

Spock Swap

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Spock Swap

by [spacedogfromspace](#)

Summary

After completing an away mission, Spock beams back up to the Enterprise. Only, what shows up in the transporter room isn't Spock. Well, it is technically Spock. Just one from another universe. One where Vulcans are cats.

Notes

Written for the Vulcans are Cats Big Bang.

This fic has accompanying art by daggerofthemind on Tumblr. Check it out [here!](#)

It was a business as usual day on the *Enterprise*, until it wasn't. Kirk Kirk was stuck on the bridge, having been kept from joining the survey team by losing to Spock in a drawing of straws. Being bored and impatient as he was, he checked on the away team's mission status frequently and obsessively counted down the minutes until they were due back. It wasn't as if he had anything else to do. Luckily, Spock and his survey team should be returning shortly, and his boredom would be somewhat alleviated.

He didn't *have* to check in with Spock, since he would be on the bridge with his report in a just few minutes, but Kirk decided he'd check in on him anyways, because he was impatient. He tapped at his chair's comm panel, requesting a connection to Spock's handheld communicator. The chirp indicating that the connection was accepted from Spock's end sounded off almost immediately.

"Kirk here," he said, leaning in his chair to be closer to the comm panel. "How's it going down there, Spock?"

"Captain, I believe that you are entirely aware of 'how it is going down here,' as you have checked the mission feed one hundred and forty-seven times in the past hour and thirty-three minutes," Spock answered flatly, prompting an eye-roll from Kirk that Spock couldn't see but could most likely infer.

"Well, yes, but..." Kirk shrugged to himself. "I like to check in personally." There was a moment of pause and Kirk winced, knowing that somewhere on the planet below him, an eyebrow was being raised at him.

"Would I be correct in the assumption that you are merely comming me out of boredom?"

"I- ... No!" He said defensively, shooting a glare at Uhura as she laughed under her breath at him. "Well, yes," he sighed. Spock knew him well, which came in handy in many perilous situations, but it was times like this that Kirk begrudged Spock's familiarity with him.

"Then I shall wait to speak with you when I am back aboard the ship," Spock said. "I am sending my survey team for beam-up now."

Kirk frowned. "Are you implying that you aren't beaming up with the rest of your team?"

"Indeed," Spock answered. "However, I will be beaming up directly after them. The transporter is limited in how many it can transport at once. My team and I are one above it's capacity."

"Right," Kirk said, rolling his eyes at himself. "Well, don't get into any trouble in the thirty seconds that you're alone on the planet," he joked.

"I have no intention of doing so, Captain," Spock answered dryly before severing the connection. Kirk huffed out a laugh and tapped his fingers against the arm of his chair, waiting for Spock's return.

Scotty stood sipping tea from a distinctively out-of-place porcelain tea cup as he watched four science and two security officers materialize on the transporter pad. He gave them a tired wave as they stepped off the pad, which the security detail returned, but the science officers were clustered together studying the display of a tricorder that one of them was holding. They took no notice of Scotty as they debated about the data and pointed determined fingers at the device, moving as a singular unit as they left the transporter room.

Scotty yawned into his fist. The long shift was getting to him. He set his tea cup down gently and turned his attention back to the transporter console to focus on beaming up the only living soul left on the planet below.

"Ready for beam up, Mr Spock?" He asked, after tapping at his comm panel.

"Affirmative, Mr Scott," was Spock's immediate answer.

Scotty double checked the coordinate lock he had on Spock, then gently powered up the transporter. Slowly, the familiar particle beam appeared and grew on the transporter pad, but Scotty frowned when Spock didn't appear before him as quickly as he expected him to. Brow furrowed, he leaned over his console, eyes skimming over the readings, looking for anomalies while he adjusted the energy level of the transporter beam, trying to fix the problem and get Spock on board.

At last, the transporter completed it's task. However, the life-form it had brought on board was not - as expected - an unimpressed Vulcan asking what had taken so long. Scotty didn't understand. He may have made a mistake and beamed up the wrong life-form, but he felt that was unlikely, as not only did he double check the signature he had locked on to, but Spock was supposed to be the only living being on the planet, which hosted no life. So how did he manage to beam *this* up? He had a sneaking suspicion, one that he hoped was untrue. He tapped at his comm panel, reluctant to test the theory.

"Transporter room to Spock," Scotty said, not taking his eyes off what he had just beamed up. "There seems to have been a malfunction with the transporter. Are you there?" He waited, but there was no response. "Spock?" He tried again. Nothing. He grimaced, then commed the bridge. "Scott to bridge," he said, nervously.

"Kirk here," the Captain's voice answered. "How's it going, Scotty?"

Scotty clicked his tongue, deciding that he would ignore the question. "I uh, have a request."

"Sure, what is it?"

He searched for the right words. "Would'ya mind scanning the beam-up site for any life-forms?" He asked.

There was a pause on the other end of the line. "What for?" Kirk asked, then added, "Did Spock see something down there?"

"Uh," Scotty stalled, trying to come up with a response that wouldn't cause alarm. It wasn't time for alarm just yet. "Something like that."

There was a few moments of silence before the captain got back to him. "Mr Chekov is telling me he isn't getting any life-form readings at the beam-up site."

Shit, Scotty thought, barely stopping himself from speaking it out loud. His suspicions were correct after all. Now was the time to sound the alarm. "Captain, there seems to be a problem. You should come down here."

"What's the problem?" Kirk asked, his voice now concerned.

"I... think it would be best if you saw for yourself." Scotty said meekly, glancing back at the transporter pad and it's occupant.

"I'll be right there," Kirk said, and Scotty let out a long breath, wondering how exactly he was going to present this.

"What's going on, Scotty?" Kirk asked, striding into the transporter room with a sense of urgency. The only thing worse than problems were problems that he didn't have the details of, and he was determined to get those details as soon as possible.

"Well-" Scotty began, but Kirk put up a hand suddenly, stopping him, as he realized that he hadn't passed Spock on his way to the transporter room. Spock would have gone straight to the bridge after beam-up, so their paths should have crossed.

"Where's Spock?" Kirk asked, suddenly worried.

Scotty winced. "Well, that's the problem, sir. Something interfered with the transporter, I am not sure what yet, but-"

"Scotty." Kirk said sternly. "Where is Spock?"

Scotty huffed out a sigh of reluctance. "Well, I can't be entirely sure, but I believe that *that*," he gestured to the transporter pad, "is Mr Spock."

Kirk's eyes darted from Scotty to the transporter pad, and he stared at what he saw with disbelief. Sitting there calmly, but looking vaguely confused, was a black cat with large, warm brown eyes, and tall pointed ears. He regarded Kirk and Scotty curiously.

"This is a joke, right?" Kirk asked, raising an eyebrow at Scotty.

Scotty grimaced, wringing his hands anxiously. "I wish it were, sir."

Kirk was starting to panic, but what came out of his mouth was: "Bones is gonna love this."

Scotty gave him a concerned look. "Are you alright, laddie? You're looking a little pale," he said.

