

The Assumption of Risk

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The Assumption of Risk

by [kalima](#)

Summary

A mature approach to a thing that maybe happened.

Notes

The aftermath of s2e22 Return to Tomorrow, the loss of body autonomy, and mature adults responding in mature adult ways. There are no depictions of violence, but non-surgical abortion happens off screen. If you object to that, I suggest you don't read.

Chapter 1

Christine could have injected the contraceptive herself, but Dr. McCoy liked to incorporate reproductive health into the annual health exams and, what with one crazy crisis after another, hers had been pushed back several times over the past three months.

Contraception wasn't exactly at the top of her concerns, truth be told. She was far too busy to pursue sex with another person. Or too picky, some complained. Or holding a torch for someone she couldn't have, others suggested. Lately, she'd been beset with a kind of nebulous anxiety, the result of bad dreams she couldn't remember, so, really, she was just too tired.

She did appreciate the absence of menses the contraceptive provided, however, and wanted to make certain that continued without any unpleasant interruptions. When he told her she was pregnant she rolled her eyes and said, "You're hilarious. Give me the shot."

"Chris, I can't." He pointed at the bio readout above her head.

She whipped around, squinted at the readings, blinked, shook her head. "That's – that's not possible."

"Sometimes the implants dissolve faster than they're supposed to. It's rare, but it happens. You know that."

"Yes. No. I mean, I mean I *can't* be pregnant. Did you check my thyroid? Maybe it's my thyroid."

"Seriously?"

"Leonard. I haven't had sex with anyone *not me* in over six months!"

She watched his Adam's apple move up and down. The furrow in his brow deepened. He reached for the hand-held scanner and a medical tricorder. Fiddled with the settings and focused the wand over her lower abdomen. "Uh, embryonic development around sixty days."

"I don't understand this. I don't understand. Run the scan again—"

"Chris. Sweetheart..." But he offered little resistance as she snatched the devices from his hands. Ran it once, twice. Stared down at the readings, her fingertips white where she gripped the edges of the tricorder. He pried it away gently, set it aside. A moment later he was rubbing between her shoulder blades, trying to keep her from passing out. "Keep your head down. Slow breaths."

They came to the same conclusion – some sort of drug or mental coercion that left her unable to recall the event in question. There might be another less nefarious explanation. She hoped there was. But she could tell by his expression he thought it as unlikely as she did.

"I'll sample the amniotic fluid for a DNA match," he murmured. "You okay here for a minute?" She nodded. He went to set up a private exam room.

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"Near as I can figure, the assault occurred around the time Henoah was using Spock's body. He may not remember it any more than she does. Or, at least, I'm giving him the benefit of the doubt."

McCoy recalled that moment on the bridge when it was all over, the godlike beings returned to their incorporeal state, Spock, alive, returned to his own body. Christine stood next to him in a kind of dreamy haze. "We shared consciousness," she'd said. He realized now that Spock's reaction of mild horror was only mild by human standards, a reaction treated with fond amusement by the rest of them, a sign that everything was back to normal. "Normal" being a relative term on the Enterprise as the current situation made very clear.

Maybe if he'd been able to do more comprehensive physicals right away (like he'd *wanted* to), he would have seen the signs. They could have taken proactive measures.

Typically, regulations would require him to bring an accusation of sexual assault to the ship's XO, which, being Spock himself, was out of the question.

At his desk, Jim shook himself out of stunned silence and moved swiftly into self-castigation. "This is my fault. I brought this on them. All that grandiose speechifying about risk. Bending everyone to my will—"

"Just how charismatic do you think you are? We agreed to take the risk. All of us."

“Bones, half my senior staff advised strongly against it, you, being one of them.” He pinched the skin between his brows and heaved a sigh. “Jesus, what are we going to do?”

“Well, first, we’re gonna have to talk to Spock.”

The captain’s head shot up. “Shit.” He stood abruptly, straightening his tunic with an air of wild distraction. “Shitshitshit. We need to move this conversation to a neutral area. A conference room. I can’t talk to either of you about this here. Not in my quarters. It could look like bias.”

