

Until Morning Light

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Until Morning Light

by [orphan_account](#)

Summary

Four years after the events of I Will Catch You, Tengor gets out on parole and comes after Spock and McCoy. It is up to Joanna to save them from certain death.

Notes

...and so it continues...

As always, I'd love to read your comments!

Chapter 1

Leonard McCoy brought his fist down on the table with enough force to upset the glass of Saurian brandy he had poured himself with shaking hands only minutes before.

“HOW?” he demanded angrily. “How did he get parole? After only four years. How is it possible?”

“Leonard...” Spock was trying to pacify the doctor but his calm voice seemed to have the opposite effect.

“No, Spock. I don’t want to hear it. I don’t want to hear any arguments in favour of releasing this lunatic. I told the board at the hearing and I’m telling you now. The man is criminally insane!”

Spock regarded the emotional human silently for a moment, wiping up the liquid on the table.

“It is illogical to dwell on that which cannot be changed,” Spock stated carefully. He poured a new shot of brandy and handed McCoy the glass which the doctor downed in one go.

“Illogical!” McCoy raved. “This is illogical alright. In two weeks they’re releasing a torturer, a kidnapper who was given a ten-year sentence after only four years! I would have thought you’d be more upset about this. After all he did to you!”

“I do not become ‘upset’...”

“God, Spock!” McCoy interrupted him. “We’ve been together almost five years now...”

“Four years, six months, 4 days,” Spock supplied.

“...and you still want to tell me you don’t become upset? I’ve *seen* you upset! When you thought he had Joanna...”

Spock’s eyes darkened. “I was going to say,” he stated testily, “that I do not become ‘upset’ about events that do not justify this emotion. Tengor’s release should have no bearing on our lives. The conditions of his parole will stipulate that he must not come near us, nor near Joanna, that he cannot commit any crimes and that he has to regularly report to Federation security.”

McCoy threw up his arms in exasperation. “Great! Is that supposed to make me feel better? What did I go to that parole hearing for, telling them all about what it was like watching him electrocute you? I had to resuscitate you, Spock. You were *dead* there for a minute. Dead in my arms!”

McCoy turned away from the Vulcan, his whole body shaking.

“I sat there *crying* when I gave my evidence, for God’s sake. A grown man crying like a baby!”

The doctor took a deep breath and rounded on the Vulcan.

“You should have been there. *You* should have given evidence. I still don’t understand why you didn’t do it!”

Spock looked at the floor, trying to avoid the doctor’s accusing stare.

“As you know, I was engaged winding up ship’s business after the five year mission, finishing reports...”

“We were docked at Earth spaceport and the hearing was in the Antarctica correctional facility,” McCoy interrupted him angrily. “You could have beamed down for 20 minutes, given your evidence and gone right back to your reports!”

Spock looked uncomfortable. “It was a public hearing,” he said, willing McCoy to understand.

“I bloody well know it was,” the doctor replied mercilessly. “*I* was there!”

“I did not *feel*...” Spock gave McCoy a pleading look, “that I would be able to talk about what happened without displaying emotion.” He paused for a moment. “I was afraid I would, as you put it, ‘cry like a baby’ in front of strangers.”

Spock’s shoulders slumped and all of McCoy’s anger suddenly evaporated.

“Oh, Spock.” He walked over to the Vulcan and pulled him into a tight embrace. Spock leaned into the contact, taking a deep breath.

“I can’t believe we’re fighting because of that Cespian,” McCoy mumbled. “And you’re right, it doesn’t matter. It won’t affect *us*.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Thanks everyone who's following this story and encouraging me with your lovely comments!

Once again, the Vulcan language in here is taken from the VLD (www.starbase-10.de/vld/)!

Three months later, McCoy had all but forgotten about Tengor. In the first few weeks after the Cespian was released, the doctor had been jumpy and nervous, suspicious of every shadow and had suffered from insomnia. Once, he had even sworn to Spock he had spotted the Cespian outside their window while wandering the house, unable to sleep. Spock had finally decided to put an end to the doctor's illogical behaviour by calling in a favour with Starfleet Intelligence. They reported Tengor had left Earth two weeks after his release from the Antarctica prison colony and suddenly, McCoy had slept much better.

Plus, McCoy had more important things on his mind right now. It was the summer holidays and Joanna was staying with Spock and him for three weeks. After the end of the five-year mission, he and Spock had moved into his old family home in Georgia and Joanna, who had spent the first few years of her life here, was excited to be back among her childhood friends and surrounded by the beautiful Georgia country side.

Every day she went roaming around the nearby forest and hillsides, but this weekend, McCoy suspected, they would all be staying in. The satellites controlling Earth weather were programmed for heavy rain in their region for the next two days. *No matter*, he thought fondly, leaning against the living room doorframe and watching Spock and Joanna, they would find things to do inside.

In fact, McCoy mused, in the last couple of days he'd had just about enough fresh air to last him a lifetime. Well, that was if the cold musty air of the nearby cave system could be called 'fresh'. They had spent three whole days climbing around underground, with Spock indulging Joanna's new-found interest in geology and the doctor grudgingly (but secretly gladly) coming along. Not that he particularly cared for stalactites and stalagmites, he just needed to make sure his two favourite scientists didn't bump their heads or scrape their knees while engrossed in the *fascinating* make-up of the caves.

Even now they were discussing the discoveries of the day, or at least McCoy thought they were. He had made out the Vulcan word for cave – *tauk* – and also *abru-to'ovaya* – was that a stalactite or a stalagmite...? For about six months now, when Joanna and Spock were alone they would speak exclusively in Vulcan. Joanna had expressed an interest in learning the language and had taken it as an elective at school. She had proven to be surprisingly good at the notoriously difficult grammar and pronunciation and had enthusiastically practised with Spock. McCoy was proud when Spock told him Joanna was an extremely fast learner and by now almost fluent.

“Th'i-oxalra, Sa-mekh,” Joanna was saying and this McCoy understood perfectly. *Thank you, father*. It made McCoy happy how well Joanna and Spock got along and the fact that she called Spock sa-mekh – *father* – while McCoy was daddy, but Jocelyn’s new husband Ben was only *Ben* was the cherry on top of the cake. McCoy smiled to himself.

