

## The Last Love

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/163) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/163>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">Major Character Death</a>
Category:	<a href="#">Gen</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Star Trek: The Original Series</a> , <a href="#">TOS - Vulcan's Glory - D.C. Fontana</a>
Character:	<a href="#">Christopher Pike</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Death</a> , <a href="#">Grief</a> , <a href="#">Duty</a> , <a href="#">Weekly Challenge: Ideals</a>
Language:	English
Collections:	<a href="#">Weekly Writing Challenges</a>
Stats:	Published: 2023-06-12 Words: 700 Chapters: 1/1

## The Last Love

by [SLWalker](#)

### Summary

(2255) - After a surprise attack, the *Enterprise* is adrift and her senior staff is working, even as they mourn.

### Notes

This is no doubt part of a much longer tale. Written for Weekly Challenge #8, Ideals. Based more on Vulcan's Glory than SNW, but the characters themselves could work for both. (Picture who you want!) Also part of the Arc of the Wolf, contains spoilers for later stories.

The *Enterprise* felt like a ghost ship.

In many ways, Chris Pike reflected, she *was*. Phil had called him not ten minutes ago to tell him that Sheldon hadn't made it; despite emergency surgery, the young man had died on the table. Like every other loss on this day, Pike's mind presented a dozen memories of the engineer, working or smiling or *existing*. A speck of life and light out into the deep black, now gone. Another recording or letter he would be responsible for.

Sheldon was the fifty-third. Pike knew every name before his, though not the order in which they died; when the crew was just a hair over two hundred, when you were out of range of backup or help most of the time, when you relied on each other for your lives, it was impossible not to come to know everyone. And as a captain, it was his duty to not only know them, but to understand them and lead them and *protect them*, at least against all things that they could be protected from.

They were five months from mission's end, and yet now fifty-three of them were never going to reach it.

Pike was an engineer before he had switched to the command track; once the ship was stable and out of danger, he left Number One at the conn and joined the damage control teams, working alongside them. Over shipwide, Lieutenant-- *Acting Chief* Scott was directing different parties to where they were most needed, voice ragged but steady. An unexpected calm spot in all of the chaos.

They were as far out of danger as they could get, adrift on maneuvering thrusters only in a dense planetary system that would shield their existence from whatever the hell had hit them, at least long enough to repair and regroup. And long enough to count their losses.

Cait was the only reason they had escaped; she had suited up in a radiation suit and had gone into the intermix chamber to bring warp back online manually. And she had died there, alone in the dark, but not before she managed to save them all; more than anything else, Chris hoped that she died knowing that. That she'd saved her ship and crew.

Her and Una had been especially close friends; when Pike handed command over to Una, her face was still, but there were tears running down it, dripping off the elegant line of her jaw. His own eyes were dry, but his heart hurt with every beat; Cait had been with him on the *Yorktown*, just like the core of his senior staff, and had come over to join the *Enterprise* at his request.

Not that it had taken much. He remembered the little smirk that crossed her face, the way her freckles just enhanced her expression of mischief. "*It'll take a lot more than a change of ships for you to get rid of me, sir,*" she had said, as if he'd want anyone else as Chief, as if she wasn't going to be working with treasured friends and trusted colleagues.

Apparently it took a surprise attack out of seemingly nowhere, so devastating that over forty people died instantly and the *Enterprise* herself was grievously wounded. Apparently it took so much damage that a physical body had to go into the intermix chamber to execute the needed repairs before they could be attacked again, a suicide mission with no hope of rescue.

It didn't surprise him that Cait had gone. Or that there had been no time for her to tell the people who loved her *goodbye*; no time for them to tell her the same. Upstairs, Una sat in the center chair with tears on her face; down here, Chris Pike worked; in sickbay, Phil tried to save her wounded engineers. The last love they had left to give her.

*"I'm askin' for volunteers, engineers with no injuries, who can go and get our Chief. I'll need six in total,"* Scott said, over shipwide, the only time in all of this that his voice cracked. *"If ye're volunteerin', report to Main Engineering."*

Pike handed his borrowed toolkit off and headed there himself.

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