

Wolves and Sheepdogs

A Lieutenant Leslie Adventure



by Lance Schonberg

“Wolves and Sheepdogs” is a work of fan fiction taking place in the Star Trek prime universe between The Original Series and the Motion Picture. Published in March of 2019 and freely available to [download](#) or read on [Wattpad](#). The rights to Star Trek and all associated names and characters are held by CBS-Paramount and no infringement is intended.

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Looking up at the distant rim of the canyon, and still completely unsure how he could possibly get there, Leslie sighed. It was the same old story: boy meets girl, girl turns out to be a Romulan agent, boy gets abandoned by girl in the middle the wilderness with no hope of rescue unless he can find his way out of a canyon lined with refractory metal ore.

Well, that last bit might be stretching things a little. It really didn't matter if there was anything mineralogically exciting in the rock or not. The walls were more than high enough so that the *Enterprise* would have to be directly overhead to catch a signal. Adding the refractory ore in just added some sense of romance to the story.

From the *Tal Shiar* point of view, he wondered why it wouldn't have been simpler just to kill him. Bishara could have gotten rid of his body just as effectively as she'd gotten rid of him.

He'd passed out in the middle of the night to have it transform into the middle of nowhere. As far as the *Enterprise* was concerned, the search would be a needle in a haystack anyway. But as long as they kept searching, with him still alive, he could eventually shorten the search. Still, he supposed he shouldn't complain too much about Bishara being a Romulan agent. They'd enjoyed an incredible weekend together first. Well, he'd enjoyed an incredible weekend, and she'd at least given the

appearance of doing so. That would probably have to do.

Still, she hadn't killed him. That said something, didn't it?

But warm memories weren't going to help him reach the canyon's rim, where he could hopefully be picked up more easily by the ship's sensors. They also weren't going to help him avoid the large predator tracking him.

He sighed again.

Join Starfleet, see the galaxy.

No one would tell a 17-year-old kid testing for Starfleet Academy that the galaxy consisted mostly of empty space, that over the first decade or so of his career, he would lose friends and almost die more times anyone could think adventurous, that once in a while a Romulan agent would strand him in the ass end of nowhere and leave it up to him whether he lived or died.

No, the recruiter with focus on the positives: serving aboard a starship (its endless, identical corridors), standing on planets no human being had ever seen (with hopefully breathable air), meeting new alien lifeforms (which may or may not try to kill you), rescuing stranded travelers (even the ones who didn't want you to), helping avert disasters (okay, that one was pretty much universally good). Leslie had to admit that he'd done all of these during his career, and hoped to keep doing them for a long time yet. But he also had to admit that some of those alien lifeforms, and some of those alien worlds, worked hard to make sure you didn't survive the encounter, and a lot of them came up with tremendously creative ways to do it.

The existence of his stalker, Leslie considered, argued that there was at least one, and probably more than one, relatively easy way in and out of the sheltered gorge. It was only a kilometer or two wide, so unless it went on for scores of kilometers, it

couldn't possibly have enough small game to support even a single large predator for long. And that single large predator would eventually be the last thing in the gorge. Of course, there was nothing to say that the relatively easy entrance and exit to the gorge wasn't a half dozen kilometers in the wrong direction. Knowing something existed was a lot different than having access to it.

In all likelihood, his best bet was still to find a not impossible to climb trail and pull himself up a hundred or so vertical meters of rock out of the gorge where he might stand a chance of being rescued. He hoped he was picking his way in the right direction through the scraggly forest to find that trail, but as his ears stayed open to all the noise around him, and his eyes scanned ahead, he was aware that each passing moment brought sunset closer, and he certainly wasn't going to climb in the dark even if he found something suitable.

It occurred to Leslie that he should also be looking for a large tree that would support his weight to spend the night in, or, maybe better still, a small hollow in the side of the gorge to put us back to with a fire in between him and the predator following him.

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An hour after sunset, stomach still grumbling, Leslie had boiled the list of things he wished he down to three essentials: a phaser, a tricorder, and a ration bar. Of course, having the second would eliminate the need for the third. The tricorder would give him some idea of things in the gorge that were edible, animal or vegetable, so he could get some calories into his system. He could go a few days if he

had to, but his body fat was pretty low so he didn't have access to much extra to burn.

