

To Make You Well

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/700) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/700>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Star Trek: Discovery
Relationship:	Ash Tyler Voq/Christopher Pike
Character:	Christopher Pike , Ash Tyler Voq
Additional Tags:	Hurt/Comfort , Sickfic , Fever , Vomiting
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2023-07-20 Words: 1,681 Chapters: 1/1

To Make You Well

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Summary

Chris and Ash finally get some time together after months apart, but a sudden illness disrupts their plans.

Notes

Written before Strange New Worlds. Originally posted on AO3.

Chris smiles as he takes a sip of his coffee and sits down at his computer to check his messages. In a little under ten hours, the *Enterprise* will arrive at Starbase Four for a much-needed three days of shore leave.

Starbase Four is one of the larger starbases, containing hotels, restaurants, museums, a park, and even a ski slope. And, if Chris's calculations are correct, right now it should contain something else. Or, more to the point, *someone*.

As he suspected, he has a message from Ash, and his heart beats a little faster as he opens it. They haven't seen each other in person in almost eight months, and while they message and vid call each other whenever they can, Chris aches to touch him, to be together properly, without a screen between them.

The message is short, just Ash telling him that he's arrived at the starbase and checked in to a hotel. He's attached a picture of the view out of the window - impressive - and one of the bed with a comment that it's big enough to live in.

Good, because I don't plan on leaving it, Chris sends back, and gets up to start his day.

* * *

The mood on the bridge is buoyant, discussion among crewmembers seeming to revolve more around their plans for shore leave than anything to do with work. Chris doesn't chide them for it, though - his crew deserve a break, and it isn't as if he hasn't found his own attention straying occasionally towards more interesting things than paperwork.

He frowns, shifting in his seat as he signs his name to another report. The bridge seems oddly cold today, but no one else seems to have noticed so he makes a note to get Louvier to look at it and continues working.

Despite sleeping well the night before, he finds himself fighting to keep his eyes open as the morning drags on. At his request, Yeoman Colt brings him another cup of coffee, but it doesn't help with the tiredness or the cold. All it does is make him nauseous.

An unpleasant suspicion begins to grow in his mind, and when lunch time rolls around, Chris turns down Una's offer to eat together, telling her to go ahead without him, and heads down to sickbay.

Phil is talking to one of the nurses when Chris walks in, but he quickly excuses himself and comes over. "Chris!" he greets with a smile. "What brings you to my neck of the woods? I thought you'd have your hands full with shore leave preparations."

"Una handles most of that," Chris tells him, smiling briefly in return. "Actually, I'm not feeling so great."

He lets Phil herd him over to a bed and perches on the edge as the doctor waves a scanner over him. "What do you mean by not great?" Phil asks.

Chris shrugs. "Just kind of tired and nauseous." He rubs at his temple and adds, "And I think I'm getting a headache."

Phil frowns, studying the scanner. "Temperature 37.9 degrees and climbing, so there's definitely something going on. Lie down and let me take a closer look."

Chris does so, letting his eyes slip closed as he settles himself on the bed. As captain of a starship he's used to being tired, but it's usually easier to shake off.

It isn't long before Phil has the results, and from his frown it's not good news.

"It's Tarkalean flu," he says. "Not serious, but you'll probably feel like crap for the next few days. Fever, fatigue, nausea, aches and pains..." His expression turns sympathetic as he adds, "It should clear up on it's own in three or four days, but-"

Chris's heart sinks as he sits up. "But that's after shore leave," he finishes. "You can't cure it?"

"I can treat the symptoms, but I'm afraid the only cure is the old fashioned one. Rest and time."

Chris swallows, unsure whether the pain in his throat is from the flu or the knowledge that instead of spending the next few days in a giant hotel bed with Ash he's going to be spending them in his quarters, sick and miserable and alone.

That isn't Phil's fault though, so he takes a deep breath and puts on his best captain's mask. "Is anyone else sick?"

"Not so far, but the incubation period is pretty long. You probably caught it on our last assignment."

Their last assignment was delivering supplies to a Federation colony world around ten days ago. Chris doesn't remember seeing anyone who seemed obviously ill, but he knows that doesn't always mean anything.

"Guess I'll go confine myself to quarters," he says, pushing himself off the bed and steadying himself against a brief wave of dizziness.

Phil gives his shoulder a comforting squeeze. "Here," he says, handing Chris a bottle of pills. "Take one of these every four hours. It should help."

