

eremophobia

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Summary

Lieutenant Rok-Tahk was hard to miss in a crowd, and the Brikar's head of department only had good things to say. Grudgingly accepting Kathryn's recommendations had paid off.

And now, with Rok the only person sitting in the arboretum, Seven took the chance to actually talk to her.

Notes

Weekly Challenge: The Longest Night of the Year

So, 'eremophobia' is a fear of being alone. In *Firewall*, Seven describes herself as suffering from it. I know it's only beta canon, but it tracks with where she was at at that point in her life.

There weren't many opportunities for Seven to spend off-the-clock time getting to know staff outside of her command crew. It chafed a little; years in the Rangers and a relatively flat hierarchy had made their mark.

But she took the chances when she could.

Lieutenant Rok-Tahk was hard to miss in a crowd, and the Brikar's head of department only had good things to say. Grudgingly accepting Kathryn's recommendations *had* paid off.

And now, with Rok the only person sitting in the arboretum, Seven took the chance to actually talk to her.

'Am I interrupting?'

Rok leapt to her feet, stumbling into a salute. Seven shook her head. 'You're off duty. I'm off duty. And I don't stand on ceremony anyway.'

Rok nodded but stayed on her feet. 'How can I help, Captain?'

'I just saw you when I was walking past and realised we've never really had the chance to chat. You might know that I worked in sciences back...' Seven trailed off, never quite sure how to talk about her time on *Voyager*. Crew, but not commissioned. Helpful, but not Human.

'I know,' Rok said. 'At least, I know a bit. Janeway told me.'

'The admiral, or your old holo-instructor?'

'Both.'

'She speaks very highly of you,' Seven said, and the already pink skin on Rok's cheeks flushed even pinker. Seven sits, and after a moment of hesitation, Rok does too.

'Um, you too. I mean. Is that okay to say? I don't know. You weren't Starfleet then and--' Rok cuts herself off. 'Sorry. I ramble.'

'You're not the first and you won't be the last.' Seven looked around, taking in the verdant surroundings. 'I really should come here more. It's beautiful. I could see why you'd want to spend time here alone.'

'Not alone,' Rok said, too quickly. 'I mean. There are lots of critters here. And people come by. It's nice.'

There's something about the speed of Rok's response. 'You don't like being alone.'

Rok shook her head. 'Not really, no.'

'Me neither. Well. Historically. For a while I was *too* comfortable with being alone. But that was a shift.'

Rok looked at her curiously. 'Yeah?'

Seven nodded. 'You know my background, obviously.' It wasn't a question, it was a fact. Even if people hadn't known, guessed, assumed her xB status in the past, Starfleet had been only too happy to use her new commission as a post-Frontier Day PR moment. 'Were you...?'

'No. First time in my life I think I've been too old for something rather than too young. Only just, though.'

'Yeah. Well. You know the general drill, right? Hivemind. I'd been connected to it for 18 years when I met Kathryn – Admiral Janeway,' she corrected, catching herself. 'Even on a busy working starship, the silence was deafening at first.'

'I can only imagine.'

'It was difficult. And there was a period in the first year after I was severed where everyone else was in stasis.'

'Even The Doctor?'

Seven smiled. 'You have done your homework.'

'Well, he was on *Voyager-A* too...'

'Right, right, I had forgotten. To answer your question, no, he wasn't in stasis, but he did end up offline.'

Rok drew in a breath. 'So you were *really* alone.'

'It was rough.'

'That part I *can* imagine.' She swallowed, and Seven could see a slight tremble. 'So, back when I was on the *Protostar*, you know, there was a temporal anomaly. Time was passing at different speeds for all of us, so we couldn't interact with each other. And it was moving the slowest for me. So I was alone for a while.'

'How long?'

Too long, Janeway had said. 'Long enough to go from basic arithmetic to building a warp matrix.'

Seven let out a breath. 'I think you win.'

'I don't talk about it much. People don't get it.' Rok looked at Seven. 'But it sounds like maybe you kind of do, Captain.'

'In my way.' Seven flexed her left hand. 'I didn't mean to be such a downer.'

'No, no. It's... good to talk about it, actually.' Rok smiled shyly. 'Thanks.'

'Any less bleak parts of that adventure that you want to talk about?'

Rok grinned. 'Sure.'

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