

## Resynchronizing Orbits

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1236) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1236>.

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Rating:          | <a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>                             |
| Archive Warning: | <a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>                         |
| Category:        | <a href="#">M/M</a>   |
| Fandom:          | <a href="#">Star Trek: Alternate Original Series</a>              |
| Relationship:    | <a href="#">James T. Kirk (AOS)/Spock (AOS)</a>                   |
| Character:       | <a href="#">James T. Kirk (AOS)</a> , <a href="#">Spock (AOS)</a> |
| Additional Tags: | <a href="#">Star Trek Beyond</a> , <a href="#">Injury</a>         |
| Language:        | English   |
| Stats:           | Published: 2023-12-17 Words: 7,373 Chapters: 1/1                  |

## Resynchronizing Orbits

by [spacedogfromspace](#)

### Summary

When Krall ambushes the Enterprise, sending the ship crashing into the planet Altamid, Jim and Spock abandon ship together. However, their evacuation isn't without cost, and the long walk to the wreck of the Enterprise makes a difficult conversation unavoidable.

### Notes

This is my KiScon 2023 Zine submission!

Altamid.

This was supposed to be a rescue mission. Just lending aid to a stranded ship. Standard procedure, run of the mill. But of course, nothing could ever be that simple. It was a setup, an ambush. And now, Altamid was the final resting place of the *Enterprise*.

Jim scrunched his eyes tight against the lingering image of his broken, falling ship that flashed across his retinas. He gave his head a shake, and moved his fingers and toes to assess himself for injury. Their escape pod crashed rather than landed, and it took a moment for its occupants to shake off their stunned states and take action.

Finally getting his wits about him, Jim popped the hatch on the top of the pod and clambered his way out, stopping abruptly the moment his feet hit the ground. He stared at the trail of smoke and debris streaking across the atmosphere, and the plume of black smoke in the distance that signalled the location of his destroyed ship.

Spock pulled himself out of the escape pod a moment later, and Jim was so gutted from the loss of his ship that he didn't think to ask him if he was okay—at least, until Spock couldn't help but make a pained noise as he slid down the side of the escape pod. His knees buckled as he landed and he leaned against the pod for support, trying not to crumble.

Jim forgot about the Enterprise, at least for the moment. It was his crew that was most important. He didn't know where any of the others were, none had seemed to have landed in their vicinity, so there was nothing he could do to help them now. But Spock was there, injured, and it wouldn't do to let the one person he *could* help die on his watch. Or at least, that was what he thought before he saw Spock's wound. Now he could only hope he wouldn't let Spock die on his watch.

"Jeez, Spock, quit moving," Jim said, snapping out of his momentary shock when Spock tried to stand up and move. Even to Jim, moving seemed like a bad idea when you had a giant chunk of shrapnel sticking out of your side.

He rushed over to help Spock rest against the escape pod, and surveyed the damage. "Well," he said, attempting a joke in the face of a very serious situation. "At least you have another kidney to fall back on." At least, that's where he thought a kidney would be. He wouldn't know. He wasn't a doctor.

Spock squinted at him, confused. After a moment he puzzled out what Jim meant, and spoke through gritted teeth. "Vulcan anatomy is different than that of a human's. The site of the injury is nowhere near either of my kidneys."

"Oh," Jim said, hopeful. That sounded almost promising. Maybe there wasn't anything important under that shrapnel. "So... if that's not your kidney, what is it?"

Spock grimaced. The way he struggled to take a breath made Jim worry that it was a lung that had been pierced. But it was worse. "My heart," Spock said when he had caught his breath.

"Shit," Jim said, grasping the gravity of the situation.

He wished that someone else was here with Spock. Not that he didn't want to help Spock, of course, it's just that he wasn't very qualified to keep him alive. Bones would have been a far more ideal person to have in this situation. "Alright, think," he said, mostly to himself. "What would Bones do if his XO got stabbed through the heart with a piece of jagged metal while stranded out on an unfamiliar planet and with no medical supplies?"

"He'd go find other survivors," Spock answered. Jim gave him a funny look, and Spock clarified, "This piece of shrapnel is merely *near* my heart. If I were stabbed through the heart I'd be long dead by now, and there would be no point in the doctor wasting time with my corpse."

"Let me guess, this big chunk of metal is *just* close enough to your heart to be an immediate danger?"

Spock considered. "I think perhaps it is just within the range of 'just close enough.'"

Jim sighed. "Alright, well, *definitely* don't try to move. At least until I figure out how to make this"—he gestured vaguely at the bloody mess—"less immediately deadly."

Spock shook his head. "You need to go on and find the others," he said, blinking hard against the pain in his side. "With no medical supplies, I'm as good as dead. You'd only be wasting your time trying to help me."

