

Silence

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Summary

When a mission goes wrong, Riker and Troi have to develop their escape plan in complete silence, using only their mental bond to speak.

The issue is, you really can't keep any secrets when you're reading each other's minds.

Notes

For Owl_Party

Anything over there?

Counselor Troi's voice rang out loud and clear in Riker's head, but the aliens hunting them would, of course, hear nothing.

Coast is clear, he said back. *I say we scramble for cover*.

That willow tree, Deanna suggested. *To the north*.

Riker poked his head out from his hiding space (a large boulder) to check. The willow tree was good. Its branches hung in thick tendrils all the way to the water, and these aliens seemed to hate water. He and Troi could take cover there and be reasonably sure the aliens wouldn't come after them. It might eliminate the risk of casualty entirely.

Okay, Riker said. *On my count. Three...two...one...go!*

Troi ran. She was closer to the tree than he was, and she dove noiselessly into the water, with all the perfect grace and skill of a lifelong swimmer. And she looked damned good while doing it, too. Her uniform, like his, was torn and charred, and those hints of bare skin...

Focus, Troi said, and Riker blushed scarlet. He lifted one of his few 'weapons' — a boomerang tracker — and aimed it at the woods to the east. While the aliens searched for Troi, Riker's trackers zoomed overhead and rustled through the foliage, creating the illusion of movement on the other side of the woods.

When the aliens ran off, Riker emerged from his hiding spot. He made his way, quick and quiet, to the willow.

Very nice, Troi thought to herself, and Riker got a glimpse of his own hairy chest peeking through the ripped uniform.

Hey, he said. *Behave, Counselor*.

Now she was the one blushing. By the time Riker waded into the water and ducked beneath the fragrant willow leaves, Troi had put on her most professional mask. The picture of composure.

But her uniform was soaking wet. And her hair curled in the heat and clung to her skin.

Beautiful.

Will swallowed hard and looked away.

We need a plan, Troi said.

Worf will find us soon, Riker said.

So we wait?

It's our safest bet. He eased closer to her, careful not to make the water ripple too much. This whole thing reminded him of the Janaran Falls on Betazed. Warm and fragrant and relaxing, the roar of water in his ears, the steam curling Deanna's hair. And he remembered swimming in the deep end, holding himself up with his fingers wrapped around the root of a nearby tree, and how he lost his grip when Deanna circled her arms around his neck and pressed her body against his.

We nearly drowned, Deanna said, startling him out of his thoughts. He turned to her and saw the pitch-black arousal in her eyes.

Your fault, Will said. *I had a great grip before you...*

He projected, accidentally, just how good it felt when she leaned into him. And she projected back, less accidentally, the thrill of being in his arms, warm and weightless and absolutely safe.

And these were not appropriate thoughts for a first officer to have about his ship's counselor. Riker cleared his mind and looked away, hands on his hips. Troi did the same, retreating into the professional persona of a psychiatrist, both of them listening for the sound of movement on the other side of the willow tree.

...But occasionally, when she sneaked a glance at him, he could tell just from her emotions that she was looking at his bare chest.

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