

If My Grandmother Had Wheels, She'd Be a Wagon

By

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The klaxon blared, gas vented everywhere, consoles exploded in a shower of sparks. Montgomery Scott was on the Engineering catwalk struggling to hold on as the *Enterprise* lurched to the side. Amid the noise and chaos, he heard a voice, "Uncle Monty, help me"

Scott looked down the catwalk and saw his nephew, Engine's Mate Peter Preston, hanging on edge of the catwalk. "Help me!" Peter pleaded.

Scott pulled himself up against the railing. The steam obscured his vision; all he could do was make his way down the catwalk by pulling himself along the railing hand over hand. Despite the deafening wail of the klaxon, all Scott could hear was his nephew's voice.

Suddenly, the steam cleared and Scott saw his nephew. The right side of his body from his face to his hand was burnt and the uniform had melted to his flesh in places. Scott reached down to pull his nephew to safety, but the moment he made contact with his nephew's hand, it slipped out of his hand. Scott reached down and tried to grab him again. Scott watched in horror as his nephew fell.

The *Enterprise* lurched and this time Scott fell through the railing. He continued falling and falling. To his amazement, he suddenly stopped falling and was lying on the floor of Engineering. It was dark, but Scott could see a number of figures in shadows. He pulled himself up and looked at the figures.

The lights came up and Scott found himself staring at Peter. "Uncle Monty, why did you let me die?"

"Peter, I dinna let ye die. I did all I could," Scott pleaded. The tears started to fall from his eyes.

"Monty, ye promised that me that Peter would be safe. Ye let my son die!" This time it was his sister looking as she did on the day of Peter's funeral. "He was so badly burned they wouldn't even let me see him. Ye promised me, Monty! Ye promised," she shrieked as she dissolved into a wail of tears.

"No, I did all that I could," Scott stammered.

"And clearly it was not enough, Mr. Scott. I was forced to enter the warp containment area and realign the mains because you were incapable of completing the task," Mr. Spock said. "Your failure led directly to my death."

"Mr. Spock, I tried. The radiation was too much, I couldna take any more."

"Scott, what have you done? Starfleet is decommissioning the *Enterprise*," Admiral Kirk said. "All of your modifications have made it so compromised that Starfleet would rather mothball her than put her back into service again."

"Admiral, no! Ye canna let them take the *Enterprise*!"

"*Enterprise* self-destruct sequence activated," said the voice of the main computer. "Detonation in T-Minus five, four, three, two, one"

"No," yelled Scott. He lifted his head and found he had been hunched over his desk in his quarters on the *USS Excelsior* where he had recently been made Captain of Engineering. It was an honor they said, he would be in charge of the state of the art starship. Some bloody honor, Scott thought. Here I am in charge of bloody bathtub with warp nacelles. He reached over and finished his scotch. He sighed and looked over the results from the latest transwarp simulations. He tried to focus his eyes on the screen. He needed to review and approve the results before the *Excelsior* could fire up its transwarp engines for the very first time.

With a deep sigh, he started at the beginning and meticulously read over all 80 screens of data. He was nearly completed when he noted that the tertiary tachyon sensor reading was well above safe levels. Scott frowned. Tachyon particles were notoriously unpredictable. The transwarp drive was conceived around trying to build up sufficient tachyon particles in a controlled environment in order to bend the usual warp speed limitations. A buildup of uncontrolled tachyon particles was something else. They could open a wormhole or create a rupture in the space-time continuum. Scott frowned and drained the rest of his whiskey. He rose from his chair and went to the food replicator in his quarters, punching up the order for a large pot of extra strong coffee and a mug.

Filling the mug, he sat back down at his desk and said, "Alright, you little bugger. Let's see what kind of trouble you're causing..." He brought up the blueprints for the *Excelsior* and quickly located the sensor. It was located near the main deflector array at the front of the ship. He rechecked the calibrations performed on the sensor before and after the simulation. The sensor didn't seem to be in error. He then started reviewing the data on the primary and secondary tachyon sensors. Each was well within operational parameters. Frowning, Scott pulled up the wiring schematics to see what was different about the sensors.

Scott meticulously worked his way through the design and the numbers. The primary and secondary tachyon sensors were both located near the warp nacelles, the idea being that any buildup of tachyon particles would likely be concentrated near the nacelles. Scott leaned back in his chair deep in thought. How is it there could be such a discrepancy between the sensors? Location must have something to do with it. Scott replayed the simulation on a micro second time frame, focusing only on the three tachyon sensors. At the point that the simulation attempted trans-warp, there was much higher than anticipated spike in the number of tachyon particles. But on the primary and secondary sensors, the number dropped almost immediately. In fact, the spike was only two micro-seconds long. It would be easily missed in the scale of things occurring during the simulation.

Again, he looked at the location of the primary and secondary sensors. Was something interfering with the sensors at the point the sensors stopped recognizing the tachyons? He traced the wiring for each sensor and he found the problem. Both the primary and secondary sensors received power from the same lines that powered the tachyon containment field generator. He punched the up the simulation and focused in on the readings of around the tachyon containment. Sure enough, as the transwarp drive was activated, there was an ever so slight decrease in the tachyon containment energy levels, indicating that there was a loss of the energy to somewhere. And Scott was certain he knew where that energy had gone; the containment field had leaked down the lines and was masking the true tachyon sensor readings.

Scott opened a channel to Engineering, "Engineering, Captain Scott here."

"Lukas, here sir." said the voice of Scott's assistant. Lieutenant Commander Martin Lukas had been in charge of the preparations of the transwarp trials for the *Excelsior*. He was resistant when Scott had been posted to take over from him. The two men had gotten into heated engineering discussions. But Scott always kept these discussions from becoming personal. He had found he liked the young man and knew how he would feel if some old geezer like himself had told him how to run the *Enterprise*. The two had formed a strong working relationship.

“Mr. Lukas, I was wondering if ye could do me a favor,” Scott said. “Could ye send a couple of teams to run a tricorder sweep of the primary and secondary tachyon sensors around Jeffries Tube J-19 and K-24. Report back the results back to me as soon as you have them, don’t worry about the time.”

“Is there something wrong, sir?” asked Lukas. “Will we have to postpone the transwarp trial?”

“I dinna know, lad. That’s what I’m trying to figure out.”

“Very good, sir. I’ve dispatched the teams. Should they be looking for something in particular?”

“No, if I tell ye what I’m expecting, ye’ll give it to me. I’m hoping ye will surprise me.”

“Very good. Anything else, sir?” Lukas asked.

“No, just get me the results of the tricorder sweep. Thank you, Mr. Lukas. Scott out.”

