

Memory, Burned In

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| Rating: | Teen And Up Audiences |
| Archive Warning: | No Archive Warnings Apply |
| Category: | Gen |
| Fandom: | Star Trek: Alternate Original Series |
| Character: | Nyota Uhura (AOS) , James T. Kirk (AOS) , Spock (AOS) , Leonard "Bones" McCoy (AOS) |
| Additional Tags: | Whump , Death , Injury , Grief |
| Language: | English |
| Stats: | Published: 2024-02-05 Words: 1,213 Chapters: 1/1 |

Memory, Burned In

by [spacedogfromspace](#)

Summary

After Hendorff dies, Nyota rejects treatment for the rope burns she sustained trying to save him, wanting his memory permanently burned into her skin.

Notes

FebuWhump Day 5
Prompt: Rope Burns

She had only pushed him lightly, as a joke. She didn't know he was standing off balance, and she didn't know about the rock that would prevent him from regaining his footing. All she could do was watch in horror as Hendorff plummeted off the edge of the cliff into the deep ravine.

He had already strapped himself into his rappelling harness, but the end of the line he was attached to hadn't been secured to anything yet. Nyota watched as the coil of rope on the ground slipped away one loop at a time, alarmingly fast. She ran to it, and grabbed the rope in both hands, tight. She had to let go as it jolted her towards the edge of the cliff, then braced her foot against a solid chunk of rock and tried again.

She leaned her entire weight back and tightened her grip on the rope as it rushed past her. Despite gripping it as hard as she could, she couldn't stop or even slow the rope. She gritted her teeth as the rope ran through her hands, tearing up her palms as she did everything she could to try and slow Hendorff's descent. But the rope kept rushing through her hands, tearing layers of skin off as it went. And suddenly, it stopped, and Nyota fell backward to the ground as the rope no longer pulled at her. She looked up in time to see the tail of the rope vanish off the edge of the cliff.

Heart in her throat, Nyota eased herself to the edge of the cliff and reluctantly looked down. A red-shirted figure lay face down and unmoving at the bottom of the ravine, a pool of dark blood forming around him.

As reality crashed down on her, all she could do was scream.

Nyota was sitting on the sofa in Doctor McCoy's office, wrapped in a blanket to treat her for shock. Jim was sitting with her, trying his best to comfort her. It had taken a long while to calm her from the hysterics she was in after the accident. She might have been embarrassed at her behaviour in those moments— screaming, running away, even punching (she would apologize to Sulu later) —if only such things mattered. But they didn't matter, because Hendorff was dead.

She had been crying silently for the past few minutes, but sobs wracked her body once again. "I killed him," she repeated, voice hoarse and choked.

Jim put an arm around her and pulled her towards him, squeezing her shoulders. "It was an accident," he assured her for probably the fiftieth time.

"It doesn't matter," she argued, for probably the fiftieth time. "He's dead." She broke down into shuddering sobs again, and Jim pulled her into a tight hug, rocking her back and forth. The loss of a good security officer was hard enough, but seeing Nyota this shattered was devastating.

The door opened, and Spock walked in, carrying a hot mug of tea. He exchanged a concerned glance with Jim before sitting down on the other side of Nyota.

"Nurse Chapel suggested that you drink this," Spock said.

When she had calmed down a little bit, Nyota pulled away from Jim and looked at Spock with puffy red eyes that she wiped with the backs of her damaged hands. "What is it?" She asked weakly.

"Herbal tea, to help treat the shock," Spock answered. He hesitated before adding, "there is also a mild sedative. It will help you relax enough to sleep."

Jim and Spock waited, unsure of how she would react to being presented with a sedative. With her refusal to have the rope burns on her hands treated, they weren't certain she would accept medication, either. But to their relief, she nodded, and reached her hands out from under her blanket to accept the mug.

Because of the burns and blisters on her palms and fingers, she couldn't curl her fingers or grip anything. Instead, she took the mug between both hands with just the tips of her fingers, which were mostly unscathed. She carefully sipped at the tea, letting Spock hold the mug for her when her hands needed a break.

"You should let Doctor McCoy treat your hands," Spock told her. He didn't have much hope that she would listen to him, as Jim had already tried to convince her to accept treatment. "Being in pain won't change what has happened. And if you leave them to heal without medical intervention, your hands will be left with scars."

As expected, she shook her head. "These burns are a record of my mistakes. Let them scar," she said, sniffing. "All I'll have left to remember Hendorff are the scars from when I failed to save him. From when I— I—" She started to choke up again, and Spock and Jim went about trying to comfort her as best they could— patting her shoulder, stroking her hair—knowing that there was nothing they could do that would ever be enough.

Spock coaxed her into finishing her tea, and her head started to droop drowsily. She drifted into a medicated sleep, sitting there on the couch. As her muscles relaxed she fell to the side, stopped by Spock's shoulder.

"Poor girl," Jim said quietly once he was sure she was asleep. "She's being so hard on herself."

"It'll take time," Spock answered.

The door opened, and Bones walked in, looking tired. "How is she?" he asked.

"Asleep," Jim told him.

"Have you convinced her to let me fix her hands yet?"

Jim shook his head. "She's pretty insistent on leaving them to heal the long way. She wants the pain, and the scars, as a memory, I guess."

Bones sighed. "Wish I could just zap her with a dermal regenerator while she sleeps, but..." He crossed his arms and thought. "I can put an antibacterial on them and wrap them so they don't get infected, at least. If she wants to fight me about it when she wakes up, so be it."

As Bones rummaged through his desk for an antibacterial ointment and some gauze, he looked up at them. "You two have things to do. You can leave her to sleep in my office."

"I don't think it would be pleasant for her if she were to wake up alone," Spock protested.

"I'll stay in my office, keep a close watch on her," Bones assured him. "If she wakes up, she'll have a friend here."

Trusting Bones to take good care of Nyota, Jim and Spock left. They had a lot of paperwork and duties to the rest of their crew in light of Hendorff's death.

With the other two out of the way, Bones turned to Nyota, who was laid curled on the couch, wrapped in her blanket. He took her wrists and flipped her hands up to examine her palms. They were red, slowly seeping blood, and growing large blisters. He could see her heartbeat pulsing in them. He sighed. "Poor thing," he said under his breath, and gently applied the cream to her hands before wrapping them in gauze. Maybe when she woke up he would be able to convince her that prolonging her pain wasn't the right way to grieve.

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