

THE TEMPER

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by Natasha Solten

Spock's temper had become a source of idle gossip for the crew of the Enterprise, for McCoy especially, and for Kirk who had been dealing with his own peculiar emotions concerning Spock for nearly twenty years and, especially, this last year.

"I've never heard him cuss so much in all my life," McCoy muttered. "Is the oxygen content in his quarters too rich or something? Is he eating properly?"

Kirk ignored the doctor's questions. He fiddled with the game-stick for fuzball even though McCoy was no longer paying attention to his strategy. "Watch your left man!" he exclaimed. "He's over the line. Ah... ah...damn! Bones, dammit, pay attention! Piss and shit. Now it's frozen. Hell afire, I was so close to winning, too!"

McCoy frowned. "You been getting language lessons from Spock?"

At that, Kirk allowed a smile. "His language has become a bit richer, I'll admit, ever since..." He swallowed, uncomfortable still with the memories even though they were several years old now. "Ever since Seleya," he finished quickly.

"Lately, his temper, though... I don't remember it ever being this bad... Vulcan stoicism and all that.... Strange, is all... Won't talk to me, either... Thought psych might have an answer... Cool as a cucumber when I mention tests, though... Nice one minute, then is off spouting gibberish about damned human gods and hells..."

"Bones." Kirk held his hand up to stop the doctor's tirade. "You're speaking in incomplete sentences again."

Grumbling incoherently, McCoy favored him with a blue-eyed frown. "You know what I mean, Jim."

Kirk sat back in his chair. The lights of the rec room were a soothing, golden hue but still his eyes hurt, and his head was beginning to throb. He needed some rest, but insomnia and stress, even with McCoy's medical advice and 'soft' over-the-counter prescriptions, remained almost constant companions. Especially since he'd been sleeping alone. "It's age," Kirk said. "We're all just getting old and crotchety."

"You're not that old," McCoy countered.

"What if I told you I've been lying about my age ever since I met you?"

“You mean,” McCoy’s chest and cheeks expanded with a held breath as he pretended to look horrified, “that you really weren’t ever the youngest captain in the fleet?”

“Gods, that seems like another life,” Kirk said.

McCoy rolled his eyes. “Every day is another life, Jim.”

“And every life an adventure,” Kirk finished. “Who said that? Shakespeare? Finagle? Khan?”

“You said it,” McCoy replied, smiling. “Kirk’s First Law of Star Trekking.”

“You made that up,” Kirk accused.

“Me?”

“Yeah, but I like it. Write the book and I’ll split the royalties with you.”

“Split? I write it, I own it.”

“Then you can’t use my name.”

“Who’d want to? Kirk is only the most infamous name in the galaxy.”

Kirk chuckled, drumming his fingers on the glass tabletop. His fuzzball team jumped. One of the team members said, “Hey! What’s going on up there? You gonna take a break all day?”

“You want to finish this, Bones?”

“I’m bored.”

The team members heard that and started hopping up and down. “No. No. Don’t turn us off. We’ll do better. We want to live! We want to live!”

“Computer off,” Kirk said, ignoring the tiny pleas.

“So, back to Spock. What do you think?” McCoy asked.

“I think he’s just had too much human contamination, that’s all,” Kirk said. “You wouldn’t be worried if it was a human who was temperamental all the time.”

“Spock’s not completely human.”

“He’s human,” Kirk argued. “As much as you and I.”

“Don’t let him hear you say that.”

“He already has. He told me he was insulted.”

“Why of all the... I’m going to have to... Damned snubbing Vulcan... I oughta...”

“Bones.”

McCoy blinked. “Yeah. Right. Complete sentences. But Jim... Vulcan superiority... You know... He’s...” He clamped down, his lips pressing tightly together. He swallowed hard.

Kirk started to laugh. As he did, the tension poured off his shoulders, down his back, through his legs and into the thickly carpeted deck at his feet. His headache subsided. Whether consciously, or unconsciously, McCoy knew what was the best medicine for his friend.

Then, suddenly sober, Kirk had the urge to unburden himself further. McCoy brought these urges out in him in an uncanny, almost witch-doctorish way. “You know Spock and I aren’t living together still,” he almost whispered.