He'd briefly considered that a communicator could take the place of the whole list, but it would probably only help him if the *Enterprise* somehow passed directly overhead, even without the made-up excuse of refractory ore in the canyon walls sucking the signal right out of the air.

But wishful thinking was irrelevant. He had a fire, his back against solid rock, and a clear view of everything around him. He might even snag a few hours of sleep, though he didn't see how he could risk it. Staying awake all night wouldn't do much for his endurance tomorrow, though.

Sleep started creeping up every time the fire burned low, and Leslie was forced to pull more from his dwindling pile of wood. He wasn't willing to gather more at the moment and there wasn't anything else within sight of the fire. Sooner or later, he wouldn't be able to keep his eyes open, and so he tried to console himself that the fire would probably keep the predator away until it had to sleep.

It didn't make him feel any better.

Neither did waking up in the morning, smoke curling up from the embers, with the largest canine type animal he had ever seen sleeping on the opposite side of the remains of the fire.

"Great."

One year twitched, and it opened an eye is just long enough to make sure Leslie wasn't moving.

So Leslie was very careful not to move as he started wishing for a sudden transporter beam. Once he'd gotten over that, he tried to wrap his head around what he was looking at. It seemed like it was built on a more or less canine frame, but bigger than any dog or wolf he'd ever seen. When it stood, the top of its head would probably only be a few centimeters below Leslie's shoulder. If anything, it was even more muscular than he'd thought on waking, filled out

with a heavy build for endurance and struggle, rather than speed. At a guess, it outweighed him by quite a few kilograms. A thick, blunt head almost the same width as its tree-trunk neck held a set of jaws, bulging with muscle, that would put most big cats to shame.

Was this the predator that had been stalking him? He didn't feel like he should be the right prey for it, although it could probably crunch through any bone he had. It also had a variety of scars all over its neck and back. Clearly a high-end predator, one that wasn't a stranger to conflict, but also one that had for some reason come to share his fire.

And not just sharing the fire, but lying down beside it and enjoying a stretch of sleep that had probably gone on for at least three or four hours. Honestly, Leslie was luckier than he'd ever been in his life. He could have woken up with this thing taking a large bite out of him, the waking part depending on where it chose to bite first.

While it was never good to give yourself a negative perspective, Leslie believed in addressing reality as closely as possible. You should always be fully aware, as much as you could manage, of your real situation and where you stood. The irony wasn't lost on him that lacking a full awareness of his previous situation was what landed him in his current one. He laid still, taking stock.

Stranded on a mostly alien planet with no modern technology and not much hope of rescue if he didn't try to meet the ship halfway, and sitting across the remains of a campfire from the largest canine predator he'd ever seen. On the plus side, he seemed to be reasonably well rested with only a little stiffness in his back and shoulders. It could always be worse. His favorite Romulan agent could come back to decide he wasn't worth leaving alive after all, although that seemed pretty unlikely at this point.

The dog, and his brain refused to categorize it as anything other than a giant dog, stretched both front paws forward towards the fire, raised its head, smacked its lips together several times, and yawned. Leslie started to run through the things he could believe or assume about it. Clearly mammalian, or the version of it native to this world, and probably a canine analog, on waking up it behaved more or less like any other dog he'd met. Plus, it was relaxed in his presence and so obviously didn't consider him a threat.

Oh, and it was large enough, and probably strong enough, that it could tear him apart without thinking too hard about the process or exerting itself unduly. What he didn't understand, and couldn't without making some major unwarranted assumptions, was why it had chosen to spend the night so close to him.

He raised an eyebrow at the beast and spoke quietly. "Well, I can't decide what we do now. I'd really like to climb up the side of the cliff today, and then go back home to my ship. Are you going to let me?"

The huge dog rested its head on its front paws to stare at him, twitching stubby ears forward to listen to the words, but not otherwise reacting. At the very least, it had dismissed him as a threat, and a long before he'd woken up.

"Okay then. Let's find out if you're guarding me for some reason or tracking me." *Or maybe just saving me for when you get hungry.*

Leslie stretched of his arms and arched his back, wiggling one shoulder blade to try getting a small kink out. It didn't quite work, but also the dog didn't really react other than to keep staring at him. Which made it his cue to see how far he could push things. He pulled his legs under him and, using one hand to balance on the rock face behind him, pushed up off the ground. The dog raised its giant

head, tilting it to one side in a very canine gesture, and kept staring.