Jim rolled his eyes. "Don't be stupid, Spock. I'm not just going to leave you out here for the vultures."

"Jim," Spock said, rolling his eyes towards him. He seemed to be having trouble focusing. "I mean no offence, but you hardly have the skill to treat a paper-cut, let alone a life-threatening injury. Especially without equipment."

"Yeah, well, if I could get Bones over here I would, but you're just going to have to make do with me, aren't you?" Jim said as he kicked open the storage compartment of the escape pod. "Besides, you're smart. Tell me what I need to do to keep you alive."

Spock shot a stubborn glare at him, clearly displeased with Jim's unwillingness to find the rest of the crew and leave him to die. But Jim just glared back at him, crossing his arms and waiting for Spock to stop trying to sacrifice himself. Eventually, when Jim didn't give up, Spock realized that wasting time standing around like this was antithetical to his stance, and sighed. "This piece of metal needs to come out," he explained. "Moving around with it is painful, and its proximity to my heart makes it particularly dangerous."

"Alright," Jim said, moving as if he was just going to grab the thing and rip it out right at that moment. "Seems simple enough."

Spock's arm shot out, stopping him, and he instinctively turned himself away a bit, shielding his wounded side from Jim's grasp. "*However,*" he continued with a glare, "this object is currently the only thing preventing me from bleeding out."

Jim frowned. "So... if we leave it in, you die. But if we take it out... you die."

"This is why I wanted you to leave me here, yes," Spock said, the *'I told you so'* strong in his voice.

Jim rolled his eyes. "Yeah, well, there has to be something we can do," he said, turning his attention to the contents of the storage compartment.

Observing its meagre contents, he frowned. What kind of escape pod didn't come with any first aid equipment? A dermal regenerator would have been nice, or even just some gauze. But at least there were a few ration packs. They could use those. He paused his thoughts for a moment, then reached inside the compartment, procuring a phaser.

He turned to Spock, waving the phaser in the air. "Well, there's always this."

Spock raised an eyebrow. "It's fascinating how quickly your mind has changed from not wanting to leave me to die to offering to execute me as a mercy," he said, seeming genuinely surprised and perhaps more than a bit concerned in this change of plans.

Jim blinked at him. "What? No!" He shook his head, unable to believe that Spock thought *that* was where he was going with this. "I'm not going to shoot you, for Stars' sake. I meant that we could use this to stop the bleeding after we pull that thing out of you. You know, cauterize it."

"So you're saying that you *are* going to shoot me," Spock said flatly.

"Don't be stupid," Jim huffed. "*Obviously* I'm going to use the phaser to heat something *else* up, and use *that* to cauterize the wound."

Spock paused, then nodded reluctantly. "That may work."

"Great," Jim clapped his hands together, giving Spock a nervous smile. "So, let's get this over with, right?"

Spock nodded, giving him the go-ahead, but once again stopped Jim when he made a move towards the shrapnel. "I think you should prepare the cauterization device before removing that," he said, once again feeling dread over letting Jim try to treat his injury. "It takes a remarkably short time to bleed out from an injury such as this one."

"Oh. Right," Jim said. Like Spock, he was also feeling rather nervous about being allowed to treat such a serious injury. "Give me a second," he said. That Spock didn't say that a second was nowhere near enough time to complete his task spoke to how much pain he was in.

Jim got to work quickly, walking around their crash site in search of a nice piece of scrap metal. He found one that was an ideal size, and was about to start heating one of the ends with the phaser when he realized that pulling a sharp object out of Spock just to put an equally sharp, burning hot object back in wouldn't be improving the situation much. So, he worked at folding back the sharp end to create a blunt surface to work with. Testing it for any remaining sharpness with his hand, he decided it was sufficient, and heated the blunted end with the phaser until it glowed red-hot. When he picked up the 'cool' end, he dropped it instinctively. While that end wasn't glowing with heat, the laws of thermodynamics *did* exist, leaving the whole piece uncomfortably hot. He grimaced and picked the object up again. He could stand to be uncomfortable for a moment if it meant saving Spock.

"Okay," Jim said, returning to where Spock was sitting on the ground, propped up against the escape pod. "Ready for this?"

Spock eyed him skeptically. "No."

"Great," Jim said, kneeling down beside Spock, careful not to accidentally touch him with the red-hot metal. Suddenly, Jim frowned and looked up to the sky. "What is *that*?" He asked.

As soon as Spock looked up, Jim reached over and yanked out the impaling shrapnel in one swift motion. He was glad Spock got him to get his improvised cauterizing device ready before removing it, as the amount of blood that spilled out of Spock's body after the shrapnel was immense. Jim immediately pressed the branding iron like heated scrap metal into the wound, wincing as smoke and the smell of burning flesh filled the space around them.