Kirk huffed out a nervous laugh. "Yeah, yeah, I'm fine," he grimaced, then added, "Just conflicted."

"How so?" Scotty asked, confused.

"Well, on one hand, it's hilarious that my first officer got turned into a cat," Kirk said, using his hands to indicate vaguely to his left. "On the *other* hand," he shifted his hands to gesture to his right, "my first officer got turned into a cat. And we have no idea how it happened, why it happened, or how to turn him back into something with thumbs and language processing abilities."

Scotty sucked air through his teeth, looking back at the cat, who was still sitting patiently, watching them. "Yes, I suppose I'd better get on figuring out what went wrong."

"Yeah, that's... probably a good idea," Kirk said. "I think I'll take him to sickbay. Bones might have an idea of what to do. Or, at least he might get a laugh out of the whole... situation." He shrugged weakly.

"Aye, you do that," Scotty said with a sigh, turning towards the transporter console, not looking forward to sifting through data to try and locate a problem that seemed more like magic than a mechanical failure. "D'you mind if I steal Chekov for a few hours? I could use an assistant."

Kirk nodded distractedly. "Yeah, yeah, whatever you need." He flapped a hand at Scotty, before stepping cautiously towards the transporter pad, trying to decide the best way to get this cat - Spock - to sickbay. The cat didn't show any signs that it was unsettled by Kirk's approach, it just tilted it's head, eyeing him curiously.

"Uh, hey there.... Spock?" Kirk said awkwardly, unsure how to initiate communication with his what was *probably* his friend in a cat body. The cat meowed at him, and Kirk had no idea if he was affirming that he was indeed Spock, or if he was just meowing back at him because that's what cats do. He held out a hand towards the cat, palm down. He did it without thinking, and he felt briefly mortified until the cat leaned forward, delicately sniffing at Kirk's hand before rubbing the side of his face against his hand.

With a breath of a laugh, Kirk shook his head at the absurdity of the situation. "Dammit Spock, I told you not to get into any trouble in that tiny window of time you were down on the planet by yourself. Now look what you've done," he said softly, letting the cat continue to press his face to his hand, tickling him with long whiskers. "Well, do you think I can pick you up? We should pay Bones a visit." He stroked the cat's sleek fur a few times before gently putting his hands around the cat's middle. When he didn't protest, he picked him up, holding him close to his chest as he pushed himself back into a standing position.

After waiting a moment to see if the cat would change his mind about being held, Kirk decided that the cat was content enough to be carried and wouldn't make a run for it, at least not immediately. So, he headed for sickbay, absently saying goodbye to Scotty on the way out of the transporter room. The corridor between the transporter room and the turbo-lift was quiet and empty, thankfully. He wasn't sure if the cat would spook and take off if too many people turned up suddenly. He called the turbo-lift and waited, looking down at the cat, who in response looked back up at him. Those eyes really were Spock's.

Kirk was almost bowled over by a flash of yellow when the turbo-lift doors opened. Luckily, Chekov saw him at the last minute and managed to dodge him, narrowly avoiding collision.

"Oh! Captain!" Chekov said, a little breathlessly. He held his palms up apologetically, grimacing. "I am sorry, I did not see you there."

"It's alright, Pav," Kirk said, stepping into the turbo-lift.

Before he could give the turbo-lift his destination, Chekov asked, "Uh, Captain? Why do you have a cat?"

Kirk gave him a tired look and sighed. "Scotty will fill you in," then to the turbo-lift, "G Deck."

Chekov gave a confused wave as the turbo-lift doors shut, and Kirk sighed. "Well, Spock. This is going to be a day."

"Very funny, Jim," McCoy snapped in a way that indicated he didn't find it funny at all. "I'm busy, go bother someone else." He turned back to the set of hypos he was preparing.

"Bones, I'm not kidding," Kirk protested wearily. "Scotty tried to beam up Spock, and what showed up on the transporter pad is this cat. And there's no life signatures left down on the planet, we checked. So it has to be him, right?"

McCoy sighed and abandoned his hypos for the moment, peeling off his gloves and disposing of them. "Alright, I'll bite. But only because I don't think you're a good enough actor to sound this worried if you *weren't* worried."

"Wow, thanks," Kirk said flatly, and set the slender black cat down on an empty bio-bed, where he promptly sat down, straight backed, watching them with a look of vague amusement.

"So you really think this is Spock?" McCoy asked.

Kirk ran a hand through his hair. "I mean, I don't know. Maybe?"

"Because this could just be a cat that *kinda* looks like it *could* be Spock," McCoy pointed out.

"But that wouldn't explain what happened to Spock. If he isn't this cat, then where is he?" Kirk asked.

McCoy grunted. "I'm starting to hope he *is* the cat. It's probably easier to turn a cat back into Spock than it is to collect his scattered atoms from who-knows-where and reassemble them. See, this is why I hate transporters! And everyone thinks *I'm* the crazy one."

Kirk rolled his eyes. "You *are* the crazy one. The transporter works perfectly fine... most of the time. It's perfectly safe."

"Jim, the thing malfunctions as often as it works," McCoy scoffed. "I'd hardly call that 'most of the time' or 'safe.'" He shook his head irritably. "Look, I don't know what you want me to do here. Medically speaking, it's a cat." He went to pat the cat's head, but it dodged and hissed at him.

"Guess he doesn't like you," Kirk said under his breath.

"Yeah, well I don't like him either," McCoy snapped. "I have a job to do, get this cat out of my sickbay. Can't have an animal just running around in here, it's unsanitary."

A low growl emitted from the cat as he glared at McCoy. Hoping to stop an altercation, Kirk scooped up the cat, petting it to calm it down. "Right, well, I guess I'll take him with me to the bridge. He can't do much harm there."

McCoy waved him off, already busy with calibrating some equipment, and Kirk left sickbay with the cat.

It was just Uhura and Sulu on the bridge after Kirk and Chekov were summoned to the transporter room one after the other, but it was a slow day and there was nothing that could happen that the two of them couldn't handle. Sulu had the conn, and was sitting in the captain's chair with one leg looped over one of the armrests, facing Uhura, who was in her chair with an elbow resting on her console, propping her head up with her hand. The two were bored to bits and chatting idly to pass the time when the sound of the turbo-lift's pneumatic door opening caught their attention.

"Captain on the bridge," Uhura and Sulu said in unison. Neither of them adjusted their postures, knowing the captain wouldn't mind them being a bit relaxed on a day like this.

"What's happening in the transporter room?" Sulu asked.

Uhura narrowed her eyes in suspicion. "Where did you get that cat?" At this, Sulu leaned back to peer at Kirk from around the back of the chair. His expression was one of surprise for a moment before it changed to mirror Uhura's.

"Well, to answer both of your questions..." Kirk sighed, stepping on the bridge and nudging Sulu out of his chair. He sat down heavily and placed the cat on the floor, allowing him to wander. "There was a... mishap with the transporter. This is Spock... probably."

