

## Fanfiction Disease

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## Fanfiction Disease

by [spacedogfromspace](#)

### Summary

Jim has a mysterious and previously unknown disease causing a rose plant to grow in his lungs. Nobody knows what it is or what causes it, but Jim is running out of time. Luckily, they find answers from an unlikely source...

### Notes

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Something was wrong with Jim, and Bones knew it. Regardless of how much Jim downplayed his illness - writing it off as seasonal allergies, or just a particularly stubborn cold - Bones had a feeling that the truth was something far more serious. Jim had been avoiding him a lot lately, always finding a reason to put off a visit to sickbay to get completely checked out. Something was definitely up. It must be something really bad for Jim to be pretending otherwise. That was how it always worked with Jim, much to Bones' annoyance. The more life-threatening the injury or illness, the more Jim insisted that he was fine. But god forbid that he get a paper-cut or the sniffles; he would be moaning away in sickbay begging Bones to fix it. So the current situation was very likely to be very, very serious.

Bones' thoughts were interrupted by a knock on his office door. He sighed. "Enter," he said halfheartedly. When the door whooshed open, he was surprised to see someone who, like Jim, seemed to avoid sickbay at all costs. "Spock. What are you doing here?"

Spock raised an eyebrow at Bones' lack of tact, but dismissed it, stepping into the office and letting the door shut behind him. "I'm worried about Jim."

Bones slouched in his chair. "Aren't we all," he grumbled, mostly to himself. When Spock didn't move from his position in front of the door, Bones gestured to a chair in front of his desk. "Sit down, you're making me nervous."

Spock complied, then cut to the chase. "He has had a cough for a number of weeks now," he reported.

"Oh, I've noticed," Bones said. "I've tried everything, too. As much as he'd let me at least. He won't let me do any medical scans on him, he just waves me off and tells me it's allergies, or the common cold. I've given him antihistamines, epinephrine, antibiotics, steroids, antivirals, you name it. Not a single one has made a difference. He's hiding something, I know it."

Spock nodded like he knew all of this. "I can hear him at night, coughing," he said. "It's been getting worse. He hasn't been getting proper sleep and it's starting to have an affect on his work."

"I've noticed that, too." Bones said.

"And there's this," Spock said, somewhat hesitantly. He passed a sealed, transparent bag across the desk to Bones, who leaned over it, studying it with squinted eyes.

"What am I looking at, here?" Bones asked after a minute. If he was being completely honest, he had no idea what relevance this item had to the present problem. A bloody rose? A literal bloody rose? Poetic, but irrelevant.

"I found it in his quarters," Spock said. "Under his bed."

Bones wanted to ask what Spock was doing snooping around under his commanding officer's bed, but held his tongue, waiting for Spock to

get to the point.

"I've also been finding stray petals around the ship, coincidentally in places that Jim has been," Spock continued. He hesitated before presenting his theory, as if he feared he would be laughed at. Perhaps he *would* be laughed at. "I think that perhaps the roses are what is causing Jim's cough."

"We already determined that it wasn't allergies," Bones pointed out, while getting the sinking feeling that allergies were not what Spock had in mind. And they weren't.

"I think the petals, and the flower, are coming from inside him," Spock said, sounding somewhat skeptical of his own theory. "Perhaps from the lungs, or oesophagus."

Bones gave Spock an *are you kidding me* look. "What, you think he has a plant growing in his lungs? That's ridiculous, he'd have been dead for weeks in that case."

"While it seems highly improbable, I do believe that there is something behind this theory," Spock said. "And as you've said, you haven't managed to perform any medical scans of him since this started. Theoretically speaking, anything could be in his lungs."

"Maybe we'll find Schrodinger's cat in there," Bones joked halfheartedly.

Spock was about to reply, whether to agree with him or scold him for making jokes, Bones didn't know, because Spock was cut off by Uhura's voice speaking urgently over the intercom. "Bridge to Doctor McCoy, we need you up here right now."

Exchanging a look with Spock, Bones replied, "What's going on?"

"It's the Captain," Uhura said. Spock got to his feet. "He was having one of his coughing fits and now he's struggling to breathe."

"Shit," Bones hissed. "Be right there."

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Spock and Bones arrived on the bridge to find Jim keeled over - but still conscious, thankfully - and surrounded by Uhura, Chekov, and Sulu, who were looking at a loss for how to help.

"Out of the way," Bones snapped at them. They scrambled off, giving Bones and Jim space, relief writ across their faces at Bones' arrival. The doctor knelt down beside Jim. "What's going on?" He asked. "Allergies?"

Jim was unable to breathe now, let alone speak, so he shook his head vigorously, and brought his hands to his throat in the universal signal for 'choking.'