^^^

“I assume she intends to press charges.” It was the first thing out of Spock’s mouth.

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves,” Kirk said quickly. “There are mitigating circumstances—”

McCoy stopped him. “Jim, all due respect, but...shut the hell up.” To Spock, he said, “I don’t know how she wants to proceed. As soon as I got the DNA results, I brought it to the captain. Not to protect *you*. Just so we’re clear.”

Spock gave a terse nod. Kirk gestured to the chair at the conference table opposite him. After moment Spock sat, his body perfectly aligned, as if he were still at attention.

“I take it this information isn’t entirely unexpected.”

“That I have impregnated a crewmate against their will? Very much so. But I did suspect Henoah had done something...more to Ms. Chapel than simply making her forget she was injecting your body with poison.”

McCoy leaned back in his chair, arms crossed tight over his chest. “And you didn’t think to bring this to *anyone’s* attention?”

“I accept your assertions of-of the violations, but I have no direct *conscious* memories of events. Like the captain and Dr. Mulhall, I was not present in my body when the acts occurred.”

“You said you suspected something,” Kirk pointed out.

“There was physical evidence in my quarters.”

“What kind of physical evidence?”

“General disarray. The bedding specifically. Odors. Strands of hair. And ...other things.” Spock shifted in his seat fractionally. For him, a squirm. “I did not fully understand what such evidence might indicate at the time. Those first few hours after returning to my own body were often disorienting.” He glanced at the captain. “I found myself questioning the reliability of even the most basic autonomic functions. Could I trust my body to breathe, for example, or must it be continually reminded?”

“Yes,” Kirk said, softly. “I remember feeling like that. Like my body was a puppet I *should* know how to operate but didn’t... quite.”

McCoy realized the captain was describing *exactly* how Sargon behaved when he used Kirk’s body the first time, deep below the planet’s surface. And for some reason that fact sent him right over the edge.

“Christ on a crutch!” He was half-way out of his chair, palms slapping the table as he leaned across, face red, mouth a snarl. Spock leaned back slightly. Spittle was about to fly. “Why the hell didn’t either of you come to me with this?”

Kirk winced. “Bones...”

“What could you have done?” Spock asked.

“I don’t know! I didn’t get a chance to find out!” He banged the table again as he straightened and pushed away, pacing, pausing every so often to point a finger at one or the other of them. “This is the typical bullshit I get from you two. I tried to act with all due diligence after that little...*misadventure*. I scheduled neuro-process scanning, brain wave comparisons, in-depth physicals, but I could never pin you down. Goddamned *children* the pair of you! Oh no,” he cried in mock alarm as he wiggled the strings of invisible marionettes. “I’ve forgotten how to operate my flesh puppet. Gosh! How do *lungs* work, again?”

Kirk swallowed convulsively, Spock stared at some tiny speck on the tabletop, waiting for the rant to wind down. It was a full minute before McCoy finally came to a stop and another second or two before he heaved a sigh into the weighty silence. “You should have told her what you suspected, Spock. At the *very* least.”

“I weighed the ethics of keeping silent, Doctor, but I had no memories of what transpired, only a theory based on disturbing but, ultimately, inconclusive evidence. My body may have known, but *I* did not. Telling her what I suspected seemed ... counterproductive.”

“Counterproductive for whom?” McCoy shot at him.

“Perhaps I mean cruel. She appeared content, even happy, as I understand the emotion. And in our interactions since then she has behaved towards me much as she had before. How could I inflict my own inchoate suspicions upon her if she did not appear to be affected?”

McCoy scowled, still not quite convinced.

Spock took a pointed, steadying breath, offered, "While Sargon was in the captain's body, he rarely strayed from sickbay—"

"Well, he couldn't, y' know - on account of the *poison*."