“Yeah.” His cool blue eyes went soft. He blinked, looked down. “And have you thought that might have something to do with his temper, too?”

Kirk shook his head. “He needed space, I needed space. It was a mutual agreement.”

“Since when? Seleya?”

Kirk shook his head. “You know we had that second apartment in San Francisco for a couple years. You know, after the trial.”

“Oh yeah. Well, dammit, Jim. You never talk to me anymore.”

“I wasn’t the one off gallivanting in what’s left of South Africa or the sunken slums of Kuwait.”

“I volunteered for that. But anyway, what happened? You guys were fine when we went on those camping trips to Yosemite.” He paused, eyebrows rising. “Weren’t you?”

“Before his brother died we were inseparable. Afterwards, that temper of his just, well...” Kirk stopped suddenly. Why now? After all this time, why was he talking to McCoy about him and Spock?

“So what happened after Sybok?” McCoy asked gently.

“That second camping trip, you know, he got really moody. We had a fight.”

“About what?”

Kirk shrugged. “Things. Stuff.”

“Come on, Jim.”

Kirk turned away.

“Okay, go on,” McCoy said a little too quickly.

“By the time he started working more with Sarek, and got that dialog going with that Klingon Gorkon –“ He remembered McCoy pounding on the Klingon’s bloody chest, remembered Gorkon’s hand in his hair, on his head, pulling him close for a final plea – “Don’t let it end this way.” – and the subsequent arrest for his assassination – “by that time we weren’t living together...or speaking.”

“What?” McCoy looked shocked.

“Yeah. We played it like everything was normal. In public, we were fine. Professionally, we just worked the same as always.”

“Who moved out?”

“I did.”

“Why?”

Kirk looked at his lap. His hands had started to sweat. The fingers slipped against each other as he tried to weave them together. “I thought he’d betrayed me.”

“What?”

“He never told me about Sybok.”

“You worked through that. I was there.”

Kirk shook his head. “He got Sybok’s katra, Bones, and didn’t bother to tell me that, either. That hurt me. He just got all moody and wouldn’t talk about it.”

“Is that what you fought about on the camping trip?”

“There were lots of other things. He’d been talking about the Klingons, too, but I didn’t know he’d actually been working with them. But the talk, his so noble IDIC concept, and wanting peace, peace, peace at all costs, well, it infuriated me. I thought he was taking their feelings into account while ignoring mine. I felt so betrayed. All I could think of

was how they killed David, how they would've killed him, too. Almost succeeded. And here he was opening himself up for another combat knife in the throat."

"You need to talk to him, Jim."

"We have already. A little." Kirk smiled up at him. "I'm not mad now."

"Well why aren't you with him, then? Right now, dammit!"

Kirk shrugged. "We're still working on it, Bones. These things don't get resolved over night."

"Tell me about it." McCoy drummed the glass game top with his hands now, echoing Kirk's earlier nervous gesture. "But time is precious. Don't take too long. You'll regret it. I know I did."

"With your wife?"

"And my kid. It's not worth it, Jim, telling yourself things will blow over with time. You have to make it happen. You have to take what you want. Time makes no friends. Not ever. It's completely indifferent. You don't ever want to wake up saying to yourself, damn, it's too late now. I should've done it yesterday."

Kirk stared at him, watching the expressive, craggy face soften and harden with each statement; each emotion his words brought back played over the planes and valleys of his 70 year old visage. He was so like a father to Kirk, so filled with wisdom and caring. He had taken off his maroon jacket and the gray-blue shirt beneath bunched against his thin frame. He looked casual and soft, grumpy and gruff, old and young all at the same time.

Softly, Kirk said, "But it's so hard."

"You guys haven't been together since Sybok, have you?"

Kirk shook his head.

"Now I understand."

"What?"

"Spock's temper. You."

"You got it wrong, Bones. He's been like that..."

McCoy was shaking his head. "What he did to Valeris on the bridge in full view of everyone would never have happened that way at any other time. Never. He did that for you. And he did that because of you, too. For love. For fear. For anger. For revenge.

