns a significant amount of land that most of the town's businesses are built on," Spock said. "There is one piece of land they have yet to acquire before they have a plot large enough to install a Walmart."

"But what about all the businesses on that land?" Jim asked.

"They plan to cancel the leases and bulldoze the buildings," Spock said grimly.

There was a long silence. "All those people," Jim said quietly. "My friends. This will ruin them. We can't let this happen!"

"I am in agreement," Spock answered. "I am unsure of what I can do, but once we are back in town I will contact my superiors at the newspaper with my findings. Hopefully we can at least raise awareness of the situation to the citizens and business owners of Smalltown and put pressure on the country club to be transparent with their intentions."

"When we get back I'm going to talk to Nyota," Jim said. "She'll know what to do." He was silent for a moment. "Be honest. Do you think we

can fix this?" He asked weakly.

Spock hesitated for a moment, but when he spoke he sounded certain. "I believe we can."

"Right, yeah, of course we can," Jim said, seeming to relax just a bit. "Power of the people and all that. We'll figure out something." After a beat he asked, "How did you get all that information, anyways?"

"Trade secret," Spock replied, and said nothing more on the matter.

"Spock, you're shivering!" Jim said, sounding concerned. They had been stuck in the broken down truck for over an hour already, and the cold outdoor temperatures had quickly seeped into the cab. In that time, another vehicle had yet to make an appearance.

"I am fine," Spock said, clearly fighting to keep his voice from shaking from the cold. "Do not worry about me."

"I am worried about you," Jim said stubbornly. "Your lips are turning blue."

Shit, he's hypothermic, Bones thought, mentally cursing himself for coming up with the most dangerous schemes to get these two idiots together. None of this would be worth it if he killed one of them.

"I assure you, I am fine," Spock repeated just before his teeth began to chatter.

"No, you fucking aren't fine," Jim sighed. "Hang on, I've got some blankets in the backseat," he said, reaching an arm back, blindly searching for one of the many blankets he kept in his truck specifically for this type of scenario.

Bones peered out from his hiding place under one of the blankets and held his breath as Jim's hand got dangerously close to brushing against him. In a last ditch effort to avoid discovery, Bones grabbed one of the other blankets and brought it closer to Jim's flailing hand.

"Here we go," Jim said, his hand coming into contact with the offered blanket, dragging it over the seat and leaning over to wrap it around Spock. "There, better?" He asked.

"Yes," Spock answered, but Bones could tell from his voice that the cold blanket wasn't giving him any immediate relief.

Jim seemed to notice this too, because he said, "I think I have a couple candles and a lighter back there too. You'd be surprised how much heat a couple little flames can produce!" He said cheerily, for Spock's sake.

Bones panicked as Jim's hand reappeared over the seat, searching around blindly. He looked around frantically, and luckily spotted some candles and a lighter under the driver's seat, bundled together with rubber bands. He reached under the seat and fished the bundle out, pushing the items up into Jim's hand just before Jim bumped into him. He let out a silent sigh of relief as Jim took the supplies back into the front of the cab, busying himself with setting up the candles.

"There," Jim said, after a few clicks of the lighter. "This should help a bit, okay?" Bones could see the top of Spock's head as he nodded, still shivering. Jim hesitated for a moment. "You stay here. I'm gonna walk down the road until I get a cell signal so I can call Scotty."

"You should stay here and wait for a passing car," Spock said, voice shaking as he shivered. "It is too cold outside, it won't take long for you to become hypothermic."

"Yeah, but Spock, you're already hypothermic," Jim sighed. "I can't risk you freezing to death in the time it takes a car to come upon us. I'll only be gone a few minutes. Stay here, okay?"

"Be careful," Spock said.

"I will." Jim was about to open the door, but stopped himself. "I should wear some boots," he said, and Bones' heart rate spiked as Jim once again reached into the backseat. Acting quickly, Bones passed one boot to the flailing hand, then the other, once again avoiding detection. However, he had to fight not to make any noise when Jim threw his shoes into the backseat, one of which struck Bones in the face. Without any further delay, Jim opened the door and flung himself out, shutting the door behind him quickly to keep whatever heat remained inside the cab from escaping.

It was a long twenty minutes of listening to Spock's teeth chattering. Bones was shivering too, and he had his jaws clenched tight to stop the audible clacking of his teeth that would give away his position. Jim re-entered the truck swiftly, shivering from the cold wind outside. He spent a moment rubbing his arms to warm up some before reporting on the situation.

"Scotty'll be here in half an hour," he said, breathless. "Think you can hold out until then?"

"Perhaps," Spock said weakly, and Jim turned to look at him.

"You don't look so good," he said quietly, sounding particularly worried. Bones cursed himself for his terrible ideas.

Jim thought for a moment, coming up with a plan. The outside of his coat was cold from the freezing wind outside, but the inside was warm from his body heat, so he unzipped his jacket and wriggled out of it. "Here," he said to Spock, "I'll trade you."

Spock was reluctant to let Jim take the blanket from him but was too cold to do anything about it. Jim quickly put his coat around Spock's shoulders, tugging the hood over his head and drawing it snugly around him, then arranging the blanket so it encompassed both of them.

"Is this okay?" Jim asked. The furry fringe of Jim's parka bobbed as Spock nodded. Jim scooted closer to Spock. "Here, give me your hands," he said, and Spock did so without hesitation. Their breath clouded out in front of them as Jim tried to rub some warmth into Spock's frozen

fingers.

Bones would have been pleased with this development if he wasn't so goddamned cold and possibly responsible for frostbite and severe hypothermia. Instead, he counted down the minutes until Scotty was due to arrive as Jim and Spock huddled together, likely doing the same.

"Come on, lads," said Scotty. "I've got the heat cranked up to eleven, we'll get some life back into you yet."

"You're a hero, Scotty," Jim said as he untangled himself from Spock, leading his frozen companion out of the truck.

"I know," Scotty teased.

"No tow truck?" Jim asked when he got out of the truck.

"Tow truck wouldn't start in this temperature, I'll have to come back tomorrow." Scotty said, and the door of the truck slammed shut, muffling the rest of their conversation as they got into Scotty's vehicle.

"Oh, fuck," Bones whispered to himself as he heard the other vehicle roll off into the distance, realizing that he was trapped in the middle of nowhere in frozen conditions. "How the hell am I gonna get back now?"

