

Alternative uses for apples

by mazaher

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*It came into my mind that there may be an alternative explanation for one apparently pointless and frankly annoying show of swagger by Cadet Kirk.
We all know how inquisitive Spock can be.
This is the result.*

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They are stretched on the bunk in Kirk's quarters, legs and arms comfortably tangled, the scent of love just made still fresh in the air. Spock pushes himself up on his elbow. They stare at each other for a while, the silence between them terse and perfect like a musical note. Then Spock's lips quirk at the corner. Kirk can read a question forming.

"What?"

"I wish to ask you about something. If you will not regard it as an indiscretion on my part."

"Nothing on your part can ever be an indiscretion. Go ahead."

Spock hesitates, and Kirk places the tiniest kiss on the corner of those lips so beloved.

"Come on, ask."

"For some time I have wanted to know... Why the apple?"

Kirk looks up at him, uncertain.

"What apple?"

"During your third, hacked attempt at the Kobayashi Maru test, you had an apple with you and made a show of biting at it while in command of the simulation."

"Oh, that...?"

Kirk is blushing.

"It was because of a horse."

It is Spock's turn to be puzzled.

"I am aware that apples are considered a fitting delicacy for *Equus caballus*, but I have no recollection of equines being in any way involved in the simulation."

"Well, no, but *I* was."

"You are not an equine either, ...to my knowledge."

"Look, it's like this. My family has been involved in the military, on and off, for something like a few centuries. There was a grand-grand-grand-whatever-father of mine, a Seamus Kirk, serving in India in the late XIX century, when it was under British rule. His Company was commanded by a Capt. Horace Hayes, who was a famous horseman. My ancestor witnessed an episode that struck him, so he wrote it down, and it was passed on in the family. The story was a favorite of mine as a kid, and somehow stuck with me. It goes like this. Capt. Hayes once bet with the Colonel of the Regiment that he could take the craziest horse in the complement and tame it in a single night. He shut himself in the horse's stall overnight --it was a dark bay mare-- and rode her in parade in the morning without a single glitch. So the Colonel ordered a full straffer being shot in the air as the custom was in solemn celebrations, trying to unsettle the mare enough for Hayes to lose the bet. But Hayes slipped his feet off the stirrups, took out his pipe, picked it carefully, loaded and lighted it, and the mare didn't even twitch an ear despite the commotion. Why? because a rider whose judgment she trusted was being completely relaxed and unworried.¹"

"I still fail to see what apples have to do with either this episode or your behavior during the test."

"I used to steal apples from the neighbor's tree as a kid, the best Stark Red Delicious in the whole of Iowa. The guy was a mean son of bitch who'd think nothing of shooting salt at trespassers."

¹ Story reported by HENRY BLAKE, *Thinking with horses*, London: Souvenir Press, 1975. The author's father had been a pupil of one of the witnesses, Capt. Ward Jackson. See ch. 2 of the book for a detailed account.

Spock's right eyebrow raises a fraction of an inch.

"Apples taste like success in spite of odds to me."

"Are you arguing that you took an apple with you and ate it ostentatiously as a means to..."

"...to disguise the fact that I was scared stiff, yes. To prevent myself from running. Because I knew you brass were watching me from behind that one-way glass. I knew what you would think, but I still wanted to prove my point. So I did with myself what Hayes did with the mare, and it worked, didn't it? You were standing there thinking I was not taking the sim seriously. But it was you who didn't take it seriously enough to give actual control to the bridge crew."

Kirk sighs. "Oh well, that's in the past. I hope."

"You were ...steeling yourself up for cheating."

"I only cheat when I play with cheaters."

Spock frowns. Kirk hugs him.

"Don't think about it, lover. We're never going to agree about that particular matter. But you do know how I feel about you, don't you?"

Blue eyes darken with doubt.

"As I feel about you, ashayam. But..."

"The Kobayashi Maru test... it is a part of life, and life is famous for not being fair. One can only try and level the odds somehow. Even if what it takes is some cheating, and an apple. You know, there are precedents..."

Kirk bumps his head playfully under Spock's armpit, snaking his way along his side and snuggling on to his bare chest. Spock slides his fingertips along the bridge of Kirk's nose, up across his brow and through his cropped hair, ruffling it and finally resting the palm on the nape of his neck.

"You seem to be currently making reference, both in verbal and non-verbal language, to the legend of the snake tempting the first human couple with an apple in the Earthly Paradise. But there is a Vulcan idiom even better suited to the event in discussion."

"Tell me!"

"You could not understand. It is in Ancient Golic, passed down the generations and taught to children in pre-school."

"You're a teaser, and a mean one at that."

"I have learned from a master."

"Oh, come on, tell!"

Spock says something very quickly, with a lot of slithering hard 's's.

Kirk frowns, licks his lips, and repeats almost perfectly.

Spock's eyes widen in surprise. Kirk grins. Spock is fighting a smile.

"Now tell me what it means."

"I will not."

"You will. Or I'll tickle you until I'll make you laugh."

The threat is serious. Spock can resist torture, starvation, sleep deprivation, but he knows from past experience that Kirk's tickling can reduce him to the indignity of laughing within a bare 23.897 second. So he spares himself the shame and spills his beans.

"*S'pakh'whew'soo k'la tarnl*-- 'as obstentatiously self-assured as a roused tarnl'." ²

"Tarnl being...?"

"Small, eight-legged animals endowed with a thin exhoskeleton, a moderate dose of mildly inconvenient poison delivered by opposable pinchers, and unlimited confidence in their bluffing abilities."

"So, I am either a snake or a sort of tiny inoffensive crab? I may have to show you, my haughty Vulcan, how wrong you are about my moral character. My person has no poison and I don't speak with a forked tongue."

"I am aware. There is a young le-matya crouching behind the mask of a snake."

Spock turns Kirk belly down on the bed, strokes both his hands up along the groove of his spine.

"All golden, soft silky skin on tough long muscle."

His hands now follow the turn of the shoulders, slide down along the back of the arms.

"Limbs swift in movement, strong in fight."

² *S'pakh'whew'soo*: pronounced in a startlingly similar way to the Messinian expression with the same meaning, *spacchiusu*.

He hooks his fingertips with Kirk's, gently curled toward the upturned palms.
"Sharp claws, quick to draw blood."
He strokes each finger, then his hands go to cup the sides of Kirk's head resting half-turned on the pillow.
"A katra like an unsheated sword."
He kisses the blind spot between Kirk's shoulder-blades.
"No need for apples," Spock concludes.
"I still like apples."
"As do I, ashayam. And I love you."
"Mmmh... Good," mumbles Kirk, who always wants to have the last word.

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Update June 18th, 2011: the Web, this neverending goldmine, has produced this daguerrotype of Seamus Kirk (credits: <http://celebs.icanhascheezburger.com/2011/04/21/funny-celebrity-pictures-victorian-star-trek/>)

