

## Lean On Me

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/350) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/350>.

Rating:	<a href="#">General Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">Gen</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Star Trek: Strange New Worlds</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Una Chin-Riley &amp; Christopher Pike</a>
Character:	<a href="#">Una Chin-Riley   Number One</a> , <a href="#">Christopher Pike</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Hurt/Comfort</a> , <a href="#">Sickfic</a> , <a href="#">Common Cold</a> , <a href="#">Friendship</a> , <a href="#">Cooking</a> , <a href="#">Soup</a>
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2023-06-24 Words: 1,099 Chapters: 1/1

## Lean On Me

by [lah\\_mrh](#)

### Summary

Una makes Chris soup when he's ill.

### Notes

Written for igrockspock in the Hurt/Comfort exchange. Originally posted on AO3.

Una hesitates for a fraction of a second before she raises her hand to signal for entry at Chris's quarters. There's a respiratory virus making the rounds – somewhere between a bad cold and a mild flu – and when Chris called off from his shift this morning she figured it must have caught up with him.

The door slides open and she steps inside, letting it slip closed again behind her. Chris is curled in a pile of blankets on the couch, listening to what she assumes is an audiobook. "Computer, pause playback," he orders, and she can hear the croak in his voice.

"I came to see how you were," she says, and Chris gives a soft huff.

"I've been better." He sneezes, covering his face with an elbow, and fumbles for a tissue. "My throat feels like I've been swallowing razorblades."

Una makes what she hopes is a sympathetic noise. She's never had a cold herself, but from everything she knows they sound unpleasant at best.

"Can I get you anything?" she asks, and Chris considers it for a moment.

"A glass of water would be great," he says. "If it's not too much trouble."

"No trouble," she replies, heading for the sink. There's a pile of tomatoes on the counter, next to a chopping board with what looks like a half-chopped carrot, and she frowns as she grabs a glass from the cupboard and fills it with water.

Chris takes the glass gratefully, murmuring his thanks. She waits, watching as he takes a sip and sets the glass down on the table beside him, then asks, "Why are there a bunch of vegetables on the counter?"

"Oh," he says, in the tone of one who's remembered something previously forgotten. "I was going to make myself some soup, but then I got dizzy and had to sit down for a while. I should get back to it." He moves to get up, and she waves him back down.

"You should rest," she tells him. Then, because she can't resist, "You know there's a whole selection of soups in the synthesiser?"

As she expects, Chris frowns. "It's not the same."

The advantage of home-cooked versus synthesised food has always been a point of contention between them, especially since she helped program the synthesisers and so knows exactly what they're capable of. She readies herself for Chris's usual speech about how real food is Just Better, but he only gets a few words in before being derailed by a coughing fit.

When it's over, he takes a drink of water and settles back into the blankets, looking tired and pale and so unlike his usual self that she suddenly wants nothing more than to make him feel better. "I could make you some soup," she says before she can think better of it. "If you want."

Chris shakes his head. "Thanks, but you don't have to do that."

"Is that an 'I don't want to put you out' don't have to, or an 'I don't trust you in my kitchen unsupervised' don't have to?"

He blinks at her. "Una-

"It's no problem," she cuts in. "And I'm capable of following a recipe."

A faint smile crosses his face. "I never doubted it."

She turns, taking a step towards the kitchen, then turns back awkwardly. "Do you... have a recipe?" She wouldn't put it past him to make the whole thing from memory, and she's not *that* good.

Chris gives a huff of laughter and gestures at the counter. "Bring me my PADD?"

She does so and he skims his fingers across it quickly, bringing up a recipe for tomato vegetable soup. "Here," he says, handing it back. "This one's pretty straightforward. But I'm fine, really. You don't have to make me anything."

She takes the PADD back, fingers curling around the edge. "Yes, I do."

Chris has made food for her dozens of times, after all. The least she can do is return the favour.

As he said, the recipe is straightforward, and she soon loses herself in the motions of chopping and stirring and simmering. It's rewarding to see it come together, like working through an equation to get the right answer, and she can almost see why Chris finds the process so relaxing.

Finally the soup is ready, and she grabs a bowl and carefully ladles out a serving, then hesitates and pulls out a second bowl. Might as well check the results of her work.

Chris is dozing as she approaches with the soup, eyes closed and head tipped back against the couch. She's debating whether to wake him when he stirs, rubbing his eyes and blinking up at her sleepily.

"Your soup," she says, handing him the bowl. He smiles and thanks her, stirring the soup a few times with his spoon before raising it to his mouth to take a sip.

"Mmm," he says. "It's good."

She studies him carefully, but as far as she can tell he isn't lying. She wavers, then sits down beside him and sets to work on her own portion. It *is* good, if she says so herself. Maybe not up to Chris's level, and personally she'd prefer something with a little more spice, but definitely nothing to be ashamed of.

She finishes her bowl quickly, but Chris only makes it through about two thirds of his portion before setting it aside. "I'm sorry," he says. "It's great, really, but I'm just not very hungry." He coughs into his elbow and wraps himself further into the blankets, head resting tiredly against the couch cushion.

"It's fine," Una tells him, then reaches out on impulse to touch his forehead. "You're warm."

"Hmm," Chris replies. "Doesn't feel that way."

He shuffles closer, leaning into her and resting his head on her shoulder. "Thank you," he says. "For the soup. And for being here."

"It wasn't a problem," she tells him. "You'd do the same for me. You *have* done the same for me." She might not be susceptible to minor illnesses like this, but there are times she's succumbed to injury or exhaustion and Chris has been there for her, bringing food and sympathy and companionship. It's only fair she do the same for him.

He relaxes against her, breathing evening out into sleep, and she settles in to let him rest. She'll have to leave eventually – there are always tasks to take care of, and with Chris out of action like this that goes double – but she can stay for a while.

Right now there's no place else she'd rather be.

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