War Room

Chapter Summary

The gang prepares for a war against the country club, Walmart, and Old Man Janson.

The bright morning sunlight shone through the nearly ineffective blinds directly into Bones' face, waking him up. He grumbled at the light and turned away from it, intending to go back to sleep when he realized that there shouldn't be morning sunlight on a spaceship. He opened his eyes, looking at his surroundings briefly, realizing that he was in his room at the Smalltown Motel, and not in his quarters on the Enterprise.

Bones groaned. "Well, so much for hoping this had all been a dumb dream, after all," he sighed when he looked at the digital alarm clock. Ten o'clock. "And I overslept."

He forced himself to get up out of necessity. If he didn't have a looming deadline he probably would have just gone back to sleep. He was still exhausted from the long walk in the freezing cold the evening before. It had been a disaster. First of all, he didn't know what direction the town was in, so when the road Scotty's vehicle drove down turned into a T-intersection, Bones had no idea which direction to take, and ended up choosing the wrong one. He easily could have frozen to death out there if a rare passing vehicle hadn't stopped for him.

"You know," the driver of the vehicle said when Bones got into the passenger's seat, eager to thaw out his fingers. "You don't get to go back to your universe if you die."

Bones turned towards the driver, and was surprised at how unsurprised he was to see her. "Do you usually drive around aimlessly on rural roads at night in the dead of winter or did you come looking for me?" He asked the Christmas Hag.

The Christmas Hag rolled her eyes. "I didn't need to look for you, I'm omniscient," she said, turning the car around in a three point turn before heading back towards town. "But I did come to save your dumb hide."

"Well, thanks," Bones said, genuinely grateful for the rescue.

The Hag scoffed. "Don't think I did it out of the kindness of my heart," she said, sounding bored. "I don't get paid if you die before you learn the true meaning of Christmas."

Bones shook his head. "Hate to break it to you, but I don't think this quest you've sent me on is going to teach me anything about Christmas," he said flatly. "Unless the true meaning of Christmas has something to do with Jim and Spock's habit of being annoying motherfuckers."

"Look man, I'm too tired for this," the Hag said, scrubbing a grey hand across her face. Bones was about to retort when she snapped her fingers, and that was the last thing he remembered before waking up in his motel room.

"Ugh. Right," Bones said once he recalled his evening, pinching the bridge of his nose. Then, with a sigh, he got moving. The ice sculpture competition, and his deadline, were tomorrow night. He didn't have time to waste.

Bones wasn't sure where Spock or Jim would be at this hour, but at least it was a relatively warm and sunny day for searching the town for them. He had started his search by knocking on Spock's motel room door, but there was no answer, so Bones assumed that he wasn't there. His next idea was to check The Coffee Shop. Jim had said that he would speak with Uhura about what Spock had discovered, and while he had probably already done that twelve hours ago, Uhura's store was probably still a good place to start his search.

The sleigh bells above the door sang as Bones walked into the shop, prompting a small cluster of familiar faces to look up at him suddenly. Bones froze in the doorway, taking in the sight of Scotty, Sulu, and Chekov all huddled around a table strewn with maps and documents, all looking at him as if he'd walked in on something he wasn't supposed to see.

"Oh, sorry," Bones said, still standing awkwardly in the open doorway. "I thought the place was open." He was about to turn around and leave, continuing his search for Spock and Jim, when Chekov stood up.

"No, no, I am sorry. The store, it is open," Chekov said, heading for the counter and grabbing an apron off a hook on his way. "Please, come in." Bones did so, following Chekov to the counter. "What is it I can get for you?" Chekov asked as he walked around the counter, tying his apron strings.

"Coffee, please," Bones answered. "Black. And to stay."

"Yes, I can do that right away," Chekov said, trying to sound chipper, but falling flat.

"Thanks," Bones said, hesitating a moment. "Hey, is something wrong? You guys seem a bit tense," he said to Chekov, gesturing back to Sulu and Scotty who were whispering to each other over the table.

Chekov grimaced. "There is... problem to be sorted. We are waiting for news. It is an anxious wait," he shrugged nervously, passing Bones his coffee.

As if on cue, the sleigh bells jingled and Chekov's head shot up. His eyes lit up, and Bones turned around to see Uhura walk in, with Jim and Spock in tow. Scotty and Sulu seemed just as excited at the newcomers' arrival as Chekov, both standing up eagerly to greet them.

"How did it go?" Sulu asked.

Uhura sighed, peeling her coat off before sitting down heavily at the table. "Not great, but I suppose it could be worse," she said, as they all gathered back around the table. Spock locked eyes with Bones, and nudged Jim, whose eyes lit up in recognition.

"Hey! Leonard! Come over here!" Jim called, waving him over. Bones grimaced inwardly, but picked up his coffee and walked over to their table, standing off to the side. "This is the guy who tipped Spock off about the whole thing," he said to the others as Bones approached.

He gave a short wave, and an awkward round of introductions began. Awkward for Bones, at least, since he already knew everyone at the table, but they didn't know him beyond recognizing him from a brief encounter.

"I'm guessing there was something to those rumours, then?" Bones asked, playing along.

They all nodded gravely, except for Sulu, who turned to Uhura and said, "Nyota, please, I'm dying here. What did Mr Janson say?"

Uhura sighed. "Well, he isn't going to refuse to sell his land to the country club. They're offering him a pretty good deal on it I guess."

Scotty swore under his breath. "Well if that's not just like the old bastard. Sees his chance to get some money and skip town without a care what happens to the rest of us." He huffed, adding, "You explained what would happen here if he sold to them, right?"

"Of course she did," Sulu rolled his eyes as Uhura nodded.

"He did give us an ultimatum, though," Uhura said, not sounding enthusiastic about it. "If we can match the club's offer, he'll agree to sell it to us instead."

The table fell silent for a moment, before Chekov hesitantly asked, "How much is the price?"

Uhura placed a sheet of paper on the table, sliding it into the middle for everyone to see. Bones wasn't sure how the currency worked in this universe, but judging from the expressions of those that did, it was a big number.

Jim groaned. "We can't afford that! Even if we pooled every cent to our names we couldn't afford that, not without selling our businesses," he lamented. "And that's antithetical to the whole 'save our businesses' thing."