He was so angry at her for putting your life in danger. And angry in general because you and he hadn't communicated enough, and that lack of communication endangered your life. If it had been any other time, he would've done the meld in sickbay, with Valeris on trunks and you and me there to pull him back, heal him."

Kirk felt his eyes grow warm. "Maybe." His voice was husky.

"Spock's showing you his frustration, Jim. Just open your eyes and read what's on the page. It's not worth arguing about any longer."

"I just don't know what to do anymore."

"Don't tell me after twenty years of friendship, and most of that pining after him, and five years of living together, that you don't know what to do. Don't give yourself that excuse. You know what to do, Jim. And if you don't, then you never did. And I don't believe that."

"Why do I have to..."

"Make the first move?" McCoy snorted. "Dammit, Jim. The first move was made years ago. And many many times. Before you ever got together. You both made first moves in your every gesture for years before you ever made that first step to the same bed."

Kirk was surprised to find himself actually flushing. He wasn't embarrassed, it was just that it had been a long time since he and Spock had made love, shared anything substantial together. Too long. Long enough for things to get awkward again. Long enough to be ashamed of not love, but separation, not loyalty, but mistrust.

"I can't believe you two haven't slept together since Yosemite. Damn, Jim. I just can't believe it. You two are fools!"

"We got sidetracked."

"Fine. If the love's run out, fine. But has it?"

Without warning, Kirk's chest constricted. His arms and legs tingled as he thought of Spock and love, what they had, what they shared, what he'd almost lost so many times. He'd been quietly broken-hearted when he'd moved out. Spock had to have been hurting, too. But he'd been too selfish to care at the time.

An ache he hadn't allowed himself to feel in a long time started building inside. Hollow. Desperate. Both warm and cold. Full and empty.

He remembered in a collage of textures, scents and sounds, nights locked in an unabated passion he'd never known with another lover, and never could hope to know again with anyone but Spock. He remembered all the hours of just being close, living close,

working close. He remembered Spock's first true laugh as they lay side by side on the living room floor of their first apartment together, talking and joking in the nonsensical way of lovers. He remembered the trauma of Spock's death, a cessation of his own soul, and how he'd risked everything to bring him back. He'd do it again in an instant.

Yes, they had been fools. McCoy was right. What they had had – and still had – surpassed any petty arguments over brothers and sons and Klingons and young, virile Vulcan female protégés. Had he actually been jealous of Saavik, of Valeris?

“Well?” McCoy prompted. “Has it run out? Has your love run its course?”

Kirk stood then, ignoring the gaze of his friend and mentor, ignoring the question.

As he turned to leave, he heard McCoy say, “I thought not.”

He was out the door and heading for Spock's quarters before realizing how rude his actions might seem to McCoy.

But as he stood outside Spock's door sensing the familiar presence within, realizing his truth and his life moved and breathed and dreamed beyond that final barrier, he knew McCoy would understand.

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Spock had been sleeping. His hair was pushed up on one side, and his sleep damp eyes glistened. The look he gave Kirk as the door opened was languid, still slightly glazed. He winced when their eyes met, then stepped aside. Neither man, on this voyage, declined the other entrance to his respective living space. They had gotten along fine, as well, but private conversations had been limited, and the awkwardness between them all but ignored. Kirk understood the Vulcan's wince very well. Now that the Klingon mission was over and they were heading -- the long way – back to base to be decommissioned, it was only logical for him to deduce why Kirk had come calling. Business was over. This was personal.

Their relationship shouldn't have ever been allowed to get to the point where personal communication between them was hard, even distasteful, work. After all, they still loved each other. Very much.

And McCoy had been right. Kirk wasn't making any first move here. He was making a second, or hundredth, or thousandth. That made it easier concerning both his pride and his fear of rejection. But there wouldn't be rejection. There never had been. There had been a simple separation, a difference of opinion, a parting of thought. But there had never been an end to love. Never.

He entered the over-heated rooms, hearing the door slide shut behind them, and turned. Spock stood facing him, framed by the now closed entrance. The bulkhead door was an

ugly grey. In fact, the entire quarters were grey, not Spock's preference of red, and the only Vulcan touch within were a few candles, not burning now, and some kind of ancient, blue tea ceremony set. There was also a horrible non-Vulcan picture of what looked like people drowning. Kirk never cared for Spock's tastes, but they didn't bother him, either.

