

## The Test

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## The Test

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### Summary

Jim and Spock have been taken captive and are forced to participate in an experiment. One of them must die.

### Notes

FebuWhump Day 4  
Prompt: Obedience

"What do you want from us?" Jim asked their captor, who was standing on the other side of the thick glass cage Jim and Spock were trapped in. Their captor— nameless and of a species unknown — was adjusting something on a computer console beside the glass, the display facing away from the prisoners.

"An experiment," they said, not looking up as they worked. "A little game, if you will."

"What kind of game?" Jim asked.

A smile quirked at the corner of their mouth. "You'll find out soon enough."

Jim made eye contact with Spock. *Any ideas?* he mouthed silently across their small cell.

Spock shook his head grimly, and Jim's heart fell. Spock had been examining the glass cage in search of a way to escape, and he had found nothing. They would have to think of something else.

Only, there wasn't much else. Their communicators and phasers had been confiscated when they were captured. The communicators likely wouldn't have been able to contact the *Enterprise* this far below ground anyways, but the phasers would have been instrumental in getting them out of this situation. It was looking like the only way out might be through.

"If we play your game," Jim said slowly, "will you let us go?"

The creature gave him an amused look. "Something like that," they said, cryptically.

Jim looked at Spock, who gave a slight shrug. He didn't know what to make of that either. But it seemed the mystery would be solved soon, as their captor appeared to be wrapping up their preparations.

"The test is simple," they said, turning their attention to Spock. "All you have to do is obey my simple instruction."

Spock raised an eyebrow at the creature. "I am assuming this won't really be as simple as you say," he said.

The creature grinned, showing off rows of sharp teeth. "Oh, but it *is*," they said. They turned their back on them, reaching out to something on the counter— a cloth wrapped bundle. They took the bundle, and pressed it against the glass near Spock. The bundle passed through the glass with minimal resistance, as if the glass were a thick liquid. Once through, the glass showed no signs that anything had traversed through it.

Almost as a reflex, Jim pressed a hand against the glass and pushed. But the glass didn't give way. He turned his attention back towards Spock, who was skeptically lifting the cloth away from whatever was inside. The last fold of cloth was moved aside, revealing the contents— a rather nasty looking dagger.

Spock looked at the creature with a question written on his face.

"Now," the creature said to Spock. Their eyes glittered in excitement. "You have only to perform one task for me, and then you will be free to return to your ship."

"What task are you asking me to perform?" Spock asked, playing along when he realized the creature wasn't going to get to the point without prompting.

Teeth shone in the artificial lighting. "I want you to take the dagger," they said, "and kill your captain."

Spock exchanged a glance with Jim, before giving their captor a patient look. "I cannot comply with your request," he said calmly.

"Hmm," the creature said, as if they had anticipated that response. "I think I'll be able to change your mind." Their eyes turned down to the console in front of them, and they reached a spindly hand towards it.

There was a brief buzzing sound, and Spock jolted as if he had been shocked. He looked at Jim again, this time worry leaking through his stoic features. Jim wanted to ask what had happened, but the creature spoke before he could.

"Don't worry. You have another chance. Kill him."

"I will not," Spock said, without hesitation.

Another buzzing sound as the creature pressed a key on their console, longer this time. Spock's body jolted and convulsed, and his face contorted in pain.

"Spock!" Jim shouted, and rushed across their prison cell to Spock's side. The buzzing had subsided in the couple of seconds it took to reach him, and Spock's body had been released by whatever had taken hold of him, leaving him on his hands and knees, panting as he fought to regain his composure.

Jim took Spock's shoulders in his hands to steady him, protectively putting himself between Spock and their captor, for all the good that might do.

"What did you do to him?" Jim demanded over his shoulder at the creature.

The creature was taking notes, and didn't bother to look up. "Just a little incentive to follow orders, that's all," they said casually.

Spock, having recovered, pulled back from Jim to sit on his feet.

"You okay?" Jim asked. Spock just nodded, still breathing heavily.

"Alright," the creature said. "Spock, your name is? You have a choice. You can obey my simple instruction, or you can have another taste of my incentive. Keep in mind that the more you refuse, the longer the incentive will last."

Spock glared at the creature. "It doesn't matter what the 'incentive' is," he said in a low voice. "I will not be killing my captain."

The buzzing began again, and Spock twisted in pain for five long seconds. All Jim could do was stare in horror. When the buzzing stopped, Spock collapsed forward, and Jim caught him, cradling him gently as he writhed in the aftermath of the torture.

Rage welled up inside Jim, and he spun to face his captor. "Stop this! You can't do this to him!"