"Also," Uhura said, clearly not wanting to be the bearer of even more bad news, "There's a deadline on it. His deal with the club will be finalized tomorrow night. If we can't come up with the money before then, the deed goes over to the club."

Scotty put his face in his hands. "This is hopeless. We've lost already."

"Maybe we can get a loan from the bank?" Sulu suggested.

Scotty scoffed. "Didn't you hear her? We've only got a day, we can't wait around for months for a bank loan to get approved."

Sulu grimaced. "We can fundraise?" He said, with very little confidence.

"Again, lad, one day." Scotty said bitterly. "There's no time for any of that!"

"At least I'm spitballing ideas, you've just given up already!" Sulu snapped at him.

Scotty leaned over the table, stabbing a finger of emphasis at Sulu. "I have not given up-"

"Then what's your bright idea?"

"I don't have one!" Scotty threw his hands up. "That's the problem! There aren't any-"

Uhura slammed her hands down on the table, interrupting them. "Guys! Shut up! No fighting in the goddamned war room." She glared at Sulu and Scotty until they relaxed back in their chairs. "I know it looks hopeless, but we have to try."

"Nyota's right," Jim said. "If we put our heads together, we're bound to come up with some feasible plan. The people of this town care about their town. Once they know what's going on, we'll have their support."

"And I've sent word back to the city paper, so we might be able to get some additional support there," Spock added.

Uhura nodded. "Exactly. Alone we're screwed, but if we can rally an army..." She waved an arm nebulously.

Scotty sighed. "Aye. The chances for success seem slim, but you're right. We have to try. The town'll help."

Uhura turned to Bones, who was awkwardly observing them from a few feet away. "Speaking of recruiting... How about it, Leonard? Give us a hand?" She asked, hopefully.

"Of course," Bones said, as if he could have said no.

Uhura smiled. "Great, grab a chair. We've got plans to make."

Conflict of Interest

Chapter Summary

Plans get put into action. Bones gets stuck answering phones. Uhura is definitely the captain in this universe.

“Alright,” Uhura said, brushing the eraser shavings off her notebook. They had spent the last couple hours trying to come up with ideas to prevent the country club from acquiring Mr Janson’s property, and they had drafted something that sort of resembled a plan. Uhura summarized to make sure everyone was on the same page. “We all know fundraising is a longshot with this short of notice, but I think it’s worth a good try. I really think that the town will come together to help us out with this, so our main objectives are to set up the fundraiser and to make sure everyone is aware that it’s happening. Our biggest challenges are going to be raising public awareness of the whole country club/walmart situation, and actually setting up a fundraising event. For the latter I’m hoping we can commandeer the Winter Carnival. It’s a popular event and if we can get the organizers on board to turn it into a fundraising event, I think we can gather a significant amount of money.”

“Oh!” Chekov said excitedly, raising his hand. “What if we talked to the organizers of the ice sculpture competition? Perhaps they’ll dedicate some of the prize pool to the cause.”

Sulu patted Chekov on the shoulder. “It’s a good idea, Pav, but those organizers are pricks. I really don’t think they’ll allow it, especially since sign ups have already happened.”

“It’s worth asking, though,” Uhura said, adding it to the list. “If they say no, then Jimmy here better do a banger sculpture again this year,” she teased, shooting a smile at Jim.

“Wow, no pressure or anything,” Jim laughed, running a hand through his hair.

Scotty gave Jim a nudge. “What’re you planning on making out of ice this year?”

“Aw jeez, I haven’t even decided yet,” Jim admitted sheepishly.

“Then how are we supposed to tell you if it’s a winning idea or not?” Sulu asked, feigning dramatics. “How will you ever get by without our expert opinions!”

“Okay guys, we’ve got a lot of work to do,” Uhura said, tapping her notebook with her pencil to remind everyone why they were there. Everyone calmed down and paid attention. “Right. Hikaru, you’re with me. We’re gonna go talk to the carnival organizers and see if we can’t get that set. Scotty, you go talk to the mayor. See if you can’t get an announcement made. Spock, you write a piece for the front page of tomorrow’s paper. I know the publisher, and he owes me a favour, he’ll print it. Emphasize how important it is that we acquire that land, and tell the people how they can help. Also,” Uhura paused, raising a finger. “Get some interviews from people around town. It’ll be good for people to see their neighbors weigh in on this.” She pointed at Chekov. “Pavel, you’re the internet guy. Stir up some shit on social media.”

“Aye, Captain,” Chekov said with a salute.

“Jim, someone’s gotta hold down the fort. The shop will be our base of operations and we need someone answering the phones when people call with questions. Your arm is broken, so you’re getting this job,” Uhura said.

“Are you sure I can’t be more useful?” Jim asked, seeming disappointed.

Uhura shrugged. “Sorry, someone’s gotta stay. Besides, it’s important.”

“Alright, no problem,” Jim said, offering a smile.

Uhura checked her list again. “And... Leonard, you’re with Spock. Go help with those interviews. Everyone clear? Any questions?”

Chekov raised his hand. “Do I have to pay for the internet?” He asked, gesturing to the computers in the corner.

“Pavel, you work here, and you’re on town-saving duty, don’t be silly,” Uhura said.

Chekov blinked at her. “So I have to pay...?”

Uhura sighed. “No, just use the override code. You’re good.” Chekov grinned and shot off towards the computers, eager to get to work.

Bones raised a hand tentatively, unsure if it was just a Chekov-habit or if it was expected of him. “I think that if Spock is off getting interviews with the townspeople, I think one of the locals should go with him,” he said. “I think people will be less likely to answer questions and believe what we’re telling them if it’s just two strangers walking around ambushing them. Why don’t I swap places with Jim? He’s a familiar face.” Despite the fact that he was entirely bullshitting a way to get Jim and Spock paired together for the rest of the day, he actually had a valid point and was proud of himself for it. Jim lit up at the suggestion, looking at Uhura with the kind of puppy-dog eyes only Jim could pull off.

Uhura nodded. “That’s a good idea, Leonard,” she said, erasing something in her notebook and amending it. “You stay here and answer phones. And offer information to anyone who shows up in person. Jim, you’re with Spock. Try not to break any more limbs, we need you to kick ass in the competition tomorrow.”

“Don’t worry, Nyota, I’ll keep all my injuries isolated to this arm,” Jim said, smacking himself on his busted arm. “Ow,” he winced. Both Bones and Uhura rolled their eyes at him.

