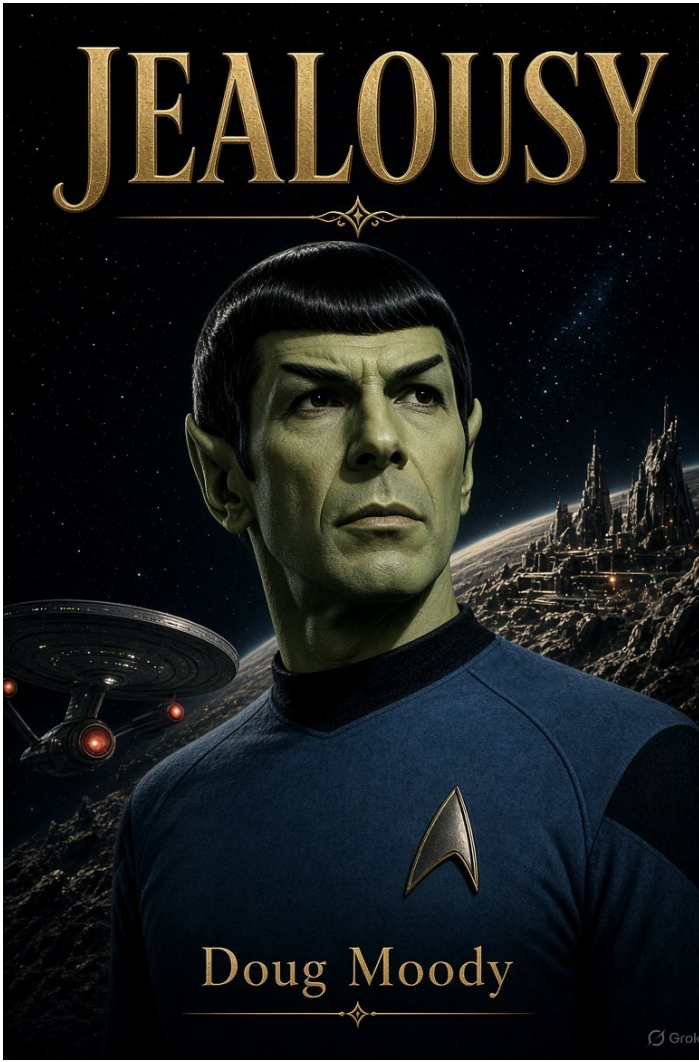
JEALOUSY
Doug Moody
Grok

Jealousy

by Doug Moody

Spock looked up from his viewer. “Approximately 6.735 hours to nova, Captain.” Kirk hid a smile. “Mr. Chekov, plot a course for Beta Epsilon Four and lay it in when Mr. Spock has finished his reading.”

Chekov’s hands flew over the controls on his console and he sat back. “Course plotted, Keptin. Time to orbit Beta Epsilon Four, 56.664 hours.” He paused momentarily and Kirk saw Spock start to raise his head. “From the time we leave orbit here, of course, Keptin.” Spock lowered his head again and Kirk smothered his laugh in a cough. Chekov turned his impish grin back to his console just as Spock looked up again. Kirk quickly straightened his face and turned to his First officer.

“Yes, Mr. Spock?” Spock merely shook his head and bent over his viewer. Kirk turned as McCoy stepped up beside his command chair.

“What’s so funny, Jim?” Spock slowly raised his head, looking at Chekov’s back and burning ears. One eyebrow crept slowly up. He nodded and dropped his head once again. Even as his hands moved steadily over his computer tie in he spoke. “Mr. Chekov. Your figure of 56.664 hours seems somewhat long. What factors did you consider in your computation?”

“Departure and entrance at perigee of standard orbit, normal cruising speed of warp 3 and 2.4 hours at warp 1 while Mr. Scott overhauls the port nacelle entry field generator.” Chekov ticked them off on his fingers to make sure he mentioned them all.

Spock merely nodded. “My computations yield a

figure 1.03 hours shorter, weighing all those factors." As his head started to rise, Sulu punched in some information on his console and Chekov quickly assimilated it.

When Spock looked at Chekov, Chekov replied, "I forgot to mention the 1.03 hours detour around the magnetic storm, sir."

Spock's eyebrow crept up again and his head bent to the viewer as he punched up information on their computed course. He nodded and looked to Sulu and then back to his computations. Sulu and Chekov shared a deep sigh, which started Kirk laughing again. McCoy, having caught the by play, joined in.

Kirk noticed Nurse Chapel standing next to McCoy. "A social call Miss Chapel?"

Christine sighed and shook her head. "Just my turn for inventory duty, Captain."

Kirk quickly glanced at Spock and then back to her. "Looks like Mr. Spock will be busy for a few hours yet. So, you draw me for this one." He turned back to Spock. "Mr. Spock. You have the bridge."

