

The Laughing Vulcan and His Dog

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The Laughing Vulcan and His Dog

by [IDICdreads](#)

Summary

Spock is stranded on a remote planet during a salvage operation. He quickly discovers that not everyone was rescued from the downed transport. The marooned survivor? A Doberman Pinscher puppy!

(crossposted from AO3)

Updates will (hopefully) be biweekly.

I Want to Break Free

Captain's log: stardate 4526.6. The Enterprise received a subspace transmission from an Andorian freighter at 09:30 this morning. A transport carrying a Federation survey team crash landed on the planet Pâton Mir, an uninhabited planet in the Remault system being considered for colonization. Six of the fourteen members of the team were found dead on arrival, assuming as a result of the catastrophic crash. While not always the most pleasant of peoples to deal with, the Andorians rescued the remaining eight survivors and are en route to Starbase Laurel 7 in sector 41 to transfer them to the medical facilities and the morgue. It is as of yet unclear just why the transport crashed, but Mr Spock's preliminary scans indicate ionic turbulence, suggestive of a storm front. The Enterprise has been ordered by Star Fleet to reroute to Pâton Mir to retrieve the transport's black box and salvage any equipment.

I explained to Admiral Wainwright that the Enterprise is scheduled to rendezvous with the USS Ginsburg in thirty-six hours at Starbase 867 to transfer very time-sensitive biological samples, any delay could result in the entire crop spoiling before its delivery to the Terra-forming colony on Eldorado Prime. Since this mission is routine in nature, Mr Spock has volunteered to pilot a shuttle to Pâton Mir himself. It should take no more than sixteen hours to offload to the Ginsburg, after which Mr Chekov has plotted a course to pick up Spock, the black box and any materials he has been able to salvage.

Kirk watched as the Galileo swooped gracefully between the warp nacelles and out into open space.

Spock had been unusually pensive and distant since they'd departed Station K7. He was more reclusive than normal, skulking off to his quarters promptly upon being relieved from his scheduled duties, not emerging again until the following morning.

Kirk didn't want to say that Spock was being a prick, but his First Officer was being a prick to the nth degree. It'd been a relief for everyone when he'd volunteered to go solo for this quick side mission; it wasn't exactly within regulations for Spock to go on his own, but with how irritable and standoffish he'd been the last couple days, regulations could be skirted around.

Kirk had the sneaking suspicion that a certain Vulcan had a *very* guilty conscience about the plight he'd forced upon all of those poor Tribbles.

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"Computer, estimated time until ionic storm front reaches Pâton Mir at its present speed and trajectory?" Normally that was the sort of calculation Spock was able to make himself, but at present he was preoccupied with plotting the course and speed of the Galileo.

And he'd already been distracted before he'd even sat in the pilot's chair.

*'Working. Leading edge of ionic storm front will enter upper atmosphere in three point two three hours.'*

Three point two three hours.

Good.

Tapping the last of his commands into the navigation console, Spock engaged the auto-pilot, pressed another button to lower the cabin's lights slightly and leaned back into the chair. "Computer," he commanded the machine again, "access Commander Spock's music archive, file number 1006, albums Argue With A Tree, Foiled Live, Ugly Side and Things We Do At Night. Play in chronological order." Spock watched the star field slip by outside as the raspy, gravely voice of the singer floated through the air inside.

Not for the first time, Spock was grateful that the Captain and Mr Scott had allowed him to download an abbreviated version of his expansive personal music collection into all the shuttlecraft's databases. The archive was extensive enough that almost every genre of Terran music was represented and it could still take weeks to make it through its entirety; his master playlist stored on hundreds and hundreds of data tapes could take years to complete. It wasn't just his executive privilege that allowed him the luxury of passing the time by listening to music in the shuttle, he'd granted permission for any crewmen to access the files whenever the shuttles were being utilized.

The monotony of the doldrums between solar systems traversed via shuttlecraft was draining, exhausting even, despite the constant monitoring of the navigation displays and the ambient background music had prevented more than one piloting crew from falling asleep at the consoles.

Spock was indifferent to the monotony, to the mundane. It often allowed for his mind to mull over whatever mathematical equation his junior officers had deemed unsolvable, or logistical nightmare Mr Scott and his engineers were attempting to solve, to calculate whatever opposing astronomical odds it would take to get the ship out of whatever danger it was facing, or wrestling with the illogic of tamping down the not-entirely-unwelcome emotional attachment he was developing to Nurse Chapel.

He reclined further back into the chair, hiked his right leg up to prop it against the console, leaned forward again to stretch out the muscles of his right hip. He'd been in the gym yesterday when Mr Riley's ion mallet slipped from his hands as he was struck mid-swing, sending it careening through the air to ricochet off the bulkhead and into Spock as he'd been rolling out of the *navorkot* maneuver of *Suus Mahna*. The Captain and Dr McCoy were close to banning Parrises Squares from ever being played on the Enterprise again, he'd been the seventh injury from the game in the four months since it had been introduced. Minor as it was, Spock acknowledged that McCoy was, indeed, correct and that he'd have a nasty bruise and soreness in the muscles.

With the auto-pilot engaged, the normal whirs and blips from the instrument panels were silent and nothing else filled the air except the sounds of Spock's own breathing and the music from the comm panel.

*// I wish I could go to sleep and wake up with amnesia,  
And try to forget the things that I've done/*

He swung his leg back down off the console, sat up ramrod straight in the chair. "Computer," he barked at the unit. "Pause playback. Amend

previous request." He thought for a moment, running through the pre-programmed catalogue and the amount of time left he had to travel. "Access file number 1801, miscellaneous performances. Play audio recordings of Queen Live Aid, 2022 Super Bowl halftime show, 2007 Super Bowl halftime show, Nirvana Unplugged, keep Things We Do At Night."

Trying to forget what he'd done was exactly what he'd been trying to do for two days.

He was a murderer.

