

The Little Captain

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The Little Captain

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Summary

On a mission, Captain Pike encounters a strange machine that shrinks him to the size of a doll.

Notes

Written for Slybrarian in the Fandom5K exchange.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Captain's log, Stardate 2190.4

We have arrived at the Aurora system, home to the Federation colony Aurora V. This colony was founded almost fifty years ago, and its location on the edge of Federation space means that it is visited rarely - the last time being over ten years ago. At that time, the colony numbered just over two thousand people, but current life readings are inconclusive, barely registering on our scanners. Our attempts to contact the colony have been unsuccessful, so our next step is to beam down to the planet and check it out.

Chris's first thought when they beam down is that it looks like they've landed in a ghost town. The settlement around them is still and silent, buildings standing empty and abandoned and colonists nowhere to be seen.

He looks around, taking in their surroundings. From the looks of things, the settlement has been abandoned for years, plants beginning to grow over the buildings, but there's no obvious signs of any kind of war or natural disaster. It's as if the colonists just decided to pack up and leave one day.

"Readings, Spock?" Chris asks.

His science officer frowns, fiddling with his tricorder. "No signs of pathogens or radiation, Captain."

"Any life signs?"

"Negative." Spock glances at him before turning back to his tricorder. "However I am also not picking up any bodies. It appears the residents left on their own."

"But we don't know why," Chris surmises.

"Not at present," Spock agrees.

Oh well, Chris thinks, if he'd wanted an easy job he wouldn't have joined Starfleet.

"Perhaps these buildings may hold some explanation," Spock suggests, and Chris nods.

"Guess we might as well check it out." he says, glancing around at the landing party before starting off towards what he assumes is the town hall.

The inside of the building proves to be as empty as the outside, all the surfaces covered in a thin layer of dust. Chris pokes his head into a few rooms as they make their way further in, but they're all empty. Completely empty, actually, he notes – not even any furniture.

As far as he can tell there aren't any signs of a struggle, or tasks left half-finished. As Spock speculated, it almost looks intentional – that the residents planned to leave for whatever reason, and took the bulk of their supplies with them.

Finally, near the centre of the building, they come across what looks like a laboratory. It's less empty than the rest of the rooms, equipment lining the walls and panels of computer systems taking up the middle.

Chris crosses to the nearest computer and taps a few buttons, but it refuses to turn on. Not surprising, given the state of things, but disappointing nevertheless. "Any chance you can get the power working, Mr Spock? Might give us a clue to what happened here."

Spock nods. "I shall attempt it, Captain."

He steps forwards, and Chris shifts aside to give him access. Lieutenant Hansen moves to assist Spock, running her fingers over the screen before ducking down to examine the wiring below.

Chris decides to leave them to it and steps away to examine the equipment around the room. Some of it he recognises – a centrifuge, a scientific replicator, a biometric analyser – but there are a few items that bear no resemblance to anything he's seen before. Spock would know more, he muses, but a glance at his science officer shows he's busy with the computer and Chris is loath to disturb him.

A large piece of equipment near the back of the room catches his eye, and he moves closer to check it out. It looks like an archway, metal and wires twisted into intricate patterns that stretch almost to the ceiling. There's a panel next to it, attached to the archway with cables, and Chris studies it with interest. From the wear and tear on the buttons it looks to have been through a great deal of use, but none of them are labelled, so what the purpose of the device could be is beyond him.

He idly considers trying pressing a couple of the buttons, just to see what happens, but manages to restrain himself.

Studying the archway more closely, he sees something on the floor and moves in for a closer look. It looks like a miniature version of the archway – a perfect scale model maybe fifteen centimetres high. He's bending down to examine it more closely when the archway suddenly flickers and begins to light up – both the main one and the smaller version together, in perfect harmony.

Chris's instincts start to blare, telling him to get out of the archway before he finds out what this machine does the hard way. But a searing pain washes over him before he can, freezing him in place. It's like dying, like being burned alive, like-

And then, between one breath and the next, it's over. The pain vanishes as swiftly as it arrived, and Chris drops to all fours and tries not to throw up.

"Captain?"

Chris looks up. And up, and then up some more. There's a giant standing over him, and he scrambles to his feet, stumbling back against the wall as he grabs for his phaser.

"Captain?" the giant says, and Chris is stunned to recognise Spock's voice. "Are you there?"

Chris stares up at him uncertainly, hand still resting on his phaser. Somehow Spock has become giant-sized, he thinks, before the rest of his surroundings filter in and he realises *everything* around him is giant-sized. Everything but the archway, that is, which is still just above his head, close enough that he can reach out and touch it. Except...

He looks up, and there it is, far, far above his head. Another archway, identical to the one he's standing in except much much bigger. The world tilts as he realises it isn't everything else that's too big, it's him that's too small.

