

## Faithful

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## Faithful

by [SLWalker](#)

### Summary

(2245) - After two years away, how do you go back home? Well, if you're lucky, your best friend comes to get you.

It was a strange thing that waiting for something you'd been dreaming of and longing for the past two years could be such an ambivalent process. How it could be filled with hope and fear, and exhaustion, and trepidation, and joy. As though the very thing that you ached for was something to be afraid of.

Maybe it was the change again. Or, maybe it was just that he actually had time to think about it now.

Andrew Corrigan looked into the blazing red light of a Vulcan sunset, and waited.

He had hoped that his parents would decide to make the trip, but they had responsibilities at home and had told him that they'd meet him in Augusta when he got back. It was sixteen days from Earth to Vulcan, at least with standard travel, and sixteen days back. That was a lot of time for them to spend in space, just so that he would have some company on the flight home. And Rachel was in college now, though lately it seemed like she had been spending more time than not doing everything *but* coursework, so Cor knew not to expect her either.

Scotty had likewise said he doubted he could get there; he was still on corrective action -- where Cor's was revoked the moment he graduated from the program for the VSA three days ago -- but at least he had been reassigned from Lunar to the San Francisco Fleet Yards. He still wasn't doing much more than providing manual labor and a warm body, but if his letters were any indicator, he was utterly enamored with the *Constitution* -class ships he was helping to finish out, and the *Enterprise* in particular.

Corry had, in the past few years, grown to appreciate how Scotty could manage to say a good deal with very few words, provided you understood his language. He could ramble for hours about machinery and give an utterly passionate discourse on the latest engineering feats, but on occasion he would say something that transcended the words themselves.

Of the *Enterprise*, and getting to be there when they fired up her warp and impulse drives for the first time since she'd been completed, Scotty only had one thing to say that spoke volumes of his wide-eyed wonder:

*"She sings, Corry."*

So, Cor didn't particularly expect his best friend to drag himself away from the Fleet Yards. And besides, sixteen days after spending two years on a desert world, spending almost all of his time controlling himself and tamping down his emotions, would probably be a good chance for him to actually re-acclimate to being *human*. It wasn't that he hadn't come to really admire and like many of the Vulcans that he worked and studied with. He found that, despite their emotional control, many of them were compassionate and generous people. He made friends, ones he planned on keeping in contact with, and he was grateful for all he had learned, but--

But he had never stopped aching for Earth. For the ocean. For his *family*.

He took a breath and waited. The skimmer would be there soon. He wondered how long it would take him to get used to breathing Earth-normal air again; it had taken him months to get used to the heat and thin oxygen here, and most of a year before he wasn't getting regular shots of tri-ox just to keep up. And he wondered if -- *how* -- he would fall back into the life he'd come from; how he would fit back into South Bristol, back into the little joys and sorrows that accompanied everyday life, back into the world. Into his own life.

The skimmer finally pulled up, and he put his bags in the back seat. He took one more look at the Vulcan Science Academy; it was such a beautiful building, perfectly functional artistry. But he wouldn't miss it. Some of the people, yeah. But not so much the place.

He climbed into the front seat and watched the scenery pass by once they started moving. He still felt ambivalent. He wished he knew why he

felt that way; it was kind of unnerving. In his head, there were four years or more worth of training that he had completed in two years, and all he could seem to think of was whether or not they had repainted the swing bridge yet.

The spaceport was surprisingly quiet when they got there; the rare times he'd come over here, half hoping to find some humans to share jokes with, were usually very busy. But tonight, it just seemed kind of quiet, both inside and out. The air took on a sharpening chill with the nightfall, and that added to the impression. Corry climbed out of the skimmer, more on auto-pilot than anything, and started unloading his bags.

Someone reached past him, pulling out one of his suitcases, and he was about to say something when he saw who it was and froze.

"What the hell'd ye pack in here, anyway? Bricks?" Scotty grumbled, without an edge, setting the bag on the curb. Then he eyed Corry for a moment, failing to stifle a grin, mischief all over his face. "What? Ye'd think ye haven't seen me in a year." His idea of a joke, apparently.

Corry blinked, gobsmacked. "I-- you-- I thought--"

"I'm always engineering somethin'," Scotty replied, half-shrugging cheerfully. Then he grabbed another bag. "Plan on helpin' with these?"

"Yeah." Corry shook off the shock for a moment, though he was still reeling. Between the mixed feelings on reclaiming his life and the exhaustion from the past two years, this little surprise was almost enough to knock him over. "How'd you manage that?" he asked, feeling oddly breathless, pulling the last of his luggage out of the skimmer.

Scotty pretended to think about it, head tipped over. "Hm. Lots o' hard work, some luck, and maybe just a wee tiny bit o' conduct unbecoming an officer."

*A wee tiny bit* could mean a whole lot of things when it came to Scotty; Cor huffed something close to a laugh. "Do I even wanna know?"

"It wasn't that bad. A little wager on somethin' that I was pretty certain of." Scotty waved it off with a chuckle, shaking his head, then regarded Cor anew with a tongue-in-cheek grin. "Ye look like someone just smacked ye in the head with a pipe."

"No, I'm--" Corry let a breath out in a rush. "Geez, I just didn't expect you to be here, y'know?"

"Aye, I suppose." Managing to get about half of Corry's luggage in hand, Scotty waited.

After a moment or two, Corry got the rest of it, letting the silence fall while his tired mind tried to catch up and actually process everything. Or *anything*. It wasn't for a second that he wasn't thrilled that his best friend had shown up to take him home, but it was such a concrete reminder that this was really it. He was really going back to his own life. His own world.

It was starting to sink in by the time they got to the *C/V Millay*; Scotty chattering on aimlessly about what he'd been up to, Corry being wryly amused at the continuing role reversal. Not surprisingly, it was almost all engineering talk; even less surprisingly, Corry only half tuned into it, glad for Scotty's familiar voice even if he didn't have the brain power left to parse out the words.

Cor was just finally starting to feel like himself again when they went up the gangway, and then he got slammed into all over again.

Standing there, smiles going from easy to brilliant, and tearful, were his parents.

He stared, just stared, disbelieving, half-believing, forgetting what that whole breathing thing was about. He hadn't seen them in two years. *Two years*. Even with the letters, and the vid messages, it had been two years. But they were there.

"A little late," Scotty said, with a softer kind of half-smile. "But happy birthday."

Cor told himself he wasn't going to break down and bawl, that it would be completely embarrassing to sob after two years on Vulcan. He tried hard not to, too. But his breath was already catching in his throat when he dragged his best friend in for a quick, fierce hug, and by the time he got to his parents, he was crying almost too hard to breathe.

And so were they. He had no idea how long they stood there, all tears and relief and laughter. How long he let the pent-up longing for home release. How long he cried for his family.

A few more minutes on Vulcan no longer mattered.

Corry was almost home.

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