

Shelter from the Storm

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Shelter from the Storm

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Summary

Ash's issues get the better of him, but Chris's presence helps.

Notes

Written for Mimm in the 2022 Chocolate Box exchange. Originally posted on AO3.

"Oh yes, come on, please, more..."

The words fall from Chris's lips in a rush of frenzied babbling. Ash shifts, thrusting deeper, and Chris's hands scabble at his back as if trying to pull him closer. It thrills him sometimes, that he's the only one who gets to see this – Chris, flushed and uninhibited as he tells Ash *exactly* how he wants him to fuck him.

"Please, just like that, come on, fill me up, make me feel it-"

A fragment of memory drifts through Ash's mind – *L'Rell, looking up at him with challenge in her eyes, demanding he make her feel it. He reaches down and guides himself inside her, first one and then the other-*

He snaps out of it, rhythm faltering. It isn't real, he knows it isn't real, but for a second he can feel it, like a phantom limb, and it takes everything in him to keep moving. *It's fine, it'll pass...*

"Harder, come on-" Chris cuts himself off suddenly, the desire in his eyes fading to concern. "Ash? You okay?"

It's too much all of a sudden, and Ash pulls out and away, his stomach turning over. He flees to the safety of the bathroom and spends a few moments dry heaving over the toilet before he slumps to the floor, pulling his knees to his chest as he fights the urge to rip his skin off.

A glass of water appears in his eyeline and he looks up to see Chris kneeling beside him. He accepts it with a mumbled thanks and takes a sip as Chris settles in beside him, careful not to touch.

"I'm sorry," he blurts, his hand tightening on the glass.

"Don't be," Chris tells him. "It's not your fault." Ash can see him watching him out of the corner of his eye. "Was it another flashback?"

Ash knows he doesn't mean anything by it – Chris has never been anything but supportive of his issues – but the reminder that this isn't the first time he's freaked out during sex still stings.

"No," he says shortly, then sighs. "Not exactly. It's hard to explain."

Chris waits patiently – he's always so patient, and kind, and part of Ash hates him for it; for listening, for making him want to explain when it would be so much easier just to cut and run.

He sets the glass down and digs his fingers into his knees, trying to figure out where to start. "Klingon anatomy is... different. Organs in different places, missing parts, *extra* parts..." He ducks his head and grips at his hair, letting the pain ground him. "Sometimes this body just feels wrong, and I can't-" Words fail him and he breaks off, burying his head in his knees.

It was worse back on Qo'noS, he remembers. The Klingons clearly didn't see him as one of them – he was never anything but an outsider, no matter how hard he tried – but there were still moments when he went to rub his forehead or stumbled over a word that human vocal cords can't pronounce and was honestly surprised.

"Is there anything I can do?" Chris asks. He's still not touching him, and Ash doesn't know if he's glad of that or not.

"I don't-" He swallows and raises his head a little, trying again. "I don't think so. It'll pass." It always does, eventually, but it's hard to hold on to that thought when he still feels like he wants to tear all his skin off.

There's silence for a few moments, and Ash closes his eyes and concentrates on his breathing. In... Out... In...

"He tried to kill us both," he says, without really meaning to. "Voq. Couldn't stand being in a human body." He still has the scars, not that they're obvious unless you know where to look.

"You're not him," Chris says.

"No," Ash replies. He has to push down all the ifs and buts that immediately jump up at that statement, but he says it again, more strongly. "No, I'm not."

He shifts, pressing his shoulder lightly against Chris's. He can't handle more than that, not now, but the touch helps, just a little. Reminds him that Chris is still here, that he knows how screwed up Ash is and stays anyway. That he thinks Ash is worth it, even when Ash can't believe it himself.

This feeling will pass, he thinks firmly. It'll pass.

And Chris will be there when it does.

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