He rose and headed toward the turbolift as Spock moved to the command chair. They made the trip in silence; Kirk wrapped in his thoughts of their impending rendezvous with the INTREPID and meeting Captain Suvuk again. Chapel made a final check on the inventory sheets she had on her clipboard. At the cabin door as they waited for security to remove the seals, Kirk finally turned to her and noted her distracted air. "These duties are not among the pleasant ones, Christine. But necessary. Did you know the dead girl?"

Christine grimaced momentarily, then smiled. "Yes, sir. She was in my graduating class at the academy."

Kirk was momentarily nonplused at his faux pas. "She wasn't even aboard long enough for me to know her name."

Christine smiled, "Lisa Miller, Captain." Kirk nodded and they entered the cabin. Everything was neat and clean, and he started in the closet calling out the contents as Chapel recorded them on her forms. After a half hour, they stopped to sort out the remaining things to make them easier to record. Kirk paused at one point and look over to Chapel to comment on the neatness of the things they had inventoried and found her looking in a small scrapbook. He hesitated and then noted the picture on the facing page. Christine looked up and saw him and held the book protectively to her. Her face glowed with her embarrassment.

Kirk hesitated again for she was obviously disturbed.

"Something wrong, Christine?"

Chapel blushed even more and clutched the book to her in almost panic. "N..no, sir!"

He almost felt obligated to say more when the door opened and Spock walked in. Christine looked up at him and then down at the book and quickly rose and rushed from the room.

Spock glanced after her and then faced Kirk again. "A problem, Captain?"

Kirk looked from the door back to Spock and shook his head. "Not that I know of, Spock. I've never seen Christine so embarrassed."

Spock nodded his concurrence. "Having the background and experience of a Star Fleet Nurse would seem to take the embarrassment out of most situations."

Kirk nodded. “I take it you have completed your observations.”

“Yes. Most interesting. The radiation levels were rising rapidly. We are now on course for Beta Epsilon Four. And we are due at a Department Head meeting in five minutes.”

Kirk nodded distractedly and moved out of the cabin. He made arrangement for security to seal the cabin again until the inventory could be completed and the girl’s possessions boxed up for shipping.

The rest of the day went quickly, and he completely forgot the completion of the inventory. It was only in his cabin when McCoy stopped by to have a drink that he remembered. “Bones, have you noticed Christine acting strangely today?”

McCoy thought for a moment and shook his head. “I only saw her once after she left to do that inventory with you this morning.”

Kirk shook his head distractedly and finally sighed. “There’s something there I can’t quite put my finger on. When you see her in the morning, tell her to report to the bridge and then we’ll finish up that inventory.”

McCoy nodded and then started to leave. “Will she be done by lunch? We have to finish up that damn medical inventory before we reach Starbase ten. I’m not curtailing my people’s shore leave for some paper pusher’s idea of necessity. I spend more time filling out reports and holding inventories than I do taking care of people!”

Kirk stifled a laugh. “You can have her back at lunch, Bones.” Kirk yawned and slipped off his shirt as McCoy left. He had to smile thinking of McCoy’s last comment. It had been McCoy’s insistence at the last Star Fleet Medical conference that had made medical inventories mandatory after the

mismanagement aboard two starships had caused them to be short of critical supplies during an engagement with the Klingons. He also knew that McCoy always did an inventory prior to docking at a Starbase to make sure that he had everything.

Kirk stood across the science console's hooded viewer as Spock summarized the studies he had completed on the nova. At Spock's glance, he noted Christine Chapel standing behind him.

"Good morning, Miss Chapel."

She pointedly ignored Spock. "Good morning, Captain." Kirk's brow furrowed for an instant and he hid a grin. Chapel probably wanted to complete the inventory with Spock. One of the few 'legal' opportunities she had to work with him.

"Mr. Spock. Would you complete the inventory with Nurse Chapel this morning?"

At Spock's raised eyebrow Kirk turned to Chapel. She was obviously upset. "Something wrong, Christine?"

She held the clipboard tightly to herself and glanced briefly at Spock and then quickly back to him. "I ... That is, the forms have all been filled out with your name Captain."

Kirk frowned at her obvious distress and looked to Spock. "I could use the extra time to complete the correlation of my studies for my report to Star Fleet." Kirk's frown deepened as he quickly glanced from one to the other.

Finally, he nodded. "Alright, Christine. Let's finish this thing up. I promised Doctor McCoy you'd be done by lunch." Her look of relief was almost comical. He turned and she followed as he left the bridge. "You have the bridge, Mr. Spock."

In the cabin, the inventory went smoothly and all the girl's possessions were logged and packaged for shipping at Starbase ten when they arrived there. As security was leaving with the boxes, Kirk turned to Chapel to question her about her behavior.

But she beat him to it. "I'll have these typed and ready for your signature right after lunch, Captain." She quickly made her escape and Kirk sighed. He glanced around the now barren cabin and left for the bridge.

"Approaching Beta Epsilon Four, Captain." "Standard orbit, Mr. Sulu."

"Aye, aye, Captain."

Kirk watched with pride as his bridge crew swiftly and smoothly placed the ship in standard orbit and opened hailing frequencies.

