

Only a Fairy Tale

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Rated G

Submitted January 2009

Summary: At a diplomatic function, Captain Kirk is told a fairy tale — or is it?

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Captain James Kirk looked around the ballroom. The room was resplendent with brightly gowned dignitaries. It wasn't often that a newly discovered world was granted entry into the Federation as quickly as this one had, but then it wasn't often that a world, and a people, long considered myth, revealed themselves and asked for entry.

"Quite a turn out," a man said from nearby. Kirk turned to look at the speaker. A dark-haired man with brown eyes was watching the assemblage, sipping a glass of champagne. He was dressed in dark formal wear, except for an oddly shaped blue enameled pendant hanging from a silver chain. The one other oddity was the pair of old-fashioned eyeglasses perched on his nose. Not many humans wore glasses, not when early treatment for birth defects and drugs for age issues took care of most, if not all, vision problems.

Kirk's own eye glasses were in his pocket. He was one of the very few people on Earth who needed them. He was allergic to Retinax, the drug used to treat age related vision problems. This man looked too young to need Retinax.

Kirk introduced himself.

"Clark Kent, Planetary Register," the man said shaking Kirk's hand. The name didn't ring a bell, but Kirk was familiar with the Planetary Register news service. The Register had been a thorn in the side of Star Fleet for many years, exposing cost overruns, nepotism, malfeasance. The Register had even found out about the Genesis device, a brilliant feat of terra-forming engineering that was too dangerous to use except as a weapon.

The concept of a free press guaranteeing a free society was one Kirk agreed with, in principle. The reality was a lot less comfortable.

"So, what's the Register's interest in a new planet joining the Federation? Unless you're going to complain about how much the party is costing the taxpayers," Kirk said. A waiter walked by with a tray and Kirk grabbed a glass for himself.

"I'm off duty at the moment," Kent stated with a grin.

"Unless you want to give me a quote on how much this party is costing the taxpayers."

"I wasn't in charge of it," Kirk said, returning the grin. He caught sight of Spock and Uhura mingling with the other guests. He waved them over and introduced them to Kent.

"I have read your work, Mister Kent," Spock said. "I found your analysis on the dangers of Genesis remarkably erudite."

Kent smiled again. "High praise, coming from a Vulcan."

Spock nodded once. "However, Star Fleet Intelligence is still trying to discover how you came to have so much information concerning those events. The information was highly classified."

"We could hear the Klingon Ambassador's bellowing all the way to the Register's offices," Kent told him. "He was very unhappy." Kent's expression turned more serious and he turned to Kirk. "I know it seems... I want to express my condolences and deepest sympathy over the loss of your son. Losing a child is not something I would wish on anyone."

Something in Kent's expression told Kirk that the other man was too familiar with that kind of grief.

"How long before the guests of honor arrive?" Uhura asked.

Kent's expression became distant as he seemed to listen to something no one else could hear. 'Auditory implants?' Kirk wondered. But that didn't seem to go with someone who wore eyeglasses rather than have corrective surgery.

"They should be here in about ten minutes," Kent said after a moment. Even Spock seemed surprised by the certainty in Kent's voice. He smiled and shrugged. "I have very good hearing," he said, tapping one earpiece of his glasses. That was the explanation, Kirk realized. The glasses probably hid a miniature camera as well as a sound transmission system. Very clever.

"Mister Kent," Spock said. "I see you are wearing the symbol of the House of El. You know something of our newest member planet?"

"Something, yes," Kent admitted. He looked thoughtful then he seemed to come to a decision. "Let me tell you a fairy tale. Once upon a time there was a civilization, technologically advanced, rather insular, whose most brilliant scientist discovered their world was going to die. Now, they had a thriving colony, but for whatever reasons, it wasn't safe for the scientist to send his infant son there. Instead, he sent the infant to Earth, hoping for sanctuary. The infant was given sanctuary, grew up, got a job, used his vast gifts for the betterment of humanity. They say he could even fly. He got married, had children.

"Now, he had been told by a reliable source that he and his descendants would found a utopia on Earth, so he worked to that end, but Earth wasn't ready. He watched his wife, his soul mate, grow old and die, his children, his grandchildren. Still, he worked to make things better. It took a couple centuries and a couple wars and finally Earth was almost ready. In the meantime, he remarried, sired more children. Watched them grow old and die.

"He had discovered early on that while working openly was personally satisfying, acting in the background worked better. He became legend, then myth, and then finally everyone forgot he ever existed except for family and even they don't know the whole story."

"Methuselah," Kirk said. "He died about five years ago."

Kent gave him a crooked grin. "Pity. I would've liked to have met him. Anyway, in the meantime, the one colony had its own trials and tribulations. It took some time, but they finally got to the point they could see their way to joining everyone else."

"Does your fairy tale have a happy ending?" Uhura asked.

"I don't know but I hope so," Kent said.

A dark haired woman caught sight of Kent and hurried over to him. "There you are," she said, taking his arm. "Jerry says they're almost here."

"Captain Kirk, Captain Spock, Commander Uhura... My wife, my writing partner, and my soul mate, Louisa Long."

The woman smiled and nodded her greeting but was silently urging her husband to accompany her.

"Mister Kent, you never gave us a name for your fairy tale hero," Kirk said.

"Kal-El of Krypton, known to legend as Superman. But remember, it was just a fairy tale. He probably never existed," Kent said as he allowed his wife to lead him away, toward the doors where the ambassadorial delegation would be entering.

The doors opened and a small group of men and women entered. They looked fully human but Kirk knew appearances could be, and often were, deceiving. They were dressed in black form-fitting leggings with bright blue brocade coats. The men were wearing the same symbol Kent had on his pendant, but emblazoned across their chests.

Kirk and his companions moved closer to watch.

A tall dark haired woman, who bore a striking resemblance to Kent and his wife, stepped forward and gave a small bow.

“Kindred in the bonds, I greet thee thrice.”

The Federation president returned the bow. “I am honored to welcome New Krypton as a member of the United Federation of Planets. Welcome to Earth, Ambassador Lara Kal-El.”

To one side of her, Kirk could see Kent beaming with pride and the Ambassador was smiling back at him.

But remember, it was just a fairy tale. Superman probably never existed.

THE END