"Yes, of course. And Thalassa, in Dr. Mulhall's body, spent much of her time in the robotics lab. Yet Henoah required Nurse Chapel to administer his injections in the privacy of *my* quarters. No one appeared to question her prolonged absences from sickbay on those occasions."

It was not presented as an accusation, but McCoy flinched as if he'd been slapped. "You're right. I should have paid closer attention. I should have tested the formulas myself, insisted on more oversight despite being told by ancient, all-powerful beings that I was too stupid to understand any of it —" He shot Kirk a quick look. "That's a huge red flag by the way. I mean, the next time we're dealing with seemingly benevolent all-powerful beings."

Kirk huffed out a grim chuckle, shook his head. "I'll keep that in mind. Meanwhile, how do we proceed from here?"

"*We* do not." Spock said. "It is up to Nurse Chapel now."

"And if she wants to bring charges against you?"

"There is an acceptance of risk when signing on to deep space missions. And under the specific circumstances in which the assault occurred, I am unlikely to be held criminally responsible even if she does."

"That's convenient," the doctor muttered.

Spock's mouth tightened. "It does not lessen my ethical responsibility. Miss Chapel has other legal recourse should she choose to pursue it. Whatever recompense she requires from me I will accept without protest—"

"Spock—"

"*We chose* to participate, Jim. She did not."

McCoy grunted softly, then said, "Well, you won't be responsible for a child I can safely say. She's in her cabin waiting for the abortifacient to do its job."

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Two colleagues who used to be friends try to deal.

Chapter Notes

This is very grown-up serious for OG TOS Star Trek.

The door opened too suddenly, revealing Nurse Chapel, hair loose and damp, face free of cosmetics. “Mr. Spock. Right on time of course. Come in.”

Her general appearance confused him. Fresh from the shower. Pink drawstring pants and a baggy t-shirt. Seeming too at ease and dressed too casually for the nature of the discussion he presumed they would be having. Perhaps she was still convalescing. He’d researched the effects of the specific medications prescribed. The entire process took less than 48 hours. The worst of the physical symptoms would have been over by now.

“Are you...” *Bitter? Angry? Resentful? Repulsed?* “...sufficiently recovered?”

A brief humorless chuckle as she turned away from the door and moved deeper into her quarters. “Nooo. Not at all.”

“I – forgive me. I had assumed since you asked to speak with me that you were well enough to—” He paused. To what?

“I’m not pregnant anymore if that’s what you’re wondering. Hope you’re not disappointed.”

The tone in her voice was singsong bright – a telling contrast to the subject matter. Sarcasm then. He found it oddly comforting. Nevertheless, pertinent information was missing. “It is doubtful a fetus would have been viable after 120 days in any case. My own gestation required a great deal of medical intervention and oversight.”

“I *know* Spock. Hence, my surprise you managed to knock me up.”

It was going to be a sarcasm-heavy evening. “I had assumed I was sterile.”

“Based on what?”

“I am a hybrid. Hybrids are usually sterile.”

Her gaze assessed him coolly for a moment. “Okay. We’ll table that for later.”

With one leg curled beneath her, she sat in the only comfortable chair, and picked up a mug from the little stand beside it. Steam wafted gently over the lip of the mug. He could smell peppermint.

He’d not been in her quarters – not *these* quarters – since she’d returned to Starfleet as a member, searching for that fiancé she hadn’t had when she left. This cabin was not as large and yet somehow more personal. Back then she’d always had one foot out the door.

She took a sip, gazed up at him from over the rim. “Gosh. Look at me. So impolite. Would you like a cup of tea?”

“No thank you.” His response appeared both a relief and an annoyance.

“I have a few questions for you.”

“I cannot guarantee answers, though I will try.”

A non-committal hum, then, "I'd be more comfortable asking them if you weren't looming over me."

He pulled out the chair at her desk and turned it around to face her. "I regret that this experience has caused you to be apprehensive of me."

"I'm not. That's part of the problem. I've never had a proper sense of self-preservation when it comes to you." Her keen eye caught some micro-expression he'd let slip. "Oof. That one cut close to the bone."