Spock *screamed*.

It was over quickly, and Jim tossed the hot piece of metal aside once he was certain the bleeding had stopped. He shrugged apologetically at Spock, who was glaring at him with an air of distrust. "Sorry. I should have given you a stick to chew or something. Now all of Altamid knows we're here," he joked.

"Can we move on now?" Spock asked. "Your crew needs you."

Jim helped Spock to his feet, supporting his weight. "*Our* crew, Spock," he corrected.

Spock paused, a far-off look in his eyes. "Indeed," he said quietly.

They walked towards the smoking plume from the *Enterprise*, the dry creek-bed providing a path that wasn't easy, but allowed them to bypass terrain such as the dense forest to either side, or the stout canyon that rose around them as they progressed. They moved slowly and had to stop for breaks regularly, on account of Spock's injury. While it was no longer immediately life-threatening, it was still excruciatingly painful, and Spock tired quickly. They hadn't gotten anywhere near the *Enterprise*, or any of her crew, by the time night began to fall.

"We should find somewhere to stop for the night," Jim suggested. He knew Spock would protest, so he added, "You're dead on your feet right now, and we don't know what kind of things come out here at night looking for something to eat. I don't even have a flashlight. It's *logical* for us to stop until daybreak."

Spock grunted, too tired to argue.

Luckily, they didn't have to wander far to find shelter. The canyon wall was rife with cave entrances and caverns, and one suitable for shelter was easy to find. Jim was half dragging Spock by the time they were ready to drop for the night, and he helped Spock settle gently down to the floor of a cavern before plopping down himself. Spock leaned back against the cavern wall, closing his eyes. His breathing was laboured from the walk, or perhaps just from the pain in his side. Jim sat in silence for a few minutes, letting Spock rest, before opening the pack of survival rations from the escape pod and handing some over to Spock.

"What's in this?" Spock asked, taking the ration bar and eyeing it suspiciously.

Jim shrugged. "Calories," he said. When he saw Spock's look of skepticism, he added, "It's definitely not meat, if that's what you're worried about."

This seemed to satisfy Spock, and he nibbled at the ration bar idly, clearly not wanting to eat but understanding the importance of fuelling himself for the day ahead of them. They kept silent company for a long while, watching the light fade, drenching the cavern in cool shadow.

Eventually, Spock broke the silence. "Back on the ship," he ventured, "in the turbo-lift. There was something you wanted to speak with me about."

Jim looked over at him, studying his profile in the dim light. "Yeah," he said. "And there was something you wanted to talk to me about."

"Indeed," Spock said. The pair fell into silence for a long moment as both of them waited for the other to speak. Spock gave in first. "Ambassador Spock has died," he said. His voice wavered slightly, as if he was only now acknowledging this as fact now that he had spoken it aloud.

Jim's heart fell, and he instantly felt sympathy for Spock. He struggled to find words to say. "Jeez, Spock," he said rather eloquently. "I'm sorry. I can't even imagine what that must be like for you."

In the darkness, Spock nodded. "Indeed," he agreed. "It is... a strange way to confront your own mortality."

"No kidding," Jim said. "You're probably the only one to ever have to grieve the death of your older self."

Spock was silent for a moment. Jim could tell that he was contemplating saying something else. Jim waited patiently, knowing that pushing him wouldn't get them anywhere. His patience was duly rewarded. "Jim, I have to leave Starfleet," he announced reluctantly.

Jim's head jerked up in surprise. "Leave? What are you talking about, Spock? Why?"

Spock let out a defeated sigh. "With Ambassador Spock dead, I can no longer be in two places at once," he explained. "I have to continue the Ambassador's work on New Vulcan. It is my duty to my species, one that I have only been able to circumvent because of Ambassador Spock's presence in our timeline."

"But Spock... Starfleet *needs* you, you can't just leave," Jim protested, forcing his voice to remain calm without much success.

Spock shook his head. "Starfleet has plenty of very talented and intelligent officers. My place here will be filled easily."

"You can't be serious," Jim said, dread seizing his chest at the thought of Spock leaving Starfleet. Leaving the *Enterprise*. Leaving *him*.

"I am," Spock said. "As I already explained, I have a duty—"

"No," Jim interrupted. "I mean that you can't seriously believe you're so easily replaceable. Or that you're replaceable at all."

"I am," Spock disagreed. "There is nothing I can do that other officers cannot. New Vulcan needs me more than Starfleet does."

