

Out of the Depths

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by [Beatrice Otter](#)

Summary

Though much is taken, some things remain.

Notes

Pthak'sahaisau means "cast out fear" (thank you, Vulcan Language Dictionary) and refers to Surak's writings: "Here is the first part of the secret: Cast out fear. There is no room for anything else until you cast out fear." (Spock's World, p. 312)

Betaed by: ljc

Prompt: treknovelfest 57--The Pandora Principle, Spock Prime & Saavik. Spock!Prime goes to rescue everyone a decade or so early.

Spock surveyed the cavern, the largest chamber on Thieurrull, which in Standard was "Hellguard." He allowed himself as much satisfaction as he had felt since his failure to save Romulus had triggered the events that had led to the creation of such a darker alternate timeline. This would not have been possible in the original. Saavik, his wife, would have approved.

He stood on a raised platform in a great underground cavern, neither so large nor so finely carved as those of Vulcan. (The great hall of Pelasht could have held twenty of this one and still had room left over, and even an apprentice stoneworker would have been ashamed to own the creation of such a makeshift place.) Still, he savored the ambience; it would be many years before the new Vulcan homeworld would have such buried halls. Crude as the masonry was—blasted out with disruptors and then braced with great steel girders—it welcomed him on a primal level as no Earth-built structure ever could.

The cavern's inhabitants, who had ruled this planet until his ship's arrival the day before, were not so hospitable. They were Romulans, men and women assigned to this barren desert planet to create life, manipulating biology and genetics according to the will of their empire. They were guarded by Vulcans in Starfleet uniforms, the bright human-designed garments creating splashes of bright red, gold, blue, among the dark Romulan uniforms. The Vulcans held their phasers tightly, bodies rigid with as much anger as they could allow themselves to show. He recognized this emotion, though few of them would have admitted it, and most humans could not have detected the difference from normal Vulcan strictness. It had not been a good year for any Vulcan.

It had not been a good quarter-century. Nero's attack on the Kelvin had revealed the close kinship between Romulans and Vulcans, and the nature of that revelation had combined with the short time since the end of the Romulan War to create a backlash of suspicion against Vulcans throughout the Federation. In part because of the backlash, and in part because of the greater perception of threat to the Federation, this timeline had resulted in an earlier integration of Vulcan ships and crews into Starfleet, and far more Vulcans joining Starfleet once that integration was accomplished. This timeline's Spock had not been the first Vulcan to attend the Academy. And in this timeline, when the Vulcan Council needed a mission deep into the Romulan Neutral Zone, they had Vulcan-flagged starships and greater influence with the Admiralty, some members of whom were Vulcan.

At Spock's left, Lieutenant Sutsik stepped up. He was tall, his pale skin standing out almost as much in the cavern's dimness as the red of his shirt did. He was Chief of Security on *Pthak'sahaisau*, the starship called "*Intrepid*" in Standard. "All Romulans present and accounted for."

Spock nodded an acknowledgment and stepped forward. "Romulan soldiers!" he said in a polished, upper-class dialect of the language used by the Romulan military. "This project has captured hundreds of Vulcans over the last eleven point three years. You have experimented upon them and created children for your own use." There was no need to be specific; each one of the Romulans here gathered had to know how drugs had been used on their captives to induce pon farr and the fertility cycles that accompanied it, forcing them to mate, forcing them to breed with their captors. Anger and shame crested over him like a wave, battering him like a sandstorm. All members of his expedition had known what they would find here before they left Federation space, but to see it was a different matter, here with the offenders standing before them. As individual Vulcans lost their control, even just for a second, their emotions broadcast to their brethren on a level too deep to ignore,

causing more to lose their control as well. It was a feedback loop of emotion. To their credit, none of the Vulcans in the room acted on the feelings buffeting them. Spock suspected in most cases it was a near thing.