"I don't know about that, Captain," Sulu said skeptically, looking down at the cat that was now circling Sulu, rubbing up against his legs. "Cute cat, though," he added as he squatted down to pet the cat, which eagerly allowed him to give him chin scratches.

"Well, Scotty seems to think it's Spock. Otherwise, where did this cat come from?" Kirk asked.

"Maybe Scotty locked on to the wrong target?" Uhura offered, not sounding very confident. She knew that Scotty would have covered all his bases before presenting such an outlandish theory.

Kirk shook his head. "There's nothing else down there. That's what he got Chekov to do a scan for a few minutes ago. So if Spock isn't down on the planet, and he isn't this cat..." He waved his hands nebulously.

Uhura frowned. "I guess the best case is that he's the cat, and not... scattered out in space somewhere."

Kirk let out an amused huff. "That's exactly what Bones said."

"What did the Doc have to say about him?" Sulu asked as he stood back up, the cat having lost interest in him to go rub his face up against a chair.

"He said that, medically, it's a cat, and to get out of his sickbay." Kirk said flatly. "Anyways, Scotty and Chekov are looking into the problem. Hopefully they can figure out what went wrong and find a way to turn him back into a Vulcan."

Uhura had stopped listening, leaning forward making 'pss pss pss' sounds and wagging her fingers towards the cat. She succeeded in catching the cat's attention, and he meandered his way over to her, shoving his head under her hand, much to her delight. The cat flopped over, purring, exposing his belly and looking up at her with bright eyes. "Aww," Uhura crooned, and reached out to pet his belly. The cat responded by batting at her with his fluffy paws, claws kept safely retracted.

Kirk and Sulu watched Uhura play with the cat, trying to poke at the cat's belly and escape being smacked by a soft paw. "Catch these hands," she said quietly, unaware that Kirk and Sulu could definitely hear her.

After a while, when the cat had tired of playing and systematically claiming everything on the bridge as his own, he jumped up on the helm with a 'mrpp.' Sulu was jolted out of the book he was reading on his PADD, surprised by the cat's sudden appearance in front of him. His surprise melted away as the cat curled up on the warm surface of the helm. "Aww," Sulu grinned as the cat began snoring softly. He crossed his fingers that the cat wouldn't trigger any of the controls that it was laying on. The safest thing would be to move the cat off the buttons that controlled the ship, but it seemed a crime to move a sleepy kitty that seemed so content.

The cat was still snoozing late in the afternoon when the turbo-lift doors opened, presenting Scotty, Chekov, and McCoy. Kirk stood to greet them, Sulu put down his PADD, and Uhura took out her earpiece, all of them looking at Scotty expectantly.

"Well," Scotty said, clapping his hands together, which unfortunately startled the cat awake. Sulu reflexively reached over to stroke the cat, calming it. "Chekov and I have determined the cause of the transporter malfunction."

"Really? Already? What is it?" Kirk asked, eyes widened in surprise at the speed at which they sifted through the data. Sure, it had taken a few hours, but Kirk didn't expect a report until much later in the day, if not until the next day.

"Remember that ion storm on Halka?" Scotty asked tentatively.

"Yeah?" Kirk winced. That was an incident he didn't wish to relive anytime soon.

"There was an undetected ion storm passing rapidly through the atmosphere, it appears," Scotty continued. "Our theory is that the storm wasn't in a position to interfere with the beam-up of the other six members of the landing party, but only *just*, and by the time I attempted to beam up Mr Spock, the storm *was* in a position of interference."

McCoy, who had clearly come to the bridge to hear what Scotty and Chekov had found, rounded on the chief engineer with a frown. "So you think this cat isn't *our* Spock, but a different Spock from another, parallel universe, like with the Halka incident?" McCoy asked, in a tone that said he didn't get paid enough for this kind of bullshit.

"I... cannot say for certain, but I believe so," Scotty admitted, shrugging apologetically.

"So if this cat is Spock from another universe," Kirk thought out loud, meeting McCoy's eyes. "Then what kind of universe is our Spock in?"

Scotty shook his head. "Hopefully one less hostile than what we went through at Halka," he muttered.

There was a silence as everyone contemplated all the horrible places their Spock could have been sent to. Everyone except for Chekov, who had wandered over to Spock-cat and was quietly chanting: "kitty, kitty," while patting the cat's head lightly.

"Well, if it's as similar to Halka as you think it is, we can count on Spock to use the same strategy to swap him back here, right?" Uhura asked after a moment. "All we'd have to do is beam down this little guy and hope Spock does the same thing at the same time, wherever he is."

Nodding, Scotty agreed. "Aye, that's what I'm thinking, too. There are a lot of moving parts, but I'm certain it is doable."

"What kind of moving parts?" McCoy asked, certain that Scotty was downplaying the difficulty of the situation.

Scotty shrugged. "Well, to recreate the conditions we need to send our furry friend here back through the ion cloud. It hasn't dissipated yet, but it isn't stationary. We can't just beam a cat into the cloud wherever the cloud happens to be, because we are also reliant on Mr Spock using the same beam-down coordinates *and* energizing the transporter at more or less the same time, with a margin of error of two to three seconds."

"I don't know if I'm missing something here, but you're making it sound like it's impossible to get this right," McCoy commented.

"Actually, it makes it easier than if the cloud *were* stationary. The one set of coordinates that both me and Spock know are the original beam-up coordinates, so it only makes sense to use those particular coordinates again, to guarantee that they are the same. Then, we just have to wait for the cloud to come back around to create interference between us and those coordinates. The lining up of these common coordinates and the ion cloud create a mark for initiating the beam-down. A 'go' signal. Our logical bastard on the other end will come to the same conclusion," Scotty answered excitedly, then added with less enthusiasm, "Unless the cloud dissipates before conditions are right."

"Hold on," Kirk said, raising a hand. "There's another moving part. Us. If that ion cloud is over those coordinates while we're on the other side of the planet, we're screwed."

Scotty waved a hand flippantly. "Not a problem. Chekov's got the trajectory of the cloud mapped out. Once we're within a couple hours of our 'go' signal, we'll decelerate our orbit to a near-tidal lock."

McCoy scowled at the last bit. "That sounds like a good way to crash us into the planet, if you ask me."

"I *didn't* ask you," Scotty shot back, before turning back to the rest of the crew in a much more pleasant tone. "We can maintain a stable decelerated orbit for roughly two and a half hours. Isn't that right Chekov?"

"Yessir!" Chekov chirped back, his starry-eyed gaze not breaking from the cat that was clearly causing him much amusement.

"I get him to check all my math," Scotty said to the others as an aside.

"So when's go-time?" Kirk asked.

Scotty looked to Chekov for an answer, but Chekov wasn't paying any attention to them. "Chekov! When's that cloud gonna be back?" He asked sharply.

Chekov snapped to attention, and referenced his PADD. "Forty-four hours, thirty-seven minutes, and twelve seconds. Pending changes in weather."

