

And a Star to Steer Her By

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by [lah_mrh](#)

Summary

Snapshots of Ash's life, from water to space and back again.

Notes

I've always wished there was more fic about Ash's love of sailing, so this prompt felt kind of perfect.

Ash's first memory is of water.

He's two or three, young enough that he can't be sure it's a real memory, but in it a friend of his mother's is taking them sailing. He can't remember the name of the boat – or the friend – but he remembers the heaviness of the life jacket, the cold of the wind on his face, and the feeling of joy and excitement as the water rushes by below him.

*

At six, his mother signs him up for sailing lessons. He learns how to tie a bowline, how to raise and lower the sail, how to steer – and what to do after capsizing. At ten he enters his first race and comes third – but the rush of triumph and adrenaline is enough that it might as well be first.

*

In some ways, Starfleet might seem like a strange choice for someone who spends so much time out on the ocean, but the idea of space pulls him just as strongly as the water, and he figures he should at least see what's out there.

He can always come back, after all.

*

He spends entire days out on the water after his mother dies, trying to find some way of coping with his loss. He throws himself into his studies, graduating the academy with honours and earning himself a place on the *Yeager*, and then, before he ships out, he uses the money she left him to buy a house on a lake where he can sail. The knowledge of just how fast things can be ripped away sticks with him, and he wants to make sure that no matter what happens, he'll always have somewhere to come back to.

*

After the war, years and lifetimes later, after L'Rell and *Discovery* and the battle with Control, Ash goes back to that house on the lake. Wanders through the rooms filled with pictures and mementos and memories of that other Ash Tyler, until he finds himself down by the water, watching the sun gleam off the surface. It's a perfect day for sailing, warm but with enough of a breeze to kick up some waves, and he can't help but wonder what Michael would have thought of it, if she would have loved it as much as he does. He'll never know, now.

His boat is right where he left it, and it isn't long before he's setting sail, muscle memory taking over as he steers across the lake. It's peaceful out here, just him and the water, and he breathes in the air and lets his mind go blank, blocking out thoughts of Michael, or Voq, or anything at all besides the wind on his face and the water rushing by below him.

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