"I have the council leader, Captain. A Mr. Rodney Gurney."

Kirk paused and frowned. "Good day, Mr. Gurney. Captain James T. Kirk, starship ENTERPRISE. Please pass the coordinates for the landing party to my science officer."

There was a short pause. "Of course, Jim. I'll be in my office. Gurney out." Kirk jabbed the comm button and sat back frowning.

"Problem, Jim?"

Kirk glanced over at McCoy. "No, Bones. Just remembering the last time I saw Rod Gurney." At McCoy's questioning look he continued. "Gurney was court-martialed and drummed out of the academy. He shouldn't be eligible for the position he apparently holds here."

McCoy paused thoughtfully. "The initial reports I have

on this colony indicate they are doing very well. After all, this is only a routine call for required physicals and the administrative garbage it takes to run one of these places. What was he courts martialed for?"

"He was assistant class leader and in charge of our graduating party. He was also my roommate and a good friend. I found a package of a trirythium derivative in our room and when I confronted him he admitted he had used Star Fleet monies to buy the drug. He planned on dumping part of it in the drinks at the party and selling the rest to pay back the money before it was missed.

I turned him in. It wasn't only an error in judgment. Drugs were strictly forbidden. He could have gotten the whole class set back six weeks when they tested positive during the final testing. Testing on the drug revealed it was laced with a mild form of strychnine. Evidently for an added boost. Only the quantity would have killed the whole class. Plus, all the brass that attends those graduations. He had been using the drug for months and had just gotten that batch for the party."

McCoy started to speak and then hesitated. "I take it he really hates you now."

Kirk nodded. "He made some threats when they escorted him out at the court martial. Bones check over the part of this operation you have access to with a fine-tooth comb. I want to be sure that everything is on the up and up. Gurney never struck me as the type that would let a little thing like a Star Fleet court martial change his way of thinking. I'll have Spock check on the administrative side. The manufacturing concerns here are too important to Federation security to let something get out of hand." McCoy nodded and slowly walked to the turbolift. Kirk sat in his command chair wrapped in

memories.

Christine sat in her bed with the bunk light providing the only illumination in the room. Her attention to the book in her hands was total. A faint sheen of perspiration coated her lovely face. After a time, she looked up and stared into space. Her expression hardened momentarily and if someone had been there observing her they would have heard the single word, "Bitch."

Then her look grew crafty and she bent over the book once again searching for something with single minded purpose. After many pages and careful gleaning, she carefully wrote down the words she had found. She looked at the picture in the front of the book and slowly smiled and nodded her head.

Kirk, Spock and McCoy beamed down to the station and were escorted to the chairman's office. Kirk noted that the name on the door to the chairman's office was not Rodney Gurney.

But it was Gurney who rose and came around the desk to greet them. "Good day, Captain Kirk."

Kirk eyed him warily and then introduced his officers. "Mr. Spock, my first officer. And Doctor McCoy, my chief medical officer."

Gurney smiled at them. "Mr. Spock. Even on this distant little backwater we've heard of you. Your research and treatise on the properties of the Zarcon compounds provided the impetus to create the company, which now mines the substance here. I salute your diligence in tracking down the synergistic effect on dilithium."

Spock raised one eyebrow. "It was a most interesting study. I was not aware that my work was that well known."

Gurney smiled again. “I’ve attempted to do some research into the origins of this corporation and the basis for their original investment. Your treatise was noted and I made a point of obtaining a copy and reading it.” Spock slowly nodded.

Gurney turned to McCoy. “And Doctor McCoy. Your ability to head up the medical section in what is renown as the finest starship in Star Fleet and still have time to do the essential research on the effects of Zarcon derivatives in the treatment of dilithium exposure has assured your fame in medical circles. I applaud your hard work and obvious ability.” McCoy shifted uneasily and then smiled his appreciation.

Gurney finally turned to Kirk. “Well, Jim. If you will outline your plan of action, I’ll have my assistants get busy setting things up for you.”

Kirk nodded slowly and glanced at his officers. “Mr. Spock will head up the administrative inspection. Doctor McCoy has informed me that his staff is standing by in my sickbay to begin the physicals.”

Gurney moved behind his desk again and pressed a button. “Doris, please have the first group meet in the reception area for beam up to the starship.”

There was a slight pause. “Yes, sir.”

A young man came into the room and stood by the desk. “Mr. Spock. This is Stan Lynack. Stan is in charge of coordinating the administrative duties on the station. He will work directly with you to make sure you have everything you need.” Spock nodded briefly to the young man, and he led the way out of the office with Spock following.

“Doctor McCoy, I shall be your guide for the first part of your inspection. Once we map out the general areas of your concern, I’ll have members of my staff assist your group to

expedite their inspection."

He paused and turned to Kirk. "Jim, will you be accompanying us or would you like a guide to tour the station."

"A guide will be fine."

Gurney nodded and pressed the button on his desk again. "Doris, please step in here a moment." Kirk turned to the door and had difficulty suppressing his reaction. The girl who entered was young, extremely beautiful and had a glint of interest in her deep brown eyes. "Doris, please act as Captain Kirk's guide through the station while I accompany Doctor McCoy."