“English, please!” he grumbled good-naturedly as he entered the room. “And it’s almost time for bed.” He made an attempt at looking strict but Joanna saw right through him.

“Daddy, I’m almost thirteen, I don’t need to be in bed by nine.”

“Come on, Jojo,” McCoy pleaded softly, “it’s been a long day. Besides, you two have two more weeks to talk about stalactites.”

Joanna rolled her eyes. “We were talking about stalagmites,” she informed her father. “I don’t understand how you have been with Spock for years now and still don’t really speak Vulcan.” And with that she trotted off to the bathroom to brush her teeth.

McCoy sighed. “She really *is* becoming a teenager,” he commented. “Sassy and a know it all. Great.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Ple'ma tsu rashaya?” he asked, a rare smile gracing his features.

Now it was McCoy's turn to roll his eyes. "English, please," he said for the second time tonight.

"Cannot the same be said for me?" Spock translated, brushing his fingers against the doctor's.

McCoy grinned and returned the gesture. "Oh yeah. But you've always been sassy and you know it all. With Jo I'm not used to it."

The next time McCoy heard his daughter's voice, she sounded much more like the little girl she still was, pleading and absolutely terrified.

"Daddy, wake up!"

McCoy was on his feet immediately, only to see the muzzle of a phaser pointing at Joanna and Spock, who were both kneeling on the floor next to McCoy's side of the bed, fully dressed and their hands behind their heads.

McCoy's gaze flitted past the phaser, up the arm that was holding it and the doctor's heart froze with fear.

"You have a deep sleep, McCoy," Tengor said, "but now that you've joined us... get up, get dressed and we'll go on a little adventure."

Chapter 3

While hastily pulling on yesterday's shirt, shoes and trousers (Tengor had been quite specific as to what he should be wearing), McCoy had glanced at the chronometer. It was four o'clock in the morning. Now they were outside, he, Joanna and Spock walking ahead with Tengor behind them, pointing the phaser at their backs. As scheduled, it was already pouring down with rain, but even if it weren't the middle of the night and terrible weather, McCoy thought despairingly, there would be no witnesses for whatever was about to happen. Their house was at the very edge of a small village and they were moving away from it, towards the forest where meeting other people was rare, even in sunshine and daytime.

McCoy swallowed hard. What was Tengor's plan? Would he just shoot them and bury their bodies somewhere remote? Would he hurt them first? McCoy reached out to Joanna and took her hand, trying to somehow reassure her.

"No touching!" Tengor barked from behind and McCoy had to let go of his daughter's hand.

"And no talking," Tengor added, almost as an afterthought. There was nothing McCoy could have said anyway to make this any less scary. His nightmares from months ago had suddenly become frightening reality. He glanced at Spock but could read nothing in the Vulcan's stoic expression. He silently cursed himself for not yet having gone through with the bonding Spock had proposed more than a year ago. McCoy had been nervous about having someone else in his head. He had to admit that Vulcan mind voodoo, as he liked to call it, still freaked him out. At this particular moment though, there was nothing he wished for more dearly than being able to silently communicate with Spock.

Heavy wind was blowing the rain into his face and it was dark and so McCoy had not realised where they were headed until he saw the mouth of the cave. As they stepped inside, the howl of the wind and rain suddenly subsided and an eerie sort of quiet settled over them as they walked on. Spock softly whispered something in Vulcan and Joanna nodded imperceptibly but McCoy was too nervous and scared to recall the meaning of the words.

"I said, no talking," Tengor growled from behind.

The deeper they went into the cave, the harder it became to see, with only bioluminescent fungi growing on the cave walls emitting a low glow. The floor of the cave sloped and rose like a miniature mountain landscape and the cave's ceiling was so low in some places that even McCoy had to stoop not to hit his head. As they had discovered over the past three days, theoretically, it would be possible to find one's way deeper into the cave and out again easily as the entire structure consisted of one long passageway without any side branches to get lost in. The cave did branch off in different directions but those passageways were too low and narrow to walk in. At the moment, McCoy cursed their very existence as they effectively functioned as rain gutters, letting more and more water into the cave and quickly filling up the slopes, turning them into puddles, which would eventually turn into pools.

McCoy was looking around frantically at the side branches, hoping to spot a means of escape but seeing none in the dim light. The only way out was back and that possibility was cut off by Tenger and his phaser. The Cespian seemed to notice McCoy's nervous glances and suddenly addressed him, his voice deep and shocking as it reverberated in the cave, puncturing the tense silence.

"Don't bother, McCoy," Tenger teased. "There's no way out of here. I'm sure of that, but so are you, aren't you. After all, you spent three days climbing around in here."

McCoy swallowed hard. Tenger had been watching them. *Again*. How was it possible that they had not noticed the man? He was a goddam giant. McCoy shivered at the thought of the Cespian following them around.

"Thanks for the nice set-up by the way," Tenger continued conversationally. "I was looking for a way to get rid of you that could not possibly be traced back to me and you led me right to it."

McCoy threw Spock a glance and though the Vulcan's face betrayed nothing, there was an urgency in his eyes, as if he was trying to silently tell McCoy something.

"Everyone will think you lost track of time in here and didn't make it out in time before the rain came in," Tenger continued smugly, just as they were wading out of the water and climbing onto the next ledge.

McCoy breathed out slowly. So that was Tengor's plan. He was certain that Spock would be able to calculate how much time they had left until turning back would be impossible, the way back cut off by water. He glanced at Joanna who had already been hip-deep in the cold water while they traversed the previous slope. They would either drown, starve, or freeze to death in here.

McCoy swallowed nervously. He tried to catch Spock's eye again, but the Vulcan was scrutinizing the water levels. Then, suddenly several things seemed to happen at once. Spock only shouted out one word: "NOW!" and threw himself at Tengor, while Joanna sprinted away into the direction they had come from. Spock was wrestling with Tengor for control of the phaser and McCoy stood there as though glued to the spot and watched, horrified, as the phaser discharged and the beam hit the ceiling above their heads.

