

Taking the Scenic Route

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Taking the Scenic Route

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Summary

Kirk takes Spock on a road trip.

Notes

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Spock stares at the car in front of them as if he expects it to jump out and bite him. "When you invited me to visit your mother I assumed we would beam there," he says. "Or at least take a shuttle."

Kirk rolls his eyes. "It's perfectly safe, Spock. I've been driving since I was sixteen." Technically since he was eleven, but he figures Spock doesn't need to know about that particular adventure.

Spock raises an eyebrow. "As I recall, your first attempt at driving a vehicle led to its destruction."

Oh. Right. Kirk scratches the back of his head. "I, uh, forgot I'd told you that story."

"You were somewhat intoxicated at the time," Spock replies.

Kirk coughs. "Right. Anyway, you can't hold that against me. I was eleven! And it was one of those ancient twentieth century cars, with a clutch and wheels and stuff. These modern ones are much easier." He leans against the side and gives Spock his best 'don't you want to agree with me?' grin. "I promise, I am an excellent driver."

When Spock just looks at him, he sighs and straightens up. "Fine, but *I'm* going by car, so you can either get in or explain to my mom why you showed up without me."

He tosses his bag in the back, then climbs into the driver's seat. *One Mississippi, two Mississippi...* He makes it to eight before the passenger door opens and Spock climbs in. Kirk grins at him. "Excellent choice."

Spock just looks at him, clearly unimpressed. Kirk can feel his enthusiasm waning, and fights to hold on to it. They're going to have fun on this trip whether Spock likes it or not.

"Trust me," he says, as he powers up the engine. "You're going to love it."

* * *

An hour later, they're out of San Francisco and heading down the interstate towards Nevada. Spock seems to have relaxed a little now that they've gone a decent amount of time without crashing, and is busy looking out of the window as the world passes by.

Kirk finds himself watching Spock out of the corner of his eye. He's always kind of liked the way Spock looks when he's focused on something, like he's mentally taking it apart to see how it works.

"So you've never been in a car before?" he asks, breaking the silence.

Spock turns away from the window to look at him. "Not like this," he says. "It is... interesting."

"And you've stopped worrying that I'm going to kill us?"

"Vulcans do not worry," Spock tells him. Kirk rolls his eyes. He's seen for himself that *that's* not true. Spock glances around, then adds, "You are an adequate driver."

'Adequate'. Well, it's better than nothing. "Do you want to play a game or something?" Kirk asks, tapping his fingers on the control panel.

"Should you not concentrate on the road?"

"I can do more than one thing at once," Kirk replies. And it's not like the car doesn't have autopilot. "There's plenty of games people play on road trips. It's traditional."

"Indeed?" Spock is silent for a moment, and when Kirk glances at him he seems to be contemplating something. "What kind of games?" he asks finally.

Kirk barely holds back a grin. "How about I-Spy?" Might as well start with something simple. "I spy with my little eye, something beginning with... S."

Out of the corner of his eye he sees the familiar eyebrow go up before Spock turns to look out of the windshield. "Sky," he says.

Kirk smiles. "Nope."

"Sign."

"Nope!"

Spock glances around. "Seat."

Kirk's smile broadens. "No, but it is inside the car."

Spock stares at him for a long moment, eyes narrowed. "You are referring to me."

"Yes!" Kirk nods enthusiastically. "S is for Spock! Good job."

"This is a ridiculous game," Spock tells him.

"So you don't want to play anymore?" Kirk gives him his best puppy dog eyes, and Spock sighs.

"I spy, with my little eye..."

* * *

They make it to the border of Nevada before stopping at a diner for lunch. Spock orders a salad, Kirk orders a burger and fries, with extra bacon.

"I do not believe Doctor McCoy would approve," Spock says, as Kirk takes an enthusiastic bite out of his burger.

Kirk shrugs, chewing and swallowing before he answers. "I'm on vacation." He stops with the burger halfway to his mouth and squints at Spock. "You're not going to tell him, right?" Spock and McCoy don't really get along, but he still wouldn't put it past them to team up in an attempt to ruin *all* his fun.

There's the slightest hint of amusement in Spock's expression as he responds, "Your secret is safe with me."

Kirk beams, and digs into his food with renewed relish.

* * *

Half an hour later they're back on the road. I-Spy has lost its charm, so Kirk introduces Spock to Twenty Questions. Spock proves to be annoyingly good at it, and ends up winning three times in a row before he decides to meditate for a while, leaving Kirk to his own devices.