Jim felt his breath draw short. The thought of Spock leaving filled him with dread and anxiety about the future. He bit his lip. "But our crew... They need you. You're the best first officer a crew could ever want. Anyone else is going to be—well—a downgrade."

"Personnel changes happen all the time on starships. The crew will adjust."

Jim let out a sharp, exasperated exhale. "Stars, Spock. *Sure*, fine, Starfleet can replace you, and the crew can make do with another first officer, but Stars be damned, *I* can't!"

"Captain?" Spock inquired. He wasn't looking at him, but Jim knew he was doing that infuriating thing with his eyebrows.

"I just—I don't know what I'd ever do without you, Spock," he admitted, feeling pathetic. "I need you. The *Enterprise* wouldn't ever be the same without you. And I—I don't know. I just know I can't do this without you."

Spock regarded him silently for a long moment. Jim could feel Spock's eyes on him in the dark, and the dread that had seeded itself in his chest bloomed as he prepared for Spock to tell him off for being an idiot.

"I am... confused," Spock said, finally.

Jim laughed bitterly. "About what? How I'm an idiot captain who relies too much on his first officer to do his job?"

Spock eyed him curiously. "I find it odd that you are this upset about the idea of me leaving the *Enterprise* when you are considering doing so yourself." Jim's head shot up, and he stared at Spock, who raised an eyebrow. "I am assuming that is what you wanted to speak with me about," he said.

"What... How did you know about that?" Jim asked, baffled.

Spock shrugged. "Your pending promotion to vice-admiral was not classified information," he said. "I am of the understanding that you intended to accept the promotion at the conclusion of this mission."

"Yeah—No, I—" Jim sighed. "I hadn't decided yet, okay?" he said. "And what I was going to talk to you about was that I recommended that you succeed me as captain of the *Enterprise*."

Spock ignored that part. "Why would you want to leave? Vice admirals don't fly, Jim."

"I know," Jim sighed. "I just—I don't know. I feel lonely, I guess."

Spock tilted his head curiously. "You have many friends on the *Enterprise*, Jim. You are hardly suffering from social isolation in your current position."

"I know," Jim said. "The crew is like family to me. And for a while that was enough. But it can't last forever. I look around and everyone's got something outside the *Enterprise* to go back to. Sulu's got a family, you've got a whole species and culture to save from the brink of extinction, Scotty's a genius who should be designing more efficient warp engines and transporter technology instead of fixing my ship every time I break it." He shook his head. "The point is... everyone has something else. And eventually they're all going to go back to that. But I don't have anything else. The crew is my family, but they're all going to go off and do their own thing eventually. And then I'll be on my own." He let out a heavy sigh and rubbed the drowsiness from his eyes. "I'm going to die alone."

"You are under the impression that you can avoid the pain of losing your friendships by being the first to leave them," Spock mused. "Jim, just because someone moves on to do something else doesn't mean that they're abandoning you. They'll still be in your life."

"What about you?" Jim asked. "When you go to New Vulcan, I mean. I'm not going to see much of you if I'm flying about the galaxy, and you're not going to have a lot of time for me with all that work you're going to have. You might not mean to fall out of touch, but it'll happen eventually. Same with everyone else."

Spock was quiet for a long time. He found that he couldn't disagree. Time apart led to rifts in relationships. It was just what happened as people continued to grow separately from one another. "Jim," he said. "I should tell you that I do not want to leave the *Enterprise*. But it is necessary that I do. I wouldn't leave if I had the choice."

"But you *do* have the choice, Spock," Jim pointed out.

"I have already explained why that is not the case."

"Yeah, and it was a bullshit explanation."

Spock changed the subject. "I don't think that you are considering accepting that promotion, Jim."

"Of course I am," Jim huffed. "It's all I'd been thinking about until my ship got destroyed and my crew was kidnapped."

"Don't lie to yourself, Jim. You were never going to leave."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Jim snapped. He was growing frustrated. "You think I can't handle a career change?"

Spock shook his head, backpedalling. "I apologize. I did not mean to offend you. But Jim—you belong out here. It would be a grave mistake to accept that promotion. Commanding a starship is your first, best destiny. Anything else is a waste of material."

Jim looked at him curiously for a long moment, then scoffed, crossing his arms over himself as he leaned back against the cavern wall, gazing up at the shadowed ceiling. "But you leaving Starfleet isn't going to be a grave mistake on your part?"

"It is a necessary sacrifice," Spock said. "But Jim, listen to me, please. You belong *out here*. In the stars. You wouldn't be happy behind a desk in San Francisco."

With a deep sigh, Jim gave in. "Yeah, I guess you're right," he said. "But what's the point if you're not there with me? We're a team, Spock. I don't know how I'd ever manage without you."