Guess I know what that machine does now, he thinks, a little hysterically.

"He can't have just vanished," Ensign Chen says from far above him. "Maybe he got caught in some kind of transporter system?"

Chris figures that might as well be his cue. He straightens, smoothing down his uniform and feeling a sudden surge of gratitude that his clothes apparently shrunk down with him, then walks out of the arch. "I'm down here!" he calls, waving his arms.

None of them react, and he raises his voice and tries again. "I'M DOWN HERE!"

The shout is enough to get Spock's attention, at least, and the Vulcan blinks at him before crouching down to get a closer look. Hansen and Chen follow suit, dropping to their knees and staring at him in astonishment.

"Captain Pike?" Lieutenant Hansen asks tentatively. "Is that you?"

Chris nods, and her eyes widen. "How did this happen?"

"It appears this archway functions as a miniaturisation device," Spock interjects, studying it with a raised eyebrow. "Fascinating."

"Easy for you to say," Chris tells him. "Did you get anything out of the computers?"

"Not so far," Spock tells him. "We were able to get them working for a moment, but I believe the machine's activation may have overwhelmed the power relays."

"Can you fix it?" Chris asks.

"It should be possible," Spock replies. "But it will take time."

"What about the machine?" Chris asks. "Can you figure out how to change me back?"

Spock frowns. "I would prefer not to experiment further until we have more information. Until we gain a better understanding of how this device works, we run the risk of making things worse rather than better."

Chris imagines shrinking away to nothing and suppresses a shudder. "So I'm stuck like this."

"That would seem to be the case for the moment," Spock agrees. "Captain, if you are amenable, I believe you would be safer back on the *Enterprise*."

Chris supposes there's some logic to that. "Will they be able to get a lock on me?"

Spock considers the question. "Perhaps you should beam up with one of us."

"I can carry you," Ensign Chen suggests, reaching out a hand.

Chris takes a few hasty steps backwards, avoiding the grasping fingers, and is grateful when Spock steps in. "Careful, Ensign," he says. "With the current size difference, we could easily damage the captain without meaning to." Chen pulls his arm back with an apology and Spock lays a hand down on the ground near Chris's feet. "If you will allow me?"

Chris eyes the hand dubiously, but has to admit it's probably his best option. "Just don't drop me," he says, before clambering onto Spock's palm and settling in as best he can.

Spock's hands cup around him carefully, and then he's being lifted into the air. Chris peeks between Spock's fingers at the ground far below, feeling grateful he's never been afraid of heights.

Lieutenant Hansen hails the *Enterprise* and requests beam up. The response, coming a few seconds later, is laced with confusion. "Uh, landing party, we can only get a lock on three of you. Is something wrong?"

"Just beam us up, *Enterprise*," Spock tells the transporter chief. "The situation will become clear soon enough."

"Understood, landing party. Beaming now."

Chris feels the familiar tingling sensation pass over him, and then he's materialising on the transporter platform, still cupped in Spock's hands. He'd had half a hope that the transporter process would have changed him back to his normal size, but it seems that hasn't happened.

Kyle stares at them, his brow furrowed. "Where's the captain?"

"There was an incident on the planet," Spock says. "The captain is unharmed, but he has been... altered."

He steps forwards, off the transporter platform, and Chris raises himself to his knees and pokes his head up over the edge of Spock's fingers. Kyle's eyes go very wide. "You're not saying that's him?"

"Unfortunately," Spock replies, "that is exactly what I am saying."

"But... how?"

"That is what we hope to discover," Spock replies. "Captain, if you agree, I believe you should visit sickbay for an examination. We do not know what effects the process may have had on you."

"Makes sense to me!" Chris replies. "Lead on."

The walk to sickbay is filled with stares and whispers, and Chris grimaces as he realises he's going to have to make some kind of announcement about this, if only to ward off the rumours. Information spreads quickly on a starship, and he'd rather it was at least a little bit accurate.

First things first, however, and it isn't long before Spock sets him down gently in the centre of a sickbay biobed. Chris settles himself as comfortably as he can, resisting the urge to tug at his uniform as M'Benga and Chapel crowd round the bed with wide eyes.

"Whoa," Chapel says. "Is that the captain? What the heck happened to him?"

"We encountered a miniaturisation device," Spock tells her.

"Yeah, I, uh. I got that." She shakes her head slowly. "I know we've seen a lot of weird stuff in this job, but this has to be right up there as one of the weirdest."

How do you think I feel? Chris thinks.

"The bed's not even registering your presence," she continues, glancing up at the readout. "I don't know if we'll even be able to do an exam – our medical equipment isn't designed to work on someone this small."

While they go about trying to take readings, Spock straightens his back and clasps his hands behind him. "Request permission to return to the planet, Captain. Decoding the computer logs may be the key to understanding what happened to the colony, as well as how to change you back."