Kirk has seen Spock meditate before, usually on landing parties when they've shared quarters, but it's still a little strange to see him disappear inside himself. Especially since he knows that, however out of it Spock looks, he's constantly aware and ready to snap out of it at a moment's notice if needed.

Kirk realises he's staring and turns away, feeling suddenly awkward. He considers turning on the radio, but he doesn't want to disturb Spock, so instead he just stares out of the windshield, his mind wandering.

Part of him wonders why Spock agreed to come on this trip. When he originally asked Spock to come with him to visit his mother, he never really expected him to say yes. He just didn't like the idea of Spock being left alone while the rest of them visit their families. But for some reason Spock agreed, even when Kirk surprised him with this impromptu road trip idea.

Maybe this is a sign, that all the stuff the older Spock said about them is true. That they really are meant to have some kind of special connection that will make them greater together than they are alone.

He hopes so.

* * *

It's getting dark when they decide to stop for the night. Kirk pulls up outside the first motel they come across and sets the immobiliser before leaping out and grabbing his bag. Spock follows at a more sedate pace, and they make their way inside.

After a short discussion Kirk books them a single room with two beds, and is given a pass-card to room 212.

They head up, dump their bags in the room, then head back downstairs to find somewhere to eat. Kirk decides on a pizza parlour a few streets away, and they share a large veggie pie. Spock seems dubious at first, but ends up practically inhaling his half of the pizza – although he insists on eating it with a knife and fork instead of his hands, no matter how much Kirk tries to correct him.

After dinner they go for a walk, but there isn't much to see so eventually they head back to the motel and spend the rest of the night watching an old movie about talking animals that Spock pronounces 'totally illogical and ridiculous'. Kirk notes, however, that he never suggests turning it off.

By the time the movie ends it's getting late, so Kirk suggests they turn in. They have a long day tomorrow.

* * *

Kirk's alarm goes off early the next morning, startling him out of a pleasant dream. He groans a little, but his time on the *Enterprise* means he's able to go from sound asleep to fully alert almost instantaneously.

Spock is meditating, so Kirk takes first shift in the bathroom. He showers quickly and cleans his teeth, then pulls on underwear, jeans and a t-shirt before wandering back out into the room with bare feet to find that Spock has finished his meditation.

"All yours," he says, still towelling his hair dry.

Spock nods, then grabs some clothes out of his bag and disappears into the bathroom. By the time he emerges again Kirk has pulled on socks and boots and finished drying his hair. The towel is abandoned in a ball on the desk and Kirk rolls his eyes when Spock primly folds it up and returns it to the bathroom.

"Come on," he says. "Breakfast."

They have breakfast in the motel restaurant. Kirk orders pancakes with a side of bacon, Spock, after some deliberation, decides on pancakes as well.

"These are *amazing*," Kirk says, after his first bite, and begins shovelling them in as fast as he can.

"The taste is pleasant," Spock agrees. He eats his at a more restrained pace, but by the end of breakfast their plates are equally empty.

Kirk downs the last of his coffee and sighs happily. "Still think we should have taken a shuttle?"

"Yes," Spock replies immediately, but there's a definite note of amusement in his eyes. "But I admit this approach is not entirely devoid of merit."

Kirk laughs. "I guess that's good enough," he says, then rises to his feet. "Come on, we'd better go. We've got a lot of ground to cover."

They retrieve their bags from the room and check out, and soon they are back on the road.

They've barely gotten underway before Spock pulls out a PADD and begins to read. Deprived of Spock-based entertainment, Kirk turns on the radio and is soon singing along to one of his favourite songs. That method of amusing himself unfortunately only lasts about two and a half minutes before Spock says tersely, "Cease assaulting my eardrums with your noise."

"What, you don't like my singing?" Kirk asks.

"'Singing' would imply you were at any point in tune."

Kirk stares at him in mock outrage. "You take that back, or I'll..."

"Continue to 'sing'?" Spock finishes dryly, the air quotes clearly audible. "Truly a terrible threat."

Kirk can't help it, he bursts out laughing. "All right, all right. I'll stop. For now."

He concentrates on the road for a few minutes, before curiosity gets the better of him. "What are you reading, anyway?"

"At present I am reading a paper by Marav of Tellar. It outlines a potential improvement to warp field alignment that could increase the power generated by up to six percent."