Uhura clapped. “Alright, let’s get out there and show those rich idiots whose boss!”

Bones was dying. Well, no, he wasn’t. He was being dramatic. But he was dying to know what Jim and Spock were up to. Of course, he knew that they were out collecting interviews for both the morning paper and for Chekov to post on the internet, but he wanted to know what was happening between those interviews. Were they getting to know each other? Were they too distracted by the doomsday clock Bones had accidentally uncovered? He wanted desperately to know, but he had a job to do, and on second thought, he really didn’t want to witness their cringe flirting if that’s what was going on.

So instead, Bones busied himself with the job he had practically begged Uhura for. As the day went by and more and more people of Smalltown called the Coffee Shop for more information after they learned about the looming threat of a Walmart coming to their town, either from Chekov’s internet escapades, Spock and Jim inadvertently spreading the word while doing interviews, or the information sent out from the official Smalltown social medias, courtesy of the mayor and Scotty.

Speaking of Scotty, the car rental guy/mechanic/defacto roadside assistance guy was the first to return back to The Coffee Shop after completing his tasks, which were a success as evidenced by the messages that were put out on the Smalltown social media accounts, which Chekov showed to Bones the moment he spotted them. Scotty jumped in on fielding calls, and with the extra person on duty Bones decided to try and find a valid excuse that would let him escape The Coffee Shop to go track down Jim and Spock.

Unfortunately, thinking of something that didn’t sound like a lame excuse to ditch out of phone duty was a task easier said than done. Fortunately, Jim and Spock were the next ones to walk back into their base of operations, having gathered enough interviews to work with. Spock sat down in one of the booths, opening up his laptop, presumably to write his article, while Jim took a page of notes over to the computers to pass on to Chekov.

“How’d it go?” Bones asked as Jim passed by him.

“Good,” Jim said brightly. “People are angry. I knew nobody would stand for this corporate big box bullshit moving into our neighborhood!”

Bones nodded. “Good, that’s what we want.”

In a lowered voice, Jim said, “Thanks for swapping places with me, by the way,” and winked.

“Yeah, no problem, kid,” Bones answered. As the phone began to ring, he wondered if Jim was thanking him for getting him out of phone duty, or for sending him off for some one-on-one time with Spock. When he looked over at the booth again after answering a caller’s questions, he determined that it was the latter. Jim was sitting beside Spock, leaning unnecessarily close to him to read over Spock’s shoulder as he typed his article. He couldn’t hear what they were saying, but he could see Jim occasionally point to something on the screen and say something, and Spock would look at him, listening intently, their faces close together. Then Spock would nod in agreement and return to writing.

Even though setting his friends up together was Bones’ entire objective and his ticket back home, he had only one thought about the two idiots getting snuggly in the booth. Gross.

Shenanigans

Chapter Summary

Bones recruits Uhura to join in some scheming shenanigans.

Bones could tell that Uhura and Sulu's mission had been a success by their relaxed demeanour as they entered The Coffee Shop in the middle of a conversation.

"I still don't think you needed me there, you did all the talking yourself, and you crushed it," Sulu was saying.

Uhura rolled her eyes and smiled. "I didn't need you to *talk*, I just needed you to stand there and look pretty."

Sulu laughed. "Pfft, what's that supposed to mean?"

"It means," Uhura grinned, "that the one organizer, that Ben guy, has a huge crush on you, so I brought you along to help.... sway the negotiations."

"Wow, Nyota," Sulu said, raising an eyebrow. "Quite the manipulation tactics you've got there."

"Yeah, but it worked, didn't it?" Uhura said, shuffling out of her coat and tossing it over the back of a chair. "Anyways, that guy's cute, you should ask him out."

It was then that Jim finally noticed that Uhura and Sulu were back, and he promptly stumbled out of the booth in his scramble to meet them at their table. "So? Is the Winter Carnival going to help us out?" He asked, eagerly.

Uhura grinned at him. "You bet they are," she said, then elbowed Sulu. "You can thank Hikaru here for that."

"Oh, shut up," Sulu said, rolling his eyes. But he was smiling too.

"So," Uhura said, ignoring Sulu. "Everyone needs to show up at the park at ten o'clock sharp. The carnival organizers are going to let us hijack their event to use as a fundraiser, but we've gotta do some volunteer work to staff some of the events."

"That sounds reasonable," Scotty said, and everyone nodded in agreement.

Uhura turned to Spock. "Add something about the Winter Carnival being a fundraising event to your article." When Spock nodded, Uhura clapped her hands. "Right. Class dismissed."

It was late in the day, and there wasn't much left to do. The phone calls had died down, and the only task left to be done was the article for the morning paper, which Spock was diligently working away at, joined once more at his booth by Jim. Scotty and Sulu left The Coffee Shop, followed by Chekov after Uhura assured him that she would close up shop herself. Bones lingered near the counter, keeping an eye on Jim and Spock while Uhura shut off machines and wiped them down.

Bones glanced at the big analogue clock on the wall just as it clicked over to seven o'clock. He grimaced. There were only twenty-four hours left to secure his passage home, and tomorrow would be too busy with town-saving to do much match-making. With a sigh, he admitted to himself that he needed some help.

Wandering up to the counter where Uhura was scrubbing away at a sticky spot on the counter, Bones cleared his throat awkwardly and asked, "Need a hand, there?"

Uhura looked up briefly, flashing him a smile before returning to the stubborn spot. "Thank you, but I'm alright. It's just this sticky spot that's giving me trouble. I need to remind Pavel to make sure he cleans up any spilt syrup *before* it dries and fuses to the counter," she sighed, then gave him a quizzical look. "Not that I mind the company, but what are you still doing here?"

"I'm in no rush to get anywhere," Bones said, fidgeting as he tried to figure out a way to say what he wanted to say without sounding like a total weirdo. He had a feeling that *'Jim and Spock need to get together in the next twenty-four hours or I'm trapped in your Hallmark Christmas Movie Hell forever, please help me,'* wouldn't go down very well. "Those two seem to be getting along," he finally said, nodding towards the booth that Jim and Spock occupied.

Uhura looked up from her work, tilting her head to get a look over at the booth. She let out a short laugh and shook her head. "That's Jim for ya, town's biggest flirt," she said fondly. "Too bad Spock isn't staying in town for long, they might have really hit it off."