Within seconds, Tengor had thrown Spock off and was about to fire the phaser at him when suddenly rocks were falling all around them. McCoy jumped backwards to avoid a large rock and fell off the ledge they were standing on, hitting the pool of water accumulated in the next slope and going under. Scrambling for purchase but finding none, he fought his way back to the surface. The rockfall above had not stopped and the ruckus it made echoed off the cave's walls. McCoy could feel smaller stones hitting the surface of the water close to him and put one arm above his head to protect himself. The next thing he saw was Spock hitting the water hard next to him. Instinctively, he reached out and grabbed on to the Vulcan's arm, but he almost let go as the dead weight threatened to pull him under.

"Spock!" he shouted the Vulcan's name but the man in his arms did not respond. *Did Tengor get him with the phaser?* McCoy wondered, feeling dread in the pit of his stomach. *Where was Tengor? And most importantly, where was Joanna?*

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Joanna was running. Or rather, she was alternately sliding, splashing, swimming, running and falling, getting back up and running again. Behind her, she could hear crashing sounds and shouting but she never stopped and never once turned around.

When I say 'now', Spock had said, you will run towards the exit and get help. I will create a distraction so you will have time to escape. Do not stop and do not go back, no matter what happens.

Good thing Tengor doesn't speak Vulcan, Joanna thought as she glimpsed the first rays of the morning sun glimmering beyond the mouth of the cave. *Too bad, daddy doesn't speak it either tough.* She knew Spock's instructions had been meant for the both of them but her father was nowhere to be seen.

She could feel her lungs burning but she didn't slow down until she reached their house. She let herself in through the door which had remained unlocked after their sudden departure and immediately went to the communications console to call law enforcement and emergency services.

McCoy was holding Spock's head above water, trying to get his bearings. The Vulcan's pulse was weak but he was breathing and that was all that mattered to McCoy at the moment. The sound of the falling rocks had subsided and in its place an unnatural silence had settled upon the cave. The doctor tried to make out whether Tengor was anywhere near them but he couldn't spot the Cespian in the sparse light the fungi provided.

Feeling mildly reassured, McCoy dragged Spock over to the next ledge and with great difficulty heaved him onto the plateau, pulling himself up beside the Vulcan. Looking back towards where the exit should be, McCoy was dismayed to discover that the falling rocks seemed to have filled up the passageway, effectively sealing off the exit. Only water was continuously pouring through the pile of stones. It seemed to be coming from all sides and

McCoy wondered how much time and air they had left. Perhaps, he wondered, it would be better to keep moving deeper into the cave. But one glance at Spock told him that wouldn't be happening any time soon. The Vulcan was bleeding heavily from a deep gash just above his left ear and was still unconscious.

McCoy gently shook Spock, trying to wake him up but he did not respond, which filled the doctor with real fear. Yes, the gash was bad but it was strange that the Vulcan should be unconscious from such a, in relative terms, minor injury. McCoy ineffectually pressed his hand against the wound, trying to stem the flow of blood. He felt quite useless without his medical kit and scanner but decided to examine Spock as best he could without supplies and in the semi-darkness.

He ran his hands over the Vulcan's body, finding no broken bones. But when lifting Spock's soaked shirt, he found what he had been dreading. A phaser burn was visible on the skin along the Vulcan's back. Clearly, it had only grazed him, but that McCoy knew, was enough to cause serious injury, especially if the phaser was set to kill as McCoy assumed it must have been, having caused the cave's ceiling to collapse. It looked harmless enough but the tissue damage from radiation was not to be underestimated.

The doctor took a deep breath to calm himself. "Typical of you to come up with some cockamamie plan and then miss half the fun, Spock," he joked but his voice sounded hoarse and strange in the silence surrounding them. "I just hope Joanna made it out," he whispered, pulling Spock closer. If nothing else, he could at least try to keep him warm.

Joanna was running around the house, stuffing things into a backpack. A torch, two communicators, her dad's medical kit, fresh water, some nutrition cubes, a heat pack, a rope. She kept glancing out of the window, both to see if the emergency services had arrived yet and to make sure Tengor had not followed her home. It seemed that he had not, but that meant he was still in the cave with her sa-mekh and her daddy. She shuddered. She didn't remember much about what had happened at Starbase 10 five years ago but last year she had overheard her mum telling Ben about the hostage crisis. She had been shocked to hear what Tengor had done to Spock then, but the story that came next – how Tengor had broken out of prison and tortured Spock a year later – had given her nightmares for weeks.

Joanna understood she wasn't supposed to know about any of this so she never talked to her parents about it. Instead, she resolved to try and make them as happy as she could. In Spock's case, this involved learning Vulcan, which she hoped had paid off for the first time today. Spock had saved her once again and she was determined to return the favour. When finally the emergency services' glider landed outside, she had put on dry clothes and shoes, shouldered her backpack and was ready to show them the cave.

Spock opened his eyes and peered into the semi-darkness. Intense pain was radiating from his back into his entire body. Groggily, he tried to sit up, but a hand on his chest kept him from moving, gently but firmly.

"Easy there," McCoy said, relief palpable in his voice. "How are you feeling?"

Spock raised an eyebrow. "I believe," he stated drily, "the human expression is 'like shit.'"

McCoy laughed in spite of himself. "Well, that's to be suspected. You came too close to that phaser blast."

Spock nodded. "I did not expect Tengor to shoot," he admitted. "It was most illogical. As a result of his actions, he was buried under the rubble. However, Joanna escaped, I saw her running away."

McCoy exhaled, relieved. "You think Tengor is dead?" he asked, feeling a little ashamed at hoping for the death of another being.

"Unknown," Spock said, grimacing in pain. "Cespians are a tenacious species. It is possible that he is merely unconscious."

“Then maybe it’s a good idea to move away,” McCoy suggested. The stones have blocked the exit but we could move further into the cave. Also, because, you know...water.” He gestured at their surroundings. “Do you think you can travel? Looks like we might have to swim to the next ledge.”

Spock nodded. “I shall endeavour to.”

“You don’t understand!” Joanna was standing in the rain outside the cave while one of the officers who had been sent to save her parents was scanning the structure and the other was speaking into a communicator. “It didn’t collapse by itself, it happened because of a phaser blast – and the man who fired the phaser is still in there and he wants to hurt them!”

The officer with the scanner looked at her sceptically. “Look, love,” he said slowly. “Even if that’s the case, there’s nothing we can do. The cave’s structural integrity is compromised, we can’t just go in and start digging. We’re calling the disaster relief unit now but it’s gonna take time, that’s just how it is.”