Leslie wanted shrug. “Well, I hesitate to say good boy or nice boy, if only because I don’t know if you’re a boy, but since you don’t seem to find me very offensive, I think I’ll go now.”

He edged along the rock face, watching the dog watch him, until he started to get some bushes and scrub between them. Carefully turning, and listening for the beast to make any move whatsoever. He began taking regular steps to put some distance in. While he never quite made it to a run, a brisk walk seemed entirely reasonable in the situation. So far as he could tell, the dog didn’t follow. At the moment, ranked among the broader experiences of his recent life, he wasn’t entirely certain it had been a smart move, and yet it had gotten him out of the immediate situation. He wasn’t really out of the woods yet, literally or figuratively. The dog could probably track him and catch him quite easily if it wanted to.

That happy thought made his walk just a little brisker

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By the time the sun was fully up, Leslie was fairly sure the dog was stalking him again. Although, considering it had curled up to the fire closer than he had, maybe stalking wasn’t quite the right word. Since it had seemed indifferent to his departure at dawn, he couldn’t understand what motivation it might have in keeping track of him. Marklar wasn’t a very heavily populated planet, less than half a million people on the only settled continent and

while it had been explored, at least according to the records, that exploration could be considered more along the lines of a very vague, general survey. The residents still had a lot to see and catalog. And he had no idea where he was on the planet or how long he'd been out, or even, if he were completely honest, if he was still on Marklar. It looked right, and the air didn't taste any different than he remembered, and taking him to a different solar system to abandon him seemed excessive for Romulans, even if his former companion had a ship in orbit with its crew for assistance.

Overthinking things. He was stranded somewhere on a settled planet, and a giant dog living in the wild was curious about him, probably the first human, maybe even humanoid, it had ever seen.

Curious. That had to be it. Walking, Leslie considered that while he continued to scan the rock face. He was under no illusions that simple curiosity could possibly mean communication skills, although it probably had a very large brain inside the giant skull. But just because the creature was checking him out, albeit from a distance, didn't mean it had any desire or expectation of exchanging greetings with him, and he couldn't expect to understand things if it did. He wondered if it would come lay by his fire again tonight if he made one.

Not the way he should be thinking. He had to keep moving, had to find a way to get up out of the canyon so the *Enterprise* could find him before it left orbit. Because sooner or later the ship would be forced to move on, and he would really prefer to be on it when that happened. The Captain would never abandon anyone, but he might, at some point, be given an order he couldn't ignore. Or some other crisis might come up. In this situation, he couldn't expect a rescue if he didn't work on his end to make it happen. And sooner or later, he'd need to eat.

But he somehow didn't feel as threatened by the beast. Oh, he had no doubt it could tear him apart if it chose to, but then why would it sleep beside the fire without so much as scratching him? Of all of the skill sets and specialties he'd cultivated, none of them were in xenopsychology, especially of less than fully sentient lifeforms. He was equally at home in engineering and security, and could function adequately on any bridge station as a matter of course, perform in whatever landing party specification the Captain might require. But some days, he had a hard enough time figuring out what was going on in his own head, much less in other humans', to have any idea what a giant alien dog might be thinking.

Unless it was just waiting until it was really hungry, there was no reason it couldn't have killed him during the night, and it hadn't. So Leslie kept walking, and tried to ignore the feeling of eyes on his back.

After a while, he decided a walking stick might be nice, something that could double as a club in a pinch, and found a nice straight length of something that reminded him of bamboo. Not quite his height, but close enough, and strong enough to take as much of his weight as he wanted to give it without buckling. Something to lean on came welcome. He was getting tired and it might be a lot of work to get up again if he gave in to the urge to actually rest somewhere.

Noon seemed to come quickly, and it had to be an hour or two after that when he stopped in the dubious shade of a large leafy plant, thinking he could pick out the beginnings of a path up the cliff face. Well, not so much a path as a place where water might run down regularly. Dry now, the near vertical streambed seemed to promise plenty of hand- and footholds. Scraggly vegetation grew here and there in a long, sort of straight path, probably

sucking greedily at whatever water happened by, and included some gnarled, tough looking tree analogues with roots pushed into the rock. Those might provide extra handholds, or even resting spots along the way, because it still didn't look like anything less than 100 metres straight up from where he stood to gawk.