"Day after tomorrow," Scotty translated, turning back to the others.

"Well," Kirk said, looking at the cat, who was on his feet performing dramatic stretches. "At least we won't be bored."

The remainder of alpha shift went by smoothly, as expected. After the briefing, Scotty retreated back to Engineering, and McCoy was shooed off the bridge once it was clear that he was only lingering to procrastinate. When the shift ended, the senior staff (plus Chekov), met in the officer's mess to wind down for the evening and have something to eat.

Finding something for Spock-cat to eat was easier said than done. They offered him every variety of cat food that the synthesizer could

produce, and he had turned his nose up at every single one of them. They even tried to see if he would eat plomeek soup. He would not. Finally, after much trial and error, they finally found something that this cat would eat. Cooked whitefish, earth variety. Strange considering that their Spock wouldn't eat the meat of any living creature, synthesized or not, but Doctor McCoy pointed out that cats are carnivores that would do terribly on a vegetarian diet.

When it got late and everyone started to turn in for the night, Kirk wasn't sure what to do with Spock-cat. He considered using his emergency override to let the cat into Spock's quarters, but he wasn't sure how his Spock would appreciate that. Instead, he took the cat to the officers' lounge and laid out a blanket on one of the couches.

"Hope you don't mind sleeping on the couch," Kirk said to the cat, who looked up at him with a raised eyebrow, but jumped up onto the couch all the same. Kirk couldn't help but melt a bit when the cat began kneading the blanket and purring to himself, it was just too cute. After giving the cat a few strokes on the head, Kirk eventually brought himself to leave the cat and retire to his own quarters for the night.

Letting out a long sigh, Kirk melted into his bed, commanding the lights down. It had been a long day, and a dark, quiet room was a welcome respite. Despite this, he found himself laying awake, unable to sleep despite his best efforts. He was worried about Spock, he realized. His own Spock, not the cat he had switched places with. It felt wrong to be sleeping while his first officer - his friend - was missing. He felt like he should be working around the clock until Spock was safely back in his own universe. It's what Spock would have done if their places were switched. Kirk knew there was nothing to be done until the ion cloud moved back into place, but that just felt like a lame excuse to not take action.

Shifting uncomfortably, Kirk sighed, and tried to push the creeping feeling of guilt away. Staying awake all night with worry wouldn't do his crew any good, after all. So, he let his body relax, and let his stream of thoughts clear as he focused deeply on the quiet sounds of the ship, and slowly started to drift into sleep.

His eyes opened suspiciously when a new sound joined the rhythmic hum of the engines. A repeated scratching noise, in even metre. In the haze of near-sleep, it took him a minute to identify the source of the sound. Then, with a sigh, he swung his legs over the side of the bed and went to his door, pressing it open. After meditating in the quiet darkness of the room, the pneumatic hiss of the sliding doors was as loud as the corridor light was bright. Squinting against the light, Kirk looked down at the door-scratching culprit to see the little pointy eared black cat looking up at him with owlsh eyes.

"Alright," Kirk said, stepping aside, too tired to protest. When the cat stepped into his quarters, Kirk shut the door and stumbled back to his bed in the dark, not paying the cat any mind. In fact, he had practically forgotten that he let Spock-cat in only a few minutes after the fact, until he was again roused from half-sleep, this time by something lightweight jumping onto the end of his bed.

He didn't move, but tracked the cat's movements as he walked across his bed and up beside him, where he began to purr and knead a spot on the mattress. Kirk listened to the purr. It was a calming and pleasant sound that only got better when Spock-cat was satisfied with his kneading and curled up on Kirk's chest, quickly falling asleep.

It crossed Kirk's mind that it was weird to let a cat version of his first officer sleep on his chest, but he pushed the thought from his mind. The weight of the cat and the vibrations of his purring were of a pleasantness that outweighed the weirdness. And besides, who was he to move a comfortably sleeping cat? He fell asleep petting the snoring cat's smooth fur.

Uhura lifted a hand from her console to cover a deep yawn. She hadn't slept well the night before, and she knew that she wasn't the only one. Sleep was difficult enough to come by while a friend was missing, let alone when he was lost in some godforsaken alternate universe.

It would be a quiet day in orbit, with not much to do until the next day when the ion cloud was due to be in a good position to try and send Spock-cat back to his own universe - and hopefully bring their Spock back. So, to keep her mind occupied, Uhura decided to spend her morning re-calibrating and maintenancing her equipment at her station on the bridge.

Blinking the sleep out of her eyes with little success, Uhura stretched her arms briefly and returned her attention to her console. She adjusted her earpiece and listened carefully while slowly turning a dial, listening to a sine wave gradually change frequency. She was interrupted when a soft black paw batted at her hand.

"Oh!" She jumped slightly, only now noticing the cat sitting on her console. She hadn't even known that he was on the bridge. "I didn't see you there, Spock," she said, flashing a smile as she reached over to pet his large ears. The cat's eyes closed and he started to purr.

"Aww," Chekov said, appearing over Uhura's shoulder. "What a good kitty," he cooed at Spock-cat, who allowed him to join Uhura in doting on him. Spock-cat arched his back against Chekov's hand and purred loudly, much to the delight of the two humans. Grinning at Uhura, Chekov remarked, "I wish we could keep kitty-Spock *and* get Mr Spock back." Uhura smiled at him.

"Scott to bridge," the chief engineer called up, voice slightly compressed by the comm system.

Sulu, who was draped over the captain's chair reading something on his PADD and fighting to keep his eyes open, scrambled upright to answer. "Sulu here, Mr Scott."

"Is Mr Chekov busy? I could use his help down here," Scotty asked.

Sulu looked over at Chekov, who shook his head vigorously. "I am clearly *much* too busy," he told him, gesturing to Spock-cat, who was batting at Chekov's hand the second he paused his petting.

Sulu blinked tiredly at Chekov, then tapped the comm key. "He'll be right down, Mr Scott."

Chekov pursed his lips and glared at Sulu. "Traitor," he hissed, only half joking.

Sulu shrugged apologetically. "Sorry Pav, but I can't be letting people slack off while I'm in charge."

Chekov rolled his eyes. "Says the guy sleeping in the chair," he said, shaking his head as he headed for the turbo-lift.

"Hey, I am doing *very* important paperwork," Sulu called over his shoulder at him.

"Sure," Chekov said sarcastically, winking back at Uhura who feigned a yawn to hide a grin.

Once Chekov disappeared into the turbo-lift, the bridge's brief respite from sleepy boredom ended. Sulu returned to what Uhura was certain was not paperwork, but a novel, and she had no other choice but to return to calibrating her equipment. Spock-cat hadn't moved from his spot next to her instruments. He sat still and alert, watching her with his large eyes, seeming to only blink when nobody was looking. Giving the cat one last pat on the head, Uhura turned back to her console and got to work.