Bones frowned. "Try not to panic," he said, tilting Jim's head upward, feeling along his throat. "Jesus," he swore under his breath. There was something blocking his airways alright. And big enough that he could feel it through skin and the still esophageal tissue. Bones had to move fast. Jim was turning blue from lack of oxygen. "Hold on, kid," he said, and reached into his bag for a pair of forceps, which he shoved unceremoniously down Jim's throat. It wasn't an elegant solution, but there wasn't time for elegance.

Bones was careful with the forceps, not wanting to damage Jim's throat by probing around too vigorously, nor did he want to accidentally push the blockage further down. Working quickly but carefully, he managed to get a good grip on the foreign object with the forceps, and he started to pull. It took a surprising amount of effort, as if the object had been clinging to Jim's windpipe. He soon discovered that that was exactly the case.

After steadily pulling on the object and increasing the amount of effort he put into dislodging it, it suddenly came free. Bones' arm shot back away from Jim's head, forceps and the object following. Jim, now a dangerous shade of blue but now able to breathe, collapsed to the floor, weakly holding himself up on his elbows as he coughed violently and gasped for air. Spock quickly moved to Jim's side, unable to do anything to aid him, but placing a hand on Jim's back to provide some semblance of comfort. The blood he spat up was violently red against the white floor of the bridge, but there was something else, too.

Rose petals.

With the colour returning to Jim's face, signalling that the danger had passed, at least for the time being, Bones turned to study the object still trapped in his forceps. "Good lord," he gasped when he realized what it was. He glanced at Spock, who was looking back at him grimly.

A red rose lodged in his throat had almost killed Jim. A large red rose. Much bigger than the one Spock had found under Jim's bed. This one created a total blockage, and worse, it had come with thorns.

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"Alright, Jim. Spill it." Bones demanded, perhaps a little harshly. He now had Jim on a bio-bed in his sickbay, where Jim would hopefully allow him to finally get to the bottom of this. Spock was hovering nearby, seeming worried enough that even Bones didn't have the heart to tell him to get lost.

"Spill what?" Jim croaked. It hurt to talk, his throat burned and continued to bleed slowly.

"When did you start spontaneously coughing up flowers?"

Jim shrugged tiredly. "I dunno, a month ago?"

"A *month*?" Bones looked like he was about to burst a vein in his forehead.

"It started out with just petals," Jim offered. "Seemed innocent enough. But it's only gotten worse, and today, well..."

"Why the hell didn't you tell me earlier? You could have died!" Bones snapped, raising his voice in exasperation.

"I dunno," Jim said. But Bones knew him well enough. Jim was afraid of diagnoses. Especially for serious ailments.

Bones sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. "You'd better let me do scans, now."

Jim winced. "Yeah," he agreed.

Bones retrieved a tricorder, setting it up for a full x-ray and ultrasound of Jim's chest, sending the signal to a screen on a mobile armature against the wall above the bio-bed. As Bones methodically scanned Jim's torso, the image gradually filled the screen. Being a medical professional, Bones understood it first, and was unable to hold back a gasp of shock and disbelief. Spock's own rather human response followed shortly after as he made sense of what he was looking at.

"What?" Jim asked, nervously. "What is it?"

Bones and Spock exchanged bewildered glances before Bones moved the screen so Jim could see. "You have a plant growing in your lungs, Jim."

"Yeah. Figured," Jim said, staring at the image. "Can you take it out?"

Bones frowned, then pointed out the patterns on Jim's lungs. "See this here? That's not your lungs. That's a root system. And it's so integrated with your lungs... hell, I wouldn't be surprised if it was replacing lung tissue entirely."

"So..."

"If I tried to remove that, I'd be removing a huge portion of your lungs as well. And you need those. Maybe I could have removed it if you'd told me *earlier*," he trailed off when Jim flinched, face falling. Bones sighed. "I'll find a way to fix this. Mark my words."

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Bones felt like punching his computer. It had been a week of constant research, and there was nothing that described what Jim was going through. Jim himself never left sickbay after the choking incident on the bridge, he was weak and needed to be under watch. He had coughed up several more large, sharp flowers in the days in between that first incident and now.

Bones jumped at a knock to the door of his office. "Come in," he said, and experienced a bout of *deja vu* as Spock walked in, a grim look on his face.

"I am worried about Jim," he said, once again.

Bones sighed. "Aren't we all."

"I think he's dying."

Bones blinked at the bluntness of it. Then his face softened when he realized that Spock was upset. Very upset. He didn't look it, by human standards, but Bones could tell the Vulcan was sick with worry and barely keeping it together.

"I'm sorry, Spock. I'm trying everything I can, but there's nothing for me to go off, here."