No amount of meditation could calm the reeling in his mind that he had been the one that had given the order to Mr Scott to beam the Tribbles onto the Klingon ship. Every Vulcan and Human voice in his head was screaming that he'd condemned the innocent creatures to violent, painful deaths.

Pests they were, yes. But they were still living and breathing entities deserving of humane treatment and he'd sent them away to be slaughtered.

Every moment these last two days not spent pondering, postulating, calculating or hypothesizing left his mind to conjure up ever-increasing horrific scenarios in which those poor Tribbles were being tortured.

It was complete and utter bullshit that Dr McCoy teased Spock that he didn't have an imagination. He most certainly did have one, a *very* over-active one, and it'd been running rampant. Spock was well aware that he was being what Lt Uhura classified as a "certified grade a asshole" since departing Station K7; when the opportunity arose for a solitary mission, he'd practically jumped at the chance to get away from all those scrutinizing, accusatory glances, even if those glances were just figments of that imagination.

All indications that this side mission to Pâton Mir were that it would be of such a routine nature that he'd be able maintain a semi-meditative state while performing his duties, that he'd be able to "reset," as it was, his guilt and anxiety over his cruel treatment of the Tribbles.

At least he hoped that would be the case.

Spock reclined back in the chair again, letting Freddie Mercury's siren song wash over him. Not for the first time he wondered what it would be like to actually *be* at Wembley Stadium to witness this in-person. With the intermix formula he and Mr Scott had created, it was possible, of course; he and Uhura, his fellow insatiable music connoisseur, had even gone so far as to devise a covert plan should the opportunity ever arise. But he, Captain Kirk and the rest of the crew of the Enterprise already had thick files of violations stored at the Department of Temporal Investigations' records section that self-indulgence was both highly illogical and out of the question.

Spock was brought out of his musings by the alert of unexpected turbulence. He disengaged the auto-pilot, brought the lights back up to their full illumination and studied the displays before him. The ion storm front had gathered strength and speed, the Galileo was on a direct intercept course with the leading edge.

"Shit!" he muted the music, calculated a new trajectory, tapped the new coordinates into the navigation console. "Galileo to Enterprise. Galileo to Enterprise. Come in Enterprise." The ship was likely out of range of the shuttle's shorter transmitting capabilities by now. He refused to let the memory of the last time he called for help from this shuttle to surface.

"Galileo to Enterprise. Come in Enterprise."

(A/N: Lyrics are from Blue October's *Amnesia*.)

## Black Dog

"Galileo to Enterprise. Come in Enterprise."

Spock continued this mantra, knowing full well it's futility. The Enterprise was well on her way to the rendezvous point with the Ginsburg. It would be sixteen point six three hours before the vessel was within range to receive the already paltry signal from the shuttle. He had, suddenly, the idea to redirect the transmission towards the subspace relay just on the outskirts of the Remault system, bouncing it from one relay to the next. Lt Uhura's keen Vulcan-esque hearing would pick out and identify his call for help well before that sixteen point six three hour mark, expediting the Enterprise's rendezvous time.

His hands flew across the instrument console, recalculating and reprogramming his previous commands. This was the latest generation of the F class shuttlecraft, a pseudo-prototype for future models currently sitting as schematics and blue prints on draft tables at the Glenn facility back on Earth. It was capable of short bursts of warp factor one, through Mr Scott's tinkering and adjustments, *this* new and improved Galileo...Spock was none-too-thrilled at the new shuttle's recycled name...was able to achieve a warp factor of at least two. His new course and speed set, he pressed down on the toggle that initiated the craft's warp drive. Baring any deviations from its current trajectory, the Galileo would *just* narrowly enter Pâton Mir's atmosphere a scant ten minutes before the storm front.

The storm, however, possessed the same predictably unpredictable quality most ionic fronts did and gathered even more speed as the shuttle entered the planet's gravity well. Every instrument used for navigation screamed wildly out of control, the last thing Spock remembered before blacking out from the excessive speed and force pulling him down was his ability to orient the craft's nose end up to an almost forty degree angle and being thrust forward into the panel as it plowed through dense thickets of evergreen-like trees.

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It was an indeterminate amount of time later when Spock regained consciousness. He quickly surveyed his surroundings.

The overhead lighting was out, several consoles sizzled and sparked. The emergency lighting made it difficult to see anything beyond a couple meters, but Spock could see the sizable dent in the port side bulkhead where the other pilot's chair would be. There were spider webbing cracks across both windows, and besides the one he'd been sitting in, all the seats in the cabin were strewn in every direction.

He took stock of himself next. He felt the trail of blood streaming down the right side of his temple, past his ear and jawline to trickle down onto the blue of his singed uniform tunic. He probed the gash with shaky fingers, hissing through his teeth at the sharp pain that stabbed across his forehead and down his cheek when he touched the area. Dermal regenerators weren't standard equipment contained within the emergency medikit stored aboard shuttlecraft, the gash in his skin felt deep enough that it would likely leave an unsightly scar should it be more than a couple days without proper treatment. The darkness in the cabin made it hard to see, but even in the dimness Spock's more-sensitive vision was tunneled and bleary. He was dizzy and nauseated and his head swam in so many circles all at once. He winced at the headache pounding from the rent in his forehead, he was positive he was concussed; not severely, but enough that he was reluctant to rise to his feet.

The electrical popping coming from the instrument panels started growing in intensity and frequency. Spock lurched his aching body to the rear of the main cabin to retrieve the fire extinguishing unit. Aiming the barrel of the device towards the consoles, he fingered the trigger, dousing the buttons and toggles and exposed wiring in aerosolized foam before they all ignited to a degree he wouldn't be able to effect repairs. He would have to wait for the material to dry and flake away before he could assess the damage. He could only hope that the emergency beacon had engaged as programmed when the shuttle impacted with the planet's surface.

He reached next for the medikit, rummaged through the various assortment of compression bandages, splints, hypos and ampules of pharmaceuticals. Finally at the bottom of the kit he found the vials of sublingual anti-nausea and anti-inflammatory medications; placing two of each under his tongue, Spock waited for them to take effect. Within minutes the nausea subsided and the headache decreased to a dull roar, he recalled the mental disciplines he needed to *force* the vertigo to dissipate.