Exasperated, Joanna said: “At least call someone to stop the rain! They’re going to drown in there!”

“Again,” the officer said, “we’re trying. But getting to Central Earth Weather Control is not something we just do every day. But we can call someone to come take care of you. Maybe your mum...?”

“No thanks,” Joanna mumbled. “I will call someone myself.”

She took out one of the communicators, the one McCoy used for private calls, and opened one of the pre-programmed frequencies. *Please be there, please be awake, please pick up*, she thought nervously. Finally, her heart felt a little lighter when she heard a familiar voice.

“Kirk here.”

Chapter End Notes

Yes I looked at a diagram of the cave those boys in Thailand were trapped in because I know nothing about caves, so please bear with me if you do and this doesn't seem to make any sense...

The Thailand cave rescue had a happy ending... and this one? What do you think? ;)

Chapter 5

“Bones... it’s six o’clock in the morning!”

“Uncle Jim! It’s Joanna!”

There was silence for a moment. “Joanna, what a nice surpr...”

“I need your help,” the girl interrupted him. “I need your help *right now*.”

Spock was holding on to a stalactite, breathing hard. Their plan to move to the next ledge hadn’t quite worked out. With McCoy half dragging Spock through the water, they had noticed too late that this ledge was much lower than the previous one and already completely submerged in water. The ceiling was lower too so that the stalactites hanging from it reached deeply into the water. To get to further into the cave, they would have to dive through the flooded bit of the passageway. Spock knew he should be able to remember the exact makeup of the cave, know whether behind this part the ceiling would be higher again and the ledges likely free from water but at the moment he could not seem to recall even part of this information. His body was shivering violently in a combination of cold, exhaustion and the effects of the phaser beam.

“Maybe it’s better if we turn back,” McCoy suggested, looking at Spock with real concern. The Vulcan only nodded, trying to conserve energy. Just as McCoy was placing his arm around Spock to help him swim back to the ledge, they heard a rumble, rocks sliding and hitting water and finally a deep, primal scream, full of anger and loathing.

Spock and McCoy looked at each other. *No turning back now*. Spock grabbed back onto the slippery stalactite and McCoy briefly dove underwater to take a look at the narrow tunnel in front of them.

“There’s not too much space,” he reported as he resurfaced, “but I think we can fit through together if we swim above rather than next to each other. I can swim and you hold on to my shoulders.” He gave Spock’s arm an encouraging squeeze.

“Leonard,” Spock managed, his voice sounding weak. “I cannot. You… must go alone… please.”

There was more movement and a lot of cursing in Cespian from behind.

“No way, Spock, I’m not leaving you here. He’s gonna come after us eventually, we have to move,” McCoy insisted. “It’s probably not far to the next chamber.”

Spock closed his eyes. “Leonard,” he looked deep into the human’s eyes. “I want you to know… I need to say… *I love you.*”

McCoy felt as though an icy hand were gripping his heart. “I know that, Spock,” he tried to sound cheery. “And I love you too but we’ll have plenty of time to tell each other that when we get out of here, okay? So come on!”

He placed the Vulcan’s hands around his own neck so that Spock was on his back. “Hold tight, alright? Deep breath!”

James T. Kirk materialized outside a cave in a forest in Georgia. It was pouring down with rain and two clearly overwhelmed law enforcement officers were busying themselves with their scanners and communicators while an anxious young girl with curly brown hair and piercing blue eyes watched them impatiently.

“Wow, how did you get here so fast?” Joanna asked as she spotted Kirk, clearly impressed. Though beaming was a common mode of transportation on Earth, site-to-site transportation

was rare, while permanently installed transporters in central locations were the norm. The closest one was a 30 minute walk from the remote village McCoy and Spock lived in.

Kirk winked at her. "The Farragut is in orbit and her captain owed me a favour. Two actually," he said, taking out his communicator. "Speaking of which..." - He pulled out his communicator. "Kirk to Layson. Do it now. I don't care if it's against all the regulations in the book. It's my responsibility. I'll even pay for it if they want me to."

Ten seconds later, it stopped raining. "How did you do *that* ? Joanna asked, awed.

"I, erm, had them shoot down the U.S. South East weather satellite," Kirk said, looking a bit uncomfortable. "It was the fastest way. Don't tell Spock, he wouldn't like that."

Kirk turned to the two officers who were staring at him open-mouthed.

"Gentlemen. What's the situation?"

"Wow, James T. K-Kirk," the officer holding the communicator stuttered. "It, erm, well. It looks like we can't do much before disaster relief get here and, uh, the scanners cannot locate any life forms in there... so..." he glanced at Joanna nervously, "so either there's, uhm, nothing to detect... or they're just too far inside the rock."

"Or," Kirk said impatiently, "your scanner is no good. Kirk to Farragut. Can I get a life form scan on the entire cave right by my position please."

"We're scanning, Jim," a voice sounded from Kirk's communicator. "Three life form readings detected. One human, one Vulcan, one Cespian."

"Can you beam them out?"

“Sorry, Jim. There’s too much interference from the rock. We’d need a communicator signal to be able to locate them.”

“*Shit*. Thanks, Joe. I’ll call again, Kirk out.”

A communicator signal. That’s all? Joanna wondered.

McCoy was about three quarters of the way through the tunnel when he suddenly felt Spock being jerked off his back. Frantically, he turned around to see what had happened and saw that a stalactite had pierced Spock’s shirt, trapping him.

McCoy tried to free him, tugging frantically, panic rising as he noticed Spock going more and more slack. McCoy’s own ability to hold his breath was already strained to the limit, stars beginning to dance before his eyes. Finally, making the hardest decision of his life, he abandoned his efforts to free Spock and with his remaining strength cleared the tunnel and broke the surface of the water.

Swallowing air in big gulps, he waited only until his vision cleared, took a big lungful of air and dove back down into the water. Instead of trying to free Spock, he pinched the Vulcan’s nose, pressed their mouths together and blew the life-saving air into Spock’s lungs.

Mercifully, the Vulcan opened his eyes, if only a fraction, giving McCoy the hope and strength he needed to return to the chamber and swallow another lungful of air. This time, he devoted all of his energy to ripping Spock’s shirt off and after a minute-long struggle he managed. Released from his entrapment, Spock floated down, unconscious and McCoy grabbed him, pulling him along to the next chamber and heaving him onto a ledge that was just above water-level.