"I'm not doing anything to him," the creature said. "He's doing this to himself. All he has to do is complete one little task."

Jim scowled at them. "You're lucky you have this glass to hide behind," he spat.

"Indeed," the creature said flippantly. "Moving on with the test. Come on now, Mr Spock. If I don't see you get going on your task, you'll face the buzzer again."

"Spock..." Jim trailed off, unsure of what to say.

Spock looked up, past Jim at the creature, who was watching him expectantly. Spock shook his head, and braced in anticipation for the buzzer.

Jim reached over and held Spock by the arms, steadying him as every muscle in Spock's body seized. He convulsed for a long ten seconds before finally falling limp in Jim's arms, breathing heavy, shuddering breaths.

A tightness formed in Jim's throat as he lowered Spock to the floor. Whatever the creature was doing to Spock, it had to be pretty horrific to weaken Spock so much so soon.

"You're going to kill him if you keep doing this," Jim said, trying to negotiate with their captor. "It'll ruin your experiment."

The creature clacked its tongue. "You misunderstand. There are two possible outcomes to this test. Both are acceptable and equally interesting."

Jim looked down at Spock, who was still trying to recover. "You mean either I die or he does," he said, understanding.

"Precisely," the creature said. "If it's any consolation, if he dies, you get to go back to your ship."

"That isn't much for consolation," Jim said, bitterly.

Spock sat back up, breathing slow, measured breaths that still had a shake to them. His face was damp and ashy, hair slightly askew.

Jim gave him a worried look. "You okay?" He asked, stupid of a question it was.

Spock gave a slight nod.

*Vulcans can't lie, my ass*, Jim thought. "Spock, if only one of us is going to get out of here, it should be you."

Spock shook his head. "Illogical," he said in a hoarse voice. "As captain, you are more—"

"Shut up, Spock, rank has nothing to do with it," Jim said. "Besides, a captain goes down with his ship. *As captain*, it's my duty to do whatever I can to save my crew, even if it kills me."

"The crew needs you more than me," Spock argued.

"Bullshit," Jim said. "Spock, you'd make a great captain. You would have made captain years ago if you didn't keep refusing reassignment. You know as well as I that you mean as much to that crew as I do."

"Then it shouldn't matter which of us is to die," Spock said. "As a Vulcan, I am able to accept death more readily—"

"Stop," Jim said with a sigh. He took one of Spock's hands in both of his. "Look at it this way," he said. "One of us has to die in here. If you die, it will be slow, painful, and drawn out. If I die, it will be quick and relatively painless. A mercy," he gestured at the dagger on the floor beside Spock. "I know you can make it quick. I won't feel a thing."

Spock shook his head again. "I can't—"

"Killing me is the logical choice, Spock," Jim pressed. "You know that."

"Yes, I do," Spock said, reluctantly. "But I find it near impossible to act logically around you."

The buzzing started again, and Spock cried out, collapsing to the floor where he convulsed painfully, as if being electrocuted. Jim could only watch helplessly as Spock thrashed, unable to prevent pained noises from escaping him. It seemed to last forever. When it finally stopped, Spock lay weakly on the floor, trembling.

"Spock, please don't do this," Jim begged. "I can't watch you die, not like this."

"I'm sorry," Spock whispered.

Jim's eyes flicked to the dagger on the floor, dangerously close to where Spock was thrashing about. "Then I'll do this myself," he said, reaching for the dagger and steeling his resolve for what he was about to do. *For Spock. It's worth it to save Spock*, he told himself.

But Spock saw what he was doing and used what little strength he had to snatch up the dagger before Jim could get to it, holding the blade close to his chest to keep it out of Jim's reach.

"Dammit, Spock, give that to me," Jim snapped, lunging for the knife.

Spock was so weak he could hardly move, but he managed to dodge out of the way. "No," he said, stubborn to his last breath.

The buzzing began again, and Spock seized, the grip of one hand tightening on the dagger's handle, his other hand closing tightly on the blade. It cut deep into his palm as he convulsed in throes of pain, unable to control his body. The pain was so intense that he didn't even feel the cut of the knife.

By the time the buzzer stopped, a lump had formed in Jim's chest. For a brief moment, he thought Spock was dead. He made no movement or sound as he lay curled on his side on the floor, dagger clutched to his chest. But then he noticed the shallow pattern of breath. He stroked Spock's arm in a meagre attempt to comfort him, and tried to take the dagger from Spock's grip. But Spock only tightened his hold on the weapon. He opened his bloodshot eyes weakly, meeting Jim's gaze. He shook his head gently.

Jim's posture slumped in defeat. He gathered Spock's limp form in his arms and held him tightly, and together they waited for the buzzer that would end their test.

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