Scott rubbed his eyes and finished his now cold coffee. Since I’m up, I may as well make use of the time, he thought. He opened up a new screen on his terminal and began to re-run the simulation using the values from the tertiary sensors as the data for both the primary and secondary sensors. As he expected, the transwarp computer shut down the transwarp initiation because of an imminent tachyon cascading chain reaction, where the buildup of tachyon particles becomes exponential. Scott tried to use the simulator to determine what would happen if the transwarp computer didn’t shutdown. However, the simulation wouldn’t let him reprogram the transwarp computer. So, he would have to do it the old fashioned way and rely on his brain. Scott sat down and worked over all of equations governing warp, theoretical transwarp, and anything else he could remember involving tachyon particles. From this, he managed to create a set of equations that he programmed to generate the likely outcomes. The computer quickly confirmed his suspicions: there was a twenty-three percent change of opening a wormhole, a sixteen percent change of opening some other rift in the time-space continuum, an eleven percent chance of a chain reaction that would destroy the *Excelsior* and a fifty percent chance that nothing at all would happen.

Now, Scott thought, how do I fix it? Scott brought up the schematics of the *Excelsior* once more. What an overcomplicated monstrosity, Scott thought. Where a primary and backup system would be more than sufficient, the Starfleet engineers put six or eight systems in its place, each designed as a backup to the primary or primary backup systems. He couldn’t help but remember the words of one of his engineering instructors at Starfleet Academy, “Avoid the temptation to overcomplicate systems. The more systems that are involved, the better chance that something unexpected would happen.”

The communication channel whistled at his desk. “Scott, here.”

“Aye, Captain. We have the tricorder readings you wanted. I’m sending them to you right now.”

“Excellent work, laddie. Thank ye. Scott out.”

Scott poured over the new readings and wasn’t surprised. There was the smoking gun; readings of a small number of anti-tachyons lingering in the lines to the sensor. In effect, once the ship went to transwarp drive, the sensors were useless as the antitachyons generated by the containment field masked the true count of tachyon particles.

Scott sighed. He knew he couldn't sign off on this report and he knew that Captain Styles was adamant that the *Excelsior* would start its transwarp trials tomorrow. No, actually today, Scott realized as he looked at the time on his screen. He returned back to the problem of fixing it. The first step was easy – he would commission engineering crews to run two shielded lines to the primary and secondary sensors, not on a line with the tachyon containment field generator. That would prevent the *Excelsior* from achieving transwarp if the tachyon buildup was as large as he had surmised.

Next thing, find the root cause of the tachyon build up. Four hours and several cups of coffee later, Scott found it. Because the tachyon containment field generators were so vital to the operation and control of the transwarp drive, each critical subsystem had four different redundant systems. A complex feedback loop had been created in the containment subsystems where a number of tachyon particles leaked out of the field because of a phase variance between the systems. It was not going to be a difficult repair, but it would be time consuming because it meant tearing apart the field generators and rewiring them to a single phase generator and ignoring the phase generator within the current system.

Scott wrote up his findings and then completed the engineering requisitions necessary to have changes to the design of the *Excelsior* approved by Starfleet Engineering. Of all the things he hated about this new position, he hated this the most. On the *Enterprise*, when he needed to make a design change, he only needed to run it by Captain Kirk who mostly rubberstamped any request coming from his chief engineer because he knew that if Scott wanted to make a change to the ship, Scott always had a damn good reason. On the *Excelsior*, he first had to convince Captain Styles who always second guessed Scott's decisions. As if that pompous idiot knew anything about engineering, Scott thought. And even if he did manage to convince Captain Styles that the changes were necessary, he then had to convince the *Excelsior* Design Committee of Starfleet Engineering that the changes were necessary.

And Scott knew from his time overseeing the retrofit of the *Enterprise* just how easy it was to get any changes from their "sacred" designs. Bunch of damn desk jockeys, Scott thought. They've either never served on a real starship or it's been twenty years since they actually served on a starship. The thought angered him, until he remembered that he had pretty much been relegated to that role on the *Excelsior*. The first time Captain Styles found Scott in his Engineering duty uniform, crawling around a Jefferies Tube, he told Scott to follow him to his office immediately.

"Captain Scott, what were you doing crawling around a Jefferies Tube in that uniform?" Styles said.

"I was attempting to fix one of the auxiliary systems." Scott said. After a moment, he added, "Captain."

"Don't you have a whole Engineering crew capable of doing that work?"

"Aye, sir. But I am still trying to get the feel of the ship and the best way for that is for me to get my hands dirty, so to speak."

"Captain Scott, there will be no 'getting your hands dirty' on this ship. You are Captain of Engineering – your job is get this ship up and running."

"Which I was attempting to do," said Scott.

"But you are a Captain now, Mr. Scott. A captain can't be seen crawling around Jefferies Tubes in... that," Styles said, indicating Scott's uniform with his swagger stick.

"It is regulation," Scott offered.

"Well, not on my ship. I don't know what kind of lax discipline that Kirk had on the *Enterprise*, but this is the *Excelsior*. And I run a tight and disciplined ship. No Captain will be seen in anything other his standard duty uniform and will not be crawling around the ship getting dirty. Do I make myself clear?" Styles asked, punctuating each point with a tap of his swagger stick.

Scott gritted his teeth, "Permission to speak freely, sir."

Styles crossed his arms and had an amused smile on his face. "Permission granted."

"Ye got me transferred to this bucket of bolts so I could make your damn transwarp engines work and crawling around and getting dirty, as you say is the best way for me to do that. I've been doing this for a very long time and I know what I'm doing." Scott waited a few seconds before adding, "sir."

"I got you here because everyone at Starfleet told me you were the best engineer in the fleet. But this is a new technology and let's face it, you aren't the young Chief Engineer you were on the *Enterprise*. You're at an age where you should be looking at Command or a posting at headquarters. Space is for the young, Mr. Scott."

"Now, wait a minute, you..." Scott started.

"Let me remind you I am your superior and while I may overlook many comments, I will not stand for insubordination. Off the record or not."

"Very well, sir," Scott said. "As my commanding officer, you have the right to order me to play desk jockey. But I'm begging you, if you want this contraption to work, let me get to know the ship." Scott put special emphasis on the word commanding in that while technically the two were the same rank, Styles was his commanding officer. But certainly not my superior, Scott thought.

"Absolutely not, Mr. Scott. My orders stand."

"But," Scott began.

"Those are my orders, Captain Scott. Is there a problem or am I going to have to cite you for insubordination?"

"No, sir," Scott grumbled.

His console started to play its morning alarm to wake Scott up for the start of the day. Scott sighed. No sleep now. He spent another twenty minutes finishing his report and the engineering requisitions before leaving the chair and getting ready for the morning meeting of senior staff.