Gurney turned to them. "Gentlemen?" McCoy made an obvious effort and headed out the door. Gurney smiled and followed him.

Kirk turned to the girl and his smile came automatically. "I think I've got the best of the deal." The girl smiled back. "What would you like to see first, Captain?" Kirk raised his eyes briefly as if invoking some deity. "Why not start with the messing facilities and a cup of coffee?" She nodded her acquiescence and led the way. Kirk shook his head once and followed her.

Kirk sipped his coffee and grimaced. "I must have drunk ten cups of this today. And that has been the most productive part of my day. What have you gentlemen come up with?"

McCoy gestured to Spock. "The administrative portion of this station is satisfactory. The attention to detail is very high for humans. As you had surmised, Captain, the current director has only recently assumed the position. The former director and his assistant died in an accident that is as bizarre as it is well

documented."

Spock paused for a long moment, and McCoy jumped in the breach. "Are you going to tell us what they died of or do we guess from here."

Kirk hid a quick smile. Spock continued, unruffled. "As you know, Captain, the research here has covered many diverse paths. One area was the investigation of the possibility of a planetary defense field. This type of device has long been theorized and equally long sought after. The application of one such experiment found the field enveloping both those men. The field, in this case, worked excellently. Both men were vaporized instantly."

McCoy winced. Kirk turned to him. "Bones?"

"My initial overview looks good, Jim. The sickbay is in excellent order, and the supplies are all about as they should be after a year. My people are completing the inventory right now and we'll beam them down what they need for replacements. The physicals have proceeded smoothly, and we anticipate completion by the end of the third day, as planned originally. Everyone seems very healthy if a little underweight.

Christine is already working on the dietary supplements for their food synthesizers."

Kirk nodded and glanced at the two men. "I have the feeling that everything is a little too good. I spent three hours this morning in the company of a very lovely young lady. But aside from a few personal facts about her, I have learned very little about the conditions here. Externally, everything seems better than average. Much better. How long ago did that accident happen, Spock?"

Spock responded instantly. "Eleven days, Captain."

Kirk shook his head. "Something is wrong here. I can't

tell what it is yet, but I can feel it."

Spock raised an eyebrow. "Feel it, Captain?" At Kirk's nod, Spock continued. "Perhaps one of your human hunches?"

Kirk smiled and McCoy quickly utilized the opportunity. "Yes, Spock. One of those human things. Pity you Vulcans can't have them too. As you've noted in the past with Jim, these things have helped us resolve many difficult situations."

Spock favored McCoy with a very Vulcan face. "A 'hunch', Doctor, is a culmination of thought processes involving seen and recorded but unconscious data. An extremely logical process. What the Captain displays is a habit of making jumps in his logical processes over areas that are not logically supported but with results that evidence logical progression. It is these jumps I find fascinating."

Kirk laughed and flipped open his communicator. "If I ever learn how I do it, Spock, you will be the first to know."

Kirk stretched with the open communicator held high and then sighed. "Let's beam up and get some dinner. And a good night's rest. I want to really dig into this situation."

He frowned and looked at Spock and McCoy again. "Something is wrong here. I can't put my finger on it yet, but I know it's there."

He selected the proper frequency. "Beam us aboard, Mr. Scott." As the last vestiges of the transporter sparkle disappeared, a short man stepped from his hiding place and hurried to the director's office. Kirk finished up the last of his Zailian pudding just as McCoy joined him. "Good morning, Bones. Have you seen Spock this morning?" At McCoy's negative shake he paused. "Spock almost always meets me here even though he usually doesn't eat much. I wonder what's

keeping him?" After some desultory conversation in which McCoy filled in the captain on the results of the medical survey in progress, Kirk excused himself and stopped by Spock's cabin.

He knocked at the door and, when no answer was forthcoming, he opened the door and looked inside. Spock made it a habit never to lock his quarters and Kirk glanced around momentarily after turning the lights up. He had just waved the lights off and closed the door when Spock came up behind him in the passageway.

"Good morning, Captain. I was unable to attend our usual morning discussion. Nurse Chapel had scheduled me for a series of tests, and I was attempting to get them taken care of before we beamed down this morning. I was unsuccessful." Just then McCoy walked up behind him. "And with the present rate of accomplishment of Doctor McCoy's sickbay, I should be finished and able to join you on the station in 4.773 hours."

"My sickbay? What's that got to do with your delay?" McCoy propped his hands on his hips and Kirk sighed and folded his arms and leaned against the bulkhead.

"The completion of the acetylcholine series should take 2.21 hours. If your medical department completes the testing on the samples in its usual manner, then I should be through and able to join the captain in 4.773 hours. That, of course, ignores the time I must spend here explaining the situation to you. A regrettable and totally avoidable loss, if you kept yourself aware of what was going on in your department."