"Go ahead, Mr Spock," Chris tells him. "Take anyone you need."

Spock nods in acknowledgement, then turns and leaves. Chris sighs and settles in to be scanned.

Chapel tries her best, making all kinds of adjustments to the equipment to try and compensate for his reduced size, but eventually she has to admit defeat. "I'm sorry, Captain. I've turned the gain to maximum, but I'm still not getting a stable signal."

"I may have another option," M'Benga says, looking thoughtful. "Give me a minute."

He leaves, returning shortly with another tricorder, of a design Chris doesn't recognise.

"My daughter had pet mice," he says in explanation, waving the scanner over Chris's body. "I'll have to translate the readings, but it should work in a pinch."

Chris isn't sure how much he trusts the mouse tricorder, but – after some fiddling of the results to allow comparison to a human baseline – it apparently gives him a clean bill of health.

"I'm getting a height of just over nine centimetres," M'Benga tells him. "Looks like you've been reduced by a factor of 20."

"Good to know," Chris says. "Can I get off this thing now?"

"Probably a good idea," Chapel says. "We don't want anyone to lie on you by accident."

That's an idea Chris hadn't considered, and he scrambles hastily onto Chapel's outstretched hand, letting her convey him over to the desk. "Is there anything you need?" she asks.

Chris considers the question, then asks, "Can I use your intercom?"

She has to hold down the button for him, but he manages to make a short announcement.

"This is your captain speaking. As some of you may know, there was an incident involving the landing party. Nobody was injured, but as a consequence I have been shrunk down to approximately ten centimetres high. Now I know this is an unusual situation, even for us, but until my condition can be rectified please be aware of your surroundings, as I'd prefer not to be accidentally crushed. Thank you, and please continue with your duties. Pike out."

"Informative," Chapel says, looking amused. "Is there anywhere you want me to take you? Your quarters, maybe?"

Chris shakes his head. "My quarters are about a thousand times too big for me right now. I'm probably better off staying here."

Chapel brings him a PADD to – attempt to – work on, but he doesn't get much past turning it on when Una appears, striding through the doors of sickbay and heading straight for him.

"Number One," Chris greets as she drops into the chair and stares at him silently. "Fair warning, I might need you to take command for a while."

Una reaches out as if to touch him, but then seems to think better of it and rests her hand on the desk instead. "I was hoping your announcement was a joke," she says. "You know this was supposed to be a simple reconnaissance mission?"

"When has a mission of ours ever been simple?" Chris asks. He hesitates, studying her hand, then moves to lean against it, settling himself gently into the curve of her fingers. She twitches, fingers curling around him slightly, and he leans into it. It isn't as good as a hug, but it helps.

"Almost never," she admits. "But you have to admit that this is a little past the usual level of complicated."

"Spock's working on the computer systems," Chris tells her. "I'm sure he'll have something soon."

"I hope so," she says. "Or else we'll have to design a new captain's chair."

Chris sighs. "Don't joke. I don't even know what I'll do if this isn't fixed soon. I can't exactly go to sleep in my quarters like this, can I? I know Starfleet bunks aren't exactly generous, but it's still more than big enough to get lost in, and that's if I can even get there without a three-week-long trek across the ship."

"It won't come to that," she tells him. "I'm sure we can rig up some kind of miniature bedroom for you."

"Great," he replies with a huff. "I'll be living in a doll house."

"Maybe this will teach you to be more careful next time," she says, and he pushes himself upright and gives her an outraged look.

"Why do you assume this was my fault?"

"Well for one thing, I can't help but notice none of the *rest* of the landing party ended up small enough to hold in my hand." She tries to hide it, but he doesn't miss the smile playing around the corners of her mouth. "Do we have to revisit the conversation about not throwing yourself into danger?"

"I didn't!" he objects, because, okay, he has been known to do that in the past, but *this* situation really wasn't his fault. It could've happened to anyone, and it was just bad luck that he happened to be the one standing there when the machine went off.

"If you say so." She changes the subject before he can argue further. "I should get back to the bridge. I'll let you know if there's any news."

She hesitates briefly before pulling her hand back, and Chris almost asks her to take him with her. He restrains himself, though, figuring that

him showing up on the bridge like this is not going to be conducive to a focused work environment.

Instead he just watches her leave, then sighs and goes back to his PADD. It proves to be more difficult to use than he thought – the edges of the screen might as well be a metre apart, and he has to swipe his entire palm across the surface because his fingers are too small to register.

He's starting to tire of the endeavour when he's interrupted by Chapel setting a plate down on the desk. "I thought you might be hungry," she says.

Chris takes in the bed-sized sandwich and banana that's bigger than he is and gives her a dubious look. "Thank you, but I'm not sure I can eat all of this."

