

## Rituals

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by [SLWalker](#)

### Summary

Kirk, Spock and McCoy share a ritual.

Bones rarely joined them while they were playing chess; Jim supposed that the doctor didn't want to intrude on the ritual. Neither he nor Spock minded when crewmates would come up to speak with one or both of them while they played, but mostly they were left alone. It was something Jim didn't fail to appreciate, either -- the relative peace with which to play a game, and have a conversation with his friend. He usually felt more centered and calm after, even when the hours or days before they sat down to share a game had been difficult.

But Bones was with them tonight, sitting on the side and keeping quiet. It had been one of those times; a mission that went bad, cost lives. They'd come through the other side and salvaged their objective, but that didn't make the loss of life just vanish into the haze of history.

No matter how much Jim wished that it was that easy.

Spock seemed the most unruffled of the three, which was no surprise. Both of them, even Bones, knew that it was more façade than fact. The science officer had lost two crewmen, in ways that would have never happened had they been given the right information, and after this game, Spock would be going back to his quarters to compose letters to their families. Jim knew that, because he knew he would be doing the same.

Bones would also be writing letters as the CMO; for anyone who died on this mission, and then yet more letters to those who were wounded badly enough for their families to be notified.

As he pondered his next move, in the silence of the rec hall with his two closest friends keeping silent company, Jim realized that the ritual they were sharing now wasn't the game of chess, but the solemn duty and sad honor of writing letters to families. That in their silence, they were quietly looking for the words that they would hopefully use to explain and even try to comfort those they were writing to. That in their silence, they were quietly looking to each other -- not for words, not for sympathies, but for the simple knowledge that they all needed: That they wouldn't be performing this solemn duty alone tonight.

Deep down, unbidden, he thanked whatever good power there was in the universe that neither man would have to write a letter to his family for him.

His home was already with them.

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