Despite a shower, a fresh uniform, breakfast, and several cups of coffee, Scott felt old and bedraggled. The dark circles under his eyes from lack of sleep made him seem older than he already felt. Scott took his usual place at the table and set down his Engineering Personal Access Display Device or PADD and a large mug of extra strong coffee.

Captain Style strolled in exactly at 0800 with his swagger stick under his arm. Scott hated that affectation, but rose with all of the other officers when Styles arrived. "Please be seated. I want to make this meeting short. We still have much to do before we can begin our first transwarp test." Styles looked at Scott and with a note of disdain in his voice, said "Captain Scott, it appears you've been burning the midnight oil. I certainly hope you have some good news for me."

Scott paused before saying, "I have news, Captain Styles. I'll leave it up to you if it's good or bad. If you'll all take a look at your PADDs, I've summarized the results of the recent transwarp simulations. I believe I have isolated a problem and have presented estimates to complete design changes necessary to address the problem." Scott went on to describe the problem with the primary and secondary sensors, how to fix both the sensors and the underlying problem, and the risks if nothing were done.

"Captain Scott, what you're proposing is that we delay our transwarp test for at least two weeks to address this problem because a tertiary sensor reading was too high?"

"Yes, Captain, but..." Scott started.

"Did it ever occur to you that the tertiary sensor might have been the problem all along?" Styles started.

"Of course, Captain. It was the first thing I looked at. Calibrations before and after confirm that it was performing correctly."

"But as I can see here, so did the primary and secondary sensors. Why are they both suspect while you believe the tertiary sensor is correct?"

"As I described, the primary and secondary sensors are being flooded with anti-tachyons and are, in fact, useless. I've laid it all out in my report, as you can see." Scott said, growing more irritated. He was not used to having his engineering knowledge questioned by someone who obviously had no idea about the topic at hand.

"I don't see anything here, but someone being overcautious. Captain Scott, please sign off on the final simulation results of the transwarp engines so that we can complete our tests today."

"No," Scott said emphatically, before adding, "sir."

"Captain Scott, that wasn't a suggestion. That was an order."

"With all due respect, sir," Scott said, mastering all of the patience he could manage. "I cannot in good conscience approve that we try a live test of the transwarp engines based on the data that I see before me."

"Based on this one flimsy piece of data?" Style said incredulously.

"Based on everything I have laid out before you. The data is right there before your very eyes, man!"

"I see one anomalous sensor reading and a whole scenario cooked up to explain it. Are you afraid we're going to break the *Enterprise* speed records, Mr. Scott? Is that what this is about?"

"Absolutely not," Scott spat in anger. "I will not have my integrity insulted by a tin-plated, overbearing, swaggering dictator with delusions of godhood!" A Klingon had used the very same words about Captain Kirk and Scott thought it appropriate for the circumstance.

Style fumed for one second. "Very well, Captain Scott. You are relieved of your duty and confined to your quarters for the duration of the transwarp trials. And then, I'll personally bring you up on charges of gross insubordination." Styles punched the communication panel on his table. "Security, please escort Captain Scott and confine him to his quarters. Mr. Lukas, you are now my Chief Engineer. Please sign the simulation results."

Lukas looked at Scott. "Please, Martin, I beg you, don't sign off on that report. You'll doom all of us."

"Lt. Commander Lukas, sign that report. That's an order."

“Aye, sir,” Lukas said, not looking at Scott as he signed the report.

The two security officers came and attempted to grab hold of Scott’s arm. “Get your mitts off me. I know me way to me bloody quarters.” He took two steps to the door before turning and saying, “For all of our sakes, I hope that I wrong.” But I’m rarely wrong, thought Scott.

Scott endured the walk back to his quarters. He lay on his bed staring at the ceiling. He sighed. Maybe that arrogant bag of wind was right; maybe he was too old for this chasing around the stars. All he had ever wanted to be was an engineer. It wasn’t just the design process he loved; he reveled in the act of creating his design and bringing it to life, so to speak. And here on the *Excelsior*, all he seemed to be expected to be was a paper pusher and rubber stamp. Maybe he had actually become Captain Dunsel, serving no useful purpose. Scott closed his eyes, trying to imagine what would role he could actually play and drifted off to sleep.

Scott jolted awake at the sound of the boatswain’s whistle. “This is the Captain. All hands to stations in preparation for the first jump to transwarp by a Federation starship. Today, we make history people! Be sharp. Styles, out.”

Make history or a bloody great explosion, thought Scott. He rubbed his bleary eyes and started to the door before he remembered that the blowhard captain had confined him to his quarters. Scott went to the terminal at his desk and quickly brought up the main engineering console on his screen. One of the benefits of being Chief Engineer was the ability to take control of the Engineering functions from nearly any terminal on the ship. He could take control away from the bridge, if Styles hadn’t revoked his clearance, but Scott didn’t feel like making matters worse.

Scott watched the screen as the ship was prepared for its first transwarp jump. Scott reprogrammed his display to include the primary, secondary, and tertiary tachyon sensors. He also adjusted the sensor display for the primary and secondary sensors to account for the bleed over of the anti-tachyon field. So far, everything was on track. Scott patched in the audio feed from the bridge so he could hear what was happening.

“All systems ready, sir. All speeds available, including transwarp,” said a voice that Scott did not recognize.

“Very good,” Styles said. The boatswain’s whistle signaled throughout the ship. Oh great, Scott thought, the windbag is going to make a speech.

“This is the Captain. Ladies and gentleman, today we make history. The *Excelsior* is about to be remembered in the same breath as the *Wright Flyer*, *Apollo Eleven*, and the *Phoenix* as we take the first step into transwarp speeds. What we do here will revolutionize space travel and allow Starfleet to truly go where no one has gone before. Good luck and Godspeed! Initiate transwarp drive.”

Scott watched his console as the transwarp engine started up. Scott watched as the values on his reprogrammed primary and secondary tachyon sensors rose past the threshold and at the same level as the tertiary sensor. This was one of those times he hated being right.

The *Excelsior* began the jump to warp when the tachyon readings went off the scale. Scott quickly switched his view to the main sensors and found a wormhole forming right in front of the ship just as it attained warp velocity.

The ship shuddered and lurched and Scott was thrown from his chair. He pulled himself back and tried to make sense of the sensor readings. It appeared that the release

of energy from the wormhole had damaged the engines because they appeared to have no power whatsoever. But the ship was still moving at warp speed, but Scott couldn't discern where they were going. He switched his view to the main console and Scott knew why they were travelling at warp; they were being pulled through what Scott hoped was a wormhole. He prayed it was a wormhole because that meant there would be an opening on the other side. If it was just a tear in the space-time continuum, Scott shuddered to think what would happen if they collided with the continuum.

