

Rewritten

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Rewritten

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Summary

Nine years after the events on Boreth, Ash gets a visit from his future self with a mission: Save Christopher Pike.

Notes

Written in 2019, before the end of season 2 (and before SNW was even thought of). Originally posted on AO3.

Ash wakes up to a hand shaking his shoulder, and a strangely familiar voice calling his name. He groans and turns over, opening his eyes to find himself staring directly into his own face.

"Gah!" he yells, scrambling backwards until he's pressed against the wall. "Who the hell are you?"

"Calm down," his double replies. "I'm you. I'm from the future."

"Oh, of course," Ash retorts. His gaze falls on the phaser on his desk, but there's no way he'd be able to get to it before the intruder does.

His double sighs. "When you were fourteen you kissed Angie Turner behind the cafeteria."

Ash opens his mouth to point out that that's hardly a secret, when his double continues, "You were pretending it was her brother."

Ash's mouth snaps shut with a click. He's never told *anyone* that. Alex Turner was his first major crush, but he was straight, at least as far as Ash could tell, so he went for the easier target. It wasn't as if he didn't genuinely like Angie, after all, just not quite as much as her brother. "How do you know that?"

"Because *I'm you*." His double – his future self, apparently – huffs in exasperation. "And I don't have much time, so stop arguing and listen. Chris is in danger."

Ash rubs his eyes, wondering idly if he's still dreaming. "Chris?"

"Captain Christopher Pike? Former commander of the *Enterprise* and *Discovery*?"

"I know who he is," Ash snaps. "What do you mean, 'danger'?"

"It's-" His future self pauses suddenly. "What's the stardate?"

It takes a few seconds for Ash to calculate, but he rattles it off.

Future Ash relaxes slightly. "Good, then I'm not too late." He glances at the chronometer and adds, "In about eight hours, he sets off to supervise a bunch of cadets on a training cruise. All routine, no big deal, except something goes wrong."

Ash feels his heart twist. "Does he die?"

"No, but-" He hesitates. "It's bad. Really bad. And I'm breaking a hundred or so rules just by being here, but I... I couldn't leave him like that."

Ash has never seen that expression on his face before, and really hopes he never does again. "What can I do?"

His future self pulls something out of his pocket. "You need to give him this."

He holds out a small metal object, and Ash takes it, examining it closely. It looks to be a metal disc, about the size and shape of a Starfleet medal. "What is it?"

"It's a prototype for a personal shield. I've tested it, and it works. It's meant to be worn on the front of the uniform, ideally over the heart." He taps his chest. "You need to make sure he wears it."

"That's it?"

His future self smiles, a little sadly. "I hope so." He checks the sensor on his wrist and adds, "My time's up. But listen, if this works, you should tell him."

"Tell him what?"

His future self gives him a knowing look, and Ash is struck by the surreality of seeing that expression from the outside. "*Tell him.*"

There's a sudden flash of light, and when it vanishes, Ash is alone. He looks down at the metal disc in his palm, wondering what could possibly have happened to Chris that was so bad his future self would bend time itself to save him.

* * *

Ash spends most of the next morning staking out the main transporter station at Starfleet Academy, watching people come and go. He spent the rest of last night experimenting with the disc, and he's fairly convinced that it is, in fact, a shield, one that only seems to activate if the wearer is in danger. (And the story of exactly how he figured *that* out will follow him to his grave.) Now he just has to put the rest of the plan into action.

Eventually, just before eleven, he catches sight of a familiar head of grey hair, and rushes after him.

"Captain Pike! Chris!"

Chris stops, turning, and Ash catches up to him. "Tyler," he says in surprise, then smiles. "Ash. It's been a while. What are you doing here?"

Ash shrugs. "I was in the neighbourhood. Thought I'd say hi."

Chris nods, then gestures behind him. "I'd like to stay and chat, but I'm supposed to be supervising a training cruise."

"Yes," Ash says. "I know." He darts a hand into his pocket and pulls out the disc. "You should take this."

"What is it?"

Ash reaches out and attaches it to his uniform, right next to the Starfleet insignia. "Consider it a good luck charm."

Chris looks down at the disc, his expression somewhere between amused and puzzled. "I'm not sure this is regulation."

"Please," Ash says, a little more desperation in his tone than he intends. "Humour me."

Chris studies his face for a moment, and Ash doesn't know what he sees there, but it must be enough because all he says is, "Okay."

He glances at his wrist and grimaces. "I really have to go. But listen, I should be back in a couple of days. Maybe we could get a drink, catch up?"

Ash nods, managing a smile. "I'd like that."

Chris smiles back before turning and jogging away. Ash watches until he's out of sight, fingernails digging grooves into his palms.

I really hope this works.

* * *

Ash sits at Chris's bedside, watching his chest rise and fall steadily. Even with the shield he didn't make it away unscathed – the radiation has left scars on his right temple and ear, and down his right arm. There's some spinal damage as well, meaning he'll likely need a cane, if not a wheelchair. But he's alive, and whole, and Ash knows it could have been so much worse.

Chris's eyes flicker, and then open, and Ash feels a twist in his stomach as they fall on him. "Ash?" he asks, then, concern entering his tone, "The cadets?"

Ash feels a rush of affection. Of course Chris's first concern is for other people. "They're fine. Thanks to you."

Chris's awakening must have set off some kind of alarm, as the room fills with doctors. Ash stays out of the way as they cluster around Chris's bed, taking readings and asking questions. Chris answers when prompted, occasionally asking a question of his own, but mostly just listens as they discuss his injuries and prognosis and possible long term outcomes.

They bring him a mirror, and he just looks at it for a while, tracing the scars on his temple. It's strange, Ash thinks, but he almost looks relieved.

Eventually the doctors leave, and the two of them are left alone. Chris lets out a shaky breath, fingers running over his scars. "This is not exactly what I expected."

"I know it's a lot to deal with," Ash begins, but he doesn't get to say more as Chris suddenly laughs.

"You think I'm *upset*," he says with wonder. "No, Ash, this is..." He pauses, before continuing, "It was exactly like my vision. Every single detail. Except..." He flexes a hand, studying it. "I'm still me."

"Your vision?" Ash asks, then it hits him. "You knew this was going to happen."

"That it would happen on this particular cruise? No. That it would happen at some point?" He gives Ash a smile that doesn't reach his eyes. "Unfortunately, yes."

A million questions rise up in Ash's mind, but what comes out is, "How long?"

"Since Boreth."

Boreth. Ash stares at him. "That was almost ten years ago."

Chris nods, wrapping his arms around himself as if cold. "It was the price I had to pay, for taking the time crystal. It showed me my future. A future in which I was-" He breaks off and swallows unsteadily, blinking back moisture. "He said there was no escaping it."

Ash has to swallow past a lump in his throat as it hits him that Chris has carried this knowledge with him for *years*, that he knew before he entered that room what would happen to him and went ahead and did it anyway.

He can't even imagine being that brave.

"No one's future is set in stone," he says roughly, hand moving almost of its own accord to cover Chris's. "It can always be rewritten."

His future self's words echo in his mind. *Tell him.* He takes a steadying breath, focusing on their joined hands, and adds, "And I think I'd like to help you write yours. If that's okay."

He glances up in time to see a smile spread across Chris's face. "Yeah," he says, hand shifting to entwine their fingers. "I'd like that."

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