

Looking up into the sky above New London spaceport, one could see a diminishing blue light, getting fainter and fainter every second. There were hundreds of other lights, of course (Star Fleet spaceports are always busy), but this one light is of particular interest to us. It was the light of the USS Enterprise, setting off on its mission to bring a group of trainees to a base on Canterbury-4. Canterbury-4 was distant and boring, but the Enterprise's crew was glad to take a break from getting shot at by Klingons and other various malicious aliens. On the bridge, the crew was a hive of men all manning their stations to prepare for warp speed. Every single piece of equipment had been checked dozens of times and the course was set. "Warp speed!" commanded Kirk, and the Enterprise was off.

Scotty swiveled in his chair. Warp speed was fast, sure, but it wasn't instant. Plus, after you've spent thirty minutes hunched over a terminal, swiveling in a chair was a virtual carnival of fun. He glanced at the terminal, but just as he was about to turn away, a red blip entered the screen. It travelled closer . . . closer . . . closer . . . "Oh. No." he yelped as the ship shook and every single alarm simultaneously announced that the red dot and the Enterprise had had their meeting. Scotty's communicator crackled with the voice of the Captain, "SCOTTY, REPORT!"

Scotty fumbled with the communicator before answering, "Uh, I don't really know. I think . . . uh . . . we hit something. A comet. Maybe. Sir." The captain was silent for a moment.

"Okay, but what happened to the warp drive?" asked Kirk. Scotty only glanced at the terminal, but it was enough.

"Uh, we kind of lost an engine. Or two," he replied.

“Scotty. We only have two engines,” said Kirk.

“I’m aware, sir.”

The crew of the Enterprise sat on the bridge, intently listening to Kirk. “Okay, I’ve called for a repair ship, but until then, we’re drifting in space.”

“When, exactly, is ‘then’?” asked Scotty.

“Two, maybe three days,” said Kirk. One of the ensigns let out a whistle. “Yeah, I know. Ideas, anyone?” he asked.

“Story time?” ventured Chekov.

A man walked onto the bridge at that point. He wasn’t really a ‘man’, per se; technically, he was an alien. He was fairly tall, black hair, and with almost normal features. Except for the ears, which were, well, pointy. As pointy as his barbs could be: he was a brilliant man, who had little patience for those of lesser intelligence. He was a fan of logic and reasoning, and saw little point in fun and games. Straightening a pin on his red uniform, he strode to his station at one of the walls. He began typing, but abruptly stopped and looked up to see everyone on the crowded bridge looking at him. And every single one of them had their index finger on his or her noses.

“Spock,” said Captain Kirk, “would you like to begin?”

“Begin what, sir?” asked Spock.

“Haven’t you heard? It’s story time. We did nose-goes.”

The room was now divided into two sections: on one side, about fifty eager looking Enterprise crew members. On the other side sat Spock in a chair. “I cannot believe you are all so immature,” he said, “but it doesn’t look like I’ll be going anywhere. So I’ll begin.”

“Back when I was in Star Fleet Academy, I was a relative outcast. Not just because the professors considered me superior, and I was always a ‘teacher’s pet’ but because I was an alien. Vulcan had no Academy, so I was forced to go to one on Earth. Years passed in solitude, and it began to impact my academic performance. Naturally, the instructors became worried. As their star pupil, they feared that I would be lost to isolation. A transfer to another school was impossible for reasons I’ll never know, but the instructors managed one thing. They added one student to the roster at the beginning of my second year. Like me, he was a Vulcan. This, of course, made us both outcasts. The instructors were blind to this and only focused on making us friends. I had no interest in becoming friends with someone, even a fellow Vulcan. Then came the first battle simulation. It was a simulation of a small border firefight. I did considerably better than everyone. Except for the other Vulcan. We both achieved perfect scores. The next four times, it was the same. We outclassed everyone but each other. Finally, on the fifth test, the instructors changed the test. Just for us. Me and the other Vulcan both failed. Miserably, in fact. Why? They had put us together. It was our two ships against all the other recruits. But we remained aloof and never worked together, and so we lost. Time after time, we lost. There were unfair odds, of course, but the instructors expected better of us. We finally decided to work together. We won.”

“After a row of eight straight wins, with odds that consisted of us versus the rest of the academy, the instructors realized that by making us friends, they had assured that the rest of the school detested us. Both myself and the other Vulcan were confident when the graduation exams were given, but it was during those exams that we went our separate ways. We came to the academy prepared for anything, but the exams pushed

even our limit. We were informed before the test that we would each be tested separately. So when the test began, I was faced with half of the academy to fight by myself, and he faced the other half. Each of us had to beat half the battle school. By ourselves. There was another, more daunting twist, however. The instructors were sure that we could beat our half of the academy, so they knew that they had to challenge us.”

“The instructors had added in the objective to save a damaged spaceship. On each of said ships were 1,000 innocent lives (simulated, of course) but innocent all the same. This is where we went our separate ways, although I did not know this until afterwards. I took the course I saw best. I realized that the crew of my ship would give me another 2,300 simulated lives to safeguard. Trying to save the ship would lead to all of us dying (the odds of saving the ship AND defeating the rest of the academy were slim to none), but forgetting the ship and saving ourselves would lead to only the damaged ship being destroyed. I considered 1,000 casualties vs. 3,300, and I immediately knew what to do. I let the damaged ship be lost and consequently won. As it turns out, none of the other recruits I faced even knew the damaged ship was there and that it was an objective of mine to save it. I graduated with high remarks two weeks later. The other Vulcan experienced a different course. I was allowed to watch the tape of his exam, and it was obvious why he had not graduated. He had become emotional, refusing to accept that the ship with the innocents could not be saved. His fight was admirable, and he managed to destroy almost a quarter of the ships piloted by the other graduates before they realized he was protecting the ship. They swiftly destroyed the innocent ship. It was at this point that I realized how little he grasped the Vulcan methods. He accepted all as lost, not even attempting to fight the remaining ships. He simply threw his head in his hands, not

realizing his emotion was costing him the very little dignity he had left after losing the ship. He had, simply put, let emotion control him. And he paid dearly for it.”

Everyone on the bridge stared at Spock. Someone nervously coughed.

“Is there at least a happy ending?” asked Kirk.

“Hm? Oh, not really. You see, the other Vulcan was transferred to another ship and made to wear a red shirt. Subsequently he . . .” Kirk cut Spock off mid-sentence.

“Spare us the details, would you?” said Kirk. “Was there any point to this story, at all?”

“Decisions are to be based on reason, not emotion. Follow your emotions,” said Spock, “and you just might end up wearing a red shirt, or worse.” He turned and walked towards the lift with everyone’s eyes following him awkwardly. He paused at the door and looked over at a certain crewmember. Scotty was in the corner trying desperately to stifle a laugh.

“I’m sorry, was my story funny only to you?” asked Spock.

“Hm? Oh, um, no, it’s nothing, sorry, just . . .” Scotty then tried mask a giggle with a cough unsuccessfully.

“Then please, enlighten me as to what’s so funny.”

“Oh, hey, would you look at that, the warp drive is fine, we’ve been at Canterbury-4 for over an hour,” replied Scotty before breaking into uncontrollable laughter. Spock turned and briskly fled the bridge before the entire crew burst into fits of giggles.

Spock yelled out to Scotty as the doors to the lift closed, “Just remember, next time you get to tell the story!” Spock gracefully put his finger on his nose as the lift doors swung shut.

“Well, I’m not really sure I . . .” Scotty began to protest before looking around the suddenly quiet bridge to see every man and woman with their fingers on their noses.