That streambed, or miniature waterfall, or whatever he wanted to call it, was dusty at the moment, and the sky looked free of clouds. Probably, it wasn't going to rain anytime soon. Probably, it wasn't the best spot for him to try. Probably, hungry and thirsty as he was, waiting until morning wouldn't do him any good. The rest might make him feel more energetic, but would certainly be more than counteracted by the loss of strength from another eighteen or twenty hours without food and drink. He had passed a few small pools of water here and there since waking up yesterday morning, but Leslie hadn't yet found any standing or running water he was willing to risk his life on without hoping of getting back to the ship quickly to clear out any offensive microflora. A little bit of morning dew had been the best he could manage, sucked off hopefully reasonably clean leaves. Physical effort spent water, just by moving and breathing, and sooner or later, probably sooner, that would start to dehydrate him in a bad way. He was glad it wasn't harsher climate.

Leslie started for the base of the streambed, hoping to maybe even find a little bit of water waiting, so long as it wasn't filled with slime or anything too unpalatable to ignore. He had no way to purify it, but it should take him only an hour or so to climb, and, with a little luck, the *Enterprise* would pick him up on sensors fairly quickly once he was out of the canyon. He had no doubts Dr. McCoy could take care of whatever microorganisms he might pick up. Or might have already picked up.

The closer he got to the rock face, the more that streambed blended in. he wondered if he'd

missed some number of similar opportunities yesterday. It didn't matter now, but second-guessing yourself was a part of human nature, he supposed. Reaching the wall, he still saw no evidence of recent rain, but there was a tiny trickle of water at the bottom, building into a shallow pool he could step over if he had to and jump the length of without difficulty. A tiny underground spring fed into it, judging by gentle ripples at the cliff end. He didn't look too closely at the things that definitely weren't tadpoles swimming in it, deciding a few microscopic hitchhikers were probably worth the short term risk.

Warm and mineral tasting, the water felt good going down, and if it didn't settle the hunger pangs in his stomach, at least it made them a little quieter. Standing up from the little pool, and contemplating his climb, he heard the first high pitched growl. Both his eyebrows went up, because he couldn't believe a dog that size could possibly make a pitch that high and sound menacing. He turned around slowly, and instead found himself face to face with something he had to describe as a metre-long weasel.

While he knew he shouldn't judge by Terran standards, especially considering the number of planets he'd visited, a weasel seemed like an odd choice to throw up as a high-end predator, especially next to the giant dog who'd spent the night almost keeping his feet warm. Still, now Leslie had some idea why he was still feeling uncomfortable when thinking it was the dog tracking him. Clearly, it wasn't. Equally clearly, he should not have been so quick to walk away from the other creature. There might have been some accidental protection there.

A ferret was basically a small weasel, and he knew a couple of kids in his pre-Academy days who'd kept them as pets. They certainly had sharp teeth, and it hurt if you got bitten, but he'd never really thought of them as a serious predator. Dangerous to small animals, yes, but nothing human-sized could

consider them a serious threat, although the scratches and puncture wounds it could provide might need some antibiotics.

This, however, was something completely different and probably wasn't fair to call it weasel any more than it was fair to call the dog a dog, but it had the long, slinky body, the smooth fur, the short legs, and seemed to match up pretty well, physically, just scaled up. The teeth, well, he couldn't see them clearly, but also couldn't swear they weren't sharp or serrated. What he could see, Leslie could easily imagine tearing through a large chunk of flesh, and possibly ripping out an important artery in the process. The last thing he needed. He looked around for a better weapon than the now pathetic branch he'd been using as a walking stick, and found nothing save a few rocks, and none of them close enough that he could possibly reach it in time if the creature tried to jump him.

He resolved himself to the fact that he was going to defend himself if it attacked, when it attacked, and there were techniques that would work well against the probably-agile beast. He gave himself good odds of surviving, even winning, but the question was if he would still have the strength to climb the cliff afterward.

Another high-pitched growl, and a second weasel slunk from the undergrowth. Then third and a fourth. He scowled. "Oh, of course you're pack hunters. Couldn't make it easy for poor Lieutenant Leslie."

The four animals moved closer, and he began to try to anticipate what might happen first. He had no intention of going down without a fight and actually started to wonder if he should attack first. Display some dominance, and maybe, just maybe, they'd run away. Or least back off far enough that he could maybe get higher up the rock face than they could jump in one go. If they couldn't climb.

