

Lightning

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Summary

Thunder and lightning, and a Starship falling to her death.

Notes

Flash fic challenge response: Thunder and Lightning

He knew, before the Bridge did, that it was over. The ship lurched under his feet again, and an explosion at the end of the corridor set his ears ringing and etched white light across his vision, thunder and lightning a dozen meters away. He staggered and hit his knees, blind and deaf for a moment. In that breath, he was left only with the sensations of aching cold and the crisp odor of ozone.

It was cold because the chill of space pushed inside in the microseconds before the bulkhead doors could seal a breach—and there were a thousand breaches. And it smelled like the air after a lightning storm because the plasma was pouring out of a thousand holes in the EP system.

Two minutes ago, almost everything had been on fire, but the inferno was out. And it wasn't the suppression system, which was a crippled as everything else. It meant there wasn't enough oxygen for combustion, below sixteen percent saturation. He believed it, from the way his heart was thudding against his ribs, from the ache when he gasped at the air, from the way he kept falling down, and most of all the way—

—*focus, Scotty!* He growled at his drifting, oxygen-deprived mind.

He needed to get back to the reactors. He didn't think they had been breached—no radiological alarm—and the antimatter holding tanks were still intact—no subspace-shattering explosion—but it was only a matter of time now.

The *Enterprise* was dead.

He knew it. He's known it the moment her nacelles were torn from her body, a dismemberment so swift and cruel that he'd barely been able to speak.

Scotty, I need warp!

I cannae! The nacelles ... they've gone!

He'd known she was dead. And yet, the all-hands evacuation siren still gutted him, a killing blow through his heart. Because they were leaving her *alone* to die. Which—*god almighty, Scotty, stop*. He needed to get his people *off*.

He took as deep a breath as he could, the air too cold, too thin. "Pods!" he shouted at his shell-shocked engineers, most of whom were still fumbling at their stations, blinking as if an all-hands evac couldn't possibly mean them. "*Get off! Evacuate!*" And they still hesitated. He was so damn proud of all of them. "It's an order! *Run!*" he shouted, and they finally did. His head spun from the exertion, but he lifted people who were hurt, cinched shoulder harnesses, smashed launch buttons and stood back from the doors that snapped shut ahead of the explosive charges. (This wasn't everyone, there were too many people *missing*... he couldn't think about that right now.)

It kept getting colder and harder to breath, each ejection another hole knocked in the ship, until there was one pod left on this level. He turned and looked at Keenser.

“No,” Keenser growled.

“Sorry, lad. Yes,” he said, fond but immovable, and bodily lifted his kicking, thrashing assistant into the pod. Keenser was strong, but Scotty had him by half a meter and 25 kilos. And by the heavy stripes on Scotty’s sleeves that were a promise and a duty to every being who served under him.

“Scotty!” Keenser howled when Scott belted him in.

“There are pods on other levels,” Scotty soothed reasonably, although he damn well knew that access to the other levels was blocked.

“You can’t get to the other levels,” Keenser cried in despair, and trust him to know that.

“I know, wee man,” Scotty said simply, and smashed the eject button.

The deck was—quiet. He fought here, bled here. Wept, sweated, shouted, resigned his duties, paced through mania, fought through despair, talked quietly with troubled crewmen. Watched the Captain die here, and others. His turn, now.

He knew he was entirely cut off from the rest of the ship, the bulkheads down, protecting main engineering. The reactors had finally shut down, the damage too much, and the last safeguards of thick magnetic and radiation fields had permanently dropped around the reaction chambers, all calculated to prevent contamination from the corpse of a starship. They were designed to survive the atmosphere and hitting the ground at terminal velocity. The silent heart of the *Enterprise* would survive intact.

He would not.

The deck was quiet, and he could hear his heart beating even over his struggle to breathe. It had a couple hundred beats left. As fast as it was pounding, maybe a thousand. He wasn’t afraid, but reached out and put a hand on a bulkhead, out of ideas and hope. “I’m sorry, lassie,” he said to his ship.

And then, the bastards that had killed them were suddenly *shooting* at him. He yelped and spun away, and it was insulting. He was going to be dead in minutes anyway, and they were going to shoot him in the back?

That wasn’t the way he wanted to go, and he ran, far more familiar with the ship than his enemies, even if she was falling to pieces around him. With a little luck, maybe he’d take a few of them to hell with him. But bulkheads were down, doors were twisted, and two turns he didn’t want to take trapped him in the torpedo room.

“Ah, shit,” he breathed, and the footsteps of his pursuers were heavy behind him. No way out, and this is how he died.

The *fucking torpedo room*, he realized abruptly, and the wildest, *stupidest* lightning bolt of an idea in a lifetime that had been full of them suddenly occurred to him, because a torpedo could leave the ship. Nothing to lose, and it just might work.

“Come on lass,” he begged his ship, hands flying as he tore the deadly payload out of the torpedo to make room for one human. “Hang in there, my love; give me just a little more time.”

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