"Don't worry," she says with a brief laugh. "Most of it's for me. I thought we could share." She pulls off a corner of the sandwich and begins tearing it into crumbs.

The result is a much more manageable size, and Chris assembles his own sandwich out of chunks of bread and cheese and begins tucking in.

"Don't eat too much," M'Benga warns as he passes by. "Your stomach's only about the size of a peanut right now."

"Then I won't eat any peanuts," Chris tells him, and takes another bite of his sandwich.

After making his way through two "sandwiches", a fist-sized chunk of banana, and several handfuls of water from a bottle cap Chapel filled for him, Chris is feeling pleasantly full and more at peace with the world.

He decides to see how Spock is getting on, struggling with the buttons until Chapel takes pity and does it for him. "Pike to Spock."

"Spock here."

"How's it going down there?"

"We have restored power to the computers, but the data is heavily encrypted. It will take time to uncover any usable information."

Not the best news then. "Good to know," Chris tells him, managing to suppress a sigh. "Keep working, and let me know the instant you find something."

"Understood, Captain."

"Pike out."

* * *

Despite everyone's best efforts, the day draws to a close without any ideas about how to return Chris to his usual size, which means coming up with somewhere for him to sleep.

As it turns out, Una anticipated this eventuality and has already made arrangements. He supposes he shouldn't be surprised; her ability to anticipate problems and issues in time to head them off at the pass is one of the things that makes her such a good first officer.

He isn't quite so enthused about the exact arrangements she's made, however.

"I know you were joking about the doll house," she says, setting a box on the desk next to him, "But it got me thinking. Lieutenant O'Connor has been building one for his nephew as a hobby, and he agreed to lend me a few things."

Chris gives her a *Really?* expression, but supposes he should at least give it a chance. He has to sleep somewhere, after all.

He watches as she cuts two parallel lines down the box and folds down the section in between. "There you go," she says. "I've made you a door."

The cardboard feels springy under his feet as Chris approaches the box and steps inside. There's a bed in one corner, possibly a little big for him – and doesn't that speak to how messed up this situation is, that he's too small for a literal doll's bed – but oddly inviting, with a wooden frame and colourful blankets. There's also a desk and chair, and an odd box in one corner that turns out, when he pokes his head round, to contain what looks like the cap from a can of hairspray stood upright.

He pulls his head back and looks up at Una where she's watching him from above. "Toilet facilities," she tells him.

Chris looks back at the cap and feels grateful that hasn't been an issue yet. Still, he has to admit, if this goes on much longer, it will be. "Good to know," he says, and wanders back out to sit on the bed. "So if these are my quarters for the night, I suppose I'm stuck here?"

"M'Benga wants to keep you under observation, in case something happens," she replies. "But he says you can stay in my quarters, if you want to get out of sickbay."

They've shared quarters quite a few times over the years, on missions, or when one or both of them is especially in need of comfort. Never like this, though.

"That'd be nice," he says. "Can we go there now?" Now that she's mentioned the idea of getting out of sickbay, it's suddenly all he can think about.

"Sure," she says. "Just hold on."

She folds up the cut side of the box before carefully lifting it into the air with Chris still inside. "This okay?"

He considers saying no, but he has to admit it's probably the easiest option. "Yeah, I guess." He nearly adds 'as long as you're careful', but he knows her well enough to know the warning would be redundant. "Lead on, Number One."

The sides of the box mean he's blocked from seeing much during his journey from sickbay to Una's quarters, flashes of ceiling and crewmembers passing by above him. It's all a little dizzying, and he's relieved when they finally step through the doors to her quarters. She sets the box down gently on her bedside table and stares down at him with a raised eyebrow. "Is there anything you need?"

To get back to my normal size, Chris thinks, but he doesn't say it. "Maybe some water for washing?" he asks.

She surveys the contents of the box for a moment, looking thoughtful, then frowns. "I don't want to risk getting the box wet. How about I take you to the bathroom?"

"Works for me," he replies.

She folds down the side of the box again, and he walks out and onto her waiting hand. It shakes a little, and he steadies himself before glancing up at her accusingly.

"Sorry," she says, lips twitching. "Your feet were tickling me." She cups her hands around him gently and adds, "Ready?"

"As I'll ever be," he tells her, and braces himself as he's lifted into the air.

A short ride later, Una deposits him carefully next to the bathroom sink before grabbing a small dish filled with hair clips and ties and emptying it out onto the counter. Chris watches as she fills it with water and sets it in front of him. "I hope this will work," she says. "I don't want to risk you drowning in the sink."

Chris suppresses a shudder at the thought. Being this size is *dangerous*; it feels like there's no end to the list of things that could inadvertently injure or even kill him. He can only be grateful there aren't any animals on the ship, or he'd probably end up being lunch for some curious house cat.