Spock didn't answer, too exhausted to argue a point he had made several times already. He just shifted himself carefully to be more comfortable, and crossed his arms over his chest as the temperature in the cavern dipped.

"I know you feel like you have a duty to your species after—after all that," Jim said softly. "But you don't belong there. You've never felt like you belonged on Vulcan, that's why you enlisted in the first place. You belong on a starship, keeping me in check when I start to act like an idiot," he joked, to try and lighten the mood a bit. It didn't work.

"Jim," Spock said, the exasperation permeating his voice now. "You do not need to convince me. I know how I felt growing up on Vulcan. I know why I enlisted in Starfleet. I know that I would be happier spending my prime years exploring the galaxy at your side. But it would be selfish of me to place my own wants over the preservation of my culture."

"Can't you be selfish, just this once?" Jim wondered. When Spock didn't answer, he added, "You deserve to be happy, Spock."

"I am tired," Spock said, ending their conversation. "We won't be of any use to the crew if we spend the night talking instead of gathering our strength."

"Right," Jim said, feeling defeated.

He reached out to help Spock lie down without straining his wound, then himself on the stone ground. The floor of the cavern was cold, and the air was cooling with each passing minute.

"I'd light a fire, but I don't think we should be drawing attention to ourselves," Jim said apologetically.

"I am unbothered," Spock said, but Jim sensed it was a lie. Sure enough, within minutes he could hear Spock's teeth chattering, and saw him shivering.

Jim was cold too, but he knew Spock was more sensitive to low temperatures than he was. Additionally, Spock was injured rather severely, and the cold would do him no favours. So Jim sat up, slipped his uniform jacket off, and scooted over so he could drape it over Spock's curled form.

Tensing in surprise, Spock looked up at him, his shaking momentarily halting. "You'll be cold without this," he said.

Jim shrugged. "I'll be fine. Get some sleep," he said as he laid back down within arm's reach of Spock.

The stone felt even colder now that he had shed his jacket, but he refused to show any sign that he was freezing. He clenched his teeth and tensed his body to stave off chattering teeth and shivering, knowing that if Spock noticed, he would insist on returning Jim's jacket to him.

"Jim," Spock said after a painfully long time trying to sleep despite the cold.

"Yeah?"

"I can see the condensation of my breath in the air," Spock said. A simple statement of observation. Translated into human parlance, it meant *'I am freezing and I can't fucking take it anymore.'*

Jim was kicking himself for not grabbing some of the other supplies from their escape pod. He was sure he had seen blankets or bedrolls or something of the sort in there, but all he had thought to grab was food. He rolled to his feet in the dark cavern. "Stay here," he said to Spock. "I'll figure something out."

"Be careful," Spock said when he realized that Jim was stepping out of the cavern.

Jim wracked his brain for a solution. He couldn't just let Spock freeze to death out here. He would hike back to the escape pod and get those blankets if he had to. Though if he did, he wouldn't make it back until morning, making the effort pointless.

When he finally decided that making a fire and risking attracting unwanted attention was a better option than letting Spock freeze solid, he cursed, realizing that even if he were to find dry wood out here in the dark, he didn't have anything to start a fire with. He had never learned the art of making fire from sticks or rocks, and all he had was a phaser, which had a habit of vaporizing sticks long before igniting them.

Wait. He had a phaser. A memory arose, and his stress about the cold melted away. "Thank you, Sulu," he muttered under his breath as he hefted a large rock from the dry creek-bed, lugging it back into the cavern and setting it down near Spock, who raised an eyebrow at him.

Jim flashed him a reassuring smile. "Remind me to thank Sulu for his ingenuity back when he nearly froze to death on Alpha 177," he said, taking his phaser from his belt and firing a beam into the rock, heating it much like he did with the chunk of scrap metal earlier.

Spock scooted back in alarm, hissing as the wound in his side protested the movement. By the time Jim stopped firing, the rock was glowing red-hot, and Spock was glaring up at him. "Rocks have a tendency to explode when they are heated to extreme temperatures very quickly," he scolded. "That would have been a good way to get us killed."

Jim gave a *'what can you do'* shrug and sat down by the glowing rock. "Well, good thing this one didn't explode," he said, patting the ground next to him to encourage Spock to get closer and take full advantage of the warmth the rock emitted.

"Luck doesn't excuse recklessness," Spock said, but he dragged himself closer, glad for the respite from the cold.

"Well, you know what they say," Jim said as he lay down by the rock. "Better to die in an explosion than to freeze to death."

Spock sighed in annoyance. "I doubt anyone has ever said that, but I suppose you may be right." He shuffled up close to the rock, letting himself drop down next to Jim, breathing laboured from the small effort of moving himself a few feet. But with the phaser-heated rock nearby, he was no longer shivering.

