

Into the Woods

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Summary

Spock accompanies Kirk on a camping trip.

Notes

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As he follows Kirk deeper into the woods, Spock tries to remember why he decided to take up his captain's offer to accompany him on shore leave. Perhaps it was a desire to avoid Kirk becoming injured, as seems to happen distressingly often. Or perhaps he did not wish his friend to spend his leave alone. Or perhaps, a very small part of his mind admits, he *wanted* to spend this time with Kirk.

Even if it does mean trampling through the trees in search of an acceptable place to make camp.

"Aha!" Kirk exclaims triumphantly, as they emerge into a clearing. "This is perfect."

Spock wouldn't know, having never been camping in the woods before, but he is willing to take Kirk's word for it.

The clearing is around twenty feet in diameter, with a stream running across one edge. Looking up, Spock can see a gap in the tree branches overhead, exposing a circle of blue sky and clouds. From his memories of Starfleet survival courses, it does seem an acceptable place to set up camp.

Following Kirk's lead, he takes off the backpack containing food, clothes, sleeping bags, and other essentials for the next few days. As the stronger of the two, he has been carrying the tent, and he pulls this out and assists Kirk in putting it up.

"There," Kirk says, when the tent is set up at the side of the clearing, away from the stream. "Why don't you unroll the sleeping bags while I collect some branches."

"Branches?" Spock asks.

"To make a fire."

"Ah," Spock replies. There is a portable heater in his backpack, but apparently Kirk has decided that is not good enough. Spock assumes this is another ritual of camping that he has yet to learn.

Kirk disappears off into the wood, and Spock watches him apprehensively for a moment before following his request and pulling out the sleeping bags to make up their beds for the night.

By the time Kirk returns with an armful of branches, Spock has set up the sleeping bags and the heater, and is in the process of using his tricorder to check if the water from the stream is safe to drink. (They have their own water, of course, but it is always useful to have options.)

"You brought a tricorder?" Kirk asks.

Spock raises an eyebrow. "Obviously."

Kirk shakes his head as he drops the branches in a pile on the ground. "I don't know why I'm even surprised," he says. "So, what does it say?"

Spock makes a few adjustments and checks the readings. "No major impurities, although it would still be prudent to boil the water, or use sterilisation tablets."

"Which we have," Kirk puts in. "They're in my bag. Not that we should need them." He looks at the pile of twigs and branches, then heads back towards the trees. "I'm going to get more wood."

Spock looks from Kirk to the pile and back, then sets down the tricorder and follows.

By the time they have gathered a sufficient amount of wood and cleared a space to build the fire, the sun is beginning to set. Kirk pauses with an armful of branches, head tilted backwards as he admires the sky.

"Look at that sunset," he says, his face seeming to light up at the sight. "You know, living on a starship, I sometimes forget how beautiful things like this can be."

Spock studies the changing colours, trying to see them through Kirk's eyes. There is a certain aesthetic appeal to the sight, he supposes.

He is brought out of his thoughts by Kirk's voice. "There," he says, and Spock turns to see him throw a last handful of twigs on the pile. "I think I'm about ready to light the fire. Can you get the matches?"

Spock obediently digs through his backpack for the waterproof matches they brought. Starfleet has specific tools for lighting fires, which he has also brought, but Kirk has mentioned wanting to do things 'the old fashioned way' as far as possible.

He retrieves the box and hands it to Kirk, then stands back, watching for any sign of trouble.

Fortunately his concerns are in vain, and Kirk manages to get the fire started with minimal problems. He watches it for a few moments, as if making sure it is not going to go out, then lays out a blanket a safe distance away and sits down with a sigh.

He smiles at Spock, who is still standing, and pats the blanket beside him. "You're going to give me a crick in my neck," he says. "Come sit down."

Spock circles the fire and sits down next to his friend. For a while they just sit in silence, Kirk staring into the flames as if they hold the secrets to the universe.

"This is nice, isn't it?" Kirk asks suddenly, without taking his eyes off the fire.

Spock considers for a moment. "It is not unpleasant."

Kirk looks at him out of the corner of his eye and smiles. "I'm glad you decided to come with me," he says quietly.

The words slip out almost without Spock's intention. "As am I."

Kirk's smile grows broader. He tilts his head back to look at the sky, which has darkened considerably. Spock follows his gaze.

He is startled when Kirk suddenly jumps up. "Better get dinner started," Kirk says, bending down to rummage in his backpack. After some searching he brings out a pan, a bottle of water, a pack of noodles, and a bag of what looks like coffee.

"I'm afraid I didn't bring any tea," he says, sounding apologetic. "I hope that won't be a problem."

"Coffee is acceptable," Spock assures him. In truth he finds the taste of coffee to be rather unpalatable, but it is only for a few days, after all.

Kirk fills the pan with water and sets it over the fire to heat, then sits back down, occasionally prodding at the fire with a long branch. When the water boils, he tips it into two cups and mixes it with the coffee before handing one cup to Spock.

Spock wraps his fingers around the cup, drawing in the warmth. With the sun setting it has grown quite cold in the woods, and he edges closer to the fire.

Kirk sets the noodles on to cook, and before long, he and Spock are settling down to their meals.

They eat in silence, content just to be in each other's company. The noodles are standard dried rations, but they are warm and filling, and before Spock knows it he has finished the whole bowl.

"Good?" Kirk asks, his eyes twinkling, and Spock can't bring himself to disagree.

Kirk takes the bowl from him and sets it aside, along with his own, then glances up at the sky. "Look," he says. "The stars are coming out."

Spock looks upwards, and indeed, since he last looked the black sky has become speckled with stars.

"I used to look up at them all the time when I was a kid," Kirk says, his gaze still on the sky. "When my dad was home we'd go out to the fields together and he'd tell me all about the places he'd been, the things he'd done. And I promised myself that as soon as I was old enough I'd be out there, sailing among the stars. I wouldn't let anyone hold me back." His tone is almost wistful.

"I also used to look up at the stars as a child," Spock admits, surprising even himself. "I believe it was one factor in my eventual decision to join Starfleet."

"A decision I hope you don't regret?" Kirk asks lightly.

Spock looks at him, feeling a warmth not caused by the fire. "Never," he says.

Kirk smiles, and the corners of Spock's lips turn upwards in response. Then, together, they continue to watch the stars.

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