

## Maerēre

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/21299462) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/21299462>.

Rating:	<a href="#">General Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">M/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Star Trek: Discovery</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Hugh Culber/Paul Stamets</a>
Characters:	<a href="#">Hugh Culber</a> , <a href="#">Paul Stamets</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Emotional Hurt/Comfort</a> , <a href="#">Angst</a>
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2019-11-03 Words: 1,008 Chapters: 1/1

# Maerēre

by [TiaKisu](#)

## Summary

"The song continues to flow, lamenting the loss of the healer. And Paul continues to fight. There are no tears on his face, no waver in his stance. He is numb, but a storm is building inside. It has to break free, eventually."

Saru's gentle voice echoes through the hall, twists and turns to form a serene but mournful melody. None of those attending know the words, but Paul feels them, understands their meaning - somewhere deep inside. They move what should not be moved, stir what should remain buried and wake what must remain dormant.

He can not let go here. Not now.

But how to keep together what has long since broken asunder, how to seal in what he can't even hope to control?

His eyes are on one thing, and one thing only: It's a shimmering object, so alien to him and cold and lifeless.

A coffin. *His* coffin.

The Starfleet emblem adorns the heavy lid, now freed from the flag that is being folded and handed to him. He doesn't want it, wishes he could just refuse the offer. But protocol says as his next of kin he should accept it, and so he does.

The song continues to flow, lamenting the loss of the healer. And Paul continues to fight.

There are no tears on his face, no waver in his stance. He is numb, but a storm is building inside. It has to break free, eventually.

The coffin is being lowered. Saru's voice grows ever stronger with his own personal farewell as it briefly disappears from sight, and *now* it hits him.

They are taking Hugh away from him. They are sending him into a burning sun while he is left behind, alone. Something in his mind tries to remind him that Hugh is already gone, that what they release into space is but an empty shell. Yet, like a switch has been flicked he cannot listen to reason any longer.

They want Paul to abandon him, try to send Hugh away and they expect Paul to just stand there and let it happen.

Something claws its way up his throat at this, a terrible wail of grief and despair that he cannot possibly contain. He feels it burn his tongue and tear at his vocal cords, sees the gazes on him before the heads even turn. His cry drowns the song in his sorrow and his pain until he can no more hear Saru, morphs into something that for a moment he believes will rip him apart.

*I'm sorry.*

He failed him, watched as Voq did the unthinkable, lingered in his coma when he should have woken up and done something, anything to help. But he was powerless. He couldn't protect him.

*Hugh.*

He is failing him again. His coffin is already out of reach. It is being launched – a blinding light about to disappear forever in the darkness. Like so many others before.

*Don't go. Hugh.*

*Hugh.*

*HUGH!*

He wants to run, but his legs will not obey him. Somewhere in his agony, in his cries, Hugh's name repeats itself over and over again until Paul is down on his knees. His fingers dig into the skin at his temples - so deep, they nearly draw blood. His body shakes and he cannot breathe any more.

He cannot *breathe*.

“Paul, Paul!”

Suddenly there is something on his wrists, wrenching them away from his face and he doubles over, tries desperately to get away.

*Let me go. They are taking him. Let me go!*

He hears his own screams in both his head and his ears now. His throat hurts, and his muscles burn as he struggles against whatever it is that holds him down. He wants to free himself, why he doesn't even know, but the hands - they are hands he realises of a sudden - are strong. And warm. And they are trembling.

“Paul, I'm here. Just open your eyes. I'm here.”

That voice. He knows it. He heard its ghost in his dreams and his every waking moment, but Hugh is gone. He is *gone*. And it just can't be real.

The terrified plea however is.

“Please, Paul. Breathe.”

Finally his chest moves, allows air to enter his lungs in a broken gasp. The rush of oxygen feels like a blow to his system, sends his heart into a frenzied rhythm while reality is crushing through the thick veil of his memories and fears.

He is in his quarters, in his bed, drenched in sweat.

His chest continues to rise and fall.

The funeral was months ago.

It was just a dream.

Just a dream.

“That's it, honey. In and out. You're okay. I'm here.”

The hands abandon his wrists and find their way to his scalp instead. And, oh God, he knows that touch, too.

“Hugh?” His voice has never before sounded so brittle, like it will soon shatter along with him. Slowly the image of the shuttle bay disappears, his vision clearing as he takes in his surroundings.

He is not alone.

Brown eyes stare at him - wide and beautiful and scared. Hugh is stroking his hair, helpless and endlessly worried.

Paul understands now, and the moment that he does any and all energy leaves his body. He crumbles against Hugh's chest, like a puppet cut loose from its strings. Silent sobs wreck his form as he melts into a desperate embrace.

All his nerves are raw and Hugh's presence is like a balm to them. He is crying and out of control, but he is safe here.

Once, there had been a time when Paul Stamets would never have allowed anyone to see him like this, perhaps not even someone as important and close to him as Hugh. But as he lies here now, in Hugh's arms, with his grief laid bare there is no more reason to hide. And so he just lets himself be held until all his tears have run dry and he sees one of the fundamental truths of this universe.

It is a rare thing to happen, an exception and precious and seldom. But every once in a while, when the stars align just right and those searching are willing to pay the price, what is missing may be returned.

And not every loss is eternal.

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