Joanna was watching Kirk approach the two officers “Right then,” Kirk said, “get me disaster relief, please.”

While Kirk was talking into the officers’ communicator, Joanna glanced around for the scanner they had abandoned on the ground. Though it was indeed no good at penetrating deep into the rock, it showed the make-up of the cave from the outside just fine.

Using the tweaks Spock had taught her, Joanna calibrated the scanner to show her what she wanted to know. There were three narrow side branches connecting the cave to the outside world. She stuffed the scanner into her backpack and quietly slipped away from Kirk and the officers.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

McCoy was leaning against a stalagmite, cradling Spock's head in his lap. He was completely exhausted. After pulling Spock onto the ledge he had coaxed a river of water out of the Vulcan and, in what felt like a terrible déjà vu, had performed CPR until Spock was breathing again on his own. But Spock remained unconscious and McCoy didn't have the strength to carry him further down the cave, which as far as McCoy could make out, sloped upwards from their current position, so if they ever got moving again there would at least be no more diving and swimming.

How long had they sat like this? McCoy wondered. He wanted nothing more than to close his eyes but he kept an anxious lookout for Tenger whom he expected to emerge from the water at any moment. He also didn't want to let Spock out of his sight, the raising and lowering of his chest – though accompanied by a wet rattle – being the only thing comforting the doctor in their current situation.

He stroked Spock's wet hair, thinking back to the desperate declaration of love he had received from him earlier. It had been as though Spock had anticipated what was to come. As though he wanted to say goodbye. McCoy's chest constricted.

"If we get out of this alive, Spock," he mumbled, "I want to be bonded to you. I want to know how you're doing, I want to know what you're thinking and I want you to know how I'm feeling, what I'm feeling – for you. Because I love you, I really do. Taluhk nash-veh k'dular."

His eyelids felt heavy. *I'll just close my eyes for one minute*, he thought. *Just one minute.*

Joanna was breathing in and out slowly, trying to calm her racing heart. She was at a dead-end. It had taken her an hour to reach the first of the side branches that she hoped would eventually lead her to the main cave. She had gone in but had had to climb out of again as it became impossibly narrow after around 200 metres. A cat might have been able to squeeze

through it but she couldn't. So she had walked on for another thirty minutes to where the scanner showed the next opening. This one was also narrow, she had had to move through it walking sideways like a crab, but she had been able to move far inside the cave – until now.

Do not panic, she told herself but this was easier said than done. *I need to get to them, they need to get out of there*. The backpack felt heavy in her right hand – she had had to take it off in the narrow passageway and had been carrying it ahead of her the entire time. *Do I turn back now and try the third branch?* But that would take time – time she suspected her daddy and Spock didn't have.

"Think logically," she said aloud, her voice sounding small in the silence of the cave which was punctuated only by the sound of dripping water. She looked up and saw that high above her head the crack she was standing in widened – she was effectively standing at the bottom of a V-shape. She peered through the impossibly narrow opening leading deeper into the cave, then up again. It looked as though the tunnel was wide enough to walk in again just behind this part here where the two walls of the passageway almost met. Joanna maneuvered the backpack above her head, rummaged through it and took out the torch. She closed the backpack again and managed to throw it through the wider part of the passageway above. Seconds later she heard it land with a dull thud. Shining the torch through the narrow crack in front of her, she determined that it had indeed landed where she had hoped it would. She took a deep breath, tucked the torch between her teeth, and carefully began her ascent.

"JOANNA?" Kirk was shouting his lungs out. "Jo-annaaaa!"

Behind him the disaster relief crew was setting up all kinds of fancy equipment, getting ready to stabilize the mouth of the cave and to move inside.

This is taking too long, he thought nervously as he watched them. *And now I've lost Joanna. God, Bones and Spock are going to kill me.*

"JOANNA!" I was well past noon. Perhaps he had just gone back to the house?

Where did I see her last? Kirk wondered. I was talking to the officers and she was playing with their scanner... Or, hang on. Maybe she wasn't playing... She wouldn't... Oh god, no, she probably would...

Kirk whipped out his communicator, opened it and set it to McCoy's frequency.

"Joanna, it's Jim," – he sincerely hoped she had gone back to the house. "Joanna, can you hear me?"

Joanna *could* hear the communicator beeping inside the backpack but she was busy trying not to slip and fall on the wet rock. She had had to climb up the way she used to climb doorframes as a child, one hand and one foot on each side of the passageway's walls. Now that she was up high enough, she was moving along awkwardly. The distance she had to cross was only about a meter but she was around five metres above ground and did not want to fall and get stuck in the narrow crack below. Mercifully, she finally saw the backpack below and climbed down the same way she had climbed up before the passageway became too wide for her to reach its walls with her arms and legs.

As soon as she was down, she dug out the communicator from the backpack and opened it.

"Uncle Jim," she said without prelude, "I'm in the cave! I think I'm close."

The communicator crackled, emitting some static. "Joanna!" Kirk answered almost immediately. "I can hardly read you. How did you get in there? That's terribly dangerous! Just wait right where you are and I'll come get you, ok?"

"Forget it," Joanna said, already shouldering her backpack and moving on. "I came through one of the side branches and there's hardly any space for me to fit through, so you can't come in. But all you need is a communicator signal and you can beam us out right? I will find them and then I'll call you again."

She closed the communicator before Kirk had a chance to say anything. She was definitely in the big cave now – much deeper than the place Tengor had taken them, *so logically*, she thought, *I've got to walk to the left*. She had to admit it was pretty scary. The light beam of her torch was dancing over the dripping rock and she felt like she was alone in the world.

To distract herself, she began to sing to herself, softly, hesitantly, but her voice still echoed through the cave clearly.

“Rock-a-bye, baby,

In the tree top.

When the wind blows,

The cradle will rock.”

She stopped, thinking she'd heard something but there was no sound except for that of dripping water.

“When the bough breaks,

The cradle will fall,

And I will catch it,

Baby and all.”

McCoy thought he must still be dreaming but the cold that had crept into his bones made him think that perhaps he was awake after all. But how was this possible? This was Joanna's voice and the song she had liked so much ever since she was a little girl. He could hear her quite clearly now.