Jim turned his head to the side, meeting Spock's eyes. "Think you can sleep now?"

Spock nodded minutely. "I believe so."

"Wake me up if you need anything, alright?" Jim said. "If it gets too cold, or if you're hurting too much or anything at all." He was glad to see Spock nod in agreement instead of arguing. "Goodnight, Spock."

"Goodnight, Jim."

---

They woke with the dawn, a brilliant sunrise cresting over the low canyon, spilling light into the cavern. The rock had cooled during the night, but it hadn't gotten cold enough to wake them before the morning light did. However, one of them had evidently moved in their sleep, as they found themselves close together when they woke, arms pressed together, and Spock's head leaned into Jim's shoulder.

Jim sat up, offering Spock a hand in righting himself. "Well? Should we get an early start, then?" he asked, tone chipper despite the bags under his eyes.

"That would be ideal," Spock answered, looking even more worse for wear. Clearly, the quality of his sleep hadn't been very good. That, or his wound was really taking its toll on him. Jim guessed both, and hoped they would find Bones and somewhere with proper medical equipment soon.

Spock grimaced as he pushed to his feet with Jim's help, a hand clutched to his side. Jim waited as he recovered enough to walk, then slung one of Spock's arms around his shoulders and half carried him as they left the cavern together.

The sky was blue and clear, and the colours of the rocks in the dry creek-bed were vibrant, sparkling in the sunlight. Altamid would have been beautiful if it wasn't holding them prisoner. Jim kept his head up, eyes on the sky in case any of Krall's drones were flying about, searching for them. He knew that they were exposed out on the creek-bed, especially once they left the little canyon behind, but walking through the rough terrain of the dense forest to either side of them was out of the question. They were moving slow enough as it was. However, if the drones made an appearance, the forest would be a good place to take shelter until they passed them by.

The dark plume of smoke from the *Enterprise's* saucer section was still visible, only slightly fainter than it had been the day before. While Jim was grateful for a beacon to guide him and Spock back to their ship, where hopefully they would find others, he despaired at the thought of his ship—his home—still burning strong after a day and a night.

Out of nowhere, Spock stumbled, face contorted, and gasping in pain as he keeled over. His arm slipped from Jim's shoulder as he clutched at his side.

"Spock," Jim grabbed at Spock's shoulders to steady him, worried he would tip over and fall on the rocks. "What's wrong?"

Spock fought to regain his composure as pain surged through him. He breathed unevenly through his teeth, doing everything in his power to not cry out. He leaned against Jim as his knees buckled beneath him, and Jim caught him, holding him close. With the sharp surge of pain finally subsiding and his breathing under control, Spock pulled a hand away from his side and looked at his palm. It was wet with fresh blood.

"It appears," Spock said through heavy breaths, "that my wound has reopened." He reached a hand up to grip Jim's shoulder, using him to haul himself back up onto his own two feet, ignorant of the green smear he left on Jim's jacket. "We should keep moving."

Concern etched into his tired face, Jim frowned. "Don't you think we should do something to patch you up?" he asked. "You're going to bleed out if we just ignore it."

Spock turned to reply, but whether to agree or to argue, Jim would never know, because Spock's eyes looked past him up into the sky.

Jim grimaced as he heard the whirring of the drone craft, and he turned slowly to face them. There were two of them hovering low over the creek-bed, facing them.

"Oh, for—" Jim grumbled, tossing his hands in frustration. He had been keeping an eye out for these guys all morning, and the *second* he was distracted *had* to be when they chose to show up.

He took his phaser from his belt as he glared at his two targets, who appeared to be locking onto them. Their stare-down was broken when Spock touched Jim's elbow, drawing his attention. Spock nodded to somewhere behind Jim. When he turned, he saw two more craft.

"It appears they have us surrounded," Spock observed, slowly drawing his own phaser. He kept his eyes on the newcomers, and Jim turned back to the other two craft, watching for any sign that they were about to blow them to smithereens.

"What, did they think we were going to try outrunning them?" Jim asked sarcastically. "Phasers to high. I guess we're going to have to fight our way out."

"Jim," Spock said, alarm in his voice. Jim spun around in time to see Spock vanish in a swirling beam of particles. All he could do was stare in shock at the spot Spock had been standing.

"Fuck," he said, eyes wide. "*Please* let that have been our guys."

A whirring noise from one of the drones snatched his attention. They were powering up to gun him down. It was him alone against four highly agile drones that outgunned him by far. He had two choices: make a break for the trees and hope they sucked at hitting moving targets, or fight back. Before he could decide, bright particles of light began to swarm him and he was whisked away to...

