

Christmas in Sickbay

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Christmas in Sickbay

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Summary

Chris is injured on a mission right before he's meant to meet Ash for Christmas, but they make it work.

Notes

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24th December, old Earth calendar. Christmas Eve. The holiday isn't as widely celebrated as it was in the past, but looking around from his seat at Starbase Fifteen Ash can still see hints of it here and there – a string of lights or tinsel, a festive sweater or headband on the people passing by, the occasional humming or whistling of a Christmas carol.

Ash himself tends not to celebrate – hasn't since his mother died – but as he discovered a few weeks ago, Chris does, and with intensity. The last time Ash commed him it looked like a decorations bomb had gone off in his quarters.

Which is part of the reason he's given his crew the holiday off, and why Ash is here, light years from anywhere of importance, to spend Christmas with him.

The rush of crewmen leaving the gate marked "Enterprise" slows to a trickle, then a stop, and Ash frowns. Chris must be running late. Not unusual, but the fact that he hasn't called or messaged to say that sends a flicker of concern through Ash's chest.

He sends a quick. "Where are you?" message, and is sitting back to continue waiting when his attention is caught by a familiar figure leaving the gate. Not the one he's looking for, but someone who'll at least know where he is, and Ash hurries to intercept her.

"Commander Tyler," Number One greets him, raising an eyebrow. "Something I can do for you?"

"I was supposed to be meeting with the captain. Have you seen him?" He tries for a businesslike tone, but from her expression it doesn't quite come off.

"He's in sickbay." From her tone, she doesn't mean visiting someone. "We ran into a nest of giant spiders on our last mission. Captain Pike was bitten defending one of the crew. He's still recovering from the venom."

Part of Ash wants to laugh, because 'Got hurt doing something stupidly brave' is such a perfectly Chris reason not to be here that it should have occurred to him earlier. "Chris hates spiders," he points out, and the corners of her mouth turn upwards briefly.

"Yeah, well, he hates them even more now." She jerks a thumb over her shoulder at the ship. "You can visit him, if you want. He's still a little out of it, but he'll probably be glad of the company." She pulls out her communicator and taps a few buttons. "I'll notify security to let you on board."

"Thanks," Ash says, as she snaps the communicator closed. Not that he couldn't get on board himself if he really wanted to, but it's easier this way.

She nods briskly. "Don't tire him out," she warns. "We're on leave, and he needs to rest."

"I won't," Ash promises, and she nods again before turning and striding away.

The *Enterprise* is on a skeleton crew, and Ash barely sees anyone as he makes his way down to sickbay. Upon entering, however, he comes face to face with Doctor Boyce, Chris's CMO, who does not look happy to see him.

"I'm here to see the captain," Ash tries, and Boyce's eyes narrow.

"Official business?"

Ash hesitates, but decides to go with the truth. "No."

It must be the right answer as Boyce relaxes a little. "Good," he says. "The last thing he needs is more work." He gives Ash an assessing look, then adds, "Una said you'd be coming. Come on, I'll take you to him."

He leads Ash to a private room at the back of sickbay. Chris is lying on a bed, his eyes closed, one shoulder wrapped in bandages. "Be careful with him," Boyce says. "He's still weak."

Ash nods, then slips into the room.

He thought Chris was asleep, but he shifts and opens his eyes as Ash approaches the bed. He blinks a few times, before a smile spreads across his face. "Ash?" The smile vanishes as realisation seems to dawn. "We were supposed to meet, weren't we?"

"It's okay," Ash tells him. "Your first officer filled me in." He considers a nearby chair for a moment, then dumps his bag on it and climbs onto the bed next to Chris. "Giant spiders, really?"

Chris groans, shifting closer, and Ash wraps an arm around him, careful not to jar his injured shoulder. "How're you feeling?"

Chris rests his head on Ash's shoulder. "Tired, achy, nauseous. It's like having the flu." He sighs and adds, "Better than I was, though. You missed the vomiting stage, and the hallucinating-from-fever stage, both of which were a lot less fun than this." From the heat pouring off him, he's still running a pretty decent fever, so Ash doesn't want to think about how high it was before.

"Are you *trying* to set some kind of record for most frequently injured captain?" he asks, only half kidding. "I'm surprised your crew hasn't mutinied by now."

Chris gives a huff of laughter. "Phil threatened to tie me to the bridge, but I think he was joking." He pauses, then adds, "At least I *hope* he was joking."

He raises his head a little to look at Ash. "This isn't how I wanted to spend Christmas with you," he says. "I'm sorry."

"It's okay," Ash tells him, before he remembers. "I have a gift for you." He pulls away from Chris and rummages through his bag for the box.

"I had one for you too," Chris says, "but unfortunately it depended on me not being in sickbay."

"With your history?" Ash can't help but tease, and Chris gives him a shove. A second later he locates the box and hands it over, feeling his heart speed up a little. He's pretty sure Chris will like it, but there's always that fraction of doubt.

"It isn't Christmas yet," Chris points out, fiddling with the edge of the box.

"I don't care," Ash replies. "Open it."

Chris does so, a smile crossing his face as he picks up the ornament Ash gave him, a tiny starship dangling from a thread. "It's the *Enterprise*."

"I thought you could hang it in your quarters," Ash says. He hesitates, then adds, "My mom and I used to make ornaments for each other every year. It was a tradition."

"You *made* this?" Chris asks in surprise, examining the tiny ship more closely.

"Actually, I programmed the replicator to make it," Ash admits. "Do you like it?"

Chris's expression is soft as he looks at him. "It's perfect. Thank you." He leans in to kiss Ash.

"You're welcome," Ash says when they pull apart. "Merry Christmas."

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