He waited a few seconds for at least minimal control to be restored before continuing. "Unlike the Klingon Empire, neither the Federation nor Vulcan hold the Romulan Empire responsible for the actions of a deranged individual and his loyal followers." That was ... mostly true. "We do hold you responsible for experimentation on our people in an attempt to create telepathy in Romulans. It will stop now." He turned to T'Shanim, the captain of the *Pthak'sahaisau*, who would give the next part of the briefing. As an elder, the details were not his to arrange.

"Do you think you can intimidate us, Vulcan?" came a call from the middle of the crowd. A Romulan soldier braver, and more foolhardy, than his brothers. "You couldn't even—"

But by then, the nearest Vulcan guard had reached him, and with a touch he fell, unconscious. Spock nodded to Captain T'Shanim to continue.

"Your local patrol ship has been destroyed. Your defenses, such as they were, are gone, your commanders and the bulk of your combat troops are dead, and our ships hold the orbitals." T'Shanim tilted her head, dismissing the Romulan's words. Her black hair, swept up in a traditional chignon, glinted in the artificial lights of the cavern. "All Vulcans and all half-breeds will come with us. All research material, notes, and specimens will be destroyed, along with this entire complex. We will be watching for further attempts to capture Vulcan ships or citizens, or any other Federation members, and will treat them as a declaration of war."

T'Shanim paused to let that sink in; Spock watched the crowd's reaction. Little as the Federation wanted a war, it was prepared for one; and despite the soldier's bravado the Romulans could not afford war on another front. They were already engaged in a war with their former allies the Klingons over the destruction Nero had caused in his escape from captivity. "We will examine all Romulan women. Those who are pregnant with hybrid children will be taken with us. When the children are born, the women may choose to live among us, or be turned over to the Federation for interrogation and possible repatriation. Any others who wish to submit themselves as spoils of war, in restitution for their crimes here, may do so. We will require a mind-meld from those who choose to come with us. It will not be deep, but thorough enough to root out spies. Those who do not wish to come will be left on the surface with emergency rations after this facility has been destroyed."

Spock stepped forward. "Once we are back in Federation space your government will be notified that you require evacuation." It was more mercy than had been afforded the children of Hellguard when the Romulans had abandoned this project in the original timeline. His wife would have approved of the irony.

He turned and stepped down, Captain T'Shanim behind him, as guards and medics moved among the captive Romulans, separating out the women for examination and herding the rest back to the cells which had so lately contained Vulcans.

"Does the Honored Elder believe any will choose to forsake their homeland to become servants of Vulcan?" T'Shanim asked in Vulcan. Being a Vulcan-flagged ship with a majority Vulcan crew, it was the official language of the *Pthak'sahaisau*.

"Some," Spock returned. "The failure of this project, meant to be the foundation for several endeavors, will be a great shame to all who are part of it, particularly given the ease of its capture."

"That is illogical, as this outpost's main defense is its remote location," T'Shanim noted. "They had few resources with which to resist."

Spock shook his head. "That will be irrelevant to the military hierarchy and their government, and of even less concern to the Tal'Shiar." He paused. "Romulans have a long tradition of war captives taken in revenge and used as bound servants by rival clans. It is not an honor, but it is less shame than they would otherwise face. They would never see their families again, but they would not disgrace them. There will be suicides and executions and ritual banishments when this news is carried to their homeworld, at least among the leaders of this project."

T'Shanim nodded. "Extra labor and an enlarged gene pool will be welcome on the new homeworld," she said. "Provided security concerns are handled properly." It was an idle observation; the matter had been discussed and approved by the Vulcan High Council (on which Spock now had a seat) and she would not be responsible for security concerns once the liberated Vulcans and captive Romulans had been delivered to the new Vulcan homeworld.

"That is what the mind-melds are for," Spock pointed out. The irony of using the mental techniques the Romulans had gone to such lengths to capture against them was ... acceptable. The captives had been informed; any who did not wish a meld could simply remain here. Despite his words, he did not believe many would choose to immigrate. "What is the status of the freed ones?"