It wasn't long before she was interrupted, once again, by Spock-cat's soft paws batting at her fingers as she deftly navigated her switches, dials, sliders, and keys. She batted back at the cat gently, and they swiped at each other playfully for a while until the cat seemed to lose interest and continued to watch her in his eerie stillness. She took this as permission to continue working, until the cat suddenly pounced on a blinking light in the middle of her console, the sound of keys and switches and the like clattering as the cat landed on them, sending a flurry of errors through her monitor.

Uhura just sat there blinking for a moment before sighing and picking the cat up under the arms and lifting him up to look into his owlsh eyes. "You know, for a Spock, you're quite the troublemaker," she said accusingly.

"Mrrp?" Spock-cat asked, tilting his head to the side as if to say, *who, me?*

Uhura pursed her lips and narrowed her eyes, then sighed. "You're lucky you're cute," she muttered. "Lets find you a spot where you can watch without undoing all my work."

Looking to her left and right briefly, Uhura realized there was nothing that would lend itself to containing a cat, or at least keep it from interfering. With a shrug, she wrapped the cat across her shoulders, where he quickly relaxed around her neck, purring into her ears.

"Hey, Hikaru," Uhura said, spinning around in her swivel chair.

"Hmm?" Sulu asked, not looking up from his PADD. A good book, clearly.

"Check out my new scarf," Uhura said, striking a pose in her chair like a runway model.

Sulu looked up and snorted, unable to keep the grin off his face. "Very fashionable, Nyota."

Sulu took a deep breath of relief when the pneumatic doors closed him into his botany lab. After being relieved from mind-numbing bridge duty for the afternoon, he was looking forward to getting some real work done. His plants needed tending. Donning a pair of gloves that would protect him against thorns, poisonous secretions, and other irritants, he set to work methodically visiting each plant, checking soil moisture and humidity, pruning and deadheading, and measuring and recording growth.

He was halfway through the first row of specimens, using a hose to water a thirsty vine-like stump that sprouted small white flowers on it's trailing filaments when it was happy, when he caught movement out of the corner of his eye. This wasn't abnormal, even when alone in his lab; Gertrude liked to stretch occasionally, or move about to try and attract his attention. But this movement gave Sulu pause, because Gertrude was situated in the opposite corner of the room, and as far as Sulu knew, Gertrude couldn't walk.

Worried that some sort of pest had gotten into the lab and was compromising his specimens, Sulu stood and faced the intruder, but relaxed once he identified the culprit. "Snuck in on my heels, did you, Mr Spock?"

"Mrrp," Spock-cat said, neither confirming nor denying the allegations.

Sulu shook his head. "I guess you can stay and keep me company. Just stay away from Gertrude, she might try to eat you."

"Mrrow," Spock-cat agreed. Sulu stepped over to stroke Spock-cats long ears before returning to shut off the hose, the vine plant now adequately watered. He continued on to the next plant, but kept an eye on Spock-cat, just in case he decided to get into mischief.

True to his word, Spock-cat kept well away from Gertrude, and didn't mess with any of the other plants, leading Sulu to unwisely trust Spock-cat's judgement and relax his guard. Sulu did not account for the fact that cats, like children, were perfectly behaved until you turned their back on them. He was measuring some odd reed-like desert plants when he looked around to check on Spock-cat again.

"Spock, no!" Sulu shouted, running over to shoo Spock-cat away from the plant he had been chewing on. "Don't eat that!"

Seeing that he had been caught, Spock-cat leapt down from the table and scuttled away, making a series of chirrups and 'mrrps' that could have been mocking in tone. Sulu sighed and turned his attention to the plant that Spock-cat had been assaulting. He was dismayed to see that it was one of the weird and mysterious alien plants, which now had multiple chunks of rubbery flesh ripped out of it. He wasn't dismayed about the state of the plant, it was a hardy thing and would heal itself in a few days. No, it was Spock-cat that he worried about. The plant's sap was irritating to human skin, and he cringed to think of what it might do to a cat's innards.

Sulu looked over to the cat, who was sitting in the corner staring at him, somewhat tauntingly, but otherwise not in any immediate distress. He sighed heavily, not in relief, but in exasperation. "Well, Mr Spock," he said, walking over and scooping up the cat. "I think we ought to pay the Doc a visit."

"Hey, Doc," Sulu said cautiously as he stepped into sickbay, Spock-cat in hand. "How's your day been?"

McCoy gave him an evil glare that frankly, he did not deserve. "It was fine until you two showed up. What did you do?"

"How did you know?" Sulu said, joking, but trying to keep the grin off his face lest he invoke McCoy's wrath.

McCoy missed the joke. "Because nobody ever comes down here unless they've done something stupid and want me to fix it," he grumbled, aggressively dumping some newly cleaned instruments into a drawer. "Can't you guys ever come in here just to say hi?"

Sulu was going to point out that Kirk dropped by to say hi all the time and McCoy always drove him out for wasting his time, but McCoy was in a mood, so he held his tongue. Instead he got to the point. "Spock ate part of an alien plant," he said quickly, as if ripping off a band-aid.

"You let him do *what*?"

Sulu rolled his eyes. "*Excuse* you, I didn't *let* him do anything. He has a mind of his own. Anyways, I have no idea if this plant is toxic to cats or not, but the sap is a human skin irritant, so I don't imagine it would be a good thing for him to eat," he explained. "So far he's seemed fine, though."

McCoy sighed heavily. "I suppose I'll have to keep him for observation for a few hours," he said reluctantly.

"Probably not a bad idea," Sulu agreed, setting the cat down on a bio-bed. Then, as if worried that McCoy would change his mind, Sulu made a hasty but not untrue excuse about having to get back to work, and escaped from sickbay.

"Unsanitary..." McCoy grumbled to himself, displeased with having an animal wandering around his sickbay. With a huff, he turned to Spock-cat. "Well, you don't look like you're dying yet."

"Mrow," Spock-cat agreed, stretching deeply before hopping off the bio-bed to explore the room.

McCoy resisted the urge to try and stop the cat from nosing about. He knew the effort would be futile. At least he kept a tidy sickbay, and anything sharp or potentially consumable was tucked away safely. On top of that, he had no patients in at the moment, so there was nobody for the cat to mess with. Except for McCoy himself, of course. He accepted his fate, and set himself to catching up on the latest medical journals, keeping an eye on Spock-cat.

At first, McCoy kept careful watch over Spock-cat, looking up at him after every paragraph or so to make sure he wasn't acting in a way that suggested that the plant he had eaten had any adverse effect on him. But as time went by with Spock-cat seeming to be in perfect health, McCoy's supervision became more lax. He had just about forgotten that Spock-cat was free-roaming through his sickbay when his reading was interrupted by a noise.

It wasn't a loud noise, but sickbay was quiet enough to hear a pin drop. A scraping sound, like something was being pushed across a surface. It stopped and started, as if whatever it was was being pushed little by little in short bursts. McCoy held his breath, trying to determine the source of the sound. Then, there was a new sound, the clinking of glass. Almost as if someone was tipping glassware, but not quite toppling it over. Yet.