Feeling a slight more functional, Spock holstered a phaser, slung his tricorder over his shoulder and exited the craft to take stock of the external damage and attempt to ascertain just where in the hell he'd crashed.

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The suborbital survey reports suggested Pâton Mir was picturesque, serene, bucolic. The suborbital survey reports did not remotely begin to convey the sheer beauty of the planet.

Even through his doubled and blurry vision, that was slowly returning to more normal, Spock was struck in awe of his surroundings. While he did not romanticize such an awesome landscape as the one that spread before him, he did find the views to be exquisite.

Off in the far distant, snow capped mountains towered into the slightly blue-green sky, puffy cumulus clouds obscuring the very tops of their summits. To his right the craggy slabs of purple-brown cliffs rose 15.24 meters above his head, stringy puce-colored lichens spilling over from their plateaus. Not far, but unseen from his vantage point in the clearing he stood in, he could hear a river sluicing through. Gigantic evergreens, whose size reminded him of the sequoias back on Earth, carpeted most of the rest of the horizon. Spock followed two scorched tracks through the trees; one made by the Galileo during its free fall descent, the other by, he presumed, the transport when it crashed.

Spock focused his tricorder towards the direction the transport's inertia would have taken it. There, 152.4 meters away the instrument registered the presence of tritanium, the downed transport. He followed the trail around an outcropping of those same purple-brown boulders as the cliff sides. He stopped short at the sight of the crumpled hulk of twisted hull wedged between two more slabs. The front half of the craft was completely obliterated, he surmised that that was where the Andorians had recovered the six bodies. The remaining half, where the living spaces were located, appeared relatively intact, save for minor dents in the hull.

The dizziness now gone, his vision back to normal and the headache a dull throbbing, Spock climbed his way through the mangled hatch into what *had been* the corridor connecting the two halves of the transport. His uniform tunic snagged on a piece of jagged bulkhead jutting into the opening, tearing it from shoulder to elbow. Inside he pulled the ruined garment over his head. Rather than discard it, he knotted the torn and singed sleeves about his waist. He would throw it back on on his way out, lest his skin also be ripped to shreds.

Standing in the center of the twisted corridor, Spock swung the tricorder in the direction of the bridge where the flight recorder was located. The emergency bulkheads had engaged, the instrument's sensors indicated the override mechanism was also damaged. It would take the portable laser torch in the shuttle to burn through the metal doors.

Sixteen hours wouldn't even begin to be enough time.

Spock turned at the sounds of scraping and falling debris coming from the aft section of the ship. He nearly turned away, supposing they had been made by the subtle shifting of the deck plates when he'd stepped inside, but another crash suggested otherwise. He trained his sensors to the rear of the vessel, they indicated the presence of a life form of *some sort*, there was too much detritus and warped metal to get a precise reading as to what *exactly* it was.

"Commander Spock of the USS Enterprise!" he called out. It was both illogical and potentially dangerous to vocalize his presence, it was unclear as to if the biological signs he picked up belonged to anything sentient, but it had been instinctual and hearing his own voice somehow eased the sense of forboding attempting to creep in. "I am Commander Spock of the USS Enterprise!" he yelled to the air again, "I am armed! Please, show yourself!"

He spotted movement just to the inside of what used to be the galley. He'd only caught a fleeting glance as a small reddish-brown body scurried behind what had once been a white linen tablecloth flagging over a fallen cabinet. Out of the interference from the bow's destruction, his tricorder was finally able to get a reading on the hiding entity. Spock's brows rose almost into his hairline at the result, causing the gash to start oozing again slightly. "What in the hell?!?!"

Spock crouched down before the curtained cabinet, he heard trembling coming from behind the fabric. He slowly pulled the cloth back, the vibrant blue-green irised and flight-induced wide pupiled eyes of a juvenile Terran canine stared back at him in terror.

'Spock, you jackass, you have your phaser pointed at a puppy,' he admonished himself.

He holstered said phaser, folded his long legs to sit cross-legged slightly to the side of the cabinet's opening and extended his hand out for the creature to sniff. "I will not harm you, little one," he said quietly.

Slowly, cautiously the young beast crept out from the security of her impromptu hideaway. Gawky foot by gawky foot she skulked closer to Spock's outstretched hand. She wiggled her brown nose once, twice at the long fingers, flicked her tongue out at their tips and inched closer.

Spock lowered his hand further to the ground. "That's it. I will not harm you," he whispered again. He watched in quiet satisfaction as the young animal worked over whether he was friend or foe and deciding that he was, indeed, friend slinked further towards him. She was very young, perhaps no more than ten weeks of age. Spock observed her coloration and markings, determined that she was a red and rust variation of the Doberman Pinscher breed. He'd met only one of the breed, on a trip to Earth visiting one of his cousins. That beast had taken a liking to him, following him wherever he went. Spock, in turn, had developed an appreciation for the graceful and goofy creature.

He resisted the urge to smile when *this* Dobermann finally concluded he was safe and climbed the rest of the way into his lap. She snaked her tongue out to plant excessive licks along his neck and underside of his chin. She yelped in pain when he placed his hand along her flank. Spock looked down at his young charge, the skin of the left side of her flank was filleted open and peeling backwards, the edges blackened with loss of blood flow and the stench of infection.

Spock untied the tunic from around his waist, wrapped it carefully around the dog's small body. Slowly he rose, cradling the pup close to his chest. "Come with me *Pi'skilsu*, you are injured."

(A/N: *Pi'skilsu*- "little fighter" in Vulcan.)

## Butterfly

Once freed from the confines of her mangled prison and outside for the first time in days, the little dog started squirming herself from her swaddling. She wriggled her head and front paws free, began nibbling at the thumb and fingers that held her in place with excessively sharp, needle point teeth.