"Maybe we can help speed things up," Bones suggested, giving Uhura a knowing look.

Uhura laughed. "What, like come up with a bunch of schemes to send them on cute little dates all day or something? Get them committed enough to keep seeing each other after Spock goes back to the city?" She asked, grinning in amusement.

Bones knew she was joking, but he shrugged. "Yeah, pretty much."

Uhura's eyes narrowed as she realized that he wasn't joking. "I mean, they've only known each other for two days," she said. "Probably best not to push them."

“Don’t worry, it’s just part of the genre. Are you up for shenanigans, or not?”

“What genre?” Uhura asked, confused. “And what’s it to you? You don’t even know them.”

Bones sighed. “One, don’t worry about it, and two, it’s classified. Please help me.” He clapped his hands together in front of him like he was in prayer and grimaced hopefully at her.

Uhura looked at him long and hard, and Bones was certain that she was going to tell him he was a complete weirdo and kick him out of her shop, when she shrugged and said, “Yeah, alright.”

“What?” Bones asked dumbly, surprised.

“I said I’m in,” Uhura repeated. “I could use some distraction from the impending doom of the town, anyways.”

“Huh. Well, thank you,” Bones said, still stunned by the development.

Uhura cracked a smile. “See you tomorrow.”

“Release the child,” Bones said into his walkie-talkie.

“Roger that,” Uhura’s voice replied, crackling through the device, shortly followed by, “Child has been released.”

“Copy,” Bones answered back. He was sitting on a park bench freezing his ass off a ways off from where Jim and Spock were stationed behind a table in front of the hedge maze, where they couldn’t see him, but he could see them. The overhanging branch of a tree leaning out over the bench provided him just the kind of cover he needed for the job.

Jim and Spock had been confused by their assignment of counting the people who went in and came out of the maze. Spock was right, their assignment *was* illogical, but it was part of the plan, and Uhura wasn’t going to let it fail out of the gate so she came up with a somewhat convincing explanation for the job. Luckily, Jim and Spock didn’t put up much of a fight.

Bones shuffled his feet, hoping to unfreeze his toes a bit, but had no success. He had been sitting there watching the entrance and exit of the maze for about half an hour, waiting for the foot traffic into the maze to slow down enough to trigger the next stage of the plan, in which Uhura pays a child that Jim is familiar with to enter the maze and sneak out the back, making it look like he had never left.

He spotted the kid, who Uhura said was named Kevin, heading for the maze, stopping to talk to Jim for a minute before skipping on into the entrance. Raising his walkie-talkie, Bones reported, “The kid is in the maze.”

“Nice. Give it half an hour before initiating the next phase,” Uhura replied, voice staticy. “Do you remember your script?”

“I remember,” Bones answered. “Can I wait out that half hour somewhere warmer? I think I’m about to lose some toes.”

“Yeah, go warm up,” Uhura said. “Just don’t get lost.”

Bones rolled his eyes and grumbled, peeling himself off the frosty bench and heading for a nice warm shop to loiter in for a while, keeping a close eye on the time as life trickled back into his frozen extremities. Once the half hour was nearly over, Bones braced himself for the cold and journeyed back outside, towards the hedge maze.

Jim looked up at him as he approached, his face breaking into a smile as he waved. “Hey, how’s it going?” He asked cheerily.

“Cold,” Bones mumbled into his scarf. “Anyways, Uhu-” he coughed, covering his mistake “-Nyota sent me to ask if you’ve seen a kid named Kevin around? She said you know him. I guess his mother has been trying to track him down.”

Jim’s eyes lit up with recognition. “Kevin? Yeah, I know him. I talked to him a little while ago,” he said, glancing at Spock, who nodded in confirmation.

“Perhaps half an hour ago,” Spock supplied.

Bones waited for a moment, but it seemed that they had nothing more to say. “Did you see where he was heading next?” He asked with exaggeration, trying to lead them along in the plan.

Jim’s brow furrowed and he glanced briefly at Spock. “Come to think of it, I don’t remember seeing him come back out. Did you, Spock?”

Spock shook his head. “I did not. The maze does not take long to complete, he should have found the exit by now.”

Jim frowned. “That’s a bit concerning. Nobody else has gone in there for a while, so if he hurt himself or something, nobody would have come across him.”

“I guess someone should go look for him. It’s pretty cold out to be stuck out in the maze somewhere,” Bones suggested.

Jim nodded, getting to his feet. “Right, I’ll go look. Spock, you stay here, yell if he comes out.”

Shit, Bones thought, in a panic blurting out, “Both of you should go look, I’ll watch your station and let you know if he comes back out.”

“That is unnecessary-” Spock started, but Bones cut him off.

“No, you can have enough eyes in a search party,” he said. “Besides, Jim might get lost in there all by himself.”

“Hey!” Jim protested, but Spock stood up, agreeing with Bones.

“Good luck,” Bones said, waving them off as he sat down in one of the chairs behind the table. He waited for a minute after watching them disappear into the maze, then picked up his walkie-talkie, saying, “Hedge maze date is a go.”

Bones was shivering out by the pond where he and Uhura were keeping an eye on the skates that were borrowed out to the Winter Carnival to rent out to anyone who wanted to skate on the pond. According to Uhura, there were a few takers in the morning, while Bones was out on top secret business, but there didn't seem to be a lot of interest that afternoon.

“Maybe it's because of the cold,” Bones guessed, shrugging. “The wind has picked up, it's chilly out here by the pond.”

“Yeah, but that gives me another idea for getting Jim and Spock out on another mini date,” Uhura said, donning her scheming hat.

Bones frowned at her. “I thought you would be more concerned about the lack of skaters. This is part of the fundraiser, after all.”

Uhura sighed, slumping in her chair. “Look man, it's kind of out of my hands now. I'm just trying not to stress out about it too much.”

“Understandable,” he said, nodding. “So, what's your grand idea this time?”

Uhura smiled. “Well, they're due for a break about now. I'll summon them,” she said, taking her phone and typing into it. Ten minutes later, Jim and Spock turned up.

“How's it going out here?” Jim asked as they walked up to join Uhura and Bones.

Uhura shrugged. “Doesn't seem like a lot of people want to go out there,” she said, nodding her head towards the pond. “I think people don't want to be the only ones out there. I bet you if there were a couple people out there already, we'd get some takers.”