It was an old, rusty and dingy cargo bay, but Spock was there, and so were Scotty and Bones. He sighed in relief, giving a nod to Scotty. "Good timing, Mr. Scott."

Scotty nodded excitedly. "I figured it would be better to beam you up separate," he explained. "This transporter's ancient and only designed to move cargo—didn't want to risk you two getting your atoms all mixed up," he wagged his fingers as if to demonstrate.

"Well, we wouldn't want that, would we?" Jim said, stepping out of the archaic transporter to join the others. "Scotty, where the hell are we?"

"Well *this* you'll never believe," Scotty said. "It's the *USS Franklin*."

Jim's brow furrowed. "The *Franklin*? The ship that went missing over—"

He was cut off as Spock suddenly hunched over as searing pain once again shot through him. "Shit," Jim said under his breath, rushing to steady him.

Bones' head jerked up. "What happened to him?" he asked, doctor mode quickly setting in.

Jim looked up at Bones. "Glad you're here, Bones. I make a terrible doctor."

Bones hurried over, and the two of them half-carried Spock out of the cargo bay, finding a bench to lie him down on. Jim slipped out of his jacket and rolled it up, setting it under Spock's head as he helped lower Spock down. He didn't let go of Spock's hand. Bones got to work immediately, cutting away parts of Spock's shirt to assess the damage.

"Good god, man," he said, shooting an accusatory glare at Jim. "What did you do to him?"

"I didn't do anything to him!" Jim protested. "He got a giant chunk of shrapnel stabbed into him when we crash landed, I just pulled it out and cauterized the wound so he wouldn't bleed to death!"

"Yeah, and it's already going septic—why didn't you disinfect it? Who knows what kind of fucking alien microbes have gotten in there?" Bones lectured.

"Okay, first of all, I'm a starship captain, not a doctor," Jim said defensively. "And secondly, I didn't have any medical supplies. I did what I could with what I had."

Bones gave him a skeptical look. "If you didn't have any supplies, how did you manage to cauterize anything?"

Jim shrugged. "A phaser and a random piece of scrap metal."

"Oh my god," Bones said under his breath, putting a hand on his face. "This is insane."

"Doctor," Spock said weakly. "Under the circumstances, I believe that you would have taken the same actions were you in Jim's place."

"Shut up, Spock," Bones said, getting back to work at cleaning the wound and staunching the blood flow.

Jim gave Spock a soft smile, and Spock squeezed his hand in return.

Spock was in good hands now, and there was work to be done, so Jim turned to Scotty. "Any idea where our crew is, Mr—Who's this?" he asked, noticing a stranger in the room. She didn't wear a Starfleet uniform, and he knew that he had no one of her species assigned to his ship, yet she was standing there with Scotty as if she was one of his engineers.

"This here is Jaylah," Scotty said, making introductions. "She found this ship. Jaylah, this is James T. Kirk and Mr. Spock."

"Nice to meet you, James T. and Mr. Spock," Jaylah said, giving them a nod. Jim looked back to Scotty briefly, brow raised in a question.

"She's on our side," Scotty assured him.

"Alright," Jim said slowly, nodding to Jaylah. "Welcome to the team. So, where's our crew?"

Scotty's face fell. "Krall's keeping them prisoner. There's some sort of facility he's locked them into. Jaylah here knows where it is."

Jaylah's stern face turned stony and grim at the mention of the facility. "It is heavily guarded. Escape is impossible. Nearly."

Scotty grimaced. "She's given me the rundown on the place, and it doesn't look good."

"Can't we just beam them out?" Jim asked.

Scotty shook his head. "Already thought of that. But there's some kind of geological interference. I can't get a lock on anything inside those walls."

"Why can't transporters ever work the way we need them to?" Kirk mused dejectedly. "How are we going to get our whole crew out of there? It's pretty hard to sneak three hundred people out on foot."

"Well, I've been thinking, and I have a plan," Scotty said, glancing at Jaylah to include her in his audience. He took a small handheld object out of his pocket. "This is a simple transmitter, but when turned on, it broadcasts a strong signal. If my calculations are correct, this signal will be strong enough to get back to us from within the area of geological interference. I can lock on to the transmitter and bring back anything within a specified range of it."

"Well, that's a plan," Jim said, impressed.

Spock was less impressed, enough so that he felt compelled to enter the conversation. "Mr. Scott has left out an important part of his plan," he said, wincing as Bones worked at fixing him up. "One of us will have to take the transmitter into the facility without getting caught. We have the further disadvantage of knowing nothing of the layout or defences. We would be going in blind."