The name sparks something in Kirk's memory. "She won the Zee-Magnees Prize a few years back, didn't she? I remember reading about it."

Spock looks up from his PADD. It's hard to tell from a glance, but Kirk thinks he looks mildly impressed. "That is correct. For her work on antimatter containment."

"So do you think this idea of hers will actually work?" Kirk asks. He's nowhere near Spock or Scotty's level when it comes to engineering, but he's no slouch, and the idea Spock's talking about sounds intriguing.

"I do not know," Spock says. "Her logic is sound, but much of the paper is theoretical at this point."

"Still, it'd be great if it did work," Kirk muses. "Out there, we need all the power we can get."

They continue like that for a long time, Spock reading and occasionally pausing to discuss a particular idea with Kirk.

They've just crossed the border into Wyoming, and Kirk is just about to suggest stopping for lunch, when a sign catches his eye. "Hey, look!" he says, taking one hand off the controls to point. "A county fair." He pulls his hand back and adds, "We have to go there."

He glances at Spock in time to see him raise an eyebrow. "That does not seem like a productive use of our time."

Kirk rolls his eyes. "It isn't supposed to be productive. It's supposed to be *fun*. Come on, please? You can say you were, like, researching a human tradition or something."

Spock gives him a long, inscrutable look, but all he says is, "Very well."

If there's the hint of a frustrated sigh behind the words, Kirk chooses not to hear it.

It turns out to be a little further than Kirk expected, and by the time they finally pull into the parking lot his stomach is grumbling loudly and Spock has been sending him 'I told you this was a bad idea' looks for at least half an hour.

Still, once they get inside, any regrets Kirk might have had disappear instantly. The place has everything; rides, games, food... He feels like he's a kid again, wanting to do everything at once. Then his stomach rumbles again and he decides that 'food' sounds like a great first step.

"Come on, Spock," he says, and charges into the crowd without waiting for a response.

He makes short work of two corndogs and a milkshake, before treating himself to some cotton candy. After some coaxing, Spock deigns to sample a vegetarian hotdog, but firmly refuses Kirk's offers of cotton candy. He does allow Kirk to buy them both ice cream cones, however.

Walking around while eating apparently offends Spock's Vulcan sense of order, so they wait until after lunch to explore. Kirk tries his luck at a 'knock the cans down' game, though he's pretty sure it's rigged. Of course, after he's struck out, Spock tries it and wins a teddy bear. Kirk can't even be annoyed, because the look on the game-runner's face when a Vulcan steps up to his stall is golden.

After they've explored the games for a while, Kirk suggests they try out the rides.

Spock seems dubious, but also a little intrigued, and it doesn't take much work on Kirk's part to get him to agree to the idea.

Kirk spins around in a slow circle, trying to decide what to go on first. Then his eyes alight on something and he freezes. "No. Freaking. Way," he breathes, and grins widely. "Oh, this could not be more perfect." He sets off without waiting for Spock to respond, heading straight for the glowing sign reading 'Enterprise'.

Spock catches up to him just as he's taking his place at the back of the – fortunately not too long – line. From the level of his eyebrow, the name of the ride hasn't escaped him. Sure enough, his next words are, "You do realise that this ride will likely bear little to no resemblance to the ship of which you are so enamoured?"

"Shut up," Kirk says, but he's in too good a mood to be annoyed. "This is going to be awesome. You'll see."

The line moves forward steadily. Spock spends his time watching the ride, his eyes following the carriages as they rotate. Kirk mostly spends his time watching Spock.

Finally Spock drags his eyes away from the ride for a moment. "Judging from the capacity of the ride and the number of people ahead of us, I estimate we will be next."

He's right. The next time the ride stops, they watch around two dozen people being loaded into various carriages, and then it's their turn. Kirk lets Spock go first, then steps in himself and lets the attendant secure the door.

A few minutes go by as the attendants check on the other passengers, then the ride starts up. They begin to spin, slowly at first, then faster and faster. Kirk can feel himself being pushed against the back of his seat, and feels a thrill of anticipation as the ride begins to lift into the air. It rises at an angle, until it is spinning almost vertically. The glimpses of the ground and sky as they spin make Kirk dizzy. He knows the physics – that the force from the spin will keep them from falling – and even now he can feel himself being pressed back into his seat. It is still a thrilling experience, though, and Kirk has always been something of a thrill-seeker.