Una dots a tiny blob of soap on the dish's edge for him to wash with, and Chris goes about cleaning his hands and face before running a finger around his teeth to clean them as best he can. He doesn't know what he'll do if this lasts much longer – maybe some kind of sponge bath arrangement – but this quick wash will do for now. He finishes by drying himself off with a washcloth the size of a blanket, then runs his hands through his hair and glances up at Una.

"All done?" she asks, and he nods.

"For now," he says, before adding, "Thank you."

Una rinses out the dish and wipes down the counter, then ferries him back to his box. Chris stands in front of the bed for a moment, considering, before stripping down to his underwear. It isn't anything she hasn't seen before, after all.

Half out of habit and half because they're the only clothes he has that have a chance of fitting, he folds his uniform and sets it carefully on the chair next to his boots before climbing into bed and pulling up the covers.

"Goodnight," Una says, followed by, "Computer, dim lights."

The bed is comfortable enough, as beds go – certainly better than he expected – but Chris finds it hard to switch off and sleep. He listens to Una moving around, going back and forth from the bathroom and getting ready for bed, but before long the noises fade and he's left alone with his thoughts.

Ordinarily, when he can't sleep he'd go to the gym or read a book or even try and catch up on some paperwork, but all he can do now is close his eyes and try and trick himself into relaxing enough to drop off.

It seems to take hours, but he must drift off eventually, because he's brought awake by the sound of Una's alarm. He stumbles out of bed, still half-asleep, and is reaching for his uniform before the events of the day before come back to him.

"Good morning," Una says from above him.

Chris looks up at her – he's going to have a crick in his neck by the end of all this – and manages a smile in response. "Good morning."

Just like the night before, she accompanies him to the bathroom to let him wash, then returns him to his box and sets about getting ready herself.

She orders fruit for them for breakfast – mostly for her, since Chris's share works out as a two-centimetre long sliver of melon cut off one of her cubes. That's another thing, Chris thinks, chewing his melon darkly – he's stuck with synthesiser food. There's no way he can possibly cook anything in this condition, and while he's sure Una or someone would be willing to help him, it wouldn't be the same as doing it himself.

They'll find a solution, he tells himself firmly. *They have to*.

"I should get to the bridge," Una says once she's cleared away her bowl and glass. She pauses, then adds, "Do you want to come with me?"

Chris thinks of long hours in sickbay, listening to audiobooks and trying not to spy on the comings and goings of his crew, and jumps at the chance. "Lead on, Number One."

Instead of carrying him in her hands, Una picks out a small shoulder bag and hangs it around her neck. It isn't the *most* dignified mode of transport he's ever used, but he can see the logic to it. The bag is reasonably comfortable – a concept he's never had to consider before – and has a see-through window so that he can see what's going on around them.

It's interesting, seeing the ship from what would normally be about stomach-height. New things come to his notice, things he'd usually miss, like how Ensign Jones appears to be wearing the wrong size uniform shirt, or that the walls could do with another coat of paint.

"You doing okay?" Una asks as the turbolift doors close and they begin their ascent to the bridge.

"Just fine," Chris assures her, and readies himself for what's to come.

"Captain on the bridge," Una announces as she steps out of the turbolift. Chris can hear the amusement in her voice, and gives her a betrayed look that she ignores.

She sets the bag down on his chair and Chris scrambles out, very aware of the eyes on him. "As you were," he orders sharply, in his best 'I'm the captain and you should do what I say' voice. A few crewmembers turn back to their stations, but Ortega just grins and comes over, squatting down to look him in the eye.

"Not a word," he tells her, which just makes her grin grow wider.

"I always thought you were too tall," she says. "Though I admit this is a bit too much the other way."

"Don't you have a job to do?" Chris demands, and she shrugs.

"I'm a pilot. Not much to do while we're in orbit." She tilts her head, considering. "You know, I've been looking for something to spice up my juggling act."

She reaches out jokingly and Chris takes a step backwards. "I can have you busted down to ensign," he threatens, and she laughs and raises her hands.

"All right, fine! I'll go reorganise our flight paths or something."

She returns to her seat and Chris lets out a sigh and settles himself in a corner of his seat. He suspects this is going to be a long shift.

It isn't terrible, as shifts go, but Chris can't deny it's a little boring. He's used to moving around, interacting with the bridge crew or heading down to science or engineering to see how they're getting on, and being stuck in one place like this makes him fidgety.

He spends some time at Una's station, watching her work and trying not to accidentally step on any buttons, before La'an comes over to them, standing at attention with her hands behind her back. "Captain, I wondered if you'd like to accompany me to the gym for a workout?"

Chris looks between her and Una and huffs a laugh. "Why do I get the feeling this was your idea?"

Una gives him an impressively innocent look. "I thought you might want to work off some excess energy."

"Is that your subtle way of saying I'm distracting you?"