Spock's ribbed white robe hung regally from his tall form. The white made his skin, eyes and hair look darker, his shoulders broader. Kirk remembered when that dark hair had been a little longer, curling at the nape of the neck, at the ears, against the slanted line of eyebrow. On Seleya, Spock had looked so young, so beautiful.

He was still beautiful.

Kirk cleared his throat. And was suddenly at a loss for words. McCoy's advice had been good, but after that he had had no plan. None.

They stared at each other. Kirk felt an itch on his shoulder blade. Sweat. Heat.

Then what he knew had to be said came to him abruptly as they looked at each other, as those dark eyes seemed to gently absorb him.

Kirk took a deep breath. "I was wrong." His voice came out higher than he'd intended, almost child-like.

For a moment, Spock looked as if he hadn't heard. Then the Vulcan blinked, looked away. "No. I was."

"I mean about the Klingons," Kirk qualified.

"I am speaking of them, too," Spock replied.

"But Gorkon was trustworthy. I didn't consider that."

"But Chang was not trustworthy. I didn't consider that. My actions, volunteering you for the mission without telling you first, or asking, are unforgivable."

"We hadn't quite been communicating at that time," Kirk reminded him.

"All the more reason why I should have come to you, instead of deciding for you. I was, perhaps, using work, my work, to get at you. To vent my frustration. To watch you squirm. That is not worthy of a Vulcan or a human."

"Maybe I deserved it," Kirk said, surprised that Spock was so easily admitting to his emotions. "Maybe I deserved more than a political jab. Maybe I deserved to see your anger unleashed, without qualification. At any rate, I deserve the truth, whether you hate me, or whether you still..." He took a breath. "...still love me."

“My anger?” Spock questioned, too obviously ignoring the reference to love.

“Yes. Your anger,” Kirk said slowly. *I got my hopes up too fast*, he thought.

“I do not know what you’re referring to. I felt frustration, Jim, after you left. But not anger toward you.”

“Oh yeah?”

Spock still shook his head in denial.

“Spock, you know how I felt about Klingons after David. You knew. It took more than frustration to underhandedly involve me with them again. Just admit it. You were pissed royally. And I don’t blame you!”

Spock stopped denying, or at least, his head remained still, neither nodding nor turning away in the negative.

“And it wasn’t frustration that made you start a chess marathon with Valeris while I was standing right there, and you never even invited me to join, either as observer or consultant. She had consultants. You didn’t even ask. And don’t tell me you didn’t need any. She beat the pants off you!”

He paused, watching the stoic visage of his best friend, his lover.

“And it wasn’t frustration that made you strike her in sickbay,” he continued. “Spock. She wasn’t going to shoot. She made it clear. You struck her anyway. Out of anger. Maybe what you really wanted was to strike me.”

“I struck her because I feared she was lying. That she would use the damn phaser, if not on me, then on you.”

Kirk noticed the four letter word that suddenly appeared in Spock’s speech pattern. The temper was there. Did he truly not recognize it?

“And I suppose there was no anger in you when you forced that meld on Valeris on the bridge.”

Spock’s right eyebrow rose. “We desperately needed the information. It was a life or death decision. Hell, I acted on your request.”

“I didn’t request the information immediately. We could’ve gone to sickbay.”

“Time was of the essence.”

“We had enough time. And you knew Sulu knew the conference was on Kittimer. You probed for that information because you were pissed, because you wanted to hurt someone. Me, maybe. So don’t tell me you don’t feel anger.”

“I feel shame. I forcefully fucked Valeris’s mind, and now you are telling me I need not have done so. Thank you, Jim. For nothing.”

He turned and entered his sleeping quarters, quite obviously dismissing Kirk.

But Kirk was not so easily put off. “Just admit you’re mad at me, Spock. At me. No one else. Me.”

“Anger and shame are not the same. Anger and disappointment. Anger and frustration. The words do not even sound the same.”