The ship lurched suddenly and Scott struggled to hold on to his desk. Scott could tell that the ship had stopped and was dead in space. Although Scott had not gotten to know the *Excelsior* like he knew the *Enterprise*, he could tell that the main engines were down because he couldn't feel the telltale vibration that resulted from the warp engines reactions. He returned to the Engineering console and his observations matched the chatter he could hear on the bridge. The warp engines were down and the ship was running on battery backup. Additionally, the sub space communications array had been damaged and after some time, Navigation was able to determine that they had been flung nearly twenty light years away. It would take them over a week and a half to return to Earth at warp nine, assuming the engines were even operable.

Scott listened to the chaos on the bridge and couldn't help but notice that Captain Styles, usually so brash and confident, was suddenly quiet. I'll be, he's as flustered as a cadet on his first zero-g mission, Scott thought. At first he chuckled to himself, but then he realized that this was dangerous. When a ship is in jeopardy, the captain has to be decisive and get the crew to focus on the tasks at hand. And Styles appeared to be petrified.

Scott opened a channel, "Captain Scott to the Bridge."

"We're a little busy here at the moment, Captain Scott," Styles said. "What do you want?"

"Nothing. I was just wondering if you needed a hand or anything."

"Not at all, Captain Scott. May I remind you that you are confined to quarters?"

"Oh, I know and I still am," said Scott. "I was just wondering if you knew anything about the status of the engines? It seems to me that we're working off battery backup, and that won't last very long, I fear."

"Yes, Captain Scott, we're working on the engines." Scott, who was still listening to the bridge feed, heard Styles click off the communication channel and open another channel. "Mr. Lukas, send a damage control team to Engineering and determine the status of our engines." Scott smiled. He achieved the outcome he had hoped. He had pushed Styles so that he would take command of the ship.

"Very well, sir. If you need me, you know where I am," said Scott. "I hate to say I told you so, but I did tell you so."

"Thank you, Captain Scott. That will be enough. Styles out."

Scott waited patiently in his room expecting that at any moment, Styles would call to reinstate him to duty and order him to fix the engines. First half of an hour went by, then one hour, then two. He realized that Styles didn't intend on calling him at all. The ship was still at red alert, but at least the klaxons weren't blaring any longer. Scott looked at the Engineering console trying to deduce what they were doing. The engines appeared to be generating power, but it was not getting routed throughout the ship. It looked like there was some sort of energy feedback from the wormhole that seemed to

have burnt out most of the main power couplings. From what Scott could see, no Engineering work teams had been dispatched to repair the couplings. Scott looked at the parts inventory and realized very quickly they did not have enough couplers to replace those lost. Scott continued through the inventory and he smiled. He found enough secondary couplers that could be mounted in parallel to do the job. Most of Starfleet's engineers scoffed at it as an inefficient arrangement, but the *Enterprise* had been more than happy to have even that inefficient solution.

After four hours waiting for a reply from the bridge and no discernable progress on the repairs, Scott couldn't wait anymore. "Captain Scott to the Bridge."

A voice that Scott didn't recognize responded. "This is Commander Darby, Captain Scott. We have a bit of a situation here, sir. Can I call you back?"

"Why haven't ye started repairs on the warp drive?"

"It's... complicated. Perhaps you can meet me in the Captain's Ready Room?"

"Captain Styles confined me to quarters. Where is he? Put him on!"

"Never mind that and meet me in the Captain's Ready Room. Darby out."

That was damn peculiar, Scott thought. He went to the door of his quarters, and to his surprise, there were no guards. Shrugging, Scott made his way to the Captain's Ready Room. At the door, he straightened his uniform and took a deep breath before saying, "Permission to enter." The door swooshed open and Scott found himself surprised to see a very nervous Commander Miguel Darby passing back and forth.

He looked up and said, "Come in, Captain Scott."

"What in the devil is going on here?" Scott asked. "Where's is Captain Styles? Why aren't we fixing the engines?"

"Alright, here it is. Captain Styles and Lieutenant Commander Lukas are no longer aboard the *Excelsior*."

"No longer aboard the *Excelsior*?" Scott scoffed. "Where in the galaxy could they have gone?"

"After you contacted the Bridge, Lieutenant Commander Lukas assessed the damaged and realized that we did not have enough parts to repair the power couplings. Captain Styles sent out a local distress call since our subspace communications were also down. An Orion freighter picked up the transmission. The Orion captain told us that he was hauling a number of power couplings and that he would be happy to sell them to us for the right price. Mr. Lukas insisted on seeing the couplings first hand, so the Orion captain beamed Lukas and Captain Styles aboard and then the ship immediately went to warp."

"When did all this happen?" Scott asked. He didn't have a very high opinion of Styles, but he thought that the captain would be smart enough not to try to deal with an Orion dealer.

"About thirty minutes ago. I was deciding if I should call you when you contacted the bridge. What do we do Captain?"

"I'm Captain of Engineering, you are the Acting Captain, Mr. Darby. And if I were you, I'd reinstate me as Chief Engineer so I can get this bucket of bolts moving so we can find the captain and Mr. Lukas. I don't think they are going to enjoy life on an Orion slave freighter if we don't get to them soon."

"Consider yourself reinstated, Captain Scott. Do whatever you need to do to get the engines online."

“Aye, Captain. I’ll have them ready in an hour.” Scott replied. “That’s the most sensible order I’ve heard all day. Do you have the heading of the Orion freighter?”

“Yes, we immediately started tracking their course.”

“Good, I’m heading to Engineering and I’ll have everything right as rain in no time.”

“Thank you, Captain Scott. The Captain should have listened to you this morning; you were right. He should never have doubted you.”

“Truer words were never spoken. But that’s water under the bridge right now.” Scott turned to leave, but stopped at the door. “Thank you, Commander. You’re a good man.”

Scott hustled as quickly as he could to Engineering. Once there, he changed out of his uniform into his Engineering duty uniform and got to work. The Engineering crew had managed to replace all of the power couplings that they had. Scott had the crew round up the rest of the secondary power couplings and showed the crew how to wire them in parallel. The crew caught on and true to his word, in fifty minutes, main power was restored. While they were at it, Scott had the crew begin installation of two new isolated power lines to the primary and secondary tachyon sensors. That would at least stop the ship from recreating the wormhole.

“Captain Scott to the Bridge. You have main power.”

“Thank you, Captain Scott,” said Darby. The boatswain’s whistle again sounded throughout the *Excelsior*. “This is Acting Captain Darby. We’re going after Captain Styles and Lieutenant Commander Lukas. Prepare for warp.”

When Scott was sure that everything was under control in Engineering, he returned to the bridge to see if he could assist Commander Darby in some way. Although he was fully qualified to command, he much preferred Engineering. That being said, he had been through more of his fair share of command decisions.

