

Day of the Dead

mazaher, november 2016

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I have been on a trip with Spock.

We are both retired now, and alone, after Jim died. We meet once or twice a year, mostly on Terra, often at my house. We sit side by side on my porch and keep silent together.

Looking back, it feels I spent most of my time of service with him grumbling about his cold detachment, but now-- now that we are both free from sudden emergencies and the chain of command, these silent hours have made me suspect that great depths lie beneath that smooth surface.

Last time we met, he looked strangely older. Or perhaps I was feeling older. On a whim, I suggested that we could take the transport to Zeta Centauri II, where a recently contacted people is developing a lively touristic industry in the picturesque, scattered villages along the coast of the ocean. I didn't expect him to agree, but he did.

The place turned out to be rather disappointing. Behind the gaudy hotels and bars along the beach, the poor huts and adobe houses where the locals live are a sorry tangle of narrow alleys, dark recesses and breathless rooms.

But while we were making our way through the labyrinth towards our lodgings, something happened.

We were peering inside an empty hovel of a place, where the dilapidated remains of a fireplace and a bed could be seen in the shadow. Spock behind me stopped and stood, perfectly still, staring at the left corner of the room, where a single ray of dim light made its way to what had been the head of the bed.

I couldn't hear him breathing.

I looked, and even though my eyes couldn't see anything more than what I already knew was there, gradually my mind became aware with a shiver of what Spock was looking at.

It was Jim in that corner, in the red uniform in which we had last seen him, his barely grizzled curls close-cropped, a half-smile on his face. He didn't seem to see us as he briskly gathered chopped wood in a tidy pile in the hearth and skilfully started a fire to cook lunch.

I was enthralled by what I saw without really seeing it, and could not turn my eyes away to look at Spock. But it was his presence that I felt, more intensely than ever. He stood immobile in the dark, and I knew he was totally and completely **there**.

His *c'thia* was as complete as his grief and his joy.

He remained aware that what he was staring at was not real. That the Captain is dead, that death is forever, and that it was his own desire to meet Jim again and have him here at his side that had brought about this vision. But nothing of all this could distract him for a second from the unexpected gift he had been given and that he was savoring like a last moment of perfect happiness and contentment which would last him for the rest of his life. Together, the reality of the loss and the comfort of the vision were filling him and overflowing, flooding me beside him in a way I never had felt or expected.

Then the vision slowly waned, Spock sighed, the joy left and the grief remained, and in silence we resumed our way.

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