Una makes a valiant attempt at staying straight-faced, but he can see the edges of her lips twitch. "I didn't say that."

"I notice that's not a no," Chris says, before turning to La'an. "Very well, I suppose a workout doesn't sound like the worst idea, though I admit I'm not sure how I'm supposed to use the machines like this."

"I've considered that, sir," La'an tells him. "It shouldn't be too hard to make adjustments."

"Well in that case," Chris says, as he begins to make his way across Una's console towards her, "lead on, Lieutenant."

La'an books them into a private room and locks the door before setting the bag carefully on the floor and allowing him to climb out.

"I thought maybe we could start with the treadmill?" she says, and Chris gives her a dubious look. "It should work more or less the same, as long as you keep the speed down."

It means setting the machine on almost the slowest speed – below what would normally be a slow walk – but Chris does end up managing a good fifteen minutes of running on the treadmill without any adverse effects. (He usually goes for at least half an hour, but he decides not to push his luck.)

"Right," La'an says, as she helps him down from the treadmill. "I've figured out some options for the next stage. We can do weight training, skipping, or sparring."

"Sparring?" Chris asks sceptically, and she shrugs and tightens her ponytail.

"It always helps me when I need to relax."

"I think you're a little out of my weight range right now," Chris tells her. "Unless you're suggesting I attack the hell out of your foot."

"I was thinking more along the lines of a practice dummy," La'an says as she produces a blue humanoid shape not too much bigger than him.

Chris stares at it for a moment, then asks, "Is that a stress ball?"

"It was a gift from Una," she tells him. "I thought it might come in useful."

Chris considers the pros and cons of fighting a blue stress ball, and decides he might as well give it a shot. It isn't like he couldn't use some stress relief, even if this probably isn't what the creators had in mind.

La'an helps him get set up on a practice mat, then goes over to the other side of the room to work on her own – full sized – dummy. Chris eyes the blue stress ball for a moment, feeling a little silly, then surges forwards and attacks.

Once he gets into it, it's actually surprisingly gratifying, especially when he lands full-body on the ball's stomach and manages to make its head almost double in size. He's taking a time out, panting heavily, when a shadow passes over him and he looks up to see La'an watching him.

"Feeling better?" she asks.

"Much," Chris tells her. "You?"

She nods, smiling briefly, then sits down on the mat beside him and reaches for her water bottle.

She pours a little into the bottle cap for him and Chris slurps it down greedily, having worked up a sweat during his workout. When he glances over at La'an he's surprised to see her staring into space with a distant expression before she seems to shake herself and takes a swig of water.

Chris frowns, wondering what she's thinking about. He doesn't know La'an as well as some of the other crewmembers – she's always been more Una's protégée than his own – but he knows her life hasn't been easy.

He remembers her words from before, *It always helps me when I need to relax*. "Did Una teach you to spar?" he asks impulsively, and she tenses, fingers tightening on the water bottle.

He's about to tell her she doesn't need to answer, but then she speaks. "After I was rescued, after they let me out of sickbay, she took me to the gym. I knew how to run, and hide, but she taught me how to fight. How to throw a punch, how to kick and swipe and knock someone off their feet. I think she knew it was easier than talking." She hesitates, then adds, "It... still is, sometimes."

Chris leans against her knee cautiously, wary of startling her, but she seems to relax a tiny bit at the contact. "Thank you for bringing me here," he says. "I really needed it."

"It's no problem," she replies, not looking at him. "I probably needed it too."

She takes a breath, shifting slightly, and Chris steps back as she rises to her feet. "Una suggested we meet her for lunch after our session," she says. "If you're done?"

Chris's stomach rumbles at the thought of lunch. "Sounds like a plan," he says.

* * *

It's still early for lunch, so the mess hall is almost empty, which Chris appreciates. He's getting used to being stared at, but it isn't like he enjoys it.

His lunch consists of a chunk of chicken and tortilla from Una's chicken wrap – she's generous enough to wait and add the hot sauce after she's taken out his share – followed by a crumb of chocolate.

He's wiping his hands off on a corner of Una's napkin when Lieutenant Rodriguez comes over to the table. "Captain," he greets. "We could use your assistance with a project in Sciences, if you're not too busy?"

"My assistance?" Chris asks sceptically, wondering what kind of project he could possibly help with like this.

"Yes, sir. The circuit we're building has very small components, much too small to handle. We've been using tweezers and other equipment, but we've been having trouble manoeuvring everything into position and we thought you might have better luck."

Part of Chris wonders if this is a set-up to keep him busy, but the siren song of a chance to be useful is too hard to resist. "I'd be happy to help, Lieutenant. Just tell me what you need."

It isn't exactly Chris's usual kind of work, but he finds himself enjoying the process of moving components into position and fastening them into place. Some are big enough to hold easily in his hand, but most are so small he has to grip them carefully between thumb and finger. He can see why the science team were having trouble.

