

Lifeboats

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Summary

Spock grieves the loss of his mother, alone.

Notes

FebuWhump Day 7
Prompt: Suffering in Silence

Every time Spock closed his eyes, he saw his mother's face, frozen in time. She had just turned to face him, a look of acceptance reflecting in her eyes, mouth open to say something to him— something important. But she never got the chance to say it before she fell.

Every time he closed his eyes, he saw that image of her, like it was painted on the insides of his eyelids. Every time he blinked the ghost of his mother flickered before him, making it impossible to forget, even for a moment.

"Are you okay?"

His friends had all asked that question on more than one occasion. They were concerned for him, and while he appreciated it, he could never answer honestly. Opening up to them about his feelings went against everything he had been taught, having been raised Vulcan.

"I am fine."

And indeed, after that initial... unfortunate incident (which was provoked, mind you), Spock hadn't shown any sign that anything was wrong. On the outside, everything looked perfectly fine. But on the inside...

His mother never left his thoughts. Every time he blinked he saw her face and his heart twisted anew. If he were less Vulcan, his friends and colleagues would be able to sense something wrong in him. They'd be able to see his pain in the way he stood, his exhaustion in his performance, and the hollowness in his eyes. But he was Vulcan enough that he could mask these things, at least well enough against human scrutiny.

"Are you okay?"

They had checked in on him for a while, despite his assurances that he was, in fact, okay, and despite him not appearing to be under mental duress. They asked anyway because they just couldn't believe that he *wasn't* grieving. That he wasn't feeling anything at all. To the human mind, it seemed impossible, not to feel anything about this.

After a few days, they started to believe him when he said that he was fine. After a few days, they stopped checking in. On the bridge or in the labs, it was as if nothing had happened.

But behind closed doors, it was different. Every night when Spock turned in, his facade would evaporate, and he'd collapse under the feelings he had been ignoring all day as they came rushing at him all at once. He would feel like he was drowning, unable to breathe, overwhelmed by an ocean of grief. He could see lifeboats, all around him, but they were just out of reach. He could not swim to get to them. At night, when he was alone in his quarters and he had no choice but to face feelings for which he didn't have the skills to process, he found himself reaching desperately for a lifeboat.

There were times in the middle of the night that he found himself standing outside of doors, trying to summon the courage to knock. One time

he actually managed to knock, but when the door opened he couldn't say the things he wanted to say. He couldn't say that he was struggling with the loss of his mother. He couldn't say that he needed help. Instead, he asked for a game of chess. Despite it being two in the morning, Jim never asked any questions. For that Spock was grateful, at least in the moment. But he never lingered outside doors, thinking of knocking, ever again.

As much as he wanted to reach out to someone, he realized that there was only one person he could really open up to— and she was dead. He cursed himself now for not embracing his human heritage, as she had so often encouraged him to do. If he had, maybe now he'd be able to admit to his friends that he was suffering. Maybe now he'd know how to process the feelings he was experiencing. Maybe now he would be able to cry.

He so desperately wanted to cry. But he couldn't, even when there was nobody there to see it.

In the mornings, he'd put himself back together, and go about his day, no one the wiser to his silent suffering. Some days, he was intentionally sloppy in his self-reassembly, in hopes that someone would see the cracks in his facade, and ask. Maybe if he was confronted, he could open up. If he could open up maybe he wouldn't have to be so alone. He awaited that question.

"Are you okay?"

But the question wouldn't come.

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