"Rock a bye baby

Do not you fear,

Never mind baby,

Mother is near."

Was he going insane? He turned around and sure enough, he could see a beam of light dancing towards them and the song continued.

"Wee little fingers,

Eyes are shut tight,

Now sound asleep,

Until morning light."

At that moment, the beam of light fell onto Spock and McCoy and Joanna squealed with delight.

“Daddy!” Sa-mekh!”

Chapter End Notes

So Rock-a-bye actually has four verses, but I wasn't gonna put you through all of them, haha

Chapter 7

Joanna ran towards McCoy and he pulled her into a tight hug.

“What are you doing here, Jojo?” he asked, torn between the joy of seeing her unharmed and the fact that he didn’t want her to be anywhere near a half-collapsed, flooded cave with an angry Cespian lurking in the shadows.

“I came to get you out,” Joanna announced. Then her gaze fell on Spock and she dropped to her knees beside him.

“Sa-mekh...,” she whispered. “What is wrong with him?” she asked anxiously, laying a hand on the Vulcan’s chest.

Her father pressed his lips together. “He’s hurt, sweetheart,” he said sadly. “He’s hurt, he’s cold and he needs to get out of here.”

Joanna tore her eyes away from Spock’s still face. “Uncle Jim is outside,” she explained, digging the communicator out of her backpack. “He can have us beamed out!”

“Jim...?” McCoy asked, flabbergasted. “How...?”

But Joanna had already opened the communicator. “Uncle Jim, I found them!”

Static. Then, Kirk’s voice became audible, sounding very far away.

“Oh god, that’s amazing, Joanna! Are they ok?”

McCoy took the communicator from his daughter. "I'm fine, Jim, but Spock is not. Can you really get us out?"

"Just one minute, Bones, I can hardly hear you. Let me call the Farragut."

"How did you find us?" McCoy asked, turning to Joanna.

"I came through one of the side branches," the girl explained. "The other day Spock showed me how to use a scanner and so I knew where they come up to the surface."

McCoy was going to say something else but was interrupted by the communicator beeping.

"Bones, they're gonna try to beam you out now. The signal's not great but they'll give it a go!"

Seconds later, McCoy felt the familiar tingle of a transporter beam. He had never been a huge fan of this mode of transportation, but at this moment he thought, he might just learn to love the damned things. His enthusiasm was soon curbed, however, when the tingling sensation subsided and they were still inside the cave.

"Dammit," McCoy mumbled. "Jim, it's not working," he said into the communicator.

"I know, Bones. They will try again, taking one of you at a time."

Immediately, McCoy's eyes were drawn to Spock who began to shimmer as the transporter beam caught him, however before he had even partially dematerialized, the effect subsided and he lay there as still as before.

Shit, McCoy thought.

“I’m sorry, Bones,” Kirk’s far-away voice from the communicator sounded outright miserable. “They say they can’t get a proper fix on you through the rock. They need a pattern enhancer.”

“Well, we don’t have a pattern enhancer,” McCoy said, more irritably than he’d meant to. “Sorry, Jim,” he added, “it’s just that I was really hoping to get Spock out of here, he’s really not doing too well.”

“I’m so sorry, Bones, Kirk said. “I’ll see if there’s something else we can try, Kirk out.”

“What’s a pattern enhancer?” Joanna asked. She looked downcast at her failed rescue attempt and had moved over to Spock again, taking his hand.

“It’s something you use when you can’t get a transporter lock,” McCoy explained. “That’s all I really know about it. Spock would be able to explain it to you properly.” He gave Joanna a sad smile.

“He really *is* cold,” the girl said, stroking Spock’s hand. “Wait! I almost forgot!”

She went over to the backpack. “I brought a heat pack and your medical kit!”

McCoy’s face lit up. “Oh, Jojo, you’re such a smart girl,” he said proudly, taking the items from her. “Thank you, sweetie!”

Immediately, he moved to Spock side, breaking the heat pack open and giving the Vulcan a couple of hypos.

“Are pattern enhancers big?” Joanna asked as she watched her father work.

“Not very,” McCoy said distractedly, “they consist of three poles about a meter high each.”

I should be able to carry that, Joanna thought. And while McCoy was still busy treating Spock, she silently stole away into the direction she had come from, taking only one of the communicators with her.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Another short chapter. We're close to the conclusion now though...

Joanna was walking fast, finding her way back with ease in spite of the relative darkness. Once she was out of earshot of her fathers, she opened the communicator, speaking urgently.

“Joanna to Jim!”

“Joanna!” Kirk replied. “What’s wrong? Did something happen to Bone... to your father?”

“No,” Joanna said, feeling a little guilty. “I just kinda... left. I need you to meet me by the exit of the second side branch and give me a pattern enhancer. I’ll take it back and then you can beam my daddies out.”

Kirk hesitated. “Joanna... you can’t keep climbing around those caves by yourself. It’s dangerous! I’m sure you ‘just kinda left’ because you knew your parents wouldn’t let you do this, so how am I supposed to give you permission, huh?”

Joanna sighed. “They wouldn’t let me but then what other options are there? *Please*, Uncle Jim. I’m the only one small enough to fit through the side entrance and I can’t just do nothing.”

Now it was Kirk’s turn to sigh. “Fine. But promise me you’ll be careful, alright?”

Joanna smiled. “Promise! Joanna out.”

“Hey there,” McCoy smiled as Spock opened his eyes. “Jojo, come over here, Spock’s awake.”

Spock looked confused. “Joanna?” he asked weakly.

“Yeah, she’s here! She brought us supplies. Jo?”

When no answer came, McCoy turned around, searching the perimeter of the cave with his eyes. “Joanna, where are you? – I swear she was here a minute ago. Jojo?”

“She shouldn’t be here,” Spock mumbled, “it’s too dangerous.”

“Well, she’s not here now,” McCoy commented, going to the backpack and rummaging through it. “Looks like she took one of the communicators but she left us the torch and everything else. “Here, have some water.” He held the bottle of water Joanna had packed to Spock’s lips while opening the communicator, setting it to the frequency of the device he usually used. “Joanna,” he said, trying to sound strict. “Can you hear me? Where are you?”