It feels good to be doing something, and he passes a contented few hours building circuits, following orders like an ensign.

Finally they're finished, and Rodriguez delivers him gratefully back to the bridge.

"Have a good time?" Una asks as Chris settles in at the top of her console.

"Just glad to be useful," he tells her. He sighs and adds, "If I end up stuck like this, maybe I can retrain as an electrician. Lot of tiny circuits out there, after all."

"You *won't* end up stuck like this," Una tells him firmly, before she smiles and adds, "But if it helps, I'm sure you'd make an excellent

electrician."

* * *

That evening, Una treats him to a bath in her quarters, setting everything up on the bathroom counter before leaving him alone to soak. Chris isn't really a bath person, but he has to admit the warm water and scented foam are soothing – even if he is sitting in a plastic sandwich box instead of a bathtub.

He waits until the water starts to cool, then climbs out and dries himself off with the edge of a washcloth before pulling on his clothes. After some difficulty, Una managed to coax the replicator into making him some new ones, and while they're a little big for him - and a rather dull shade of brownish grey to boot - they're clean, and after being stuck in the same uniform shirt and pants for a day and a half that's all he really cares about.

Una refused to leave him alone without some way of contacting her, so once he's dressed and decently groomed, he heads over to the communicator she left him. It takes both his hands and a certain amount of force, but eventually he manages to flip it open and make a connection. "Pike to Number One. You can come get me now."

It takes her a little while to appear, and he notices she's dressed up a little in a dark green shirt and silver jewellery.

"You look nice," he says. "What's the occasion?"

"No occasion," she replies as she moves the box into the sink to rinse it out. "How was your bath?"

"It was great," Chris says. "Thank you."

She tidies up quickly, then holds out her hand. "Come on then."

Chris is used to the process by now, and settles into her palm without a word. She carries him across the bathroom and into her quarters, where he's unexpectedly greeted by several crewmembers yelling, "Surprise!"

Chris takes in the sight of Ortega, Chapel, M'Benga, and La'an crowded around his desk, then twists to look at Una, who is trying very hard to keep a straight face. "No special occasion, huh?"

"I thought you could do with some cheering up," she says. "I invited Spock, too, but he insisted he'd be more use assisting in the decryption efforts."

"That sounds like him," Chris says. Warmth blooms in his chest, and he can feel a smile spreading across his face as he adds quietly, "Thank you."

"No problem," she says, before depositing him gently on the desk. "Now what do you want first, games or cake?"

* * *

By the time he goes to bed that night, Chris is in good spirits, full of cake and chocolate and buoyed by the support of his crew.

He's pretty sure the situation is going to crash down on him again before too long, but he's content to let that be tomorrow's problem as he drifts off.

He's woken some time later by the sound of the intercom, followed by Una's voice speaking quietly. A few moments later the lights go up, and she appears above him, looking tired but alert. "Spock's found something."

* * *

"So what have you got for me?" Chris asks, a short time later.

"It took some time for us to sort through the information," Spock begins, "and there are still many gaps and assumptions in our understanding of the situation."

Chris waves a hand impatiently. "Understood. Do you know how to change me back?"

"Not personally," Spock says. "But I believe I may know who can. The original colonists."

Chris stares at him. "You know what happened to them?"

"Indeed," Spock replies. "The same thing that happened to you, if somewhat more intentional."

"Explain," Chris orders, and Spock does.

Apparently, according to the colonists' records, they experienced an unusually bad harvest eight years before, which had a negative effect on their food stores. They made it through, but they couldn't be sure it wouldn't happen again, and so, knowing that another bad year could be devastating, they began to make plans. Stockpiling food, enforcing rationing, building up their supplies as much as they could to make sure they'd never be in risk of running out. And then their scientists made a breakthrough, one that would stretch their supplies almost to infinity.

"They reasoned that people who were one thousand times smaller would need one thousand times less resources," Spock says. "No worry, no rationing, no dependence on the whims of weather. They could build themselves a new town, a fraction of the size of the original, and live out their lives in relative luxury."

"We didn't find any town," Chris points out.

"No," Spock agrees. "But now that we know it exists, I believe I can locate it."

"And they'll know how to turn me back?"

"I do not know," Spock admits. "But the reports did seem to imply that the process was reversible."

Not quite the answer he was looking for, but it's a start. "Well, then," Chris says, rubbing his hands together. "I guess we'd better figure out where they're hiding."

* * *

Many scans and much research later, they manage to track the colonists down to a hollowed out cave under the town hall. The entrance is hidden, disguised as an ordinary wall, but once they know where it is, unearthing it takes almost no time at all.

Chris stays on the bridge, trying not to annoy Una by pacing around her console, while the landing party investigates. They've all agreed it'd be too dangerous for him to take part in the events down on the planet, but it's never felt right staying behind and letting other people take the risks.

