

Five Hundred Pound Heart

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Five Hundred Pound Heart

by [daraoakwise](#)

Summary

In the first weeks aboard the *Constitution*, engineer Hemmer considers his roommate.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Hemmer knocked on the (ostensibly) soundproof screen over his roommate's sleeping space. Lower deck grunts like them didn't get their own quarters. But each had a recessed enclave, some three meters by two by two, that was private—or supposed to be.

"I can hear you," he sighed, and the screen grated open.

"How?" boggled his roommate.

"I'm blind. Which means my ability to *hear* is particularly keen. Hello, Nurse Lien," he said to the other occupant of the pod.

"Hi, Hemmer," she answered cheerfully. They smelled keenly of human sweat and sex. It wasn't unpleasant, any more than anything about humans, who were constantly awash in sensation.

"I'm sorry to interrupt," he said apologetically.

"That's alright," she said. "I already finished. Which ... thanks, Scotty," leaning down to kiss him. (Hemmer knew that, of course. He was a telepath; his roommate was apparently generous in that regard. Even like this.)

"I didnae," Scotty grumbled.

"Next time," she teased.

Hemmer felt Scott watching her as she collected herself and blew them a kiss. "You could join us next time, Hemmer," she said.

"I am already amazed the two of you fit in there," he answered dryly. It wasn't the first offer like that he'd received. This week.

"Offer stands," she shrugged, and the door snicked shut behind her.

"Hemmer..." Scotty sighed.

"Three notes," Hemmer interrupted. "I really could hear you."

"I'm sorry," Scott apologized, and Hemmer could hear the rasp of his hands through his hair.

"Second, this is your fourth partner in three days, and you are in the middle of a serious manic episode. The last time you came out of one, you asked me to stop you when you got this way."

"I was depressed when I said that," Scotty sighed. "Dinnae listen tae me when I'm depressed."

Hemmer wasn't certain if their roommate assignment had been intentional. The blind and telepathic Aenar, and the mentally ill human. Charitably, done with the hope that Hemmer could help Scott. Less charitably, they had put the *supposedly* less able-bodied engineers together, although Hemmer did not remotely consider himself such.

Neither did Scott.

Although Hemmer knew better.

(Perhaps only Hemmer knew how brutally Scott swung from lordly highs that spun him into shaky exhaustion, to despairing lows that Hemmer had to close his mind to. But Hemmer refused to pity him.)

Scott was well-liked by everyone but the perpetually grumpy Stamets. Quick tongued and brilliant, he could read a room impressively well for someone so profoundly psi-deaf. And he really was, because the inside of his mind was as thunderous and deadly as the glacier fields of Hemmer's youth. Like those fields, ever changing—chasms opening and closing, the ground ever-moving. Nor did Scott think or dream in images, but in mathematics that echolocated against the framework of the universe and revealed its very bones. If Scott felt familiar to Hemmer, he would have felt alien to his fellow humans.

But then humans, in their deeply lonely way, never really knew one other.

“Third point,” he continued mildly to his roommate. “It is 0710.”

“Shit!” Scott exclaimed, practically levitating out of his bed, because he was now late for his shift. “You could have *led* with that Hemmer! Chief's going tae kill me.”

“It's funnier for me this way,” Hemmer shrugged.

“Yeh bastard,” Scott said affectionately, impressively fast with trousers and rose-gold tunic and boots.

“Hypo,” Hemmer said mildly, holding it out, because the man was about to walk out of their quarters without the also-late vial of chemicals. Drugs that sometimes felt as capable of slowing a glacier as a snowfall—which was to say, not all all—but a deep enough cover across the chasms sometimes made it safe to walk.

“Aye, granny,” Scott grumbled. The hypo hissed, and Hemmer breathed through the second-hand ache of it before Scott dashed away.

In their first days together, getting to know each other, Hemmer had told Scott his life mission: *To fix that which was broken*. And explained the Aenar belief that death came only when one's purpose was fulfilled.

Scott had nodded thoughtfully. “Good choice, lad,” he'd said, his teasing tone belying a kind of weary despair. “Makes you immortal.”

End Notes

Title is from the poem “Echolocation” by Sally Bliumus-Dunn.

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