Jim hummed in agreement. “Yeah, you almost need to plant someone out there.”

Bones rolled his eyes, but Uhura had more self-control. “Hey, that's a good idea!” She said to Jim, trying to keep the sarcasm out of her voice. “You and Spock should get out there for a bit.”

“Well...” Jim said, uncertain.

Uhura punched him in the arm. “Come on, Jim. You're a good skater. And you guys are on break anyways. It's perfect! Do it for the town!”

Jim grinned sheepishly. “Well, alright.”

Spock was standing stiffly. “I cannot skate. Perhaps I should stay off the ice.”

“No, you should totally go try it!” Uhura coaxed. “Jim can teach you.”

“It'll be good for people to see you fall on your ass a bunch of times,” Bones added. “It'll make them feel less self-conscious about their own clumsy selves.”

Spock was reluctant. “I am unsure if-”

“Come on Spock,” Bones interrupted. “Do you want to save the town or not?” When Spock's only response was a clenched jaw, Bones clapped him on the shoulder. “I thought so. Grab a pair of skates.”

Spock grimaced, but the nagging from Bones and Uhura paired with a reassuring smile from Jim convinced him to give it a go. Jim walked out onto the ice with confidence, and waited for Spock, who was far less confident. He wobbled on his skates despite not even being on the ice yet, and after shuffling awkwardly to the pond's edge, he stopped, reluctant to attempt stepping onto the slippery surface.

Seeing his hesitation, Jim glided closer, holding out his gloved hands to Spock, who gave Jim a skeptical look. “Come on, Spock, it'll be fun,” Jim grinned.

“I have the distinct feeling that I am going to break my neck,” Spock said.

“Oh come on,” Jim teased. “Do you think I'd let you break your neck?”

Spock raised an eyebrow at him. “I am unsure. You hit me with your truck a few days ago, so statistically, I'm going to have to say ‘yes.’”

“Wait, what?” Uhura asked quietly, leaning towards Bones. “He hit him with a truck?”

“Don't worry about it,” Bones whispered back.

Jim threw his hands up in a dramatic imitation of despair. “But I thought we agreed that it wasn't my fault!” He gave his best puppy-dog eyes.

Spock sighed. “That we did,” he said resignedly, holding his hands out for Jim to take.

Jim grinned, taking Spock's hands in his own. “Don't worry. I won't let you fall,” he said, then added, “Well, not right away at least.”

With one last apprehensive look, Spock cautiously stepped onto the ice, wobbling on his skates, but Jim kept his word and didn't let Spock fall... yet, at least. Uhura and Bones watched as Jim skated slowly backwards, towing Spock along with him to the centre of the pond. Once they were out of earshot, Uhura turned to Bones and raised a hand.

“... What?” Bones asked after a beat.

“Well, don’t leave me hanging,” Uhura scoffed, rolling her eyes.

Bones shook his head at himself. “Right,” he muttered, and gave her a high-five, the sound muffled by their gloves. “Well, that went well.”

“I was worried we wouldn’t get Spock out there,” Uhura said, turning back towards the ice, where Spock was still holding tightly to Jim, but awkwardly shuffling his feet as Jim made an attempt at teaching him the basics.

“I didn’t think he’d do it, either,” Bones agreed, thinking about the Spock from his own universe. Would that Spock, who had grown up on the desert planet of Vulcan, be more reluctant than this Spock to step onto the ice? That was something he would have to find out when he returned to his own universe. *If* he returned.

They watched the two skaters like they were a silent film. They could see them talking and laughing, but were too far away to hear over the wind. Spock had no natural talent when it came to skating, but Jim was patient with him, only letting him go when he thought Spock was ready. Then, he skated lazy circles around Spock as he slowly shuffled his way across the pond, Jim offering encouragement along the way. Bones couldn’t help laughing when Spock inevitably lost his balance and fell, and he was grateful they were out of earshot. As Jim helped Spock back to his feet, Uhura and Bones turned around at the sound of footsteps. A shy group of friends came up to rent skates.

“Well hey, we weren’t bullshitting after all,” Bones remarked to Uhura as the new group of skaters took off along the edge of the pond.

“Two birds with one stone,” Uhura grinned, and they both laughed when Spock fell again, this time grabbing Jim’s sleeve in a panic and dragging him down with him, the two falling onto the ice in an awkward heap. “This is going well,” Uhura commented as she caught her breath.

Bones shook his head, amused. “No kidding.”

The True Meaning of Christmas

Chapter Summary

It's the final showdown. Will the gang get enough money to buy that crucial piece of land from Mr Janson? Will Bones somehow manage to free himself from this hell? Nobody knows, really.

Uhura and Spock sat at the table in the back room of The Coffee Shop, counting the proceeds from the Winter Carnival and the donations they were given. Bones stood against the wall with Sulu and Scotty, huddled close in the cramped space, watching the counting anxiously. The ice sculpture competition had begun a half hour ago, so Jim was out in the square with the other competitors, while Chekov worked hard in the front-of-house, keeping the shop running. Uhura had considered closing The Coffee Shop, but it was too close to Market Square and the competition grounds, so it was too good of an opportunity for business to miss out on.

Everyone's ears perked up when the clicking of coins and shuffling of paper bills ceased, and Uhura and Spock compared numbers. Spock's face remained neutral, but Uhura couldn't help but suck air through her teeth anxiously.

"I can't take it anymore," Scotty said. "What's the count?"

"It's close," Uhura said, taking a deep breath. "It's not there, but it's close. Close enough that we might be able to make it."

Scotty and Sulu leaned forward, examining the matching numbers written down at the bottom of Uhura and Spock's tally sheets. Sulu whistled. "That's more than I expected we'd get from the carnival. There weren't as many people this year because of the cold."

"There were a lot of donations," Uhura explained. "Some were quite generous. There's a couple people who I am going to owe a lifetime of free coffee to, I think.... If we can make the target, that is."

"Guess we should tell Jim he'd better win," Sulu said, jokingly. Then, more seriously, he added, "I hope he wins, between this and the prize money we would have enough to buy off Old Man Janson."

"And without a minute to spare," Scotty said grimly. "Maybe we should try and get a few more donations."