Kirk stood by the alcove. Spock stood by the bed, his back to him. “You’re angry now. That anger is tearing you apart. It has been. Everyone can tell. The crew. McCoy. They’re all talking about it. I’m telling you now that you were right. And that you have every right to be angry. I just want you to admit it. And then I want to make up for it.”

“No.” It was one word, flat and final.

“Spock...”

“You were not wrong, Jim.” He still hadn’t moved. His shoulders, under the thick white of the robe, were hunched. “I shouldn’t have done what I did. To you. To Valeris. My damn behavior cannot be excused, even by you... Captain.”

“Yes it can.”

“No, because I selfishly wanted to involve you with my work, even though it concerned Klingons, whom I knew you detested. And perhaps worse...perhaps you’re right, and it was you I wanted to do those...other...things to.”

“The things you did to Valeris?”

For awhile, Spock did not reply. Then a soft hiss of a whisper filled the air. “Yes.”

“I’m a better punching bag than a young girl, even if she is a traitor.”

“Neither of you are suitable ‘punching bags.’ I do not the hell deserve forgiveness.” The whisper was bitter, and clipped.

“Then I don’t, either.”

“Then that is that and you will leave.”

“Not again. I made that mistake already. After Yosemite.”

“You will. I request it.”

“No.”

Spock turned. His dark eyes were almost black. The muscles around them had tightened, making the gaze formidable and threatening. His fingers had curled into fists.

Go ahead, Kirk thought. Vent the anger. But he said nothing.

Spock took a step forward. “Then I will leave.”

Kirk panicked at that statement. He hadn’t expected it. As Spock tried to pass him, he reached out and grabbed his arm.

“Do not...” Spock jerked away, but Kirk managed to hold on. Spock’s other hand came up between them and pushed hard at Kirk’s chest.

Kirk freed his left hand, karate-chopped Spock’s hand away and wrapped both arms around the Vulcan’s waist. Startled, Spock took a step back. Kirk followed. The Vulcan was like steel as he pressed into him.

“The love never stopped,” he said, too fast, too soft, his words muffled by the thick cotton of Spock’s meditation robe. He hugged Spock tighter. “Only everything else. I shouldn’t have left. It was a mistake.”

He felt the Vulcan shudder.

Kirk closed his eyes. *Please, he silently prayed. Please feel the same way, Spock.*

Then strong arms enfolded him and he couldn’t breathe. He didn’t care. Didn’t need to breathe right now anyway. He moved his head up so that now his cheek scraped Spock’s jaw instead of the robe.

The Vulcan had gained weight since Seleya. There was more now to hold, more to touch. His hands met at Spock’s back, but there wasn’t the same amount of room there had been five years ago, before Spock’s death, before Khan. Kirk loved it.

“Jim.” The word was spoken, low, in his ear. In that one word, everything that needed to be communicated between them was said.

Cheek slid along cheek, jaw to jaw until their noses, chins and lips met. They clung. Their mouths opened. And there was warmth. Truth. The missing spark found again, ignited.

The ache inside Kirk moved from chest to belly and lower. The pain was that of a bruise healing, a part of him that had been ripped away now put hastily back.

They paused for air, then caught each other up again, the kiss needing to be there to complete the embrace.

Kirk loved kissing Spock. It was the best. The Vulcan tongue teased his with a knowing passion he'd never experienced before meeting him, falling in love with him. There was something magic about their merging of mouths, something more intimate and more pure than any other kind of touch. It was how they told each other their love was emotional, respectful, supportive and physical all at once.

When they finally broke away, they were both breathing hard. Then Kirk grinned. "Now why wouldn't you let me do that in front of the Klingons?"

A corner of Spock's mouth twitched into a smile. "You have to ask?" He reached out, touching Kirk's chin. "You, of all people, know I can't stop after one of your...kisses."

Kirk grabbed the hand, kissed the palm and said, "Then take me to your bed, Vulcan."

Their bodies had never forgotten each other, though much time had passed since they'd last been together. Kirk eagerly parted the thick Vulcan robe and found that nothing had changed. His Vulcan was still lean muscled – just a little thicker now –still in great shape, still well-endowed. He ran his hand down Spock's stomach and over the swollen genitals.

"Mmm, that for me?" he said softly as he squirmed out of his own clothes, reluctantly pulling away.

