

The Darkness Has No Armor

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The Darkness Has No Armor

by [Pixie](#)

Summary

Tom confronts his demons after the brief encounter with his father and finds a kindred spirit in his Captain.

Notes

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

"Tell Tom...I'm proud of him..."

When I was young my father was insufferably proud of me. I have two older sisters but I'm the only son, and the only one who wanted to be in Starfleet. That was real important to Dad, there's a long line of Parises in the history of the Fleet and each one had distinguished himself...and Dad's no different. One of the greats, a true Paris by blood and reputation. And then there's me.

It'd be easy to say my Dad pushed me too hard when I was young, trying to make me into a Great Paris, the best and brightest of Starfleet's best and brightest. After all I hold the record for the youngest ever to fly an academy simulator. But truth is I pushed him. Piloting is in my blood, it's what I am. And as much as I don't want it to be true, so is Starfleet. I *wanted* to be the next Great Paris, I wanted to be the *Greatest*.

But I slipped. Slipped? Ha! I fell down a mountain and triggered an avalanche. And it was all my fault. I could tell you about being pushed and having too many expectations bogging me down and messing me up - and you'd even believe it. But I won't. I don't. I know the truth. And truth is everything's ever happened to me was all me.

Sometimes I think I do it on purpose ...screw up my life I mean. 'Cause it's easier to be a failure than it is to be the person I know I'm supposed to be. Not the person my father, or Starfleet, or anyone else, thinks I should be - no the one *I* think I should be. Somewhere inside me I am so sure I'm Special. No matter what, I have that Special inside me. All those things that happen, all the mistakes I make, every time I mess up, every time I fail - it doesn't matter. I still *know* I'm meant to be Great. And at the exact same time in the exact same way I *know* I'm not worthy. I'm nothing and I can't do anything right and it always blows up in my face. It's hard to live that way.

So I hide it. I hide it in cocky assurance, arrogance, pride. I laugh it off. I make you laugh at it. I play the part of the hero, and I play the part of the clown. And you play along. A lot of people think they know me but they just know that surface me. People like Chakotay write me off as the arrogant fool, the troublemaker. Harry looks up to me, which I've gotta say is flattering. But he doesn't need to know the other me and so he doesn't try. And B'Elanna... God I wish I was the person B'Elanna thinks I am.

"Tell Tom...I'm proud of him..."

Unlike everyone else on this trip across the universe, I didn't lose a lot when we got stuck out here. I was working off a criminal sentence - what did I have to get back for? I love my mother, my sisters, but I couldn't look them in the eye. It hurt to see them and it hurt more to be seen. And my father... well, I hadn't seen him in years anyway. He didn't want to see me. I'd trampled all over the good Paris name. I didn't have any friends left. I didn't have anything except a wall that needed building. Here I may be a hundred years from home but I have duties and responsibilities and people. And if this isn't an adventure, I don't know what is. This is what that little boy who dreamed of Starfleet was born for. And with all that I was also given another chance. Another chance to be that Great Special person I know I am.

And, yeah I'm not the greatest officer...but I know I have respect of the people around me. I still make mistakes and screw things up, but that's why they love me right? Okay, I'm still hiding. I'm still messing up. This is why I think I do it on purpose. How could I not? So either I'm an idiot or I have serious psychological problems. And I'd rather have the problems and still be Special than just be dumb. Which is probably

pretty dumb.

So it comes down to this. If my Dad *really* knew what's been going on out here, would he *really* be proud?

Over and over I've asked myself. And I don't know the answer. 'Cause I don't know my Dad. When I was little he was proud because I was his son. I didn't have to do anything for that. When I was older he was proud because I was talented, I wanted what he wanted me to want, and I was still his son. And then I disgraced him and I was pretty sure he'd never be proud of me again.

So what's changed? A lot, obviously, I'm out here. Absence makes the heart grow forgetful. I'm still his son. He still *wants* to be proud. I bet a lot of people are impressed by us. After all we're so far from everything we know - and we're still alive. We're coming home. And I'm a part of that. Finally, something to be proud of.

But the truth? The reality behind all the impressive fiction? Have I changed at all? Have I done *anything* to really be proud of? I'm just along for the ride. I've screwed up as much as I've done good. No, he wouldn't be proud. I'm not. He was saying he misses me. He was saying he loves me. Maybe he was saying he's sorry. That should be enough.

"Tell Tom...I'm proud of him..."

So, why isn't it? Why do I want to know? Why can't I just accept...?

Only one person might have the answer for me. Only one person knows my father enough to know. And I can't ask her. Because she's also the only person who really knows me. The hidden me. The me who fails on purpose because he's afraid not to be who he thinks he is. I don't know how, but she sees through me. She has since she first saw me building my wall. *I knew your father*. Maybe it's because she knew my father that she can read me. Maybe it's because she's the best Captain I've ever known (and growing up the Admiral's son you get to know a lot). Maybe it's because I trust her. Maybe it's because I want her to know.