He'd thought himself prepared for sharp edges. He'd forgotten how sharp they could be. He closed his eyes briefly, centered himself again.

"Sorry about that," she said sounding not sorry at all. "Dr. McCoy says you don't remember what happened either."

A statement requiring corroboration. "That is correct. I was not technically present when the...incidents occurred."

"More than one you think? That tracks, I suppose." She sucked in a breath, blew out a sigh. "Part of me is grateful I can't remember. Another part of me wishes I could so I'd have a focus for this rage."

This did not look like rage to him. And still, not a question. "I am the most appropriate target for it."

"Are you? I would think Henoah the most likely target. Or perhaps the captain since he made the call."

"It was not an order," he said, quickly. "All parties involved agreed to host the entities."

She sighed in weary exasperation. "Relax. I'm not going to ruin his career. Or yours. I'm pretty sure criminal charges wouldn't go anywhere so what purpose would it serve?"

"You could pursue a civil lawsuit."

"That doesn't seem fair to you either."

"This is not about me, Christine."

Her features softened in fleeting vulnerability before she returned to the current acerbic default. "You *must* be feeling guilty. You haven't called me by my name in a long while."

True. He took care to address her in a professional manner whenever it was necessary to address her, otherwise he rarely thought of her at all. He'd spent a great deal of time in meditation several years ago making sure of it. Her assertion of his guilt was accurate. The other statement required no response.

She carefully unclenched her fingers from around the mug of tea, placed it on the small table next to her. "Look. Something happened that I can't remember. And because I can't remember, my imagination has filled in all the blanks with horrors. It could have been perfectly nice sex for all I know."

"Doubtful. From my experience of Henoah, he would have wanted you terrified and *aware* of how powerless you were in the moment. Nothing about it would have been *nice*."

"Right. Right." She peered into the mug on the table as if it had just said the very same thing. "It must have been awful for you too."

"I don't remember specifics..." *Only feelings*, he almost said, but swiveled quickly. "I appreciate your attempts to absolve me of responsibility —"

She barked a laugh. "Is that what you think I'm doing? Dear god, no. I'm just trying to be fair."

"You seem surprisingly tolerant of an intolerable situation."

"Like I said. I'm trying to be fair here. *Logical*. Henoah appropriated your body and used your specific biology as a weapon against the others. I can't blame you for that. You didn't choose it. It wasn't your fault." Her gaze shot up. He tensed inexplicably. "The fact that I got pregnant *is* your fault."

Insult and embarrassment wrestled for supremacy a moment. Only years of training prevented the resulting shame from showing on his face.

"Why don't you use the available contraception, Mr. Spock? You were engaged to be married. Did the subject of children never come up?" She gave him no opportunity to answer. "And I know you've had other sexual encounters besides. It's irresponsible of you not to at least make certain—"

"*Again*, past evidence suggested I was sterile."

"Well, the fact that no one has sued you for child support leads me to an entirely different interpretation of past evidence."

He started to remind her about his own complicated gestation, but realized he'd merely be clothing his shame in pedantic exactitude. Obviously, previous sexual partners had wisely protected *themselves*. As would she have been if circumstances had not delayed a routine injection.

"I am, of course, inoculated against all known sexually transmitted diseases," he offered.

"Because you can't get out of them! It's *required*." Her fists balled up as she growled in frustration and then, suddenly, she'd launched herself out of the chair – at him he presumed, but her foot caught the edge of the seat cushion and off-balance, she went down, knee hitting the deck hard, landing at his feet in an unwelcome pose of genuflection.

Her cry was more outrage than pain as he leaned down to assist her. But she scuttled back in panic, spun away, half crawling then stumbling upright into a run. Three steps, four, before reason stopped her. Breathing hard, she moved to keep the chair a barrier between them, hands clutching the back of it like she was hanging from a cliff.

Her body remembered what her mind could not. She was afraid. Of him.