Uhura nodded. "I'll go tag Pav out and get him to put out some fancy graphics on social media. Show everyone how much we've raised and how close we are to staving off Walmart. Might encourage some more donations."

"I don't even know what I'm supposed to do for the next two hours," Sulu complained, grimacing. "All there is to do now is wait. The jitters are killing me."

"I know a way to take care of those jitters and kill two hours," Scotty said, miming drinking from an invisible bottle. Sulu gave him a very confused look, and was about to say something when Uhura interrupted him.

"He means going for drinks," she said hurriedly.

"Ohhh!" Sulu said, relaxing visibly. "I thought he meant—"

Again, Uhura cut him off, "I don't care how you guys spend the next two hours. Go have some fun, you've earned it."

Sulu turned to Scotty and shrugged. "I could certainly use a drink."

"Good man," Scotty said, clapping Sulu on the shoulder before turning his attention to Bones, Spock and Uhura. "What about you three?"

Uhura rolled her eyes. "I have a business to run, you all go ahead."

"I should be getting back to the competition," Spock said. "I am supposed to be working on an article about it."

"Let me guess," Bones said sarcastically when Scotty and Sulu looked at him expectantly. "The local bar is called 'The Bar,' isn't it?"

"Yeah, it is," Scotty said. Everyone looked at Bones blankly, as if they didn't get the joke that was the naming of all things in this universe.

Bones shook his head, letting it go. "Fuck it, I'm in. Lead the way."

Seven o'clock was nearing when Bones, Scotty, and Sulu joined Uhura, Spock, and Chekov on the outskirts of Market Square. The sculptors were still hard at work, their creations yet unseen, hidden behind booths constructed from light plywood.

"What's the count?" Scotty asked Uhura, his voice slurring a bit.

She sighed. "Close but no cigar," she said, hugging herself against the cold. "I think it's up to Jim, now."

"What's he making?" Bones asked.

Spock shrugged. "He wouldn't say."

Sulu noticed that Chekov was there too, and asked, "Who's running the shop?"

"I closed up a few minutes ago," Uhura said. "With the count so close, we all wanted to be out here for the judging. Witness the verdict of our fates."

"That, and we're so anxious that we cannot keep orders straight," Chekov added, shuddering.

A loud bell rang out across the square, marking seven o'clock, and there was a call for the contestants to put down their tools. Then, one-by-one, the plywood walls were removed from each sculpture, prompting 'oohs' and 'aahs' from the crowd that had gathered to watch the judging.

Sulu sucked air through his teeth as an ice lion was revealed. "Some of these are pretty impressive," he said anxiously.

The group watched with baited breath as Jim's sculpture was revealed. When the plywood dropped, they all turned to stare at Spock, who had raised his eyebrows in surprise. Bones and Uhura exchanged a knowing glance as Chekov let out a low whistle and Scotty said, "Jim's quite the Michael Angelo."

A little tipsy, Sulu turned to him and said, matter of fact, "If he were Michael Angelo we'd be seeing a lot more dick- Ow!" He complained when Uhura punched him in the arm.

Jim spotted them all looking at him and shrugged at them sheepishly. His face was red, which may have been from the cold, but Bones had a feeling it had a lot more to do with Jim's very detailed, true-to-life sculpture of Spock.

The last of the sculptures were revealed, and as the judges made their rounds visiting each one, Bones felt something small hit him in the back of the head. He pivoted and looked down to see a pine cone, and when he looked up to see if he could spot who threw it, he sighed, and parted from the group to join her.

"It's past seven," the Christmas Hag said as he approached.

"I know," Bones sighed, realizing that he was probably doomed to stay in this godforsaken universe for the rest of eternity.

"You've given it a good go. I'm impressed, really," she said, patting him on the shoulder consolingly. Bones wasn't really sure what to say, but the Hag wasn't done. "I'll give you one more hour."

He looked at her, surprised, and narrowly avoided rolling his eyes at her smug grin. "Thanks," he said, too relieved to be snarky.

A loud applause erupted from the square, and the Hag clapped him on the shoulder. "You'd better head back. Looks like the town's been saved."

Bones looked over just in time to see Uhura nearly knock Jim flat as she rushed to hug him. She said something to him, and it must have been the news that they had enough money to buy Old Man Janson's land, because Jim's face lit up and he hugged her back tight, lifting her feet off the ground. Bones glanced back at the Hag, but she was gone, so he jogged back to the square, catching up to Spock, Scotty, Sulu, and Chekov as they headed for The Coffee Shop to meet with Mr Janson.

Chekov unlocked the door and the five of them stepped inside, waiting for Uhura, Jim, and Mr Janson in the warmth of the building. They were all giddy with relief, except for Spock, who still looked a little stunned about the sculpture. There were whistles and cheers from the little group when Jim walked in, followed closely by Uhura.

"Way to go, Jim!" Sulu said, clapping Jim on the shoulder. The congratulations were cut short when the bells above the door rang and a thin old man that Bones assumed was Mr Janson stepped in.

"Mr Janson!" Uhura called, grinning and waving a hand over her head. "We have the money!"

Mr Janson's face showed no emotion. "I hate to be the bearer of bad news," he said, and a hush fell across the room. "I know that we had an agreement, but I have been offered triple the original amount, and I'm afraid I cannot sell my plot to you."

There was a stunned silence for a moment before anyone could react. "But," Uhura said, voice cracking. "We had a deal! You can't go back on that!" She argued, her voice growing angrier by the word.

Mr Janson threw his hands up, as if there was nothing he could do about the despair that had flooded the room. "I'm sorry," he said in a way that suggested that he was not very sorry at all, "But I didn't sign anything. It wasn't an official deal, and I'm not legally obligated to hold myself to that."

Uhura collapsed into a chair, putting her head in her hands. Scotty patted her shoulder gently, and Chekov bit his lip, trying to hold back tears. Jim and Sulu didn't react, still trying to process that the rug had been pulled out from under them. With nothing left to say, Mr Janson turned to leave the silent room.

"Mr Janson," Spock called from the back of the room, prompting everyone, including Mr Janson, to turn toward him. Bones eyed the device Spock was holding up. Some sort of rectangular device with two spools of shiny tape behind a clear window, buttons labelled with various symbols studding one edge. With all eyes on him, Spock pressed one of the buttons, and voices emerged from the box.

'So we have a deal, then?' Came a tinny version of Uhura's voice.

