

Best Smile

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/108) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/108>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Star Trek: The Original Series
Character:	Montgomery "Scotty" Scott , Caitlyn Scott
Additional Tags:	Complicated Relationship(s) , Implied/Referenced Child Neglect , Pre-Series
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Arc of the Wolf
Stats:	Published: 2023-06-04 Words: 907 Chapters: 1/1

Best Smile

by [SLWalker](#)

Summary

(2228) - Six year old Montgomery Scott has already learned a few lessons, and one of those is simple: People you love will leave you. Even when you don't want them to. And even when you *need* them not to.

Notes

First posted on April 12th, 2008 on Livejournal.

The first thing he always did, after he took in exactly where he was and with whom, was look for something to take apart. There was nearly always something that could be pulled apart, though there weren't always tools with which to do it. After he narrowed in on a target, he would look for something to take his target apart with. And while he was doing that, he would try to guess if he would get in trouble, and to what degree -- a shout, or an exasperated headshake, or by having everything taken away from him and put where he couldn't get it, or if maybe he would just be allowed to do his thing without any interference, depending on where he was or who he was with.

Sometimes it was worse. Sometimes it wasn't anything at all. He tried to guess where it would fall.

These were all a matter of instinct, not of thought out courses; rarely did these processes have words. They simply *were*.

There were some other children playing with paints at the table, making a mess, laughing. He didn't watch them for long, standing quietly and patiently by his mother's side, and instead looked at the toy shuttle that he could already see had skewed proportions. There was also a screwdriver up high on a shelf that would be a difficult but not impossible climb to get to, probably used to do quick repairs on toys with loosened pieces.

He didn't really listen too closely to the conversation between the woman and his mother; the woman was soft-looking, gray skinned and haired, and sounded English, and his mother just sounded like she always did, a fast speaker with a light, happy tone. He'd heard this conversation before, nearly verbatim. The woman commenting that of course, he was no trouble, except that he liked to break things; his mother commenting that he used to be a very fussy baby, but was now such a quiet and thoughtful lad.

That was always his favorite part, the part that he listened to, because she sounded proud of him.

Then the woman would say that he really didn't seem to like to play with the other children, and he would focus all of his attention back to how he could build a ladder to the shelf, retrieve the screwdriver and then take apart the badly-proportioned shuttle. He already had a good guess of how he would, and that was when he thought in words: *This part, to that part. Mind, go slow. It'll break if it's forced.*

He didn't play with the others because he really didn't want to. There were times when the interactions would make him look up from whatever he was doing -- if not taking something apart, then practicing his letters and numbers and reading -- and those times made him want to join in even less. They were mercurial to him; unstable, unpredictable creatures that could be smiling and happy one minute, then ostracizing one of their own the next with jeers. They left him alone. No hatred or teasing; he was, if anything, the least favorite crayon in the metaphorical box in these situations. You don't hate the crayon, you just ignore it.

His mother said that he was just shy, and had been for a long time, never grew out of it, but maybe he would when he was a little older and he had just started school so she expected that he would make lots of friends. He was a bright child, did the woman know that he could already do addition and subtraction, and that he was already learning his times tables and that he understood fractions and was even reading at a level two years above him, too?

He would have liked the proud tone then, but he didn't, because he knew that the conversation was coming to a close. Instead, he concentrated fiercely on the project he had already started in his mind, but it didn't ever work like he wanted to, because he knew that when the conversation was over, his mother would leave, and she wouldn't come back for a long time. He didn't realize that he had edged over until he practically had his head against her side, and then she rested a hand on his shoulder and he hoped, even though he knew better, that maybe this time she wouldn't go.

The project and the pride were forgotten when she looked down at him with a smile; told him that she would be back in a few weeks, he'd only be here a few days, then his aunt would watch him, and his father would mind him the rest of the time. And that he should be a good lad for the caretaker.

He already knew, had already learned, that tears wouldn't do anything but make her frown and he hated making her frown. And she would still be frowning when she left, if he cried, and it would be awhile before she had that proud voice again. There was no point to pleading, and he had no words he knew to express the quiet dread he felt; even if he had, she wouldn't have heard it, and he already knew that, too.

She gave him a smile, looking happy and light, excited to be off.

He gave her his best smile back.

She never saw that it didn't reach his eyes.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!