He glances at Spock to see how he's enjoying the ride. He's still wearing the same neutral look he wears all the time, but he looks a little paler than usual.

"Makes you grateful for inertial dampeners, doesn't it?" Kirk asks, as the ride begins to tip back to its horizontal position.

"Undeniably," Spock replies. His tone is a little strangled, but Kirk decides not to comment on it.

The ride finally slows to a stop, and they are released.

"So what did you think?" Kirk asks, as they head through the exit back into the rest of the fair.

"It was... interesting," Spock replies. "I do not intend a repeat performance, however."

There's something slightly odd in his expression, and Kirk frowns. "Are you okay? You look kind of pale."

For a moment he thinks Spock isn't going to answer, but then he says, "Next time you attempt to instruct me in human customs such as carnival rides and food of dubious nutrition I would appreciate if you would do it in that order."

Kirk runs that through his mental Spock-to-English translator and winces. "Oh, sorry. I didn't realise it would bother you." In retrospect maybe it wasn't the best ride for a first-timer, but it just seemed so perfect. He gives Spock a sidelong glance. "You're okay, though, right? You're not going to barf on me?"

Spock gives him a venomous look and stalks off. Kirk sighs and runs a hand through his hair. *And I was doing so well...*

He buys a bottle of water from a cart before heading over to where Spock is sitting on a bench. "Here," he says, holding it out to him. "This should help."

Spock takes the water without a word, but he does seem to relax slightly. Kirk takes that as an invitation and sits down beside him.

"I really am sorry," he says. "I shouldn't have talked you into this. I just... I thought it would be fun. Some of my best memories from childhood are of Mom taking me and Sam to the state fair in Des Moines, and I guess I just wanted to share that with you."

There's silence for a few seconds before Spock offers quietly, "The parts prior to this were not unpleasant."

"Really?" Kirk asks, feeling a flicker of hope. Maybe he hasn't screwed this up after all.

Spock nods. "I found the games particularly stimulating. Perhaps we could... investigate further?"

Kirk grins. "Absolutely."

By the time they're finished exploring the games, Spock has added a small flashlight and a Frisbee to his haul, and Kirk has managed to win a stress ball, which he immediately decides to give to McCoy as a gift.

Spock seems in a much better mood as they make their way back to the car. He even agrees to try some of Kirk's second bag of cotton candy, and pronounces it 'acceptable'.

"So what do you think?" Kirk asks, when they're back in the car and he's starting the engine. "Worth stopping for?"

"Indeed," Spock agrees. "It was an... interesting experience."

Kirk doesn't stop grinning for a long time.

* * *

Due to an unexpected detour, it's almost 2200 by the time they stop for the night. Kirk rubs his eyes as he walks up to the motel desk, but manages to pull out a smile for the woman sitting behind the counter. "Hi, I need a room for the night? Two beds."

She frowns, tapping at the computer. "I'm afraid we've only got one room left, and it's a double. One bed."

Kirk stares at her, the hours of driving weighing heavily on his shoulders. "Are you sure?"

She nods. "Yes, sir. I'm sorry."

Kirk sighs. He *really* doesn't want to go back out and search for another motel. "We'll take it."

She nods, makes a few notes on the computer, then hands him a key-card. "Have a nice night, sir," she says, smiling.

When Spock hears about the bed situation he offers to forgo sleep and meditate instead, but Kirk waves him off. It's a big bed, there's no reason why they can't share it.

He cleans his teeth, strips down to his boxers, and climbs into bed. A few minutes later Spock joins him, keeping a careful distance between their bodies.

Kirk orders off the lights and lies there in the dark, staring at the ceiling. He hears Spock shift slightly beside him and wonders if he should have taken him up on his offer. They've shared rooms numerous times on missions, but they've never shared a bed before, and Kirk feels an odd twist in his stomach at the thought that if he just reached out he could touch Spock.

Shoving that thought firmly aside, he turns on his side, deliberately facing away from Spock, and closes his eyes. Eventually he falls asleep.

* * *

He wakes up some time later to darkness and the feeling of something warm pressed against him. Confused, he shifts slightly and realises it's Spock. At some point during the night they must have drifted towards each other, and now Spock's wrapped around him like a blanket, arm flung over Kirk's chest and forehead pressed against Kirk's shoulder.

Probably attracted to the warmth, Kirk muses. He supposes he should try to extract himself, but it's kind of nice to have Spock curled against him like this.