She didn't just know my father. He was her mentor. And she's everything I'm not. I don't think she's ever failed but if she did she'd tell you at once and she'd have a damn good reason. He's proud of *her*, no doubts there. If anyone can bring us home he knows it's her. And if anyone can turn me into a good officer... His statement might have been more telling of his pride in her than in me. I wish it was true. I wish...

I can't ask her. I wouldn't even know how to start. And I'm not sure I want to know the answer. She'd tell me the truth. That's the way she is. If I ask, there's no turning back. Not from Kathryn Janeway. She's a lot like my father that way.

"Tell Tom...I'm proud of him..."

It's pretty late. Maybe she's already asleep. But if I don't go through with this now, I never will. I sound the chime.

"Yes?" The door opens. She's out of her uniform but not in her nightclothes, good I didn't wake her. "Tom? Is something wrong?" What am I doing here?

"Ah, no, sorry to disturb you so late, Captain...I, well, I wanted to talk..." I stammer. Where's my cocky assurance now? How can she do this to me? It's worse than my parents...

"No problem, Tom, come on in." She smiles and waves me in. She must've sensed something. She's probably been expecting me...how can she *do* that? "Take a seat, do you want anything to drink?"

"No, no thanks." I sit on the sofa. There's a bunch of PADDs on her table. "I'm sorry if I'm taking you from..." I gesture to the PADDs "...ship's business..."

"Not at all, I always have time for a friend." A friend. Not a crewmember, not even an officer. A friend. "What is it?"

"Well, I..." What am I supposed to say? I had it in my mind before I came, a nice little prepared speech. But I can't say it. It sounds false, wrong. "Captain...Kathryn, when I first met you, you said 'I knew...' I mean you knew...I mean..."

"I knew your father." She's waiting. I think she already knows everything I want to say but she's waiting for me.

"Right. Well, I...I don't. I mean not the way I want to. I think...I think you're closer to him than I am, at least than I've been in a long time. Ever since...well, a long time. And that didn't really matter out here. For a while I didn't think I'd ever see him again anyway...I...well, it was easier to just put it all behind me. *Not* to think about it. But, well, when we spoke to him...when...when he said..." I can't continue. I'm almost crying, this is ridiculous. I'm almost crying in my Captain's quarters in the middle of the night.

"He said he was proud of you." She says it quietly. She's smiling at me. I want to crawl away and die.

"Right. He said he was proud of me." I take a deep breath. Here goes nothing. "But I think he meant he was proud of you. He knows you're the only one who could make me behave, make me into something ...respectable. And even if he is proud of me it's only because I'm out here and I'm a part of the amazing Voyager crew captained by the amazing Kathryn Janeway... If he knew the truth..."

"Tom, you're too hard on yourself. He's your father, of course he's proud of you." She was sitting across the way but now she's coming to sit

next to me. She's looking at me, looking at me ready to fall apart. "Tom, the truth is I can't make you into anything you're not. Everything you've become, and everything you've done here on Voyager -- I didn't do that, Tom, you did. There are a lot of reasons your father would be proud of you and none of them have anything to do with me."

She pauses, looks at me, like she's making a decision. "The first time I met your father he told me about you. His Tom, the brilliant pilot, the wonder boy. He adored you. For as long as I knew him you were his pride and joy." She put up a hand to stop my protest. "You've made mistakes, I know. He stopped talking about you. But, Tom, he didn't stop loving you. He didn't stop being your father. You'd hurt him, but you were still his son." She takes my hand, she's so warm, so real. "You still make mistakes, Tom." She smiles at me conspiringly, I smile back. "But it's hard to be a Great Paris isn't it?"

I laugh. Of course she understands. "Tom, you are many things, but never forget you are also a Paris. You're right, your father is very special to me. He's a mentor, someone I have tried to learn from, to be more like. I'd guess a lot of what you admire about me I learned from him. And I shouldn't tell you, but a lot of what I admire about him I see in you. That same pride, that same bearing, that same desire to make a difference. We're all a lot alike, Tom. You, me, and your father."

I'm crying now. I haven't cried in years. I haven't been able to. I had to be strong. I couldn't let anything get to me. I hid behind a false armor. But here, in the dark with the one person in the universe who understands, I let it go. Because maybe she is right. Maybe there is another person who understands. She holds me as I cry and I love her. Not the way I love B'Elanna, not the way I love my mother...she's not my lover or my mother. She's my captain and she's my friend. And she is crying too. Here in the darkness I realize why it is she can see through all my barriers, why she can get through my armor. Because she has all the same barriers, all the same protections.

But the darkness has no armor.

"Tell Tom...I'm proud of him..."

"He heard you admiral."

End Notes

title/theme from ["Ready for a Fall" \(PJ Olsson\)](#)

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