"*Shit*," McCoy hissed under his breath, and jumped up from his seat, rushing into his office.

Sure enough, his suspicions were confirmed. The door of his liquor cabinet was open, and Spock-cat was brushing against bottles, shifting them on their glass shelves.

"Hey! Get out of there!" McCoy scolded.

"Mrpp?" Spock-cat asked, as if he just noticed McCoy's presence. He regarded the doctor curiously as he gathered his slinky cat body and sat down behind one of the bottles. Then his eyes drifted from McCoy to the bottle.

McCoy narrowed his eyes. "Don't you *fucking* dare," he hissed through gritted teeth, pointing an accusatory finger.

Spock-cat blinked his large eyes, feigning innocence, before lifting a paw and placing it on the bottle.

McCoy was only a few steps away from the cabinet, but he didn't dare try to move closer, knowing it would only prompt the cat to tip the bottle off the shelf. Instead, and perhaps foolishly, McCoy tried to reason with the cat. "Don't you fucking dare," he said pointedly. "That brandy hasn't even been opened yet."

Spock-cat lifted a dainty paw, pausing to look at McCoy with what the doctor swore was a malicious and threatening glare. Once McCoy was thoroughly unsettled, Spock-cat swiftly knocked the bottle from the shelf.

"Nonononono-" McCoy dove forward and towards the floor, managing to both catch the bottle before it shattered on the floor *and* narrowly avoid a head-on collision with the liquor cabinet. He started to sigh with relief, but was cut short when he noticed another bottle falling from the cabinet. Shifting the first bottle to one hand, he snatched out with the other and managed to rescue the second bottle. "Dammit Spock! Knock it off!" McCoy shouted up to the shelves above him. Spock-cat must have understood enough of human speech to interpret that literally, because a moment later another bottle was knocked from the shelf. Having run out of hands, and being too flustered to consider setting one of the bottles down to free a hand, McCoy shot a foot out to cushion the landing of the third casualty of Spock-cat's tirade. Now in an awkward lunge, McCoy lacked the mobility to rescue the saurian brandy that Spock-cat hurled down next. McCoy winced at the sound of shattering glass, and avoiding looking at the damage, he looked up to curse at Spock-cat.

"Meow," Spock-cat said, looking down his nose at McCoy in a way that was seemingly judging him for being unable to catch the last projectile.

McCoy scowled. "Dammit Spock, I'm a doctor, not a cartoon character!" Standing up and returning the two bottles clutched in his hands to their shelves, he pulled Spock-cat out of the shelves roughly, a feat easier said than done. Like most cats, Spock-cat had the uncanny ability to turn himself into stretchy taffy with the weight of a neutron star. He stretched for longer than his spine should have allowed for, rear end still firmly planted on the shelves.

After what seemed like a herculean effort, McCoy managed to finally remove Spock-cat from his liquor cabinet. Stepping around the broken glass and spilled liquid, he took the cat to the door and tossed him out of his office and back into sickbay proper. "Vamoose, ya little varmint," he snapped, shutting the door and turning to examine the damage.

Standing with his back against the door, he allowed himself a moment to regain his composure - and perhaps a moment of silence for the lost saurian brandy. Then, as he was about to start sweeping up the broken glass, he heard the tell-tale sounds of cat regurgitation. Remembering that Spock-cat was in sickbay for medical observation after eating a potentially toxic plant, McCoy cursed and rushed out of his office in time to witness Spock-cat hack up plant bits and an impressive amount of aloe-gel looking bile onto his stainless steel prep table.

As McCoy approached, Spock-cat looked up at him briefly before fleeing the scene of the crime. Knowing the cat wouldn't be able to escape sickbay, McCoy ignored him for the moment to peer at puddle on the counter. It had the surprising colour and consistency of aloe vera gel, but more surprisingly, it was bubbling. And.... smoking?

"Jesus!" McCoy jumped back from the table as he realized that the substance was eating through the steel tabletop, and fast. Hazard management training kicking in, and he grabbed a canister of neutralizing agent from its place on the wall. Wielding it like a fire extinguisher, he blasted the corrosive patch generously with the spray, then redirected it to a spot under the table where some of the gel had escaped through the hole in the tabletop.

After ensuring that the corrosive material was no longer active and none of it had burned through the floor onto the deck below, McCoy turned to Spock-cat, who was sitting on a nearby bio-bed watching him, looking bored.

"How did that not kill you!?" He asked, part in astonishment and part in exasperation.

Spock-cat shrugged. "Mrrp?"

McCoy sighed and grabbed a tricorder. "I'm getting too old for this shit," he said under his breath, and began scanning the cat's small form with the tricorder, searching for anything out of the ordinary. He frowned at the readings, tapping on the side of the device, thinking that the readings were wrong. They reported that nothing was wrong at all with this cat.

"I'm not even going to try and understand this," McCoy said, giving Spock-cat a tired look. The cat returned it with big eyes and pricked ears. "You're free to go. You know, before you decide to wreck something else." He went to give the cat a few head pats, and yelped when the cat bit him, and not in a playful way.

"Goddamit, Spock!" McCoy recoiled his hand, examining the bite. His skin hadn't been broken, but those tiny teeth still hurt like hell. "Alright, enough of you, go bother someone else!" He grumbled, and herded Spock-cat out of sickbay, sighing with relief when the cat was safely locked out.

The comm panel on the wall chirped, announcing a connection. "Sulu to sickbay," Sulu's voice said. "How's our furry friend faring, Doc?"

McCoy punched a key to answer. "Fit as a fiddle," he said flatly. Looking over at the broken glass on the floor of his office, the corroded-out hole in his prep table, and the tooth imprints on his hand, he added, "Just don't let him get into anything else that'll warrant a sickbay visit."

"Roger that."

"Where's Spock?" Uhura asked the next morning on the bridge.

Kirk blinked and scanned the bridge sleepily. "Huh. I don't know. He was in my quarters overnight but I'm sure I let him out before I left."

"At least Mr Spock isn't expected to report for duty, unlike Pavel. Has anyone heard from him? He usually isn't this late," Sulu added, turning in his seat at the helm.

Kirk frowned. "Computer, locate Spock and Ensign Chekov," he said.

"Commander Spock is in turbo-lift one en-route to the bridge," the ship's computer replied promptly. "Ensign Chekov is in Jeffery's Tube thirty-six en-route to the bridge."

Kirk, Sulu, and Uhura exchanged confused glances before the turbo-lift doors hissed open and the familiar black cat trotted out. He was carrying something small, brown, and fluffy in his mouth and appeared to be on a mission. A second later, Chekov burst rather ungracefully out of the Jeffery's Tube access next to the turbo-lift, red-faced and panting. He keeled over, hands on his knees, catching his breath while Kirk, Sulu, and Uhura blinked dumbly at him.

Having caught his breath, Chekov stood up again, glaring angrily at Spock-cat, who was standing ready to bolt at the front of the room under the view-screen. "Mr Spock!" Chekov scolded, voice cracking in his rage. "You put that down *right* now!"