Spock jerked his hand away when her tiny fangs connected with the fleshy purlicue between his left thumb and index finger, nearly dropping her almost two meters to the ground. Her oral assault on his hands continued and he hissed "ouch! Damn! That one *hurt!*" when her jaws snapped closed onto the heel of his right hand. He unwrapped her the remainder of the way, bent down and released the tiny land piranha into the grass by his feet. If she was uninjured enough to bite him, she was uninjured enough to walk. He rolled his eyes as she proceeded then to bounce around his legs shrilly barking, biting at his boot heels and clumsily springing up to tug at the hem of his uniform trousers. His right brow arched up in mirth as the beast actually began growling with a mouthful of material, twisting and pulling in the opposite direction.

He was even more amused as the pup's attention wavered from him to a turquoise winged-insectoid similar in size and appearance to a Terran Monarch butterfly as it fluttered by her snout. He watched as she quietly stalked the arachnid on its leafy perch, bound towards it in a splay of long, gangly legs, yip when it teased just beyond her gaping maw and start the dance over again when the invertebrate landed on another flowering shrub. He pondered her presence on the transport; whether she'd been brought by one of the crew to accompany him on the survey or, more likely, as cargo to be shipped to another colony, he would check the transport's manifest again when he got the Galileo's computer back up and running.

Spock suspected that the young canine had probably not had much exposure to a nature environment. Though clearly injured and in need of medical attention, she was happily still chasing the Miran butterfly, pink tongue lolling from the side of her open mouth and gyrating nub of a tail wiggling spastically. He resisted the urge to grin when the insect landed on the tip of her elongated snout, forcing her to stare it down almost cross-eyed. He rolled his eyes again as she began snapping at the air, attempting to dislodge the bug from her nose. Her long tongue was successful, curling up and over to pull the butterfly into her mouth only to roll it back out again a moment later when delicate wings fluttered against the inside of her mouth. If dogs could glare at something in contempt, Spock was certain that this pup was surely doing so as her prey flew off.

His new impromptu companion pranced her way back to sit at his feet. Her auburn wedge-shaped head flexed upwards on a long, graceful neck and green-blue eyes stared into his dark brown ones. He felt as if the beast was staring directly into his katra. "Are you quite finished chasing insects?" he asked, staring back at her with the same intensity and not feeling the least bit illogical for talking to a dog. She bounded up again to claw her now-muddied paws against his shins. With the fervor of exploring the new world before her now worn off, she turned her attention to the wound on her side. Spock reached down immediately to wrap her again in his discarded tunic. He refused to reciprocate when the puppy nuzzled her head into his throat as he carried her the short distance to the shuttle.

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Enough time had elapsed for the fire resistant foam to have dried on the instrument panels. Spock knew from his mission briefing that nighttime would be approaching in three point seven six hours and he wanted the shuttle's interior to at least be partially illuminated. He wiped the flaking material from the main console, relieved to discover that the backup systems were mostly functional, that he needed to perform a simple crosswire to tap into the craft's battery reserves. That task completed he checked to make sure the pup wasn't off getting into anything vital, he found her sitting patiently to the side, watching him. He surveyed next the status of the emergency beacon, he was relieved more than he was willing to admit that it was functioning properly and transmitting its preprogrammed distress signal.

Finally he turned his attention to his young dog...he supposed he would have to come up with something to call her in the interim, dog was impolite, even if she was a dog. He lowered himself down to sit cross-legged, the bone bruise in his hip was beginning to throb again as was the cut along his temple. He recalled the mental disciplines for pain control to tamp down on the dull droning from both. He allowed a quiet hum of relief to escape as the pup climbed over his legs to curl herself into his lap, resting her head on his inner thigh, causing the taut muscles to stretch satisfactorily.

Spock pulled out each of the items of the medikit piece by piece, it's supplies were rudimentary at best. This Galileo had been in service less than a month, Spock had the honor of taking it on its maiden voyage. 'Hooray for me,' he thought with more contempt for an inanimate object than he should have. Mr Scott had taken carte blanche priority to bring the shuttle up to par with his standards, Dr McCoy hadn't had the opportunity to ensure that the medical supplies onboard met up with *his*. There were, however, instruments that would prove useful in helping Spock close the puppy's wound. He tore open the sterile drape from the bottom of the kit, atop it he placed a portable UV sterilizing pen, small bottle of a wound irrigation solution and a cassette of filament swagged onto a needle to be used as suture should such an emergency arise. He quirked his brow upwards, McCoy would be absolutely livid if he knew he was using *suture*, such an act was archaic and taboo for the CMO; but this *was* just an emergency medikit and all that Spock had at his disposal.

The puppy...he still was mulling over temporary names...crawled her front half towards the setup, curious to the oddly-scented items. Knowing there were no anesthetic agents contained within the kit, he was unsure if any would have been suitable for such a little sprite of a being anyway, Spock chose the only other option available to him. "I'm sorry, *tal-kam*, I have very little at my disposal at this time," he whispered with a hint of sadness in his voice. He reached his hand out to her, placed it at the juncture where her long neck connected to her slight shoulders and squeezed. He watched as knobby-kneed legs wobbled out from beneath her.

Unsure of how long a neck pinch would last on a non-humanoid being, Spock made quick work of turning the young creature to lay on her right side. Using the sharpened edge of the small knife also contained in the emergency survival gear, he debrided the blackened skin until bright red blood oozed onto his fingers. He popped the seal of the bottle of irrigation and flushed as many of the particles of dust, dirt and grime he could find from the inner layers of the wound. The UV light was never designed to sterilize such a large area in relation to the surface of viable skin, but Spock drained it's power source to its end disinfecting the gash. He was most apprehensive of this last step, he'd only performed basic suture technique during his survival training in the Academy. He finished tying a by-no-means-perfect-but-still-serviceable

surgeon's knot as his puppy started stirring.

Spock was unprepared for the wailing, screeching beast that awoke.