When McCoy, his mouth opening and closing twice to retort to these accusations, was unable to voice even a murmur in his defense, Spock merely raised one eyebrow and nodded to Kirk and walked away toward the turbolift and sickbay. McCoy

stared after him a moment and finally shook his head and walked to the nearest intercom.

Kirk straggled along behind and caught the tail end of the conversation. “Well, expedite the results of those tests and let me know when they’re complete. McCoy out.” Kirk looked at him expectantly. “The tests he’s talking about are due, Jim. Spock is unusually sensitive to the chemicals we use, and I generally schedule the tests for a period when I know it won’t interfere with important projects I know he’s working on. I always let him know a couple of weeks in advance so he can accommodate it in his schedule. But Chris evidently ran across it and went ahead and scheduled him now. I can postpone it to later, but as long as it’s already in motion, I’d sooner let it go.”

“Does it make him any less able to do his job?”

McCoy immediately shook his head. “Not

Spock. He may be a little shorter tempered than usual, but his efficiency will not be affected. These chemicals affect him the way itching powder would a human.”

Kirk smiled. “Itching powder?”

McCoy noted his smile. “Not funny, Jim. You can’t get rid of it. He’ll be affected for three to four days. His people go through hell the last couple of days. Not that he hollers at them or anything. But every piece of data they bring him better be exact to ten decimal places, or he’ll have them do it again.”

Kirk sobered. “I didn’t realize it was so bad, Bones. Is it that necessary?”

McCoy nodded. “It prevents the Vulcan equivalent of Regillian fever from sneaking up on him. It’s actually a congregate of chemical substances from extended starship life. But the symptoms, and the death, are remarkably like Regillian fever.”

Kirk nodded and they separated to attack their morning's work.

It was only as Kirk sat down to lunch and Spock joined him that he realized he had not seen the Vulcan all morning. "Complete the testing, Spock?"

Spock favored him with a more reserved than usual Vulcan look and nodded. "Yes, Captain. The final period of the test went so smoothly that the total time was reduced by 1.001 hours. High above their usual standards. I shall beam down now and complete my investigation by dinner tomorrow. Is that satisfactory?"

Kirk frowned a moment. "Of course, Spock. Whatever time you require."

Spock shook his head. "That shall be sufficient." He rose and left a frowning Kirk behind.

Kirk made a point of stopping by sickbay shortly after lunch. He noted the increased pace of operations and the many strange faces in the treatment areas. He found McCoy in his office looking through some taped medical records from the station. "Hi, Jim. Something on your mind?"

Kirk glanced at him quickly, wondering if he were that transparent. "As a matter of fact, yes, Bones." He paused for a moment. "You said that Spock would get short tempered?"

McCoy smiled. "Short tempered for a Vulcan, Jim. Probably the most that everyone will notice will be a more reserved atmosphere around him than usual. It's only the last day or two that really gets to him."

Kirk shook his head. "Strange that Christine should schedule him for the tests right now. Isn't she aware of how they affect him?"

McCoy frowned then smiled again. “She is very aware of how it affects him. She even did some research on combating the accumulation of toxins in his body by other means. She didn’t make too much headway there, but her work was useful in combating the spore infestation on Simila Three.”

Kirk looked up at him in surprise. “She developed that formula? That saved hundreds of thousands of lives. Why hasn’t she been recognized by Star Fleet?” McCoy shook his head. “She said she didn’t want any awards for doing her job. She’s one hell of a lady, Jim.”

Kirk nodded. “But didn’t she realize that this would affect his performance and that the investigation he is doing for me is vital.”

McCoy nodded. “I asked her about that. But she must be on one of her Vulcan kicks.” At Kirk’s quick look, he continued. “Every so often she feels like mothering him even more than usual. More attention to his diet, making sure he has all his inoculations. That kind of thing.

Spock’s learned to take it in stride. He knows it won’t do any good to say anything. Usually just the reverse. But it’s all with his best interest at heart. And it won’t hurt his efficiency. If anything, it’ll make him scrutinize everything more closely.”

Kirk sighed and shook his head. “Alright, Bones. Let me know if you find anything out of the ordinary at all.” McCoy nodded and turned back to his tapes.

That evening at dinner, Kirk pushed his plate away and sat finishing his coffee. He relaxed, listening to the pleasant hum of quiet conversations. Suddenly, he keyed on what one crewman was saying at a nearby table. “Yeah, Mr. Spock must

be feeding the people he's working with to keep them at work longer. I've beamed down enough food for five people." One of the other people at the table commented, "That couldn't be. I was working with Mr. Spock just before dinner. He sent all of us back at once while he worked at the computer. He even asked me to bring him a couple of sandwiches back." Kirk almost dropped his cup. Spock! Sandwiches! "Well, at the rate he's going through their records, he should be done by morning." Kirk put his cup down and headed for the bridge.

After checking all stations, he sat in the command chair and thought for a moment. He knew he would be calling Spock. But especially in his present frame of mind, Spock wouldn't appreciate being interrupted for a check on his progress. He knew Kirk better than that. He'd know that something else was behind his call.

