

there's angels landing on the shore

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Summary

As Agnes worries about her ex while on her mission with Soji, Cris copes with the deterioration of their relationship by leaning on his two standbys: brandy and the (albeit virtual) company of a good friend. Raffi talks him through his fears and his upcoming diplomatic mission aboard the Stargazer.

Notes

Made with love for my friends in the Aramis in Space Discord who spend many an hour listening to me prattle on about these ideas because few others would care. A few other notes: This is set after Cris and Agnes' as well as Raffi and Seven of Nine's splits in S2. Cris is also slightly falling back into old habits here.

Agnes couldn't believe this was how her life was going now. First, the man she had thought was the love of her life had died by her hands. It had taken her forever to get over that. She was a murderess, and she deserved to die for what she had done to Bruce. Her psyche remained fractured and frail after she was forced to see the Admonition. She wanted to believe that she could have fought it off, but the more she considered it, the more she knew that was impossible.

She'd done it again— fallen in love with a man whose loyalties lay elsewhere, who was going to prioritize his work over her. What was it? Did she admire their ethics because she saw them as just like her? Or was it something deeper that even she had not placed yet. Agnes knew why she was afraid of Rios taking a command position, and it wasn't the fact that this one had baggage. It was the fact that he had baggage of his own without all of this. He'd always been in the shadow of a captain; it was Vandermeer first, now Picard. Picard's legacy would be ten times heavier, of course. Picard's Stargazer had her own tragic history that Rios couldn't help considering. Agnes knew that had played over and over in his brain as he met with Starfleet officials.

But if she knew him like she thought, this Stargazer would be different. It would be his. He'd take to it like any sailor would. She had expected as much from a man who had made this his career. He wanted the glory of being able to swoop in and save the day. She had fallen in love with a man who loved this galactic sea and would always be devoted to it. Still, it was risky for him to go back into the service. She could only hope that he would be wise and that his trauma would not flare when he was faced with a delicate situation that came close to the horrors he had witnessed on the *ibn Majid*. Agnes prayed for peace, because she wasn't sure how much more their fragile minds and hearts could take.

One thing she could admit that Picard had gotten right, something Cris had told her after their relationship blossomed: He was Starfleet to his very core. He still believed in their ideals after all this time, when they had hung him out to dry. She didn't know if she could have done it, and she loved him more for trying.

She had wanted so desperately to be his safe place. But they were broken, and trying so hard not to be. She had to hope that there was something more waiting for him than the weight of the past. Fear crept up on her the more she thought about him leaving. Would another mission send him back into the spiral he had worked so hard to get past.

I have to believe Starfleet will take care of him. But it would help me to know that he believes he's doing the right thing.

Rafaella Musiker had always proved herself a trusted friend when Rios needed her. Communicating with her had gotten him through many a drunken evening aboard *La Sirena*, when all he wished for was the ability to forget for an evening.

“Hey, Raf, I could use you here for a minute if you’re not too busy.” Rios whimpered to the empty space around him.

“Rios, hey! What’s going on?” The smile on his friend’s face faded almost as soon as it appeared, replaced by a worried wrinkle over her forehead.

“I don’t know anymore, Raffi. I wish I could make sense of all this but it feels. . . eh, what’s the word. . .?”

“Uncomfortable?” She’d missed the mark, but Rios still flinched at the direct tone she had used. Raffi would never let him skate by when he’d done something wrong.

“More than that.” He looked up and saw Raffi pacing on the screen in front of him, hand on her chin. Her eyes might have cut daggers into him if she’d been trying. Cris almost felt like he deserved it. Raffi was the friend he could always trust to tell him when he’d done something stupid, and this was one of these times. Raffi had known him for a long time, and she wouldn’t pull any punches. If he needed honesty, he’d get it from her. What he wanted was a drink and a minute to clear his head.

“Cris, honey, I can’t help if you’re not honest with me. What’s really happening here? Is this all about Starfleet wanting you back?” Rios couldn’t help it; his entire body tensed. As usual, damn her, Raffi has him down cold. He knows this side of her; when she knows something’s wrong, she won’t let go until she’s got it.

“Partly, yes, and partly—,” A sigh to fill the space. Rios knew he would have to face this, but he didn’t want to, hoped he would never have to open himself up again. Raffi, bless her, knew to wait for him to catch up. She remembered how difficult it was to leave loved ones behind when their careers come calling, because it really is true: there’s no rest for the wicked. Here, he’s ready to admit how he feels about going back. But there’s no way he would put that burden on anyone. Rios knew when he made his choices that others might be affected, he’d tried to take their thoughts and needs into consideration.

When he’d joined Starfleet, he’d done it for the promise of a world worth protecting. But he’d also let it become a reason to shut people who cared about him out of his life. He could claim he was a bad influence or worried that something might happen to them. The best part was, it wasn’t a total lie. The life of a Starfleet officer could be a dangerous thing.

Rios had seen what it was like when diplomatic missions turned sour. He wanted to be the one to come swooping in when others needed help. He and his crew could be the helping hand someone needed, but what would it cost him to give them that peace?

“It’s partially because she deserves better, Raffi. I know that I’m starting over here, but so is Agnes. She needs to have some time apart from me, so we can figure out where we stand. After all Sutra did to her, what Oh did to her, she’s got her own shit to work through. God knows where I’m gonna get sent or what’s going to happen when I fully embrace command of the Stargazer. You remember the kind of work we do. It’s messy, and complicated, and—.”

“And don’t you think she’s doing the same, working with Soji? They’re—.”

“Diplomatic missions are different. That’s like an angel coming down to give good news. They want to walk among new people.”

“So do you.”

“Like I said, complicated.”

“Cris, you’re running.”

“I’m not. What happened out there with me and Aggie, I— it was a heat of the moment thing. I’d been on my own for years, Raf, and I—we— rushed it.” Raffi had to fight the urge to smirk—they both knew better. He was right about one thing; he had been on his own for years, but experience had taught Raffi that love found a person when they were ready for it.

“Hey, I might’ve, too.”

“Oh yeah? Tell that to your xB, Fenris Ranger girlfriend and see where it gets you. And before you ‘My personal life is none of your goddamn business, Cris!’ me, take a look in the mirror. You’re blushing.

“Oh, Goddamnit...”

“Yeah yeah, I know, you need a drink. Don’t we all. Comin’ up! Sorry, I don’t have any ‘86 Chateau Picard, but I do have some damn good hooch. Serves the moment better.”

“I love you, you asshole.”

“I know, Raf. Right back at you.” Before she could say another word, the line was dead again. She knew he’d clicked off before he could get emotional; an old habit they both developed to keep their feelings in check. He hadn’t thanked her, but he hadn’t needed to; this was something they’d promised to do for as long as they were in contact.

Hopefully he doesn’t do somethin’ stupid and go getting himself killed. Angels did still walk among them, Raffi knew it. It was just a matter of looking for them. She’d found plenty in her time. Maybe, for someone, Cris could be one. Or, if he was lucky, he might find one of his own.

“For Cris’ sake, I hope he does. I also hope she’s everything he needs.”