He winced at the high-pitched screaming that lanced through his hyper-sensitive hearing. He scooped up the thrashing pup and pulled her tight against him. "Shhhhhh, *tal-kam*, shhhhhh," he gently stroked her head and neck. "That's it. Good. Relax." He held her to his chest until he felt her tiny body going slack in his arms. He released his hold of her to place her back in the hollow of his crossed legs as he went about cleaning up the mess he'd made. She began playfully nipping at his hands again as they passed over her head. This time Spock was less annoyed and occasionally tweaked her long nose between two fingers, giving it an ever-so-slight shake. Soon the puppy was revitalized and Spock watched, with no small amount of levity, as she resumed her game of tug-of-war with his pant leg.

(A/N: *Tal-kam*- "my dear" in Vulcan.)

Symbiotic

The setting of the Miran sun brought with it a brisk chill that, while still within his tolerance level, was more insufferable than Spock preferred. Even with the emergency backups engaged, the life support systems inside the cabin were operating at their bare minimums and he was expecting the interior temperature to drop significantly throughout the night.

The puppy had started shivering almost immediately after he'd carried her back inside after bringing her outside with him to survey for any external damage that would hamper the environmental controls from performing their duties. He'd looked over at the tattered remains of his uniform tunic slung over the arm of an upright chair, a glance from the edge of his periphery at her bony, shivering body and he'd reached for the now useless-to-him garment.

Spock could not help but admire his handiwork at the closure of her wound as he struggled with the beast to slide her spindly front legs through the holes he'd cut in the sleeve of the shirt. He begrudgingly admitted that the science division blue complimented the young dog's rich mahogany fur in an appealing way, that his gold Commander's stripes highlighted the amber flecks in her blue-green eyes. She was relentless in her pulling of his pant leg, so he'd fashioned the remainder of the fabric into a crude braided rope and watched with considerable concern that she would knock herself out with the knotted ends as she ferociously shook her new toy with gusto.

While coming into contact with items of questionable moisture content was naturally essential in his role as a scientist and explorer, Spock could not deny the inner repulsion he'd felt at the saliva-soaked rope the dog had flung into his lap. He was mostly successful at hiding the face of disgust he made at the wet *splat* the rope made as it connected with the opposite bulkhead when he'd whipped it away as fast as she'd thrown it at him.

The temperature outside was, indeed, decreasing rapidly. Spock cleared away the debris from the center of the cabin. He was fortunate; upon cursory examination, it appeared that the Galileo sustained minimal damage in the crash. There was of course, some structural damage, but none so far as he surmised would prevent the shuttle from taking off again. Internally it looked as if a fair amount of circuitry was still functional, a few more rewirings and bypassing of non-critical systems and he would have the computer operational again. Establishing communications would be his first priority. For now his hip had begun to tighten up and throb again, he could feel the gash above his eye becoming inflamed and the headache he'd come to with pounding with increased ferocity.

In the center of the cabin he placed the portable heater from the survival kit into its dock and activated the thermal filament. It would take some time for the device to reach its maximum temperature, and that certainly wouldn't heat the entire cabin, but the 3 meter radius around the coil would be quite comfortable indeed. He monitored his pup's...the pup's...whereabouts while he set up the inflatable field mattress that would serve as his bed for the night.

She currently held the rope as a ring in her mouth, covering her eyes and gleefully prancing in a circle just on the other side of the coil. She was growling and yapping happily away, intermittently tossing her head to each side as if she were immobilizing her braided blue prey.

Spock marveled at her sheer joy about her life these last few hours with him.

He set about next taking stock of the emergency rations. A realization hit him suddenly and he chastised himself for not thinking of it before dark totally set in.

What was the dog to eat?

There was plenty of water to share between the two of them, the top lid of the survival kit currently served as an adequate enough bowl for the puppy's long tongue to lap water from, the canteen filled with his evening's ration sat just on the chilled side of his bedroll. Spock inspected the MREs contained within the gear. Of course there weren't any vegetarian options included, there'd been no reason to believe that the need for food rations would be needed, therefore the pre-packed survival gear included regulation supplies. He cast a dubious glance at one of the freeze-dried meals, he doubted it's palatability even for a *dog*.

The puppy's stomach took over her desire to keep whacking her toy against every imaginable surface when she heard the crinkling of the wrapper from the protein bar Spock held in his hands. She plopped herself down directly in front of his criss-crossed legs, her new toy forgotten, to stare directly into his *katra*.

Spock alternated between breaking off pieces of the bar for himself and the young dog. "I am sorry, little one. This is the only adequate nutrient source I can provide at the moment," he apologized to his dinner companion. He revised his agenda for tomorrow's morning, he would go back over to the transport at first light and search for anything suitable to sustain *her*. Two bites into the protein bar, Spock surrendered the remainder over to the pup's jaws working their way through the tough emergency ration. He eyed the stack still contained within the kit; in his self-recriminating state, he'd been fasting the last two days, he supposed a few more wouldn't prove *too* deleterious.

He watched the juvenile dog gnaw at bar, holding it between her gigantic front paws and chomping it between her scissor-like jaws. Despite her too-thin condition, Spock found her to be quite a stunning specimen. He'd been fascinated even in his own youth at the resourcefulness of Humans in their adeptness at breeding canines for specific duties. The variety of everything from music to native fauna was something Spock had always secretly admired about his Terran ancestry.

He did allow for the small half smile to creep unto his lips as the puppy grunted and growled at her dinner. She did have quite an amusing charm. He pondered over temporary names for the beast. The *perfect* choice popped into his head.

Pola.

She who is determined to have the last word.

Pola, with her vociferous nature, the moniker seemed entirely appropriate.

Spock cleared away the remnants of their dinner, stashed everything up and away from prowling piranha puppy teeth and stood sentinel at Pola's last venture outside for the night. He ingested two more of the anti-inflammatory strips before settling back onto the field mattress. He'd folded a set of survival blankets into a makeshift bed for Pola near the head of his, but Spock did not correct his young charge when she slithered under his own blanket to curl herself into a tiny burgundy and blue colored ball against his chest.