After considerable mental turmoil, he elected to sleep on it and contact Spock in the morning.

Probably catch him before he even went down to the station. "Mr. Sulu. You have the con. I'll be in my quarters."

Sulu rose for the command chair even as he acknowledged, "Aye, aye, sir."

Kirk rose refreshed and quickly made his preparations for the new day and hurried down to the mess to be sure that he was there when Spock stopped in. He picked at his breakfast and finally pushed it aside as McCoy joined him. "What's the matter, Jim? Not feeling well?" Kirk snapped out of his reverie.

"What, Bones?"

McCoy frowned. "I asked if you were feeling okay. Is something bothering you, Jim?"

Kirk shook his head distractedly. McCoy's eyes

narrowed as Kirk's actions belied the message he was sending.

"Too bad about losing the entire hydroponics lab yesterday." He watched Kirk closely. Kirk considered the work done in the hydroponics lab vital to crew morale. Not only for the fresh vegetables they provided but also for the flowers and shrubs they generated for the rest areas.

But Kirk only nodded. "Guess they'll grow back soon." McCoy laid his fork down and went around the table to Kirk's side. Kirk became aware of McCoy's pocket scanner buzzing behind him.

"What's the matter, Bones?" McCoy shut off the scanner and put it away. "That was my question exactly, Captain. I just made a statement that should have captured your complete attention. Instead, I got a completely noncaring and distracted answer. What's on your mind, Jim?"

Kirk looked right at McCoy and his eyes finally locked in on the Doctor. "Sorry, Bones. I've been worried about Spock. If there's one thing I can depend on Spock for, it's to keep me informed of what's going on. Not only his own area. He seems to keep a finger on everything that's happening on the ship. Yesterday at lunch was the last I've seen or heard from him. But when I question his people, they assure me that he's glued to the job on the station."

"Why not beam down and see what he's doing?"

Kirk shook his head. "Spock hates that. He has to stop what he's doing to fill me in. And he figures that he's already done that at his briefings through the day."

McCoy nodded. "The briefings that he hasn't been giving you? Why don't you beam down this afternoon? That will be close to the time he said he'd be done anyway."

Kirk smiled. "That will also give me a chance to find

out what you've been hiding. You usually keep me informed, too. All I've been getting is 'progressing, Captain.' That doesn't tell me much."

"There was one interesting thing I've been pursuing, Jim. All these people are very healthy. Even the ones that have a poor history of physical health. I was going to do a computer correlation this morning on the results of the physicals and the tests we performed and see if there is a common factor I've been overlooking. Their diet is pretty standard and there are no strange chemicals in their water. But I'll run those tests and give you a call as soon as they're done." Kirk nodded, finished his coffee and went to the bridge as McCoy recycled his now cold food.

Kirk was completing some paperwork in his cabin when the door chime sounded. "Come." The door opened and McCoy entered with a single computer tape. He stood silently by Kirk's bed as he finished up the report he was working on. Finally, Kirk looked up. "Sorry, Bones. That particular report has been plaguing me. And I am very happy to have it done." He frowned in reflection of McCoy's facial expression. "What is it, Bones? Bad news?"

McCoy handed Kirk the tape without comment and sat on the bed. Kirk looked at it quizzically, but when no comment was forth coming he turned to his computer terminal, inserted the tape and started it. Slowly he paged his way through the report. Then he turned back to McCoy. "This is positive?"

McCoy nodded wearily. "I've doubled checked every result from every test we gave them. Those are the facts."

Kirk rose and walked his cabin like a caged tiger. "It has to be Gurney. But why?" McCoy rose too and confronted the

captain. “The effects are extremely beneficial, Jim. It’s only the long-term effects that are dangerous. Why don’t we confront him with it and see what he says.”?

Kirk paused and then nodded. “Alright, Bones. But first, let’s beam down and see Spock. I want some answers from him.”

In the station, Kirk quickly tracked down Spock. They walked into the office and saw Spock, his back to them, at the far wall. The first thing that caught Kirk’s eye was the condition of the office. The piles of food wrappers and containers strewn about on the furniture and the floor was in direct contrast to the basic cleanliness and clean lines of the office in general. Kirk picked up several of these threading his way to where Spock sat absorbed at the computer console.

Something about Spock caught his eye and he put the trash down on a nearby desk without ever taking his eyes off Spock. As he drew closer, what he thought he had seen became more apparent as he could see more and more of his first officer.

Kirk quickly stepped beside him and turned Spock’s chair to face him. Spock’s face stared back at him, haggard and something else. His uniform displayed traces of every meal he’d eaten since sitting there. Kirk’s eyes took this in even if his brain refused to believe it. He could see Spock make a visible effort to concentrate and finally focus on his face. Kirk took a step back. “Report, Mr. Spock.”

Another area in Spock took over and he straightened noticeably. “I have succeeded in locating some information relative to the operation of this station prior to Mr. Gurney’s takeover. The former director and his assistant had worked up a detailed analysis of the changes wrought by Mr. Gurney’s

interference and were in the process of compiling it prior to broadcast to Star Fleet when Gurney had them killed.