“If you hadn’t gotten me pregnant,” she rasped out, “I would never have known what happened. I could have gone on with my life blissfully unaware.”

“Dr. McCoy said your sleep had been disturbed for several weeks prior to this discovery. Subconsciously you knew something was amiss—”

“That man has no respect for doctor-patient confidentiality.”

“I understand your desire to remain ignorant under the circumstances—”

She scoffed. “No, you don’t.”

“Believe me. I *do*.”

Skepticism turned to disdain. “Spock, you hate not knowing. You *need* answers. You love solving puzzles that make everyone else uncomfortable.” Love. Hate. Words intended to insult him.

He couldn’t bring himself to tell her how he’d avoided looking for answers himself. Of the troubling evidence he’d seen and said nothing about to anyone.

She waved a hand like she was clearing a fog, then began to pace, arms wrapped tight across her chest, the chair still safely between them. “Okay. *Fine*. Not blissful ignorance. Maybe just a state of vague unease that would have faded over time. Instead, I’ve been forced to *think* about it. I can’t stop thinking about it. All these awful *awful* scenarios crawling around in my head. All the things Henoah might have done to me wearing *your* body! And now, every nice memory I’ve been clinging to all these years, however deluded, is destroyed! Crushed. Smashed. Torn to bits—” Her hands acted out the words with an implied violence that alarmed him. “So yeah, I’m angry and— and I’m *sad*. I’m so sad I can’t breathe sometimes. Nothing I’d hoped for when I came back, when I officially signed on as a member of Starfleet, none of that has come to pass. I feel like I’m disappearing, a nondescript marker in a series of increasingly bizarre events.”

Openly crying now, she slapped furiously at tears spilling over the ledges of cheekbones and into the corners of her mouth.

Her fear was irrational. But there was no good in saying so. “You’re not disappearing, Christine. I see you.”

She laughed unpleasantly. “You go out of your way to avoid me. You don’t even like me—”

Anymore. The word hung in the air without her voicing it aloud.

“I endeavor not to think of you at all.”

Another laugh, soggier this time. “Wow. That’s even worse.”

“You misunderstand me.” He glanced at her, then down again, noting with trepidation the slight tremor in his hands. “It is a practiced habit not to think of you, cultivated over the course of years. But you are significant in my memories. I fear it is why Henoah targeted you.”

Her silence at his confession felt interminable – a trick of time played on conscious awareness. But when he looked to judge her reaction, she seemed merely lost in thought, head tilted, frowning softly. Then, to his surprise, instead of justifiable and righteous condemnation, she snorted.

“Spock, *sweetie*, I’m the head nurse. I have a PhD in biochemical engineering. I was a tool ideally placed for Henoah to use. *And* he was a sociopath. And hadn’t been corporeal for eons. Your memories would not have motivated him. He didn’t rape me to hurt you. I’m pretty sure he didn’t think of you. *At all*.”

She was right of course. It was hubris to consider otherwise.

But she’d said it out loud now. That plain, ugly little word they’d been avoiding. *Rape*.

“I do not know how to make this right, Christine. I want to but I don’t know how.”

“Because you know you can’t. You have to let me feel what I feel and trust it’s probably not forever.”

“Probably?”

She shrugged, picked up the mug from the table - the start of a tidying-up routine that signaled his dismissal. He nodded, mostly to himself, and stood to leave. But there was something missing, a sense of unrecoverable loss, or perhaps, merely unfinished business—

“You once put your arms around me when I was suffering.”

She’d been rinsing out the mug – a personal item that didn’t go into the reclamation unit – and now looked at him warily. “That was so long ago.” *Lifetimes*, her tone implied.

“May I offer you the same comfort now?”

“I—” She cut off a gut response, made a little humming sound instead. Met his eyes then looked away. “Can I – can I have a rain check on

that?"

"Of course."

"And Spock, when I take you up on it – and I will – you'd better not hesitate."

He nodded his acknowledgment, and left her cabin, and went to his own, and wept, and meditated, and slept without dreams for the first time in weeks.

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