This time when she nuzzled her long snout against his ear, Spock didn't recoil. He repositioned his fatigued and aching body to lay on his side, pulling Pola closer into his chest and wrapping his arm protectively around her skinny body.

"Yuk-tor, Pola-kam. Tomorrow I shall endeavor to get us home," he yawned as the puppy's warm body and soft, steady heartbeat lulled him into the first sleep he'd had since leaving Station K7.

(A/N: *Yuk-tor* means "sleep" in Vulcan.)

Everyday People

"*Cargo Bay t' Bridge,*" Scotty's thick brogue sounded over the intercom on the arm of the chair.

Kirk, having very little else to do but sit idly by as the crew about him flitted in and out of the turbolift doors, depressed the speaker's toggle before the communique was even finished being received. Cutting through the bottom third of the forward view screen, one of Starbase 867's two docking pylons arced across the visual field. Just on the other side of the silver armature, the Ginsburg mirrored the Enterprise's docked position. "Bridge here, what's our status, Scotty?"

Kirk *hated* sitting in the Captain's chair with nothing else to do besides watch his crew perform their duties with top efficiency. Rendezvous missions such as this left him without his usual responsibilities as Captain. Normally he'd be pouring over crew manifests or other such everyday ship's minutiae with Spock in either of their cabin's. He much preferred holding their meetings in Spock's quarters versus his own; while not specifically against regulations, the Vulcan tapestries and assorted weaponry adorning the walls were certainly unorthodox, which somehow still gave the small sanctum a cozy yet otherworldly feel. Besides, Spock's 3D chess set was in far better condition than his and his Vulcan friend had spent a significant amount of credits on a professional-grade sound system from which to play his cherished music collection through.

"*Th' last o' th' bio samples are bein' loaded on t' an anti-grav unit as we speak, Cap'n. Soon's we get word from th' Notorious' cargo crew, we can shove off. Should be nae more than twenty minutes.*"

Kirk pulled at his bottom lip with his thumb and forefinger as he listened to Scotty's report. Even though it's official designation was *USS Ginsburg NCC 1757*, most of the Fleet lovingly referred to the vessel by the alias of her honored namesake. "Very good Scotty, inform Chekov when you get final confirmation of that load's reception," he depressed the toggle again, severing the connection to his Chief Engineer below decks. He swiveled his chair slightly in the direction of his young navigator. "Ensign Chekov, lay in your course back to Pâton Mir as soon as you get word from Scotty."

Chekov, who'd been diligently sketching away in the white-papered book that he carried with him whenever he was off duty, set the pad on the deck behind him to lay in his previously plotted out course. Kirk picked up the sketch book when the set of pencils Chekov had been using rolled to the base of his chair. He flipped through the pages, marveling at the eye-popping illustrations coming to life on the paper. There'd been no reason for his greenhorn ensign to remain as hyper-vigilant at his station as required when the ship was in motion, so Kirk often allowed for diversions from in-dock monotony to be performed at the crews' stations. Uhura always graced the bridge with the sound of her melodious voice, Chekov always was drawing; Kirk admitted that the kid was a hell of an artist, if he ever needed a change in careers, he hoped Pavel would consider something in the illustrating field.

"Course laid in Keptin," the navigator relayed. He sheepishly accepted his book back from Kirk's outstretched hand.

Kirk gave a reassuring grin to his young officer, "I didn't mean to snoop, Ensign, you're a fantastic artist." He gave his subordinate officer a mischievous wink, "but I don't think you got Lt Nygn's hair *quite* right. I won't tell her if you don't."

Chekov blushed at least four shades of red at the mention of Commander Spock's second-in-command of the science department. "Yes Sair. Thank you Sair."

Kirk swiveled his chair around towards Uhura's station, where she'd been half singing to herself, half to the rest of the bridge crew. "Who was that you were singing Lieutenant? The Cranberries?" Uhura could sing Klingon operas, accompanied by Spock on his lyre or guitar and every member of the crew would just eat up every second of the performance.

In fact, they did. Uhura and Spock performed together weekly. The rec room was always standing room only, their "concerts" were wildly popular and always piped through the ship wide communication system.

Uhura flashed him one of her toothy grins that were as sought after as her melodious voice. "Yes Sir! Mr Spock was on a bit of an Irish rock band kick before we arrived at Station K7. You've never *truly* heard Flogging Molly until you've heard them played on a Vulcan lyre."

Kirk returned her grin with one of his own, far be it from him to give critique on his First Officer's outlandishly eccentric music tastes; Spock had once described the variety as going from crying...rhetorically, of course...into a glass of wine during one song to throwing up ancient street gang signs the next. Kirk had little doubt that the Vulcan was *also* fluent in those accompanying hand gestures. "Lieutenant, page Mr Sulu and have him report back to the bridge. We're shipping out in a few minutes."

Uhura barely managed to choke back her snort of amusement. "'Ru will be up shortly. Dr McCoy's fixing his hand. Audrey Twoey tried eating him again," her giggling was just as infectiously pleasing to listen to as her singing.

More than once Spock had advised the helmsman and hobby botanist against bringing a Hoovallan Death Plant aboard.

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Halfway through the six hour sail back to the Remault system, Uhura picked up the first of the faint signals Spock had transmitted to ping along the network of subspace relays. "Captain," her voice betrayed the tinge of worry she attempted to keep from creeping in, "I'm receiving a message from Mr Spock, it sounds like a distress signal."

Kirk whirled around in his chair with such force he nearly gave himself whiplash, "put it on audio Lieutenant."

"It's weak, Sir. I think he bounced the signal along the relays. Gimme a minute."

Kirk watched with carefully concealed worry as Uhura's graceful fingers deftly played across her communications panel. The background blips

and beeps gave way to a sizzling crackle of static, punctuated by clipped snippets of Spock's deep baritone.

*Gali...terprise...Ga...to...En...ion storm...vanc...rapidly...helm contr...coordinates 841...973 by...*

Then nothing, silence.