Kirk and Uhura exchanged a look, poorly concealing amused grins. Chekov wouldn't be caught dead talking to Spock in such a tone if he weren't a cat. Their attention was diverted when Sulu said, "Is that a tribble?"

Kirk's head snapped around, eyes locking on Spock-cat. Indeed, the nondescript ball of fluff he carried in his mouth appeared to be a tribble. It let out an alarmed trill as Spock-cat bolted to hide under a console with his catch. Definitely a tribble.

"How did a tribble get on my ship?" Kirk asked, turning in his chair to give an accusing look at Chekov.

Chekov's mouth ran silently for a moment, flustered, before sighing and admitting, "It is a pet. I smuggled it aboard at the last station." His face darkened. "And Mr Spock grabbed him and ran off!"

The tribble squealed in distress from under the console, still held prisoner by Spock-cat.

"No! Kevin!" Chekov cried, and ran over to the console, sliding head-first under it to try and capture Spock-cat and rescue his tribble. While Chekov managed to wedge his head, arms, and torso in the tight space below the console, Spock-cat made his escape out the side, still in possession of the tribble.

As Spock-cat streaked past the helm, Sulu attempted to grab him, but the cat was nimble and sidestepped out of his reach at the last second, Sulu's fingertips brushing his sleek fur uselessly as he sped past. Now heading towards the turbo-lift, Kirk jumped out of his chair to try and prevent Spock-cat, or more specifically, the tribble, from escaping the bridge. Like with Sulu, Spock-cat dodged Kirk's hands with an embarrassing ease.

"Not so fast," Uhura said, and Spock-cat screeched to a halt. During the commotion, Uhura had moved in front of the turbo-lift and was looking down at him with arms crossed. When Spock-cat tried to turn tail and bolt, she shot an arm down and grasped him by the scruff of his neck.

"Mrrroooooow," Spock-cat protested, voice muffled by the traumatized ball of fluff in his mouth.

Uhura lifted Spock-cat to her eye-level, turning him to face her. She propped her free hand on her hip and raised a scolding eyebrow at the guilty feline. "Mr Spock, you are an intelligent cat. You should know better than to let your predation instincts get the better of you," she lectured. "Now, kindly spit out Kevin," she lifted her hand from her hip and held it out below the tribble. After a second, Spock-cat released the tribble into her palm. It twittered in fear and skittered up Uhura's arm and around her shoulders, cowering below her ponytail. "Thank you, Spock," Uhura said in her uncanny tone of kindness that held a strong undertone of a threat. She put Spock-cat back down on the floor, and he disappeared down the Jeffery's Tube.

Kirk hummed. "He better not disappear, we're getting close to go-time," he said.

"Can somebody please help me?" Asked a muffled, distressed voice, prompting Kirk, Uhura, and Sulu to turn their attention to Chekov, who was still under the console, and apparently quite stuck. None of them could hold back grins at the comical scene before them, but Sulu accidentally let a laugh slip out before clapping his hands over his mouth. "Don't laugh at meeeee," Chekov whined.

Sulu was too busy looking like he was going to die from keeping his laughter in, so Kirk and Uhura went to Chekov's aid. The kid had managed to wedge himself in the gap so tightly that it took both of them to pull him back out.

"I can breathe!" Chekov exclaimed once he had been freed. He rolled into a seated position on the floor to catch his breath, which had been restricted in the tight space. He looked up at Uhura. "Is Kevin okay?"

Uhura smiled and reached behind her, peeling the tribble off the back of her neck and handing it to Chekov, who beamed as the creature trilled happily at being reunited with his human. "I think Kevin is just fine," Uhura said. "Just a little shaken up, is all." Chekov hugged the tribble to his chest, and it vibrated with pleasant sounds.

"Ahem," Kirk cleared his throat, getting their attention. "We're going to have to have a talk about that tribble," he warned Chekov.

"Don't make me get rid of Kevin!" Chekov begged desperately. "Please, Captain, he's harmless!"

Kirk pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed. "Pav, let me ask you.... what do you get when you feed a tribble?"

Chekov looked at him uncertainly, eyes darting to Uhura for assistance, of which she gave none. "A.... fat tribble?" He tried, hesitantly.

Kirk paused, watching Chekov's face. That innocent face with watery bright blue eyes. Those puppy dog eyes. Kirk sighed. "Maybe Bones can neuter it. Alright, everyone back to work. Mr Sulu, you have the conn. I'm going to go track down Spock."

Down in Engineering, Scotty took a break from tinkering and called up to the bridge. "Scott to bridge," he said. "Can I get a status update from Chekov?"

There was a brief pause before he got an answer, presumably for Chekov to scramble over to the comms. "We will have alignment in one hour, fifteen minutes... mark," Chekov said.

Scotty nodded, though there was nobody to see the gesture. "Good, keep a close eye on that, in case that cloud changes trajectory," he said, then addressed the captain. "I recommend that we brake into a tidal lock now, Captain."

Another pause. "Captain Kirk isn't here right now," Sulu replied.

Scotty squinted at the comm panel. "Where is he, then?" He wondered aloud.

"He's... searching for Spock," Sulu answered hesitantly.

"You lost Spock?" Scotty's voice cracked with disbelief. "How could you lose Spock at a time like this? We only have one shot at this and if Spock isn't there-" He cut himself off, shaking his head. "Well, in the Captain's absence, I'll give the order to maneuver into a tidal lock. I trust that you two don't need supervision?"

"Uhura's our supervision," Sulu answered cheekily.

Scotty sighed. "Just do the thing."

"Aye, Commander," Sulu answered.

"And... let me know when you've got us in position," Scotty added.

"Yessir."

Shaking his head and grumbling about Spock-cat going missing on a giant starship with tons of places to hide, only one hour away from their only shot at swapping Spock-cat for their Spock, he wandered back to his tinkering. He stood with his hands on his hips, examining the pipe high on the wall that he believed to be causing trouble. It shouldn't be difficult to locate where in the pipe the problem lay, and he hoped the problem would be just as easy to fix.

Fingers crossed, he switched on a handy little device that he kept on him at all times for how useful it was. With it, he could scan lengths of opaque pipe and detect anomalies such as leaks and blockages. His favourite feature was the built in lazer guide, so he could collect the readings from a distance, and wouldn't have to scoot a ladder along the length of the pipe as he searched for the problem.

Scanner fired up and ready to go, he aimed it at the wall, and the red dot of the lazer appeared, showing him exactly where the instrument was pointed. Focusing on the lazer point, he moved his wrist minutely to move the lazer slowly back and forth over the pipe, examining it in small sections at a time.

The methodical process was calming, almost hypnotic, so when a black shape leaped from the shadows, Scotty was particularly startled. He let out a yelp and stepped back, the lazer jolting down the wall as his arms flailed a bit in surprise. As the black shape slid down the wall, following the lazer point, Scotty identified the shape as Spock-cat.