Spock didn't appear to be listening to him. "I... can't be without him," he admitted.

Bones sighed. "You need to get some rest," he told Spock, holding up a hand to stop him from protesting. "You haven't slept in days. You need to sleep. Doctor's orders." When Spock pursed his lips defiantly, Bones added, "You can sleep in sickbay if it makes you feel better." This seemed like a fair compromise to Spock.

Once Spock had left, Bones put his head in his hands. He was worried about Jim. And he was failing him. What kind of shit doctor was he?

A chirp announced an incoming comm. "Bridge to Doctor McCoy," Uhura's voice said.

"McCoy here," Bones replied.

"You have a call from your daughter," she told him.

Bones blinked. Right. He was expecting this call, but he had been so caught up with Jim that he forgot. He wondered briefly if he should cancel on her, being as busy as he was. But he decided he wouldn't have any chance of making any breakthroughs in the next half hour, so he may as well keep this appointment. "Thank you Uhura, I'll take it in my office."

A moment later, on his monitor, the bright-eyed face of his fourteen-year-old daughter appeared, smiling at him. "Hi Dad," she said, waving.

"Hey, Jojo," he said tiredly, but offering a weak smile. "How are you?"

Joanna's face turned. She frowned at him, concerned. "I'm fine. But what about you? You look like shit."

Bones rolled his eyes. "Thanks."

"What's going on?" Joanna asked.

With a heavy sigh, Bones explained. "It's Jim. He's been coughing up flowers for weeks now and has a whole plant holding his lungs hostage, and I have no idea how to fix it, and I think he's going to die soon." He didn't mean to burden Joanna with the details, but it had all come out in a rush before he could put a cork in it.

"Coughing up flowers?" Joanna asked, sounding as if she thought she heard wrong.

"Yup."

"You mean like... the fan-fiction disease?" She asked suspiciously.

"The what?" Bones asked.

Joanna bit her lip. "Okay, this is gonna sound stupid, but there's a chance it might help." She was typing away at her computer. "I'm sending you a document. You should read it."

Bones' PADD pinged, and he anxiously grabbed it, finding the attachment Joanna had just sent him and opened it. He squinted. "What's Naruto?"

Joanna shook her head. "Don't worry about it, just read it."

He did.

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"Jim, Jim wake up," Bones urged, shaking Jim lightly by the shoulder.

"What?" Jim asked groggily, displeased at being woken from his rare moment of sleep.

"Read this," Bones demanded, thrusting his PADD into Jim's hand.

"Is this... Naruto fanfiction?"

"Just read it." Bones paced while Jim read it.

"So... you think it's this hanahaki thing? The fanfic trope disease? Where did you even get this?"

"Joanna. And this is the only lead. And the cure is simple enough. You may as well try it. You have nothing to lose."

Jim shook his head. "No. Nuh-uh. I can't tell him."

"Jim, you'll die."

"I'll probably die anyway!" Jim exclaimed. "This 'cure' probably won't even work. It's stupid."

"Look Jim. You have two possibilities here. One, you die. Two, you confess your feelings to Spock, and probably still die, but maybe you live. We both know what the better option is."

"Option one," Jim said, then shouted "ow!" When Bones smacked him upside the head. "Alright, fine!"

Bones fetched Spock from nearby, and shuttled him over to Jim's bio-bed. "Jim has something to tell you, Spock," Bones said, then swiftly turned and hid in his office, leaving them alone in sickbay. Confused, Spock turned to Jim and raised an eyebrow.

Jim and Spock shared a very long awkward silence as Jim tried to work up the courage to say what he needed to say. Eventually, he shoved the PADD with the Naruto fan-fiction on it, gesturing for Spock to read it. Spock did so, then blinked at Jim, waiting for an explanation.

Jim sighed, and decided to eat the frog and get it over with. "I... Spock, I just want you to know, you know, that if I don't make it out of this, that you're... you're my best friend." He took a deep breath, avoiding eye contact. "And I love you. And I'm sorry. And You don't have to pretend to have feelings for me to keep me alive or anything, that wouldn't be fair."

Spock was just blinking at him. "Oh, Jim. I thought you knew."

"Knew what?"

"That I love you too."

There was a tightness in Jim's chest that he didn't notice was there, as it had grown very slowly over the weeks, acclimatizing him to the sensation. But now it released all at once, and suddenly he could breathe better, his lungs returning to their full capacity again.

Jim beamed. And then he laughed, and pushed himself out of his bio-bed, pulling Spock into a tight hug. "Listen," he whispered, and Spock did listen, hearing Jim breathing deep, regular, breaths free of wheezing. The relief he felt was so strong it nearly buckled his knees. He couldn't help but smile, and hold Jim tighter.