He closes his eyes, intending to go back to sleep, when Spock shifts slightly and *oh*.

Kirk's eyes fly open. From what he can tell, Spock is still asleep, but apparently not every part of him has got the message. Kirk knows a hard on when he feels one, and right now it's pressing quite insistently against his hip.

The realisation causes his own cock to rise to attention, and Kirk grimaces, wondering how to extract himself from this situation without making things worse.

And then Spock wakes up.

For a moment time seems to stand still as they stare at each other, neither one daring to move. Then, acting on instinct, Kirk leans forward and kisses Spock.

It takes a second, but then Spock kisses back, and everything dissolves into hands and mouths and shedding clothes and skin against skin.

As sex goes, it's pretty great, but it's barely over before Spock is pulling away, his eyes wide. Before Kirk can say anything he grabs his robe from the floor and covers himself before disappearing into the bathroom.

Kirk wipes himself off with a handful of tissues, then pulls his boxers back on and wanders over to the bathroom. He stares at the door for a moment, then knocks hesitantly. "Spock? You okay?"

The words that come back are tense, clipped. "I am fine. Go back to sleep."

Kirk frowns, wondering if this is a normal Vulcan reaction to sex. Probably not. But short of breaking down the door there's not much he can do about it, so he takes the advice and goes back to bed.

It takes him a long time to fall asleep.

* * *

Spock is already up and dressed when Kirk wakes the next morning. He isn't entirely sure Spock came back to bed at all, but everything in Spock's manner tells him not to ask.

They eat breakfast in near silence, then head back out. Kirk turns on the radio in the car, deliberately turning the volume up in the hope that Spock will at least talk to him to tell him to turn it down. But Spock stays silent, and eventually Kirk turns it down himself.

They've been driving for about an hour when he can't take it anymore. He switches the car to autopilot, then reaches out and turns the radio off completely. "So, are we ever going to talk about what happened last night?"

"There is nothing to talk about," Spock says. Every inch of him is radiating 'drop it' signals, which Kirk firmly ignores.

"Right," he says sarcastically. "Because the fact that we had sex and then you flipped out on me, that's just nothing."

"Isn't it?" Spock asks, not looking at him. Before Kirk can respond, he continues, "You do not have to worry. I am fine, and my lapse yesterday will not be repeated."

"Why not?" Kirk asks, by now completely confused and more than a little annoyed. "Why are you being so weird about this? We had sex. It was fun. I'd like to do it again. Is that so bad?"

"Yes!" Spock replies fiercely. "I have no interest in or desire for a purely sexual relationship, and my actions last night were both illogical and inappropriate."

Kirk runs that through his head a few times. "Wait, you think this is just about sex for me?"

"Your reputation would indicate so."

Kirk sighs, then manually slows down and pulls over. This isn't a conversation he wants to have in a moving car, autopilot or no autopilot.

"What are you doing?" Spock asks, looking puzzled.

Kirk switches off the engine and turns to face him. "We obviously need to talk, so I'll start. Last night... it wasn't just about sex. I *like* you. And okay, yeah, maybe I've never had a 'real' relationship before, but that doesn't mean I'm incapable of it."

Spock doesn't seem convinced, though he becomes fractionally less tense. On impulse, Kirk reaches out and lays a hand over Spock's, relieved when he doesn't pull away.

"I do not understand," Spock says quietly. "Your interest has always seemed to lie in casual sexual encounters. Why would you suddenly wish to embark upon a monogamous relationship with me?"

"Because," Kirk says. "The other you, the old one, he told me we could be awesome together. And I'd kind of like to see it happen."

He smiles, and sees Spock's expression soften the slightest bit in response. "So," he says, "are you with me?"

"I am," Spock says, and turns his hand under Kirk's so they are holding hands.

"Good," Kirk says. On impulse he leans in and kisses Spock. Spock kisses back, hesitantly at first, then more strongly.

"So everything's cool now?" Kirk asks when they break apart.

"Indeed," Spock replies, and Kirk grins.

He gives Spock another quick kiss, then pulls away and starts up the engine.

"Did my counterpart really use the word 'awesome'?" Spock asks as they continue driving.

Kirk shrugs. "I might have been paraphrasing a little. But that was definitely what he meant."

Spock doesn't look convinced, but he doesn't argue, and Kirk takes that as a win.

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