"Gurney had maintained a level of dextrium in the station's water supply some time before they detected it." Kirk looked to McCoy. "An agent for stepping up basal metabolism before the advent of modern drugs. It provides the illusion of increased energy without increased caloric intake to support it. Back in the 1950's and 60's many of the overweight population on earth used it to help them lose weight. It did that. But few of the people would maintain a balanced nutritional diet at the same time. Many of them died as a result."

Kirk turned back to Spock. "And Gurney had been putting this into the water supply for the station?"

Spock nodded. "He had been doing it for some months when accused. He pointed up the advantages it had made in the production at the station and the general health of the people.

Production had gone up. With more energy to do things and nothing else to do, a great deal of progress was made during that period. The average weight of the people decreased and with the increased amount of physical activity, many of the psychosomatic ills of the less active members disappeared."

Spock paused briefly. "The purpose for which he had originally put the dextrium in the water was to increase the productiveness of the people who worked for him in his illicit drug operation. The waste products of the mining operation he had found to contain small quantities of the basic building blocks of amyl nitrate. By utilizing this and chemically adding the commonly available nitrous compounds found in the medical stores, he was able to make the amyl nitrate in quantities sufficient for his own use." McCoy quickly made some adjustments on his medical tricorder and played back

some information.

"Yes, Jim. That would explain why this station has used more of three separate compounds in a year than most other stations use in five years. All of them separately are harmless. But this must have given him more than he could use, Mr. Spock."

Spock nodded again. "Indeed, Doctor.

The surplus of his needs he supplied to his friends, creating addicts of them. The drinking water almost brought them back to normal. A dangerous tightrope. Gurney knew they were turning him in and arranged the accident with the defense field. The person who would normally have taken over for the director was one of Gurney's addicts and easily maneuvered into naming Gurney station director. It was the opinion of the director that half the population of the station would have succumbed to pneumonia in the next six months due to decreased body resistance from the drug use."

Kirk nodded. "Yes. Doctor McCoy made the same determination through his medical exams. But surely he erased the records when he took over as director."

Spock shook his head. "As with most people who use a computer, Captain, he was unaware of how a computer actually functions. When operators, wishing to clear space in computer memory or wishing to remove certain information erase it, they actually only erase the address at which the computer began storing the information.

"The information is still in storage in memory. But it is no longer accessible by ordinary means since the address where the information is located is gone. I merely accessed computer memory directly after directing the computer to ignore those areas that were addressed normally."

Spock caught Kirk's still incredulous glance at his shirt. Looking down his eyebrow drew up. "Request permission to beam aboard and change uniforms prior to formalizing my findings."

Kirk started to say something and stopped and McCoy's prod in his back. "Of course, Mr. Spock. I will expect you in my cabin at 2100 hours." Kirk turned and left with McCoy in tow. Once safely ensconced in a nearby empty office, he turned to McCoy. "Well, Doctor?"

McCoy sat and waited until Kirk joined him. "Did you notice anything besides the state of his uniform, Jim?" Kirk responded almost immediately. "Of course, Bones. He looks haggard and run down. I've never seen my first officer look like that and I won't have it."

"Let me explain more fully the effects of the treatment Spock is undergoing. The chemicals that we use, in addition to making him irritable, cleanse his body of the buildup of those impurities we spoke of. At the same time, it creates an almost fanatical single mindedness in Vulcans.

Whatever their current project is, it occupies them to the exclusion of all else. It's not that they are unaware of other things. When they're hungry they eat. They maintain all their bodily functions. But in a very neglected manner. Only a very small part of their brain is released to handle their needs."

McCoy paused and looked a little sheepish. "Medical department is like a lot of other groups. Once a patient comes to our attention, we try to play catch up and cure all his problems at once. When Chris set him up for the treatment and tests she noted that his weight was down eight percent from his norm. So, she included a dietary supplement in his food to make him eat more and build himself back up. The chemical she used

unfortunately works more than twice as effectively in the presence of the test chemicals. Combined with the fact that his normal diet includes two compounds that inhibit upper colon action, he was in one hell of a mess."

"I don't understand, Bones."

McCoy sighed. "Taken cumulatively, the chemicals we introduced into his body made him work on one project to the exclusion of all but the most basic needs. Made him notice that he was hungry but not that he had eaten. Made his body draw the calories from the food but not utilize it, so that everything he's eaten has gone to fat. And at the same time, his body's been living on stored reserves. Didn't you notice he's about ten kilos over his normal weight?"

Kirk smiled. "I thought it was his uniform.

You mean Mr. Spock is fat??" McCoy smiled also. "To a human, it would mean a tightening of the clothes and the need for watching caloric intake and physical activity. To a Vulcan! Well, he'll find himself almost unable to live with himself." At Kirk's frown, McCoy continued.