Joanna’s communicator beeped just as Kirk was handing over the pattern enhancer. It was a little heavier than she’d hoped but still manageable. They had tied it to her back with a harness so that she would still be able to climb the rock where the passageway got too narrow to walk in. Kirk had paled when she told him about that bit of the journey but hadn’t even tried to dissuade her from going. He knew the determined look on the girl’s face only too well, having seen it on McCoy too many times – and, come to think of it, on Spock too.

The communicator beeped again and Joanna gave Kirk a nervous look. They both knew who was calling.

“Joanna,” McCoy sounded worried. “Can you hear me? Where are you?”

“I’m outside with Uncle Jim,” Joanna informed her father. “But I’m coming back in. We’ve got a pattern enhancer.”

“You will not come back into the cave,” Spock’s voice responded, weakly but clearly. “Jim, do not let her come back, it is too dangerous and we are well able to wait for the disaster relief crew to rescue us.”

“Spock!” Joanna and Kirk said simultaneously.

“Sa-mekh, are you feeling better?” the girl asked hopefully.

“I am... functional,” Spock responded.

“In a pig’s eye you are,” McCoy joined the conversation. “Jim, tell disaster relief to hurry up, but, Jo, Spock’s right, we don’t want you to come back in here.”

“Bones...” Kirk sounded pained. “The say it’ll be at least another 24 hours before they get to you... and that Cespian is still alive in there... we keep scanning and his signal is not far from yours. Don’t you think it’s better if you get out sooner rather than later?”

McCoy swallowed. He had briefly forgotten about Tengor. And while Spock was ok for now, the doctor wasn’t sure he could stand another 24 hours, or even longer, in the wet and cold. It was an impossible decision. Risk Joanna getting hurt climbing around the cave or risk Spock’s life waiting for rescue? He looked at the Vulcan but Spock shook his head.

“Do not risk your life on my behalf, Joanna-kam,” he said earnestly. “I... I could not stand to lose you.”

Joanna felt tears welling up behind her eyes. “But you did the same for me!” she shouted. “Twice actually. And why do you think that *I* could stand to loose *you*? Because I couldn’t. Please just let me help you!”

Spock and McCoy looked at each other, stunned. “How... how do you know about this, Jojo?” McCoy asked, alarmed.

“I heard mum and Ben talking about it,” Joanna said, tears now flowing freely. And I’m sorry but this time I won’t listen to you.”

And with that she closed her communicator and dashed off towards the cave as fast as her feet could carry her.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

McCoy sighed in frustration as Joanna cut the connection. “She really is becoming a teenager,” he mumbled, drawing a hand across his face. “Won’t listen, does whatever she wants, keeps secrets...”

He picked up the torch and let the light glide over their surroundings. “Spock. Do you think you can walk? I suppose now that she’s gonna bring the pattern enhancer in here, we should move to somewhere where we can set it up more easily. Looks like there’s just about enough space back there.”

Spock nodded. “Logical, Leonard.” He shakily got to his feet but a wave of dizziness caused him to lose his balance and he would have crashed to the ground had McCoy not swiftly caught him in his arms.

“Slowly, slowly,” McCoy cautioned. He pulled Spock’s arm over his shoulders and put his own arm around the Vulcan’s waist and so they wobbled deeper into the cave until they reached what looked like a clearing amidst a group of stalagmites.

“Sit here,” McCoy said as he eased Spock down to the floor. “I’ll go back for the supplies.”

But just as he was about to go, there was a splash, followed by gasping and the sound of more splashing. McCoy froze. He turned to Spock, who evidently had heard it too as he silently mouthed one word. *Tengor*.

Joanna was once again climbing the slippery rocks. Just like she’d had to take her backpack off during the first trip, she had had to remove the pattern enhancer from the harness on her back and had been dragging it behind her while walking sideways through the narrow passage. Unlike the backpack, she hadn’t dared throw it ahead of her when she came to the

part of the route where she needed to leave solid ground to get on, afraid she would damage the device. Instead, she had fashioned the harness into a rope, tied one end to the pattern enhancer and the other end to her wrist. Having conquered the obstacle in her path, she pulled at the rope and the pattern enhancer followed after her to, falling from the rock she had just scaled, but she caught it in her arms before it could hit the ground.

That's the hardest part over, she thought feeling elated as she marched on towards her parents.

It had all gone incredibly fast. One minute McCoy's eyes had darted around the cave, desperately looking for a means of escape, the next his gaze had fallen on an angry Cespian coming towards them at a remarkable speed, considering that one of his legs was evidently broken and he had a large head wound. Tengor certainly hadn't survived the cave-in unscathed but his temper seemed to be intact, judging from the murderous look on his face.

"There you are!" he bellowed as he set eyes upon them. "You thought you could trick me and escape but now I've finally got you and there will be no mercy this time."

Spock and McCoy exchanged a glance, silently communicating the same thing. *Goodbye, I love you and dear God, please, let Joanna escape this monster.*

As Joanna came closer to her destination, she could hear voices, or rather, one voice, loud and angry and belonging neither to her daddy nor to her sa-mekh. Silently, she circled closer, then peered around a stalagmite. *Tengor.*

The Cespian was standing about five metres away from her parents, pointing a phaser at them.

“Shall I shoot you or shall I bury you under layers of rock like you tried to bury me?” he asked, menacingly.

Joanna took a deep breath. She knew she needed to act fast. Kirk had explained to her how to set up and activate the pattern enhancer and she planned on putting that knowledge to good use.

She took the first pole of the device and, crouching behind the stalagmites, silently set it up between the rock formations that were hiding her from view, just between where her parents were sitting and where Tengor was standing.

“You see,” the Cespian droned, “I want to make sure you die... but I also want you to suffer.”

Joanna moved on until she was basically facing Tengor, had the stalagmites not hidden her from him. She set up the second pole, making sure it was both hidden by the rocks around her but still in direct line of sight to the first pole.

“A cave-in is probably gonna kill you though, isn’t it?” Tengor mused. He pointed the phaser away from Spock and McCoy and instead aimed it at the stalactites above their heads.

Joanna set up the last pole opposite the first one and aligned it with both other poles, completing a triangle. *Here we go*, she thought, activating the device.