Spock rolled out of his robe, completely nude underneath, as Kirk knew he always was, then clasped Kirk's own now-naked waist in his hands and pulled them together, Kirk landing on top. Long-fingered hands brushed down Kirk's back and over his hips, cupping the fleshy buttocks as they kissed deeply again. Spock's penis pulsed against Kirk's hip. His own erection and balls pressed Spock's abdomen.

"This is always so perfect between us," Kirk whispered.

"The one area where we never had problems," Spock agreed.

"I haven't even had an orgasm since before we broke up," Kirk murmured. "And now..."

"Now you're making up for it." Spock rolled them until they were on their sides facing each other. He reached between them and stroked Kirk's cock in a smooth grip.

Kirk moaned, shivers of pleasure running through his body, and reached for Spock's erect organ. The testicles beneath were round and tight as he cupped them; then he ran his palm up the underside of the penis, encircling the head with forefinger and thumb. It was a familiar dance that never got boring, never got old.

Kirk broke away and kissed Spock's chest, tongue-teasing the nipples, smoothing the hair with his chin. Then he moved lower. The stomach quivered under his licks and kisses. His hands moved over Spock's hips and thighs as Kirk drew his knees under him and moved lower, bending over the flushed, green-tinged cock. He grasped the base, tipped it up and bent to pay homage to the flesh beneath; tight, round, sensitive testes that Spock loved to have licked and sucked.

Spock called his name in a low, breathy moan.

He loved the taste of Spock. Deep spice, musk, sweet. He ran his tongue up and down the center of the sac, then licked at the right nodule and drew it into his mouth. Heaven. Spock moaned from far away, hips squirming. Kirk sucked harder.

He took the other ball into his mouth and loved it, too, then licked up the underside of Spock's cock, pausing to tease the wrinkle of flesh that connected head to ridge. Then he wetly kissed the pre-cum dampened tip.

His own cock ached. Giving head turned him on more than anything.

“Jim.”

He licked the tip and kissed it again before he felt Spock reaching for his hips, encouraging him to stretch out over him for some mutual satisfaction. As he moved to give Spock access, straddling his head with his knees, he took the Vulcan's cock deep into his mouth. His own erection pointed straight toward his belly, and he felt Spock take advantage of that and tongue his balls, and the underside. Then Spock pulled Kirk's penis straight down and sucked it into his mouth. It was the most erotic sensation, having Spock suck him from behind as he moved up and down on Spock's own engorged cock.

Kirk hand-fucked Spock while sucking the tip noisily, knowing Spock couldn't hold back long with that kind of treatment. He felt knowing hands on his own balls, a wet tongue wagging against his hardness as it was encased in the hot Vulcan mouth. Spock bucked his hips and moved his head back and forth, sucking, sending incredible sensations running through Kirk's loins, his balls, his penis.

He redoubled his efforts now. It was a silent game, a competition. They always tried to come together.

He caressed the hard balls, moved his mouth up and down the length, quickening his movements. His fingers held it, too, working the base, the length as he let up, went down, let up.

The mouth suckling his own penis grew wetter, slicker, the tongue darting and moving on his length, on the head, making him come dangerously close to orgasm. He couldn't help but move his hips up and down, fucking Spock's mouth. Spock encouraged him, and thrust up himself.

And then Kirk was coming, Spock's hand holding him, mouth sucking, then moving away, then licking as he felt the semen spurt from him in agonizing pleasure.

And in his hand, and in his mouth, Spock was coming hard, drenching his lips, his tongue with sweet, pale cream.

But they weren't finished. Both were still hard, and after exchanging the expected post-coital compliments and sentiments, they took up where they left off orally. And still later, Spock bent Kirk double and fucked him into the bunk, while Kirk laughed because, while Spock did that, the Vulcan kept grumbling about the inefficiency of the new bunks, of how small they were, and how damned uncomfortable.

"Temper, temper," Kirk chuckled, gripping his lover around the waist with his legs, urging him on.

And despite the bunk, and that now famous Vulcan temper, Spock came a third time before collapsing into the arms of the human who loved him.

Insomnia did not trouble Kirk again after that.

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