"Thanks," Chris replies, managing a weak smile. "Enjoy your leave."

With that he heads for his quarters, clutching the bottle tightly and telling himself the burning in his eyes is just the fever.

* * *

Back in his quarters, Chris makes himself a cup of ginger tea and swallows one of Phil's small white pills before exchanging his uniform for pyjamas and fuzzy socks and climbing into bed. He rests there for a moment, sipping tea and letting himself warm up, then sets the cup aside and reaches for his communicator, wanting to get the bad news over with as soon as possible.

Just came from sickbay. I've got Tarkalean flu, and apparently I'll be sick long enough that I won't be able to make our rendezvous. Guess we'll have to wait til next time.

He swallows, scrubbing at his eyes, then adds, *Miss you. x* and hits send.

Ash's response is swift.

That sucks. What kind of soup do you like? I'll bring you some and we can watch stupid movies or something while you rest.

Chris can't deny the idea is appealing, but he tells himself he has to be strong. *That's sweet, but I don't want to get you sick too. Have a drink on me, and we'll get together next time.*

He snaps the communicator shut, ignoring the answering vibration. He knows what Ash's response will be, and he's too tired to argue.

Especially when, deep down, he doesn't really want to.

* * *

The sound of the door opening rouses Chris from an uneasy sleep, and he blinks and rubs at his eyes tiredly as he takes in the figure standing next to his bed. "You're not supposed to be here."

"Good to see you too," Ash replies. "How're you feeling?" He sits down on the edge of the bed and adds, "I brought you soup. I wasn't sure what kind you liked, so I got a few different ones."

Apparently they're going to have to have that argument after all. Chris pushes himself upright, only to regret it as his nausea, which has been hovering around a four, immediately spikes to a ten. Bile rises in his throat, and he shoves Ash aside and bolts for the bathroom.

He's dimly aware of Ash kneeling beside him as he vomits, rubbing his back and murmuring comforting nonsense. Finally the nausea ebbs enough for him to sit back against the wall, shivering despite the underfloor heating. "You shouldn't be here," he says, glaring miserably at Ash. "You'll get sick."

"Section 31 agents are vaccinated against everything under the sun," Ash replies. "There was probably one for Tarkalean flu in there somewhere."

"And if there wasn't?"

"Then I get sick," Ash says with a shrug. "I haven't seen you in *eight months*, Chris. I wasn't about to wait another however many months until our schedules overlap again when I could be here with you now. Even if you feel like crap, at least we'll be together."

Chris feels like he should argue, but it feels like he's thinking through a fog. His eyes slip closed with exhaustion as Ash reaches out, cool fingers pressing against Chris's forehead.

"You're burning up," Ash tells him. "Do you have a thermometer anywhere?"

"Bottom drawer," Chris mumbles. Everything hurts, and all he really wants is to go back to bed, but it might as well be a hundred kilometres away.

He holds still as Ash swipes the thermometer across his forehead, frowning at the result.

"39.1," he reports. "You don't do anything by halves."

Chris shrugs tiredly, letting his eyes drift shut again.

"Hey," Ash says, shaking his shoulder. "Come on, you can't sleep here."

"Watch me," Chris mumbles, and Ash snorts.

"Come on," he says. "Let's get you back to bed."

Chris groans, but allows Ash to pull him upright. For a second he thinks he's going to throw up again, but then it passes and they make their way out of the bathroom and over to the bed.

It's past time for him to take his next pill, so he downs it with a few sips of water before crawling under the covers. He lets his eyes slip closed and drifts for a few moments, half-asleep, before cracking one open again and looking at Ash. "You know," he says, his voice croaking a little, "if you're not going to leave, you might as well come here and keep me warm."

"According to the thermometer you need to be *less* warm," Ash tells him, but he strips down anyway and climbs under the covers. Chris shifts to meet him, resting his head on Ash's shoulder and letting himself relax. Ash tends to run warmer than most people, which makes him especially good for cuddling with.

"I'm assuming this isn't what you meant when you said you didn't plan on leaving the bed," Ash says, fingers running idly through his hair.

Chris huffs a laugh in response, leaning into Ash's touch. "I love you," he says, and Ash's fingers still for a moment before continuing to stroke through his hair.

"Yeah," he replies softly, voice thick with emotion. "I love you too."

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