Despite being annoyed at being jump scared, Scotty sighed with relief at the sight of the cat. "Mr Spock," he scolded lightly, putting his hands on his hips. "Don't you know there are people looking for you?"

"Mrrp," the cat said, gathering his haunches below him to sit down. He looked up at Scotty and tilted his head to the side, expectantly.

"You really are trouble, you know that?" Scotty said, shaking his head with amusement. He stopped and squinted at the cat when it continued to stare at him unblinkingly. "What? What do you want?" He asked, impatiently. "You're creeping me out."

Spock-cat continued to stare, so still he appeared to not even be breathing.

"Alright then, keep your secrets," Scotty said. "I have work to do." He returned his attention to the work at hand, refocusing his scanner on the pipe on the wall, trying to remember where in the pipe he was searching before Spock-cat interrupted him.

He had just gotten back into the groove of methodically scanning over the pipe when Spock-cat charged the wall, somehow managing to run eight feet up the wall to paw frantically at the lazer before sliding back down to the floor. "Ah," Scotty said, a light bulb going off in his head. "Well that makes sense."

"Mrrp?" Spock-cat chirped, looking over his shoulder at Scotty with ears pricked.

"Well, I suppose there's no harm in playing for a few minutes," Scotty shrugged, aiming the lazer at the floor and moving it in circles. Spock-cat's large eyes locked on to it, and he spun around into a crouch, watching the lazer intently, calculating. Then, with a butt wiggle, he pounced. The lazer shot away, and Spock-cat tore after it, skidding around corners, and jumping off walls. Even jumping up walls when Scotty directed the lazer up them. It was actually remarkable how high the cat could make it up the walls, and Scotty brought the lazer higher with each lap, wanting to see just how far up Spock-cat could go.

"Hey Scotty, have you seen Spock?"

Scotty, distracted as he was, did not hear anyone enter Engineering. He jumped, spinning around to find Jim Kirk looking surprised at Scotty's surprise.

"Sorry, didn't mean to sneak up on you," Kirk said, raising his palms apologetically.

"Right," Scotty said, heart still pounding. A spot of red on Kirk's gold uniform caught his eye, and Scotty realized he was still holding up the scanner, and had it pointed right at Kirk's chest.

Seeing the look Scotty was giving him, Kirk looked down and spotted the red lazer point on his chest, like a sniper was locked in on him. "Oh no," he sighed, just before Spock-cat leapt out of the shadows and barrelled into his chest with enough force that the captain was knocked flat. Accepting his fate, Kirk lay prone on the floor, Spock-cat standing on his chest and looking for the little red dot in confusion.

With a grimace, Scotty switched the scanner off and shoved it in his pocket before rushing over to his fallen commanding officer. "Captain, I am so sorry, that was not on purpose, I swear-

"Scotty," Kirk interrupted. "It's fine, don't worry about it." An awkward silence. "At least I found Spock."

"Uh, yes," Scotty agreed, then bent down to pick up Spock-cat, sticking him in the crook of one arm while offering a hand up to Kirk with his free arm.

"Thanks," Kirk said, accepting his hand and hauling to his feet. The two stood there awkwardly for a moment, until the moment was broken by Sulu's voice over the comm.

"Sulu to Engineering," he said. "We're in position over the coordinates now, Mr Scott. Ion cloud alignment in T minus thirty minutes."

Scotty and Kirk exchanged glances. Kirk, who was standing next to the comm, punched a key and responded. "Thank you, Mr Sulu," he said.

"Oh, Captain," Sulu said with surprise. "You're in Engineering. Is Mr Scott there?"

"He's here. He got the message."

"Good," Sulu paused, then asked, "Have you had any luck finding Mr Spock?"

Giving Scotty a look, Kirk answered, "As a matter of fact, I have."

The clock was ticking down the final few minutes before the ion cloud came between the *Enterprise* and the beam-down coordinates. Scotty and Chekov were doing a final set of checks on the transporter equipment, while Kirk, Uhura, Sulu, and McCoy stood around, waiting with Spock-cat, who was slung comfortably in Kirk's arms, enjoying the attention that the crew was giving him. Not everyone needed to be there, but they all wanted to see Spock-cat off and hopefully welcome their own Spock back.

Scotty looked over at the group. "It's time," he said.

"Well, Spock," Kirk said, turning to Spock-cat. "It's been fun, but it's time for you to go home."

"It has been fun," Uhura agreed, petting the cat behind the ears and smiling when he closed his eyes in contentment.

Chekov trotted over from the transporter controls to give a farewell pat to Spock-cat, too. "I forgive you for trying to eat Kevin," he said.

"Don't eat any weird plants," Sulu said.

"And don't come back!" McCoy snapped from the back of the room, arms crossed and eyes rolling.

"Aw, Bones, don't be like that," Kirk said.

"Thirty seconds," Scotty announced.

"Alright little guy, onto the transporter with you." Kirk said to Spock-cat, and then stepped up onto the transporter to set Spock-cat down before backing a safe distance away.

Spock-cat sat down right where he needed to be on the transporter pad, and swept his gaze over the human crew that he had spent the past two and a half days with. Scotty started counting down from ten seconds. The humans waved goodbye, and Spock-cat graced them with a slow blink.

"... Three... Two... One... Energize," Scotty said, and a shimmering particle beam engulfed Spock-cat, and he vanished from the pad. After a beat, Scotty took a deep breath. "And beaming up. Everyone cross your fingers." Chekov held up both hands, crossing his fingers on both hands. Everyone waited nervously, hoping that everything had fallen into place.

A particle beam filled the transporter pad, and nobody breathed as they watched intently. When a Vulcan silhouette appeared before materializing into Spock - *their* Spock, there was a collective sigh of relief. A look of visible relief crossed Spock's face also as he looked around the room, seeing his human friends waiting for him.

"It worked!" Chekov shouted, breaking the silence and throwing his hands in the air.

Everyone except for McCoy and Scotty rushed over to the transporter pad, practically jumping Spock in a giddy group hug. Spock tensed up, making eye contact with a smirking McCoy. "Please don't touch me," he said quietly through gritted teeth.

The four people in his personal bubble jumped back, muttering apologies and seeming a little embarrassed at their impulsiveness.

"It's good to have you back, Spock," Uhura said.

"The cat was fun, but..." Kirk shrugged, giving Spock an aloof grin.

Spock raised an eyebrow. "The cat?"

Sulu waved his hands nebulously. "The Spock we've been hanging out with for three days was a cat."

"Bit more of a trouble-maker than you, though," Scotty added.

McCoy rolled his eyes in agreement, grimacing internally at his damaged sickbay. "I can't believe I'm saying this, but I missed you, Spock. As annoying as you are, at least you won't go eating alien plants and barfing corrosive acid all over my sickbay," he said, then added in a grumble, "or destroy my liquor cabinet."

Spock raised a questioning eyebrow at that, but before he could get any clarification, Kirk asked, "So, where have you been the last couple days?"

Spock considered for a moment before answering, "I do not know. But there were a lot of dogs."

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