Eventually, after what feels like hours, the landing party makes contact again to say they've encountered an obstacle. A wall, to be specific, one that's entirely impassible. Well, impassible by them, anyway.

"It looks like there's a door at the bottom," Lieutenant Abbas says. "Far too small for any of us, but we think the captain might have more success."

Chris scrambles to his feet – finally, something to do – and Una gives him a long look before sighing and saying, "Understood. We'll beam down and meet you there."

* * *

Sure enough, there's a large metal wall blocking the tunnel, with a barely noticeable door cut into it at the bottom. Una sets him down just in front of the wall and Chris approaches the door with an odd feeling – it's the first thing in days that hasn't felt oversized.

He half-expects it to be locked, but it opens at his touch, swinging back to reveal a short tunnel with another door at the other end. He glances back towards the rest of the landing party, then steels himself and steps into the tunnel.

He hesitates by the second door, wondering what he's going to find on the other side, then rests his hand on the handle and opens it.

The sight that meets his eyes on the other side of the door is breathtaking; a huge cave – even by normal standards – containing an entire miniature town, with farms and buildings and people, and a spotlight far above him, rigged to mimic the sun.

Everything around him is perfectly sized, it's almost like being back to his original height.

It doesn't take long before his presence is noticed, two people coming over to him with what look like rifles. Chris raises his hands slowly, trying to look calm and non-threatening. "I'm Captain Christopher Pike, of Starfleet. We've come to help."

* * *

As it turns out, the miniaturisation process was always intended to be reversible, although it takes a little time to get the machine working properly again.

"The town they've created is amazing," Chris tells Una as they watch a couple of the colony scientists instructing the *Enterprise* crew in the necessary adjustments from their perch on a nearby platform. "They have everything anyone could possibly want. Fields to grow crops, a hospital, a school, a gym, a lake with boats on it... an entire miniature society. *I* almost want to live there."

"Do they have miniature horses?" she teases, and he frowns.

"I said it was amazing, not perfect."

She shakes her head, smiling. "You'd get bored in less than a month. People like us don't belong on solid ground."

"No," Chris agrees softly. "I suppose we don't."

Their conversation is interrupted as the archway flickers and lights up. Chris watches as one of the engineers places a miniature chair in the smaller archway – they all agreed it would be better to test the system on something besides him – before standing back and flipping the switch.

The chair seems to shimmer briefly, then blinks out, reappearing a second later in the bigger archway, now fully sized. The engineers give a cheer before moving forwards to examine it.

"Looks like it works," Chris says. "Guess it's my turn now."

"Nervous?" Una asks.

"A little," Chris admits. "If this doesn't work..."

"Then we'll keep trying," she promises. "We'll find a way."

Chris leans against her hand, letting the touch comfort him. "Thank you," he says.

"Any time," she replies.

Once they've established it's safe, Una transports him over to the machine, setting him down gently in front of the smaller archway. Chris gives her one last grateful look before taking his place in the archway and crossing his fingers.

It's less overwhelming the second time, but the sensation still leaves him dizzy and shaking. He opens his eyes and a wave of relief washes over him as he comes face to face with Una. He glances around quickly, then at the ground, which is a lot further away than it was before. A smile crosses his face as he realises everything is the way it's supposed to be. Including him.

"Glad to be back?" Una asks, and Chris laughs.

"You have no idea." Part of him wants to hug her, but he settles for a hand on the shoulder and a grateful smile.

* * *

Now that they have the choice, a few of the colonists choose to go through the reversal and leave with the *Enterprise*. Most, however, choose to remain and continue their lives as they have been, having adjusted to their new situation. According to Spock's calculations, with the food and supplies they have they could live in the cave for decades, and it seems they intend to.

"At least I can finally fit in my chair again," Chris says as he settles into his customary seat on the bridge.

"Yeah, but you're much less cute like this," Ortega puts in with a grin.

"Just for that, you're disinvited from the 'back to normal size' meal I'm cooking tonight," Chris tells her, enjoying the way she splutters in response.

He taps his fingers on the armrest, then raises his voice, addressing the entire bridge. "I wanted to thank you all for your assistance over the past few days," he says. "It was... greatly appreciated."

"No problem," Una says from beside him. "You'd do the same for us."

There's a chorus of agreement from the rest of the bridge crew, and Chris sits back in his chair, unable to keep a smile from forming.

"Let's get out of here," he says. "Helm, plot a course to the nearest starbase, warp factor five."

"Aye, sir," she replies, and they head off to their next adventure.

End Notes

This was partly inspired by the film "Downsizing" (I don't honestly recommend it as a film, but the idea of a society of tiny people stuck with me) and also the Animated Series episode "The Terratin Incident" (which I do recommend because it's a lot of fun).

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