McCoy had put his arms around Spock and closed his eyes as Tengor fired the phaser, but the Vulcan had chosen to keep his eyes open and so he suddenly saw three blue lines appearing from in-between the stalagmites surrounding them. Just as the first rocks were falling down from overhead, he saw Joanna dashing towards them, opening a communicator.

“NOW!” she shouted and suddenly the cave dissolved before his eyes and he, McCoy and Joanna materialized in the transporter room of a starship where they were greeted by a

smiling Jim Kirk.

“Welcome aboard!”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for sticking with the story, everyone! There will be one more chapter (an epilogue) and then this series will be complete, hurrah! Hope you all liked it!

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

McCoy was rubbing his eyes in the semi-darkness of the room. Something had woken him up but he couldn't quite put his finger on it. A sound...? Or was it... a feeling? Yes, that was it. *Emotions*, but not his own. He felt for the bond in his mind, carefully probing it, letting it take him closer to Spock, his thoughts and feelings.

McCoy was still getting used to the bond which was only two months old. To say he liked it would be an understatement. While before bonding with Spock he had been afraid he'd never be able to be alone again, he now wondered why he would have wanted to. Spock's presence was like a mug of Vulcan tea, warming him, calming him, making him feel good through and through.

Now he felt amusement at the comparison ripple through the connection. *I did not realize you were so fond of Vulcan tea*, Spock teased him. He had opened his mind to McCoy completely now and the doctor could sense the feelings that had originally awakened him – relief and guilt, satisfaction and shame.

He got up and walked into the living room where he found Spock gazing out of the window, his hands clasped behind his back.

"They found the body," Spock said without turning around as McCoy entered. "It has taken them four months to clear the cave and I must admit I every day I feared he had somehow survived ... but now we can be certain he is dead. I should not feel satisfaction at the death of another being ... but I do."

McCoy crossed the room and put his arms around Spock, pressing his face into the Vulcan's back.

"That's such a relief," he mumbled. "And he had it coming. Why are you feeling so bad about this?"

“Ri klau au ik klau tu,” Spock mumbled and via the bond translated for McCoy: *Do no harm to those that harm you.*

“We didn’t harm him,” McCoy retorted. “He took care of that himself. And remember what you told Joanna that day we came back home.”

McCoy cast his mind back to the day they had returned home from their ordeal in the cave and let Spock see through the bond what he remembered about it. After a day and two nights aboard the Farragut where they’d made use of the ship’s sickbay so that Spock could recover from his injuries, they had beamed down to a clearing in the woods not far from their house. Kirk had accompanied them and Joanna had been uncharacteristically quiet.

When she finally spoke, McCoy understood what had been weighing on her mind the whole time. “D’you think he’s dead?” she had asked, almost timidly.

It had taken McCoy a moment to understand. “Tengor?” he asked. “Well, I would say it’s likely, yes, sweetheart, but we cannot be sure. They’ve been scanning the cave but the collapse made the rock too dense even for the Farragut’s scanners to get any reliable readings.”

Joanna cast her eyes down. “If he’s dead, it’s my fault,” she mumbled. “I keep thinking maybe I should have set up the pattern enhancer so that he would have been beamed up as well.”

McCoy stared at his daughter open-mouthed, at a loss as to what to say. Luckily, he wasn’t the only parent around.

Spock squatted down in front of Joanna and gently grabbed her by the shoulders.

“Vah mau vah tor-yehat ri stau,” she said to him – a saying McCoy recognised as one of Surak’s – *As far as possible, do not kill.*

“A’ri,” Spock agreed. “You must understand, however,” he continued in English, probably for McCoy and Kirk’s benefit rather than Joanna’s, “that you did not kill. He intended to kill us and you saved our lives. Dou you understand the difference?”

Joanna nodded, a few tears rolling down her cheeks. “I understand, sa-mekh.”

McCoy had gone over to his family and had pulled both Spock and Joanna into a tight embrace. Eventually, Kirk had had spoken, pulling all of them back to the real world.

“I suppose it’s a good thing I didn’t give you a phaser then when you went back into the cave,” he told Joanna good-naturedly. “I wanted to, so that you’d be able to defend yourself but you wouldn’t have used it, would you?”

Joanna shook her head. “I don’t think I could have used it, Uncle Jim,” she said. “Does that make me a coward? You know I really want to apply to Starfleet Academy when I’m older but if I can’t even fire a phaser...” she trailed off.

“It doesn’t make you a coward at all Joanna,” Kirk had told her. “In fact, it makes you incredibly brave,” he added, an idea forming in his mind, but Spock had given Kirk a strict look.

“You were going to give my 12-year-old daughter a phaser?” he had asked. “I am not sure we can let you watch her anymore.” McCoy had not been able to tell whether or not Spock was joking.

Now Spock’s voice pulled McCoy back to the present. “You are right, ashalik.” McCoy could feel the guilt in Spock’s mind dissolving like fog in the sunlight. “Shall we wake Joanna? It is her first day at the Academy today.”

“No need!” a voice said from behind, “I’m up!”

Spock and McCoy turned around to find Joanna standing in the door, fully dressed and clearly excited.

“I sure hope Jim knows what he’s doing,” McCoy grumbled. “Starfleet Youth Academy. A new training programme for promising future recruits... it had better not be dangerous, so if they give you a phaser today, Jojo, you come straight home and never go back again, is that clear?”

Joanna rolled her eyes. “Uncle Jim promised: no phasers! Besides, I’m not interested in phasers, I’m going for the science programme!”

“It would be advisable, Joanna-kam,” Spock interjected, “that you address your Uncle Jim as Professor Kirk while you’re attending the Academy.”

Joanna sighed. “Yes, sa-mekh, I know! I really need to go now, after all I need to cross the country, all the way to San Francisco,” she said, grinning.

“If you leave now,” Spock said, “You will be 1.42 hours early.”

Joanna smiled. “Well, I’m really excited, alright? I’ll see you both tonight!”

She gave each of her fathers a kiss before leaving the house to walk towards the nearest transporter.

McCoy sighed. “She may be living with us now but I’ve got a feeling Jim will get to see her more than we will...”

“Rom-halan, Joanna-kam” Spock said, putting his arm around McCoy’s shoulders as they watched their daughter walk away into the morning light.

Chapter End Notes

The end! Thanks for your lovely comments and your support!

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