"Mr Sulu, increase speed to warp six!"

## Riders On the Storm

"Approaching the Remault system, Captain. We'll be in orbit around Pâton in twenty-seven minutes," Sulu called up to the man drumming his fingers impatiently on the arm of the chair behind and slightly up from him. His own fingers, which normally skated effortlessly across the instrument panel before him, clumsily poked at the buttons and dials that would soon be requiring precise adjustments to achieve the fine balance needed between maintaining a stable geosynchronous orbit or slipping too far into the atmosphere and risking severe thermal damage. The thin splints holding the ring and pinky fingers of his right hand together for added support during the healing process created another stress into an already anxiety-ridden aura on the bridge.

For reason other than his obvious desire to see his commanding officer safely back aboard, Sulu *hoped* that Pavel had been able to triangulate Spock's position from the staticky message he had sent.

That *fucking* plant was holding the greenhouse hostage.

Phasers were ineffective in subduing the aggressive, carnivorous, semi-sentient hell-spawn. The only thing now that would squash the demon-seed's hostile takeover of the botany lab would be the mere presence of the Vulcan in the same airspace.

In unity with at least half of the crew...regardless of gender, non-gender, species, or *phylum* for that matter, the plant absolutely swooned over Spock's presence. The damn thing practically oozed reproductive seeds whenever the man walked into the room.

For the briefest of nanoseconds, Sulu had considered suggesting just that to Commanders Spock and Scott when they'd been brainstorming ideas on how to rid the Enterprise of the Tribbles. The little shoots breaking through the soil were as vicious as their parent plants and tenfold as voraciously ravenous.

Watching how withdrawn Spock had become after implementing their eventual solution, Sulu himself felt equally as guilty for even having the thought.

"Keptin! Sair!" Chekov called from the science station above. There was the briefest of twinges of panic in the young man's voice. Whenever Spock wasn't manning the science station, Chekov was, and absorbing every nuance and technique for scientific exploration he could from his mentor. The young ensign was almost as proficient at finessing the instruments to do his bidding as their true master. "Sensors are detecting ionic interference 800,000,000 kilometers ahead!"

Kirk ceased his nervous fidgeting to swivel his chair in the direction of the science station. "Ionic interference? What kind of ionic interference?" That would explain the garbled message. He could only assume the Galileo got caught in the aforementioned ion interference and Spock had transmitted before communications were completely blacked out.

"*Khristos!*" Chekov's dark eyes shown huge and wide in the blue light cast off from the scanner he was standing over. "Sair, zhis interference is indicative of a storm front, a *huge* storm front. And wery, wery intense."

Kirk joined his budding science officer at the console. "How intense, Ensign?" There was more unease in his voice than what he would have liked to have been heard publicly. Worry from experience with ion storms played the scenario in his head that Spock was thrown wildly off course by the eddies and currents embedded within the storm front.

"I am unsure, Keptin. Even at zhis distance sensors are being affected. I can't get an accurate measurement of zhe storm's size or intensity, but it's big, Sair. I estimate it to be at *least* 700,000 kilometers wide on all axis."

"700,000 kilometers?" Kirk's dirty blonde eye brows shot up his forehead in close imitation to the gesture that would have been the matching response from his First Officer. He wasn't privy to all the relevant data regarding ionic storm metrics, but he was pretty sure that was the largest storm that had thus far been measured.

"Yes Sair. Zhere is no record of a storm anywhere near as big," Chekov confirmed Kirk's musing observation. "And Sair, vhat readings we can get indicate zhat zhe storm has all zhe properties of a category 5 ionic hurricane according to zhe Saffir AU scale."

"A cat five ionic hurricane!" Kirk turned to stare at the streaks of star field taking up the viewscreen.

Finding a needle in a haystack would be child's play.

# Kryptonite

The handful of instances where he'd had occasion to find use of a field bedroll, Spock had awoken stiff and unrested. Even the hearty Vulcan physique preferred a plush cushiony surface to mould into during times of fatigue. Rousing awake this morning, Spock discovered that while he was, indeed, still stiff...no thanks to his previous injuries...he felt remarkably rejuvenated.

He distinctly recalled curling his long frame around Pola's as she balled her small body into the crook where his shoulder and torso connected just before succumbing to his exhaustion. He awoke, however, sprawled on his back across the surface of the mattress with his little furry companion splayed aloft his chest, her snout tucked firmly behind his right ear, and her tiny puffs of breath lightly tickling his hair against the skin there. His arms were hugging the small dog tight against him, he felt her soft, regular heartbeat thumping away and nearly lulling him back into slumber.

It was tempting, oh so tempting, to allow his head to fall sideways and rest his cheek against Pola's, the residual aching of his head wound be damned. Instead, without so much as jostling the tiny body atop his, he stretched out the last of the fatigue's lazy tendrils holding him under. Both the Vulcan and Human halves of his being acknowledged the satisfaction of feeling each of his vertebrae popping back into proper alignment.

Pola, sensing the subtle movement of her pillow, slowly stirred awake as well. Spock took inexplicable delight in watching her spindly legs stretch out before his eyes, culminating in the separation of each of her long phalanges and soft grunt of a yawn.

Before the impulse of her biological functions fired along the synapses from bladder to brain, Spock scooped up his juvenile beast and stepped with her outside in the morning Miran sun.

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The quick trip over to the transport had proven to be a successful venture for both Spock and Pola. The young beast had been hesitant to follow him inside the downed metal box that had held her captive for over a solar week. But her instinct to follow him overpowered her trepidation and she climbed gracelessly over and around the debris scattered across the deck to join him at his feet.

Once inside she skittered around piles of detritus and the unfortunate evidence of her entrapment inside the vessel. She'd managed to scavenge meager scraps from leftover meals toppled over in the crash. But those scant meals lasted no more than two days, following which she'd stalked whatever vermin that had managed to make it inside through the numerous holes in the front half of the hull. Most of her attempts at hunting prey were unsuccessful and she'd spent each night howling in hunger, fear and loneliness.

