

## Close Quarters

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/979) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/979>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">F/F</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Star Trek: Alternate Original Series</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Gaila (AOS)/Nyota Uhura (AOS)</a>
Character:	<a href="#">Nyota Uhura (AOS)</a> , <a href="#">Gaila (AOS)</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Starfleet Academy</a> , <a href="#">Huddling for Warmth</a>
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2023-09-24 Words: 1,461 Chapters: 1/1

## Close Quarters

by [lah\\_mrh](#)

### Summary

Gaila and Uhura are partners on an academy survival exercise.

### Notes

Written for engmaresh in the 2016 Rare Pair Fest exchange. Originally posted on AO3.

Uhura adjusts her backpack for what feels like the hundredth time since they set out. She wants to take a drink from her water bottle, but she knows she has to ration it.

She's heard that every Starfleet Academy wilderness survival test is different. There are tales of cadets being transported to the Amazon Rainforest, the middle of Antarctica, and even strapped into spacesuits and abandoned on the Moon. (Though she has her doubts about that last one.)

For this one, they've been dropped off in the middle of Death Valley. They have seventy-two hours to cross the desert from one checkpoint to another, hitting a series of markers along the way. Miss any of the markers, or exceed the time limit, and they'll be taking the test again with the next group.

It seems like she and Gaila are alone here, but Uhura knows that there are at least five other teams starting from different points around the desert. Plus Starfleet is always watching. If they get into trouble, they just have to activate their beacons, and they'll be beamed out. It's strictly for emergencies, though – activating the beacon is an automatic fail, and Uhura can't think of anything short of losing a limb that would induce her to use it.

She glances at Gaila, who is studying the old-style map they've been given. If she's completely honest, Gaila isn't the first person she would have chosen as a partner, but they seem to make a good team. There's a prize for the first team to reach the checkpoint, and they're both determined to claim it.

"It'll be getting dark soon," Gaila says. "We should probably think about setting up camp there for the night." She looks again at the map, then points to their right. "There's an outcropping about two kilometres that way. Might be a good place."

Uhura shrugs. "Fine by me." They're only twelve hours in and they've already hit three of their ten markers. They can afford to rest for a while.

Part of her would like to keep going, but even with flashlights the risk of missing the fourth marker in the dark is too great. Gaila's right – better to make camp for the night and start up again in the morning.

The light starts to fade as they approach the outcropping, and by the time they've set up camp in the shelter between two rocks, it's completely dark. They have a quick dinner by the light of their flashlights, then by mutual agreement decide to turn in for the night.

Uhura pulls out her sleeping bag and lays it on the ground before pulling off her shoes and sliding inside fully clothed. With the sun gone, the temperature is dropping, and she's heard that the desert can get cold at night. Beside her, Gaila does the same.

"Goodnight," Uhura says.

"Night," Gaila replies.

Ritual completed, Uhura turns on her side and tries to get to sleep. They have a long day tomorrow.

\* \* \*

She doesn't know exactly what it is that wakes her, but the first thing she notices is it's still pitch black out. The second thing she notices is that she's *freezing*.

A quick check of the time tells her it's just after three in the morning. Still hours until the sun rises will rise and they can get moving again. She pulls the sleeping bag closer around her and curls into a ball, trying to will herself back to sleep.

She's just on the verge of getting up and hunting through her pack for extra clothes, when she hears shuffling from behind her, followed by Gaila's voice. "Are you awake?"

"Yes," Uhura replies, trying to keep her voice from shaking.

There's a pause, then, "Are you cold?"

"I'm fine," Uhura tells her.

"Oh." Another pause, then, "It's just, *I'm* cold, and I thought that if you were too we could help each other."

Uhura rolls over to face her, even though she can't see anything in the dark. "Help each other how?"

She may not be able to see Gaila, but she can imagine the look on her face when she says, "Um. Body heat?"

*You can't be serious*, is Uhura's first thought, but then she thinks about lying here freezing her toes off for the next four hours until the sun comes up, and her resolve crumbles.

"Fine," she says grudgingly. "How do you want to do this?"

A few minutes later they've fastened their sleeping bags together into one big sleeping bag and settled down again, with Uhura's back to Gaila's chest. It's been a while since she was this close to someone, and at first Uhura can't relax, tensing as Gaila's arm slides across her waist. Gradually, though, the warmth and contact changes from awkward to comforting, and she drifts off to sleep.

\* \* \*

She wakes up warm and comfortable, her head resting on something soft. It isn't until she opens her eyes that she realises that at some point during the night she must have rolled over, and is now using Gaila's ample chest as a pillow.

The instant she realises she pulls back, scrambling backwards and out of the sleeping bag. The motion wakes Gaila, who blinks sleepily at her. "What time is it?" she asks, stretching her arms above her head. Uhura averts her eyes.

"Almost seven," she replies. "Time to get going."

They have a quick breakfast of ration bars and water, then pack up their things, ready to set off again. Uhura feels a faint twinge of regret as they separate the two sleeping bags and pack them away, but she pushes it away firmly. They have work to do.

The early start puts them in good stead, and they manage to hit four more markers by the time the encroaching darkness forces them to stop for the night. This time there aren't outcroppings in sight, so they have to make camp out in the open.

It's been a long day, and Uhura is exhausted, but she still feels a spark of adrenaline as she pulls out her sleeping bag. She knows Gaila will suggest sharing body heat again, and she isn't sure how to feel about it. She's been trying all day to forget the events of that morning, waking up pressed against Gaila's warmth, but she just can't seem to shake it. There's a part of her that wants nothing more than to curl up in that sleeping bag with Gaila, and another part that is terrified by the prospect.

"It's probably going to get cold again tonight," Gaila says, breaking Uhura out of her thoughts. "Do you want to share again?"

Uhura swallows. "Yeah, sure," she says, as if the idea doesn't bother her at all. "I'll set up the bags."

She fastens them together while Gaila tidies away their things, then pulls off her shoes and nervously slips inside. She rolls on her side against the edge of the bag and shuts her eyes as Gaila slides in behind her, trying not to tense up as Gaila presses against her and wraps an arm around her waist.

"Goodnight," Gaila says cheerfully, apparently unaware of Uhura's discomfort.

"Night," Uhura replies, trying to ignore the warmth that spreads across her skin wherever Gaila touches her.

It's going to be a long night.

\* \* \*

She lies there, listening to Gaila breathe for longer than she likes to contemplate, but eventually she manages to drift off. When she wakes up, it's near dawn, the sky just beginning to brighten.

She discovers that she's rolled over again in her sleep, but thankfully this time she's managed to avoid using Gaila as a pillow. Instead they are face to face, only inches apart. Gaila is still asleep, her features relaxed in a way Uhura rarely sees on her.

There's a piece of hair lying across her face, and Uhura raises her hand to brush it away before she even realises what she is doing. She pulls her hand back, but too late. Gaila's eyes flutter open, and Uhura freezes, knowing she is caught.

For a few seconds they just stare at each other, before Gaila smiles and leans in.

Uhura feels warmth rush through her as their lips touch, and she presses closer, deepening the kiss. The feeling is incredible, and all she can think is, *Why didn't we do this sooner?*

It isn't until Gaila's hands begin to move lower that she pulls away. "Not... not now," she says, resisting the urge to lean back in. "I mean, I want to, but- later. After we finish this." She presses another quick kiss to Gaila's lips before pulling back.

"I'll hold you to that," Gaila tells her with a smile, and together they rise to face the day.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!