On his way to the bridge, he heard the signal, “Senior staff, please report to the Captain’s Ready Room.” Scott smiled. The young commander was learning the importance of getting input from his crew. Scott settled into his seat and looked around the room. For the first time, he realized that he was nearly twice as old as most of the crew.

“Alright. We need to retrieve Captain Styles and Lieutenant Commander Lukas,” Darby began. “I’d love to hear any ideas you have.”

“Can we catch them?” asked Lieutenant Heather Keith. “They have a substantial lead on us.”

“It might be dicey. I wouldn’t push the power couplings too hard or we’ll come to a stop and lose them for good,” Scott added.

“Are there any other ships that could intercept them?” asked Keith.

“No,” responded Darby. “We are the closest Starship to the Orion freighter. And,” he added, “I’m not sure that the Captain would be pleased to know we had to call another ship to rescue him.”

There was a chuckle from the group before the room fell silent. Scott thought about the problem. There was no way they could catch up to the freighter. And suddenly, Scott remembered a theory he had played with since his Academy days. Just last year, he thought he had the theory correct, but hadn’t had a chance to perfect it. It was crazy, but it just might work.

“Captain,” Scott began. “I have something, but you willna like it.”

“Let’s hear it, Captain Scott. We don’t seem to have very many options.”

“Alright. The usual range is of transporting is usually thought to be about one hundred miles. I’ve been working on a theory that will allow the range of transport to be extended and,” Scott delayed for a second, “allow someone to beam onto a ship a warp speed.”

“Are you out of your mind?” asked Darby. “Who would be crazy enough to even attempt that?”

“Well, me for one,” answered Scott. “I wouldna let anyone else take that risk. But I promise you that this will work. I’ve been working on this theory for nearly thirty years and I’m telling you it will work.”

Miguel Darby paused for moment and considered Scott’s words. Montgomery Scott had a legendary reputation among Starfleet and if he was certain that it would, it would work. “Alright, so assuming I agree to this, what is the plan?”

“I would beam aboard which should come as a total surprise to the freighter crew. I’ll rescue the Captain and Lukas and beam the three of us back to the *Excelsior* and no one would be any the wiser.”

“As easy as that?” asked Darby skeptically.

“It may be a wee bit more involved than that, but generally that’s the plan,” Scott said.

“I can’t risk sending you, Captain Scott. You’re too valuable here.”

“Begging your pardon, Commander, I’m the least useful person here,” Scott replied. “You all have vital roles to play in the running of the ship. You have a fine Engineering crew and you dinna need me overseeing everything. I can be more useful retrieving the Captain than staying here.”

“But, Captain,” started Darby.

“No buts, sir. I’m gonna do it whether ye want me to or not, so there’s no need to fight me. I know what I’m doing and I know the risk.”

“Does anyone else have any other ideas,” Darby asked as he looked around the table. “No?” Darby sighed. “Very well, Captain Scott, what do you need?”

“I’ll need any sensor data you have on the Orion freighter and a full charged phaser,” replied Mr. Scott.

“It’s yours,” replied Darby.

“Meet me in the Main Transporter Room in about fifteen minutes,” Scott said.

“Very well,” Darby said. “Let’s do it.”

The crew rose and returned to their individual duty stations. Scott went to the Main Transporter Room. Scott pulled up the file containing his transwarp beaming equation on his PADD and reviewed it for the hundredth time, checking his math. He supplied the inputs based on the *Excelsior*’s current rate of speed, velocity of the freighter and the trajectory of its last known location. He had one shot at getting this correct or he would just be a group of random atoms dispersed across the universe. A nagging voice in his head reminded him of all the things that could go wrong, but in his heart, he knew this would work.

Fifteen minutes later, Commander Darby and several of the senior officers joined Scott in the transporter room. Scott had already fed the sensor data about the Orion freighter into his equation. With any luck, he would materialize in a deserted cargo bay

and not a bulkhead. Commander Darby handed Scott a fully charged phaser. “Are you sure about this, Captain Scott?”

“Aye, laddie, I am,” Scott said, taking the proffered weapon. “If ye could maintain your current course and speed, it would be make my return trip much easier.”

“Absolutely, Captain,” Darby said. He gave Scott a brisk salute followed by the rest of the senior officers. Scott returned the salute, his eyes watering at the gesture of respect.

“I’ll be back before your coffee can get cold,” Scott said as he programmed the transporter with all of the relevant information. “It’s all set. If one of ye could activate it when I get on the transporter pad, I would appreciate it.”

“Allow me, Captain Scott,” said Commander Darby. “Once upon a time, I held an assignment as a Transporter Technician. I think I still remember how to do it.” Scott smiled. Darby was a good commander; he would be responsible for beaming Scott out and if something went tragically wrong, he would bear the guilt, not his crew. Too bad he’s not captain of the *Excelsior*, Scott concluded.

Scott stepped onto the transporter pad and secured his own PADD to his belt so he could reproduce the equations to return to the *Excelsior*. He took a deep breath, checked that his phaser was set to stun and said, “Ready when you are, laddie.”

The bright lights of the *Excelsior*’s transporter room appeared to intensify as the transporter beam activated and seconds later, replaced by the comparative darkness of a hallway. In front of Scott was a very surprised Orion crewman. Scott thought he saw the crewman’s green skin fade a shade or two. “Who are,” started the crewman before Scott shot him with his phaser. The crewman slumped to the floor.

Damn, Scott thought. I missed the cargo bay. No use but go on. He pulled out his PADD and looked at the layout provided from the *Excelsior*’s sensor readings. With a little work, he was able to discern his location and found a maintenance closet nearby. He propped the stunned Orion up in the closet, closed the door and melted the lock with his phaser. He looked at the PADD once more, trying to determine the most likely place that the Orions might hold Styles and Lukas. Given the Captain’s nature, Scott suspected that the Orions would keep him in a secure location as far away from them as possible.

Scott began to cautiously move down the hallway until he found a maintenance tube that would take him to the freighter’s lower level where he would likely find the Captain and Lukas. He consulted the PADD and decided that the best place to start was in one of the storage rooms located off of the rear cargo bay. He cautiously approached the main cargo doors just as they whooshed open with two large, burly Orions holding dragging Styles and Lukas.

“Scott, what are you doing here? I confined you to quarters!” Styles said. Scott quickly fired two phaser bursts and the two Orion crewman fell to the floor. Scott immediately removed their weapons, handing them to Styles and Lukas. And began to drag one of the Orion crewman back to the cargo bay. Lukas, immediately seeing what Scott had in mind, grabbed the other one and likewise pulled him to the cargo bay. Scott noted that Styles could not be bothered to assist in his own escape. Instead, he was brushing dirt off of his uniform.