"Relax, Jim. The last of the chemicals should be out of his body by tomorrow morning. At that time, he will continue with his usual efficiency on all projects and maintain his uniform. What he won't do is touch any food for a couple of days."

"A couple of days? You estimated about ten kilos over his standard weight. He'll lose ten kilos in two days??" McCoy smiled again. "Spock has worked on projects for eighty hours and more without a break for the rest we would need. I imagine that, coupled with some increased exercise in the gym and his lack of food intake will enable him to lose the extra weight in ... fifty-one point six hours." Kirk shook his head and they

beamed up to the ship.

At 2100 promptly, Spock entered the conference room where Kirk and McCoy were conversing quietly. Kirk silently took in the fresh uniform and neat appearance. He also noted the uncharacteristic bulges at Spock's waist and a certain puffiness about his body in general.

Throughout the report, Kirk found himself staring at Spock. At the completion, Kirk detailed a security team to beam down and take Gurney and his drug crew into custody.

Spock rose to leave and paused. Kirk, who was watching him closely, started. "Yes, Mr.

Spock?" Spock hesitated but finally spoke. "I have noticed your attention to my appearance, Captain. I just wish to assure you that I am taking steps to correct this unsatisfactory problem."

Kirk smiled and glanced at McCoy. "What is your estimate on how long it will be before you are back to normal?" Spock also glanced at McCoy. "I am sure that the good Doctor has informed you that my mental processes are entirely back to normal. The dysfunction with my body will take slightly longer to correct. I would estimate a total of forty-nine point three hours."

Kirk smiled. "I just wish I had a picture of this, Spock." Spock grew even more reserved and turned on his heel and left.

At McCoy's urging Kirk followed him to 'C' deck and outside Christine Chapel's cabin.

McCoy buzzed and the door opened after a moment. Chris looked from Kirk to McCoy. "May we come in a moment, Chris?" She nodded and stepped aside. The door closed and she looked at them expectantly. Kirk looked at McCoy and he just

pointed at Chris's closet door.

Kirk turned and saw a picture of the sickbay stuck on the door. Spock was sitting on the side of one of the examining tables, obviously having just risen from a prone position. His chest was bare and the general softness of his body was apparent as was a noticeable bulge around his waist. He was making a point with Doctor McCoy and was obviously unaware of a wide-eyed Christine Chapel coming in the door behind him.

Kirk had to laugh. McCoy joined him. Chris's whole face and neck were red.

"Captain, it's not funny." They laughed even harder at her discomfiture over having been the cause. As they exited the cabin, McCoy paused and held out his hand to Chris. She looked distressed but went to her desk and returned with a book.

Kirk's eyes narrowed and he nodded. "That was the book you were looking at during the inventory." Chapel blushed again and lowered her head. McCoy explained.

"Lisa Miller and Christine were more than friends at the Academy. They were also very serious rivals for the available men. When Lisa reported aboard she formed an immediate and very strong attachment to Mr. Spock. Chris noticed it and advised her to stay clear of him for a variety of reasons. Lisa took it as a challenge. Spock, naturally, ignored her totally. So, Lisa contented herself with helping him in every way she could through her job."

McCoy paused and Kirk glanced at Chapel who had moved to the bed and was sitting on the edge, her head hung and looking the very picture of shame. Kirk turned back to McCoy as he continued. "Lisa was also a very imaginative person with a definite flair for writing fiction."

He held up the book. "In here, she let her imagination

run wild. I read two pages and gave it back to Chris. It is extremely graphic." He paused again and opened the front cover of the book.

Kirk noted the large picture of Spock which covered the entire inside of the cover.

"You can guess the main topic of interest throughout the book. I saw enough in the first two pages to know it was all a lie. But it does make interesting reading." Kirk could just make out the note on the first page addressed to Christine and giving her the book.

McCoy closed it and stood waiting. Kirk took it from him and hesitated. He remembered in his Academy days finding and reading one of his roommate's books. He shook his head and handed the book to Chapel. She took it and clutched it to her possessively. Kirk nodded. "Good night, Christine." He turned and left and McCoy followed him. As the door closed behind them, Kirk turned to McCoy.

"Why show me that, Bones. I know it embarrassed Christine almost to tears." McCoy nodded. "Yes. I believe it did." Kirk frowned. "Explain, Bones. That isn't like you." McCoy nodded again. "That was very hard for me, but I wanted Chris to know that you were aware of what happened." At Kirk's quizzical expression, he continued. "That book has been the cause of all Spock's problems."

"You mean she intentionally got Spock into that condition?" McCoy quickly shook his head. "Just the opposite, Jim. The thing that motivated her to do all that to Spock was jealousy. She struck back at Lisa the only way she could. By taking excellent care of Spock. So excellent in fact that she overlooked the cumulative effects of the treatment."

He paused and smiled again. "That's what the picture

is for. Every time she looks at it she'll remember to stop and consider her actions before proceeding medically. She's really one hell of good nurse."

Kirk slowly nodded. Then he smiled. "But I hope she never forms that strong an attachment for me." They both laughed as they headed for the bridge.