Spock swept his tricorder across the expanse of the ruined galley. The instrument registered a slight power signature in the vicinity of what *used* to be a prep area from where meals were retrieved. His right brow quirked upwards, "Pola, good fortune is on our side this morning," he waved the tricorder at the bank of replicators that looked to be mostly intact. "It appears the power supply for this unit is still functional. I should be able to reroute the system and provide us *both* with adequate sustenance."

It wasn't often that Spock described being hungry as the Human saying of "his stomach began growling" at the thought of food, but he couldn't deny this morning that that was, indeed, what it was doing. He could, of course, employ a mental discipline to dispel the sensation, but he saw no logic in denying his body nutrition any longer.

It took no more than ten minutes for him to perform the necessary repairs to the replicator. During that time Pola had strayed from his sight, although he could still hear her claws clicking against the deck plates. When she returned to his side, she held a floppy grey and blue stuffed Terran *Triceratops horridus* made of a pebbled velveteen fabric between her scissored jaws. It was what Spock presumed what had been one of her toys before the crash and was nearly the same size as her. She pranced around his legs proudly displaying to him her reclaimed quarry.

"We'll play later, Pola," he told his young dog, "right now you need a proper meal."

'I need a proper meal as well,' he thought to himself.

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A *proper* meal wasn't exactly what he would have classified as his breakfast. After selecting an appropriate formula of a protein-rich, semi-raw diet for Pola, he cast aside his routine of a practical meal and *logically* concluded that indulging himself was acceptable given current circumstances. He sat outside the craft savoring the sweetness of Betazoid *Uttaberry* crepes slathered in Vulcan honey and a cup of Terran cinnamon green tea. Pola sat beside him happily crunching away at her own food.

Reemerging after clearing away the remnants of their breakfast, Spock carried out Pola's beloved dinosaur and a small shoulder bag he'd discovered filled with what looked to be the type of felted ball used to play the Terran sport of tennis. He doubted the survey crew would have use of the objects in their research, so he surmised they were meant as more playthings for the puppy.

He was still questioning her presence aboard the transport. Evidence being uncovered suggested she was to be accompanying a member of the crew, but for what reason he was still uncertain.

It was imperative that he get the Galileo's computer up and running, for a multitude of reasons.

Noticing the contents of the bag Spock carried, Pola discarded her plush toy to stare at him with the same ferocity as a *sehlat* at meal time.

"Ah, so these *are* for you? I suspected as such." Spock set the bag down in the grass and threw one of the spheres out into the clearing before them. Pola chased on her gangly legs after the neon orange ball.

It quickly became apparent that he would need to employ the use of more than one of the balls; Pola upon retrieving the previous danced around his feet, teasing him *just* out of reach of his outstretched hand. "So this is the game to be played, hmm?" a slight smile tugged at one corner of his lips. *"Take that you little shit!"* he thought wickedly as he launched the second ball far distant from where he had the first.

It had been mentioned to Spock since joining Starfleet Academy that he possessed a "cannon for an arm" by any number of crewmen that he'd served with. Whenever he was making use of the rec room the same time one of the ship's pick-up flag football games was occurring, there'd invariably be multiple attempts to recruit him into the game. He was naturally exceptionally athletic, and while such competitive tribalistic rituals weren't a part of Vulcan culture...although the Terran sport of baseball was gaining popularity on the planet...they *were* a part of his Human heritage, and his mother had been an accomplished swimmer in her youth. He was partial to the games of basketball and soccer.

A scuffle had nearly broken out one such occurrence when Lt Sulu began arguing with Lt Leslie over which position Spock would be better suited to fill, quarterback or wide receiver. Spock had sided with Leslie, stating that the former required a certain "emotional awareness" to achieve success that he lacked. He'd once again declined participating, but silently agreeing with the possibility of "being the greatest wideout of all time" as Leslie had told Sulu.

A dozen throws into their game and Pola was spent. Her exhaustion was apparent as she dropped both spheres to the ground, her tongue elongated and lolling from the side of her agape mouth. She shuffled tiredly content behind her new person on their way back to the shuttle.

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The *taptapslaptaptapslap* of Spock's hands against the interior panel of the communications console echoed louder than he'd anticipated inside the cramped space. So enraptured by the music that his absent quiet singing of *"...Buddy, you're a young man, hard man. Shouting in the street, gonna take on the world someday. You got blood on your face, you big disgrace. Waving your banner all over the place..."* grew loud enough in amplitude that he roused Pola awake from where she'd been napping against his side.

"I am sorry, Pola," he shrugged at her when she flashed him what could be described as a dirty look for disturbing her. "Freddie Mercury has a profound effect, even on Vulcans."

That was a truer statement than any Vulcan was willing to admit. He didn't pay too close attention to most current trends on his home world, but a growing movement to have Queen banned from every databank on the planet was of great concern to him. And one that he would personally get involved in countering should the need arise.

There were few cultural qualities where Humans surpassed Vulcans, music happened to be just one.

A quick trip with Pola outside revealed a darkening of the skies to the west, indicating an incoming rainstorm.

Fortuitously he'd had to make another run over to the transport and both he and Pola had enough foodstuffs to make it through the remainder of the day.

Back inside, Spock initialized the startup sequence for the instrument panel. Pola was joyously in the middle of the cabin chomping down on her triceratops; with her persistent activation of the grunting mechanism within the toy, he postulated that later he would regret her rediscovering the object.

Both perfectly arched brows shot up almost to his hairline at the readout before him. He turned in disbelief to his unfortunate fellow marooned survivor. "Pola, Tel-kam, it appears we may be stranded here for quite some time..."

(A/N: Freddie Mercury is an intergalactic siren that can make even Vulcans that have achieved *Kolinahr* smile, and I will die on this hill. I do not advocate feeding raw diets, but I figure by the 23rd century, we have a pretty good handle on proper nutrition.)

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