“You didn’t answer my question, Captain Scott. You were confined to your quarters. What are you doing here?” Styles asked.

"I'm trying to save ye and take ye back to the *Excelsior*. Now, if ye'd follow me, we'll get to the transporter room and I'll beam us back."

"That's impossible. You can't beam between two ships travelling at warp speed!"

"It's not impossible; it's how I got here. Now, if ye would be so kind as to leave the engineering to me, we can get out of here."

"We can't leave," Styles said emphatically.

"And why not?" Scott barked. "Do ye fancy a future as a slave?"

"Of course not," Styles scoffed. "The captain took my swagger stick and I want it back."

"For crying out loud, ye want to risk your escape getting that stupid hunk of wood back?"

"Captain Scott, it is not a stupid hunk of wood. I won that from a Klingon in hand to hand combat."

"And a fat lot of good it will be if all three of us get caught."

"Captain Scott, we are not leaving until I retrieve that stick. And you will make sure we don't leave this vessel until we have it."

Briefly, Scott considered the wisdom of stunning the captain and dragging him back to the *Excelsior* and sighed. "Alright, but let's make it quick. I dinna want to be sold at an Orion slave market. Do ye have any idea where the captain's quarters might be?"

"I assume on the upper level. Come on, follow me," said Styles as he strode down the main hallway.

"Captain, don't ye think we would be better served with the element of surprise? I suggest that we take this maintenance tube to the upper level."

"I'm a Captain of a Starship!" Styles scoffed. "I don't slither through maintenance tubes!"

"Well, right now ye're Captain of nothing. And ye will remain that way if ye don't start using your head!" Scott responded.

"Captain Scott, I will not be spoken to in that way."

"Ye know what? Perhaps I should just beam back with Lukas. Because he's the only one here who seems bloody grateful that I'm trying to free him."

"You wouldn't dare," Styles sneered.

Scott moved up until he was practically nose to nose with Styles. "Try me, laddie."

Two men glowered at each other, but were distracted when Lukas said, "Sounds like someone's coming. We need to hide."

"This isn't over, Scott," Styles said. He backed off and allowed Scott to lead them to the maintenance tube. Styles had just cleared the entryway of the maintenance tube when two crewmen walked past the tube.

The trio made their way through the tube and came out on the upper level. Consulting his PADD, Scott deduced that the largest living quarters must belong to the ship's captain. I wonder if this ship's captain is as big of a fool as the *Excelsior's*, Scott thought.

They crept down the hall before locating what they thought were the captain's quarters. Scott listened at the door and could hear sounds from the other side. Damn, someone is in there. Scott tried the door and realized that it had been locked. He examined the doorway and quickly found a maintenance panel. Scott was thankful that he

was still dressed in his Engineering duty inform and still had a number of tools tucked away. He quickly opened the panel. It took him a few seconds but very quickly found the locking mechanism. "When I give the word, prepare to fire at whoever is on the other side."

"Captain Scott, I'm the ranking officer here. I give the orders."

"By all means, Captain," Scott said with every ounce of contempt he could muster. "What are your orders?"

"When I give the word, you'll open the door. Mr. Lukas, you and I will fire at anything in the room."

"What a marvelous plan, Captain. I wished I had thought of it," Scott said under his breath.

Styles shot Scott a look of annoyance and said, "Now, Captain Scott."

Scott triggered the mechanism and the door opened. In the dim light of the room, Scott could see two green figures, one male, one female, on the bed. Two flashes of light and the two figures stopped moving. Styles and Lukas moved into the room while Scott replaced the maintenance panel. He joined the two in the room and shut and locked the door with the control panel on the inside of the room. The three men spread out through the room and began looking for Styles' swagger stick. After a frantic search, Lukas was able to locate it in a drawer that seemed to have other trophies and ill-gotten goods. Lukas gave the stick back to Styles and Scott swore that the man's spine became ramrod straight as soon as he tucked it under his arm. "Time to go," Styles said.

As they left the room, the Orion captain stirred. "Murderers! Thieves!" he shouted. He rolled over and pulled a wicked looking pistol from under the mattress and fired it at the trio.

The blast hit Scott in the side, but his PADD took most of the energy. Scott felt a searing pain from the heat of the melted PADD and the actual energy of the weapon itself. Scott returned fire and missed before Lukas closed the door and fired his phaser at the maintenance panel, fusing the controls.

"Are you alright, Captain Scott?" asked Lukas.

"Not really laddie, but I can manage. What I'm most concerned about is that this," he said holding up the molten remains of his PADD, "had the calculations I needed to get us back to the *Excelsior*."

"How will we get back?" Lukas asked.

"I'll figure something out," Scott said. I always do, he thought. "Let's get to the transporter room before they know..." Scott was unable to finish the sentence as alarms started blaring and a masculine voice sounded, "Intruder Alert. Intruder Alert. Prisoners have escaped and are on the Main level."

"That we've escaped," Scott trailed off. "Come on, the transporter room is just up ahead." Scott tried to move quickly, but the pain in his side burned. Styles, oblivious to what was happening, continued ahead. Lukas came and put Scott's arm around his shoulders and guided him down the hall.

"Come on, don't dawdle," Styles said. The pain was making it difficult to concentrate. Scott imagined that he must be going into shock.

Phaser fire passed by Scott's head and he turned around to see three Orion crewmen firing as they ran toward the Starfleet officers. Scott and Lukas had two of them

down before Styles turned around and fired at the third. "Come on, it's right here," Styles said.

Lukas dragged Scott along and they were able to enter the Transporter Room. "Martin, shut the door and fuse the controls," Scott said. "This may take a bit of work and we dinna want to be interrupted."

Lukas did as Scott asked as Scott dragged himself to the transporter controls. They were not exactly Starfleet, but within a few seconds, he was familiar with its functionality. Styles strode over to one of the transporter pads and Lukas joined him on a neighboring pad.

"Well, Captain Scott, are you ready?" Styles asked.

"For someone who was telling me that this was impossible a few minutes ago, ye seem in a damn hurry to believe me now."

"What is taking so long?" Styles asked, ignoring the taunt.

"What's taking so long is that I'm doing Fourier transforms and quantum mapping in my head because I don't have my PADD. Now, if you'll be quiet and let me think, I'll get us out of here!"

Scott tried to focus, but his head was swimming. The pain in his side was growing worse and he had a hard time concentrating. He went through his equations and tried to compensate with as much information as he could remember. His advantage this time was that he could try to target the transporter pad as he knew exactly where it was.

Scott looked up. He heard someone outside trying to use the controls to open the door and banging the wall in frustration. He heard the distinct sound of a phaser and could see that they were trying to cut the door open. Scott ignored the sound and went back to work on his equations, double and triple checking his calculations.