'We have a deal. Good luck' Mr Janson's voice replied.

Spock switched the tape recorder off, looking at Mr Janson. "I have the entire meeting recorded, if it is required."

There was another stunned silence, and Bones asked Spock quietly, "Are recordings legally binding?"

Spock tilted his head in a nod. "They are in this universe. Of course, Mr Janson is welcome to challenge it in court..."

Mr Janson let out a heavy sigh. "The land is sold... to you," he said with gritted teeth, and all at once a weight was lifted from the room as tensed shoulders relaxed in giddy relief.

In a flash, Jim had Spock by the shoulders, beaming at him. "Spock! You're a genius!" He exclaimed, and was unable to stop himself from pulling Spock into a tight hug. Spock tensed, then relaxed a second later, tentatively returning the embrace.

The arrangements were made, Mr Janson left The Coffee Shop, and Uhura had revealed a surprise stash of champagne, insisting that they celebrate. It was a small party of only seven people, but it was a lively one. Which made it very easy to lose track of time. "Oh, shit," Bones hissed as he checked the clock. He had two minutes before his extra hour was up. He had completely forgotten about his objective after the roller-coaster of the past hour.

"What is it?" Sulu asked, having heard him.

Bones didn't answer, he was too busy frantically trying to think of something. 'What was it that those stupid movies like to use?' He thought, looking around the room, hoping to spot anything that would give him an idea. Then his eyes locked onto a conspicuous bunch of leaves hanging from the ceiling.

"Hey, you okay?" Sulu asked, waving a hand in front of his face.

"Yeah, I'm fine," Bones said distractedly before taking off towards Jim, grabbing him by the wrist and dragging him away from Chekov and Scotty. With his other hand he grabbed Spock, who was on the other side of the room talking to Uhura, and he dragged his two confused friends to the spot he had scoped out, planting them under the decoration.

Jim and Spock both looked at him, confused, so Bones pointed to the ceiling. "Oh hey look, mistletoe!" He said with mock surprise before dashing away, leaving them to stand there awkwardly.

"Oooooooooooooooooooooo," Sulu teased, breaking the confused silence in the room and encouraging everyone else to egg on the poor suckers caught under the mistletoe.

Jim, face flushed, tried to wave down the drunk hecklers. "Oh come on, guys. Don't pressure poor Spock into doing anything he doesn't want to," he scolded.

Spock raised an eyebrow at him. "What makes you think I don't want to?"

Jim blinked, sputtering. "Well I mean... Uh..." His face flushed more, and Spock shook his head in amusement, before placing a gentle hand on Jim's face and leaning in to kiss him. After a moment of being stunned, Jim kissed him back with enthusiasm, pulling himself in closer to Spock much to the delight of the drunken onlookers. As Uhura let out an impossibly loud wolf whistle, Bones whipped around to look at the clock just in time to see it click over to eight o'clock. A wave of relief washed over him as he realized that he had made it.

He looked back at Jim and Spock, gagging when he saw that they were getting a little too into it, and averted his gaze by way of rolling his eyes. In doing so he caught a flash of red outside the window, and focusing on it, he saw the figure of the Christmas Hag outside, across the street from The Coffee Shop. He casually walked to the door, then looked around the room to see if anyone was watching before quietly opening the door and slipping out into the cold night air. The Christmas Hag was waiting on the other side of the street, leaning against the building. She gave him a two fingered salute when she saw him, and he nodded back, stepping out into the street towards her.

It happened too quickly for him to register. He was crossing the dark street before suddenly being caught in a flood of light. He froze in place, a deer in the headlights, only able to turn his head to see the moving truck hurtling toward him, the name Enterprise emblazoned above its windshield, and then the world was nothing.

He woke up, blinking against the bright white lights. Remembering what had happened, he shot up into a seated position, thinking he was in a hospital, or maybe purgatory. But as he got his bearings, he realized that he was on the Enterprise, in an empty corridor near sickbay.

He laughed to himself. "So it was a dream," he said to himself, shaking his head.

"No, it was real."

Bones shoved to his feet, wheeling around to face the voice. "Oh for fuck's sake. Did you have to hit me with a truck to get me back here?"

The Christmas Hag, back in her ragged nightgown, grinned at him. "Uh, yeah. How else are you supposed to jump between universes?" She asked. "Anyways, you should be thanking me."

Bones blinked at her in disbelief. "Thanking you?" He huffed in exasperation. "You punched me in the face, made me live in hell for three days, then hit me with a moving truck! What exactly am I supposed to be thanking you for?"

The Christmas Hag rolled her eyes. "For teaching you the true meaning of Christmas, obviously."

"Wh-" Bones stuttered for a moment. "What meaning of Christmas? None of that had anything to do with Christmas!" He shouted at her. "Unless the true meaning of Christmas is following your annoying friends around in hell and using an unrealistic fundraising ploy to stop a Walmart from coming into town to wipe out the local businesses."

The Hag shrugged. "Well it is those things. But you're missing the most important one."

Bones rolled his eyes. "Please, enlighten me," he said through gritted teeth.

"The true meaning of Christmas," the Hag said dramatically. "Is Spirk." She met his glare with a pleased smirk.

Bones was very done and had nothing to say, so he raised his hand, flipping her the bird.

"Oh, there he is!" Bones looked over his shoulder at the sound of a voice behind him, and saw Jim and Spock walking down the hallway towards him. "We were wondering where you were," Jim said, then gave Bones a curious look. "Who are you flipping off?"

Bones looked back to the Christmas Hag, who was, of course, gone. He retracted his middle finger and turned to his friends with a sigh. "No one."

"Alright," Jim said with a shrug. "Come on, Uhura insisted that we wait for you before we start the next movie."

Bones' knees buckled and he collapsed back onto the floor, letting out a tortured groan.

Jim put his hands on his hips and rolled his eyes. "Bones is so dramatic, isn't he?"

"Indeed," Spock said, tilting his head curiously. "Perhaps there is something wrong with him."

"Nah, he just gets like this when we watch Hallmark movies. He'll live," Jim said with a shrug. "Help me drag him back to the officer's lounge." Jim and Spock each grabbed one of Bones' arms and dragged him down the corridor towards the turbo-lift. Bones became a dead weight out of protest, and shouted at them the whole way back.

End Notes

If you read this whole thing, kudos to *you.* <3

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