He swung the stick up and slid his hands out turning it into a short staff. The wood was strong and his grip was good. Not quite the same as having two weapons, but now he could react either side easily. He took a small step forward and the weasels all froze in place. Triangular ears twitched, mouths hung open, and nostrils dilated. No, they weren't going to back down. But he would go down swinging. Grip tightening, Leslie clenched his jaw and took a big step forward, cocking his hips and setting the staff for a solid swing.

And then the dog leapt out of the forest, from the complete opposite direction he'd walked away from it, he thought, landing with one giant foot on the head of the closest weasel, and with a snarl that might give an Earth Tiger pause.

In a single quick motion, the beast bent down and wrapped its jaws around its victim. Letting go with the paw, it lifted the weasel and shook its head viciously until Leslie heard a crack. Opening its mouth, the dog let the corpse fall to the ground. Which made only three giant weasels, but now they were alert to its presence, and, dismissing Leslie as a threat, turned as one to face the giant dog, which hunched, lowered its head, and let a growl worthy of an apex predator slip from its barely open mouth. A single drop of saliva rolled off one fang and made a tiny splat on the ground, just barely ahead of several weasel growls, higher pitched, but no less menacing.

Leslie wasn't sure if it was the first one to twitch, but the weasel closest to him seemed like it would be the first one to leap, and he took two big steps, raising his makeshift staff, and the third one to bring it down in a scooping motion that caught the creature in the ribs and sent it tumbling away from both of them. The attack startled the two remaining weasels, and they both broke eye contact with the dog to reassess the threat from behind. The dog, of course, chose that moment to pounce.

Unfortunately, the one it pounced for hadn't quite turned completely away and had just enough time to react to save the huge jaws from closing around its neck. It didn't escape completely unscathed, though. Its attacker came away with at least a small chunk of flesh.

As soon as Leslie saw it move, he jabbed at the last untouched weasel with the end of staff. It jumped back, hissing, almost a weasel-like sound in his mind, and snapped at the wood. Backing up, it joined its fellows, the three of them making a rough line facing their opponents. For what seemed like a long time they stared at each other, and Leslie, getting into the spirit of primitive fight for survival, let a snarl twist his face. Some small rational bit of his mind told him he must be tapping some primitive impulses left to him by evolution, but he ignored that voice, and the rest of the thought, ready to spring, ready to fight, ready to kill.

The weasel in the middle suddenly rippled its body to slide backward a good third of a meter. Its companions stayed motionless for a moment before they took slow, halting steps towards the brush behind them, turning away just before their tails touched the brush.

Leslie stared at the spot they'd been in, not moving until peripheral vision told him the dog was now looking at him. Then he began to relax, then the adrenaline started to slip away, then he felt his mind return. He sucked in a deep breath until his lungs couldn't fill any more, held it for a few seconds, and slowly let it go. Then he turned to look at the dog, finding the beast staring at him, giant head tilted to one side.

He felt a smile sprout on his face, because clearly, the dog knew combat was over, that he was no threat, and wouldn't become one. He wondered if there was more intelligence than he'd thought working behind those eyes. "So you weren't stalking

me, you were stalking them. They were stalking me.” Which made him bait, but whatever worked.

And if this has been some vid drama, they’d have a moment where the wild alien dog would approach the intrepid hero, make some alien but appropriate sound, and graciously accept the stroking and petting that was its only true reward. In reality, the giant dog turned away, its eyes falling on weasel it had killed by surprise. Leslie saw a thick tongue snake out across its lips. It glanced back at him and he took a step away, gesturing with one hand. “Oh no, I insist. You earned it far more than I did.” Not that he had any desire to find out what raw alien weasel tasted like, if it were even compatible with his biochemistry. He’d be fine with the almost-chicken flavoring from the synthesizer back on the *Enterprise*.

Instead, he took several more steps backward, giving the dog plenty of distance so it couldn’t possibly think he might interfere with its meal. “I’ll say thank you, not that I expect you even necessarily get anything from the tone of my voice, but I probably would’ve been weasel food if you hadn’t happened by. You’re more than welcome to my share.”

One ear twitched several times while he spoke, but otherwise it just continued to stare at him while keeping the dead weasel in view. So Leslie turned away, and made his way back to the tiny pool and the almost vertical ascent waiting for him. A few more sips from the pool, and a little water rubbed across his face and neck to give him the illusion of relief from heat and sweat. As refreshed as he was going to get, Leslie turned his attention to the climb.