"Captain Scott, now would be the time to beam us out of here," Styles said, a slight undercurrent of nervousness sounded in his voice.

"Aye, keep your knickers on, I'm working on it," Scott said.

"Captain Scott," Styles said.

"Do ye want your atoms scattered across the universe or are ye going to shut up and let me do my job?" Scott sputtered.

Styles closed his mouth and held tightly to his swagger stick.

Scott looked up and saw that the crew had almost finished cutting a hole in the door big enough to enter. He took one last mental pass over his equations, punched the coordinates into the transporter, and initiated the transport with a five second delay. Scott barely had enough time to make it to the pad before the transporter beam flowed over him. As the transporter room of the Orion freighter dissolved from his view, he saw an Orion climb through the hole in the door.

The transporter room of the *Excelsior* came into view. The senior officers of the *Excelsior* cheered when the three officers materialized. "Thank you," Style said as he stepped off the transporter platform. "Commander Darby, status report."

"Thanks to Captain Scott, we have warp power."

"Very well, set course for Earth at best speed," Styles said as he strode out of the transporter room.

Scott tried to step off the transporter platform, but the pain in his side surged and he fell. Lukas was at his side and tried to help him up. "Captain Scott needs a doctor, immediately!" were the last words Scott heard before everything went black.

When Scott awoke, he was in the Sick Bay, lying on a biobed. Dr. Viger, the blue skinned Bolian chief medical officer came into Scott's view. "Captain Scott, I'm glad to see that you've regained consciousness." Scott tried to set it up, but the pain immediately stopped him. "I wouldn't try that for a while, Captain. You were very lucky that the phaser didn't impact you directly. You need to remain in Sick Bay to allow your body to heal itself."

"Ach, I've got a ship to put back together," Scotty said. "I canna be laying around here while there's work to be done."

"That's exactly what you will do, Captain Scott. Now, are you going to stay in that biobed or will I have to put restraints on you?"

Scott sighed. His years on the *Enterprise* had taught him there was no use fighting the ship's doctor. "No, that willna be necessary."

"Excellent. Is there anything you need to help pass the time during your convalescence?"

"If it willna be too much trouble, I'd like a PADD so I can at least catch up on my technical journals. And a bottle of whiskey would be nice."

"I'll get you a PADD, but no whiskey while you're in Sick Bay."

Bloody doctors, Scott thought.

While he lay in Sick Bay, Scott took the time to finish the paper he started many years before on transwarp beaming. Now that he had had two practical trials, he felt confident that now was the time to publish this paper. The science community had an almost ancient tradition of looking down on papers submitted by engineers whose practical application of science often invalidated theories or forced them to consider that their theories. When he was satisfied, he sent the paper to the Daystrom Institute. He also revised his report about the *Excelsior's* transwarp simulation, again asking for clearance to fix the problem with the tachyon feedback problem.

A week later, the doctor cleared Scott to return to duty. He knew from the PADD that Captain Styles had re-instated Scott's removal from duty. He was also not surprised when he received a hail from Captain Styles requesting him to meet him in his ready room as soon as possible. Scott showered and changed into his regular duty uniform. With a heavy sigh, he walked to the Captain's ready room. At the door, he announced himself and Styles gave him a perfunctory "Enter."

Styles sat behind his desk, swagger stick held under his arm, looking as if nothing had happened. "Be seated," Styles said, indicating the chair in front of his desk. "Are you recovered from your injury?"

"More or less, Captain," Scott said. While the pain was gone, he was grateful to sit down as the relatively short journey to the Captain's ready room had tired him out.

"Captain Scott, I see you were busy while in sick bay," Captain Styles. "You sent a paper for review on transwarp beaming and again, submitted your request to change the *Excelsior's* design."

"Idle hands are the devil's plaything," Scott said.

"Yes," said Styles. The captain did not look at all pleased. He looked at Scott, "I could have you charged with violating the direct orders of a commanding officer and gross insubordination. I relieved you of duty and restricted you to quarters. As soon as I was off the ship, you chose to ignore those orders and risked your life needlessly."

“Begging the Captain’s pardon, but Commander Darby reinstated me to duty while he was Acting Captain, sir. I dinna think that that charge would stand up, sir” Scott said.

“Yes, I’ve already had a discussion with Commander Darby about changing my standing orders,” Styles said. “But you have been disrespectful to me in private and in front of my crew and I will not stand for that.”

Scott gritted his teeth and tried very hard to control his rising temper. “Permission to speak freely, sir”

“I have a feeling that you’re going to do it whether I give you permission or not,” sighed Styles. “Permission granted.”

“If ye are so bloody concerned about respect, maybe ye should show some respect for your crew. Ye order me aboard this bloody bucket of bolts and then ye don’t let me do me job by not letting me ‘get dirty’. I do my job and tell ye the transwarp engine isn’t ready. Ye dismiss my work, order me to sign off on the simulation and when I won’t, ye relieve me of duty. And on top of that, I risk my bloody life to rescue you and Lukas and ye dinna even have the common decency to thank me!” Scott stopped, realizing that he may have already said too much, but every single thing he said was true.

Styles fumed in silence for a moment. “Are you finished?”

“For now,” Scott said.

“I’ve decided, that given the circumstances, that I will overlook your insubordination for now. It seems that your paper had taken the scientific community by storm and I’ve had requests from Starfleet to transfer you back to Headquarters.”

“Then by all means, transfer me, sir and you’ll have me off your ship.”

“I’m not going to do that Captain Scott. I intend to have this transwarp drive operational. And to do that, I need the best engineer in Starfleet. Unfortunately for me, you are that engineer. I hereby reinstate you to duty Captain Scott, but here are the ground rules. One, you still must pass any design change requests to me before I decide if they should be passed to Starfleet. I noticed that you were able to get the crew to run new power lines to the tachyon sensors while I was away. There will be no more circumventing the process, do I make myself clear?”

“Aye, sir,” Scott muttered.

“Second, you will continue to be restricted to desk work, but,” Styles continued before Scott could object, “I will consider specific requests to allow you to ‘get your hands dirty’ as you say in order to correct a specific problem. But only at my discretion. Is that understood?”

“Aye, sir,” Scott said noncommittally.

“Finally, just so we’re clear. Any other reports or papers you decide to send to Starfleet will go through me first. The amount of work you’ve caused me because of this damned theory of yours is a distraction to the project. Do you understand?”

“Basically, you’re telling me that even though I was right about the tachyon sensors and I rescued from an Orion slave ship, nothing has changed?”

Styles thought for a moment. “Yes, I suppose I am.”

“Very well, ye leave me no choice. I hereby resign my commission in Starfleet.”