"Not necessarily," Scotty said, raising a pointer finger. "This is where Jaylah comes in. She's been in there, she knows how it all works. She can lead a team in there—"

"No," Jaylah said definitively, turning to glare at Scotty. "I will not go back there. Ever. I will *not* go back to that prison!"

"Lassie, you gotta understand—" Scotty started, but Jim cut him off.

"She doesn't have to go in there," Jim said, sensing the fear under Jaylah's anger. "She can draw us a map, give us a run down on the security detail. That'll be enough."

Jaylah's grim face didn't relax at all. She shook her head, white ponytail swaying behind her. "I will not draw maps. You make my house fly, not wander into Krall's prison and get captured."

Jim looked at Scotty, who turned to Jaylah. "We can't leave without our crew, Jaylah. They're important to us."

"They're family," Jim added.

Jaylah shook her head slowly this time, focusing her piercing eyes on Jim. "Your family is lost, James T. There is no escape from Krall."

She spun on her heel and strode out of the room before anyone could say anything else. Jim met Scotty's eyes and they shrugged at each other briefly before Scotty took off in pursuit of their newest ally.

"All the equipment on this ship is from the damned dark ages," Bones grumbled, oblivious to the tension in the room. "I need to go through their sickbay again and see if I can find anything more helpful." He got up, half turning as he walked away, jabbing a finger in their direction. "Spock, don't move. Jim, make sure he doesn't move."

Then it was just them.

Jim sighed and put his face in his free hand, suddenly exhausted. "What are we going to do, Spock?"

Spock gave Jim's hand a gentle squeeze. "What we always do."

Jim snorted. "What, fuck around and find out?"

"More or less," Spock answered. "Jim, we'll get our crew back. We'll find out what Krall means to do, and we'll put a halt to it. There's always a way."

"Didn't realize you had such a hopeful outlook on life, Spock," Jim said, trying to ignore the whole mess of a situation.

"It is illogical to make these statements with such certainty," Spock agreed. "But somebody must make them, and for some reason you are not. This is unlike you."

"Well you can't expect me to be an optimist all the time."

"No," Spock agreed again. "But you've always insisted that you don't believe in no-win scenarios, and you've always held to that belief with a stubbornness that is..." He searched for the right word.

"Irritating?" Jim supplied.



"Admirable," Spock corrected.

Jim sighed through his nose. "Well, maybe something has changed and I've had to accept that sometimes, everyone has to lose."

Spock raised a quizzical eyebrow. "Elaborate," he said simply.

"You're leaving Starfleet, Spock," Jim said bitterly. "You don't *want* to, but you have to, and I don't want you to leave, but there's nothing I can say to stop you. That's about as no-win as it gets."

Eyes turning away from him, Spock thought for a moment. "Jim, why does it matter to you so much that I stay with Starfleet?"

"I told you. I need you out there with me," Jim said, pinching at the bridge of his nose and dropping his eyes to avoid eye contact. "I'm nothing without you."

"Untrue," Spock disagreed. "Your merit is your own, and you know that as well as I."

"You're my friend, Spock. Friends don't want friends to leave them," Jim tried.

Spock frowned. "Friends typically support each other in their life decisions, regardless of whether they agree with those decisions, do they not?"

Jim huffed impatiently. "Yeah, I guess, but it's just—I can't explain it, Spock. You just mean a lot to me, and I don't want to lose you."

Another silence as Spock pondered this for a few moments. "What, exactly, do I mean to you?"

Jim threw his hands up in irritation, tired of this interrogation. "I don't know, Spock. How about *everything*?" He snapped his mouth closed when he realized what he said, and he felt heat creep into his face. He looked at Spock warily, expecting confusion or repulsion. But Spock was just watching him with a soft, intrigued gaze.

"Last night," Spock said slowly, "when I couldn't sleep. I thought about my decision to leave Starfleet in order to resume Ambassador Spock's work on New Vulcan."

"Yeah?" Jim asked quietly, unsure where this was going, but relieved that it seemed that Spock had changed the subject.

"Vulcans live long lives," Spock continued. "Mine is just beginning. I have decided that I will have plenty of time to assist with New Vulcan's development. *After* a five-year mission, or two. At your side."

Jim's eyes lit up. "You're staying?"

Spock nodded, a spark igniting behind his eyes.

Jim momentarily forgot about Spock's injury and was about to pounce on him, to embrace him, or perhaps something more, but he was stopped by the sound of the door opening and their friends trotting into the room.

"Good news!" Scotty announced excitedly.

Jaylah stood beside him. "I will take you to your crew," she said, her face set with determination.

Jim looked down at Spock and grinned. "Great," he said. Things were looking up. "Let's rescue our crew and get the hell out of here."

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!