He was only about a meter off the ground when he heard the first crunching noise behind him, and did his best to ignore it.

Maybe an hour later—he wasn't sure exactly how long, but the sun was still reasonably high in the sky, if lower than it had been when he started—Leslie hauled himself up over the edge of what he had to think of as a cliff. It hadn't been quite a vertical climb, but Leslie stuck to his original estimate of something around one hundred metres of vertical displacement. His neck, arms, shoulders, and upper back all screamed in sudden release, blood rushing to strained muscles hoping to assist in work now over. His legs, having spent so long supporting him while he looked for ways to move farther up, immediately sagged and he knew he couldn't allow himself more than a few seconds rest or it would be difficult to get up.

He allowed himself those few seconds, and then a few seconds more, but when Leslie felt his eyes begin to close, he decided he'd better get up. Wherever the ship might be in orbit, whatever sensors might possibly be pointing in his direction, if any, he still had to assume responsibility for his own rescue. That, now that he was out of the gorge, meant water, shelter, and food in that order.

He tensed and relaxed various body parts, rotated one shoulder several times to not work out the kinks forming there, and both slowly and painfully pulled himself from the ground, keeping his back to the gorge. The land sloped gently away from him for quite a distance, more than enough to allow him a broad view of mostly grassland and a few scattered trees, so different than the sheltered forest he'd just climbed up out of.

It also gave him a good view of a large settlement, some lights already visible on the shaded sides of a few of the buildings. The tallest of those buildings were probably four or five stories, which

still seemed small from whatever distance he was seeing them from, and they certainly didn't look that old or alien.

And he wasn't impressed by how close he was to the small city, probably the same one he'd had the weekend of shore leave in. Sometime late in the day before, he'd probably walked right by its outskirts, safely tucked into the gorge with no idea.

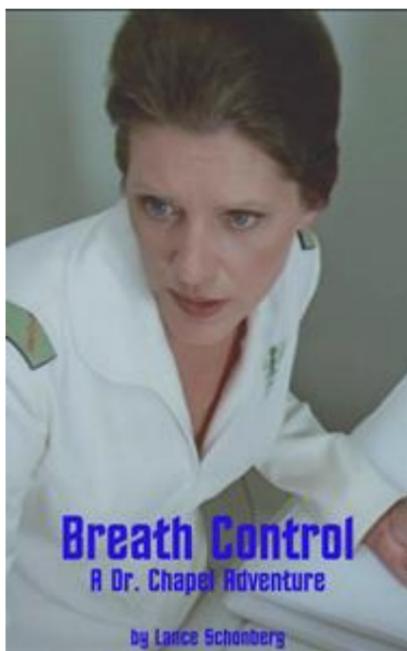
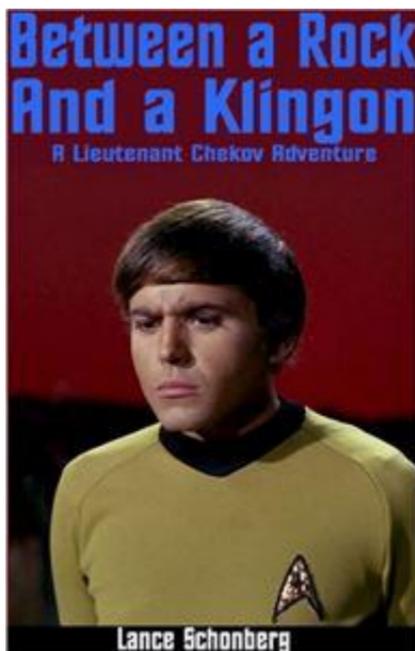
With a disgusted sigh, Leslie began to walk.

Thanks for reading “Wolves and Sheepdogs”. I enjoyed writing the story, and I hope you enjoyed reading it.

If you like Star Trek TOS fanfic, and particularly if you liked this one, I do have other works in various stages of completion. I enjoy working with the supporting and background characters from the series, using the Big Three in smaller roles. Recently-promoted Lieutenant Chekov has an available novella-length adventure by my hand, and I’ve given Dr. Christine Chapel an adventure a few months before returning to the *Enterprise*.

And right now I’m putting the finishing touches on a novel-length story with the unrevealing title of *Fractured Unity*. Captain Kirk features prominently in that one, but everyone has something to do.

Live long and prosper.



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