“I’m afraid I can’t accept that. Starfleet Command Regulation 106, Paragraph 5 states a Chief Engineer cannot resign during the engineering trials of a ship being evaluated for active duty. As I see it, you have two options; you can do something so I

can throw you in the brig and run you out of Starfleet or you follow orders and get the *Excelsior* ready for transwarp trials. What will it be, Captain Scott?”

Scott fumed. He wanted nothing better to wipe the smug look Styles face, but Styles would be sure to run him out of Starfleet. After everything that happened, Scott couldn't believe that the arrogant bastard would still not listen to him or let him do his job.

Scott swallowed down the awful taste of defeat and said, “I accept your terms, sir.”

“Very good, Captain Scott,” Styles said smiling. “You are reinstated to duty as Chief Engineer effective immediately. We'll be back in space dock tomorrow and I expect you to have the transwarp drive ready as soon as Starfleet approves the design changes that I requested.”

Scott nearly changed his mind about accepting Styles' offer. He wanted nothing more than to knock that smug look on his face. After everything Scott had done, Styles was going to take credit for Scott's solution to the tachyon sensors. Before he could do anything else, Scott stood and gritted through his teeth, “Are we done here, sir?”

“Yes, Captain Scott.” Scott turned and got to the door before Styles said, “And Captain Scott, I'm sure we'll have no more issues with your insubordination?”

Only when you stop being a smug, sanctimonious bastard, Scott thought. “No, sir,” he said.

“Very good, carry on.” Styles said and started reading his console.

The *Excelsior* arrived the next morning at space dock and true to his word, Scott sat at his desk and oversaw the work on the *Excelsior*. There was minor damage from the trip to through wormhole and Starfleet finally approved the design changes to the tachyon containment field generator. Scotty went through the motions every day, reviewing data, ordering simulations and tests. But there was no enthusiasm in his work. The Engineering crews were used to his boisterous enthusiasm and became concerned. He was also short tempered with the crew, upbraiding them on every mistake. Finally, Lt. Commander Lukas asked, “Captain Scott, are you feeling fine? Are there any lingering effects from your injury?”

“No, I'm right as rain,” Scott snarled.

“Sorry, sir, but you seem...out of sorts.”

“Dinna worry about me, laddie, worry about the job you're doing,” Scott spat. He stopped and realized exactly what he was doing. He was taking his quarrel with Styles out on his crew that were already overworked jumping through the ridiculous time schedule that Styles and the geniuses in Starfleet had developed for the transwarp trials. He sighed, “I'm sorry, Mr. Lukas. Ye dinna deserved to be snapped at like ye were a raw recruit. I suppose I am out of sorts.”

“Anything we can do to help?” asked Lukas.

Beam the captain into outer space, Scott thought. “Thank ye laddie, but no. There's nothing to be done.”

Scott trudged back to his quarters that night feeling worse about his situation than he had in months. Not only was he prevented from using his abilities to the upmost, he was taking his displeasure out on the people who were doing all the work. He poured himself a drink and was surprised to see that he had a personal message waiting for him

from Admiral Kirk saying simply, "Scotty, would you meet me for a drink at the Lion and Thistle Pub in San Francisco."

Scott knew the pub well; it had always been a favorite watering hole of his from when he was a cadet. It was the only place in San Francisco that served decent whiskey. He often went there to buy bottles of whiskey before he shipped out on a mission. But he likewise knew that Kirk was not overly fond of the rustic charm of the pub. He opened a channel to Styles. "Captain, begging your pardon, but would it be possible for me to beam down to San Francisco for some personal business?"

Styles answered, "Permission granted. Just make sure your back for the staff briefing in the morning."

"Thank ye, sir," Scott said. He sent a message back to Kirk and suggested they meet in two hours. Scott, not feeling like he wanted to be associated with Starfleet any more today, changed into his civilian clothes and beamed down to San Francisco. He entered the pub and was pleased to see that it looked very much the way it had the last time he had visited. He was about to start for the bar when a voice said, "Scotty, over here." He turned and saw Admiral James T. Kirk sitting in a corner booth, motioning him over. Scott smiled to see the admiral, but smiled more at the bottle of whiskey already waiting for him.

"Thank you, Scotty. I'm glad you can make it on such short notice." Scott sat and immediately poured himself a large measure of whiskey and savored his first sip.

"Thank ye for the whiskey, Admiral. But I'm surprised ye would ask me for a drink here. I thought ye didn't like this place."

"I don't. When I was a cadet, I was thrown out of here for seeing the owner's daughter. He threatened to cut of my privates with a claymore. I've given the place a wide berth ever since."

Scott smiled. He looked at the admiral and realized suddenly that the admiral looked old. Even though he was older than Kirk, the man always seemed young to him. He had boundless energy and confidence. Now, the man before him looked old and tired.

"I'm about to ask you a favor, Scotty. A big favor; one that you must feel free to turn down and know I won't think any less of you."

Scott took a drink of his whiskey. "What is it, Admiral?"

"I'm going back to the Genesis planet. I'm going back for Spock," Kirk said so softly that Scott barely heard him.

"Genesis? How I thought it was quarantined?" Scott said incredulously.

"Keep your voice down," Kirk hissed. "It is. But I'm going any way." He explained the visit from Spock's father Sarek and the need to return Spock's body to Vulcan so that McCoy could be free of Spock's katra and that the two would both find peace.

"I'm in, sir. But what can I do? I'm stuck on the bloody *Excelsior*, unless you can transfer me?"

"No, Scotty. I need you there, for now. I want to take the *Enterprise* back to Genesis with only a couple of crew members."

"You'll need someone to set up the automation systems to compensate for a small crew," Scott said, beginning to catch on to Kirk's plan.

"Yes, exactly. And there's only one engineer in the universe I'd trust with that job and that's you."

“I would love to captain, but I’m stuck on the *Excelsior*.”

“I know that. I’m ordering Styles to have you transferred for two days to supervise the ‘decommissioning’ of the *Enterprise*. That’s all the time you have to get the task done.”

“I could do it in one,” Scott said.

Kirk smiled. It was the first time that Scott saw him smile since they met. “And now the favor. This favor will likely result in your court martial.”

Scott frowned. “What is it, sir?”

“The *Excelsior* is the only ship in the quadrant right now. I need you to sabotage the ship to prevent us from being followed. It means giving up your work on the *Excelsior* and betraying your commanding officer. I know what I’m asking and I know the ramifications. I’m willing them to take them to bring peace to two of my closest friends. I will not think less of you if decide not to do this. We’ll think of another way to get past the *Excelsior*.”

Kirk was silent for a few seconds, letting Scott absorb his words. “What do you say, Scotty? Will you do it?”

Scott smiled for the first time since he could remember, raised his glass in salute to the Admiral and said, “Admiral, it would be the greatest bloody pleasure of my life.”