"All have been transferred to the passenger ship *Kaisu* and are being evaluated by healers. General physical and mental conditions are consonant with expectations." She paused. "Our intelligence and scavenging teams are already at work—they have not yet found paper records or backups, but the complete contents of the main computer systems have been safely downloaded for later analysis. They have begun tagging potentially useful equipment and supplies for beam up." Lives had not been the only things lost in Vulcan's destruction, and the new settlement found itself forced to make do with hand-me-downs and loans from other Federation worlds. This secret base possessed state-of-the-art Romulan technology, particularly in medical equipment and computers, which could be adapted for Vulcan needs far more easily than equipment donated from, say, Andor. Foraging was the lowest priority of all the tasks to be accomplished, but that did not make it irrelevant.

Spock nodded and turned to make his way through the cavern. Time was of the essence; as many as could be spared from ship, medical, or guard duty were assigned to meld with those Romulans who asked to leave with the Vulcans. It would be the place Spock could best contribute to the operation; Captain T'Shanim had the logistics well in hand. He walked through clusters of women being evaluated, observing the efficient work of the medics and the alertness of the guards. So far, they were on schedule, and would finish here and be back across the Neutral Zone before the next patrol of the over-stretched Romulan fleet would arrive.

A Romulan woman caught his eye, a face he recognized both on its own and in its resemblance to another. She was ... much younger than the images he had seen of her, and he strode towards her. She was relatively nondescript, average height and build, the dark hair and eyes common to both their peoples. The severe tailoring of Romulan uniforms suited her bearing and features. Her eyes held a fire he knew.

"She is pregnant," reported the Vulcan examining her, a crewman in science blue whom Spock did not recognize.

"It is a girl," Spock said, though given the changes in the timeline that was far from certain.

"Yes," the crewman replied, raising an eyebrow.

"Her name shall be Saavik," Spock said, watching the Romulan woman's face.

The Romulan jerked in surprise; it was not a Vulcan name, but a Romulan one, meaning 'cat.'

"As the elder has said," the crewman said, notating it in his records. He implanted a subdermal identification chip with a hypospray, and notified the prison ship that his patient was ready for transport.

Spock watched as the young Romulan woman dematerialized. In all likelihood, the child she now carried would not be his Saavik, conceived as she had been twenty-five years after Nero's arrival changed the course of both Vulcan and Romulan societies. Even if she was genetically identical, through whatever miracle of chance, the difference in her early life would make her a much different person than the woman who had been his student, his friend, and after many years his wife and the mother of his children. This child was most likely a sister, perhaps only a half-sister, to the woman he had known. Still, it pleased him that some part of her existed in this timeline.

Spock watched the destruction of the Hellguard facility from the solitude of his cabin aboard the *Kaisu*. The explosion was barely a pinprick of light, seen from orbit, and the sensors of all three ships (*Pthak'sahaisau*, *Kaisu*, unnamed prison ship) recorded it in far greater detail for posterity and confirmation. Still, he bore witness to it, as he had to its destruction in another timeline. This time, there was no one with him to watch, and he felt the echoing emptiness in his soul where his wife's mind should be as he had not since first emerging into this timeline.

He turned from the window and lit a candle on the desk. He was old enough that the traditional meditational pose, seated on the ground, would place unnecessary strain on his body after the exertions of the day. As he seated himself in his chair, he felt the telltale shifting of the ship around him, too slight for most people to notice—they had broken orbit and were proceeding out of the planets gravity well under full impulse. In the time he had come from, inertial dampening technology had advanced to the point that (unless a ship received significant damage) such transitions were imperceptible even to the most sensitive observer.

Spock found he was grateful for the cruder technology. It was a reminder to him of his heritage, a soothing balm to soul. The shiver as they broke orbit; the faint hum as they went to warp. These had been the sensations which had surrounded him for the defining decades of his life. No matter what else was taken from him, this remained. The great caverns of Vulcan, and the mountains and deserts that stretched over them, drew forth the great racial memory that was Vulcan's blessing and curse. Their influence was deep, and could not be denied.

But like the wife whom he would never see again, Spock belonged to the stars.

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