

Limitless

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by [Pixie](#)

Summary

Tuvok is everyone's best mentor and also determined to create more best mentors so he can eventually retire.

Notes

Please do not ask me to explain the Prodigy/Picard timeline, I cannot, it is trash.

For the purposes of this fic, there's 17 years between PRO S1 and PIC S3. Gwyn spent about 7 years on Solum and yes, despite time travel shenanigans, they happened, because I said so. Gwyn was 24 when she got fast-tracked into Starfleet, which is coincidentally how old Jack is when he meets her ten years later.

Early in her tutelage of the 'Protostar Five', as they quickly came to be known around Starfleet, Admiral Janeway introduced each of them to a personal mentor, one of the Admiral's friends.

Rok-Tahk was brilliant, intensely curious, and quite wise, but also quite young. The Admiral brought her to Cadet Wildman, whose childhood on *Voyager* allowed her to relate to the young girl's insecurity and enthusiasm equally. Her continued close relationship to Seven of Nine was also beneficial. Not only would Naomi be unbothered by Rok-Tahk's appearance or reputation, she could call on Seven for guidance or assistance.

Jankom Pog was an engineer and a hot shot, so it only made sense to set him up with Commander Torres and Mr. Paris. B'Elanna was impressed by his ingenuity, and Tom by his trash talk. Plus Jankom encountered difficulty connecting with other Tellarites— though Janeway also encouraged him to talk to Dr. Noum— and both B'Elanna and Tom were good at navigating awkward relationships with family and culture.

Zero was the most difficult to place. They were a medic, but neither Noum nor the Doctor had the proper temperament. They were an engineer and scientist, but B'Elanna was taken and Seven wasn't Starfleet. Ultimately, Janeway called on Harry, and he got in touch with Geordi La Forge, who was considered an expert in cybernetics during his time on the *Enterprise*, and had a long personal history with medical equipment related to vision enhancement and impairment. Geordi was delighted to take on a new puzzle with someone so eager, and Zero was excited to work with an adult who considered their wonder to be a strength.

The Admiral intended to mentor Dal herself. They had a connection, and he reminded her of her previous 'projects'— Tom, Kes, Seven. She still felt guilty about failing to convince her peers to accept Seven of Nine, and while helping Dal become an officer wouldn't make it up to Seven, it would prove something to Starfleet. But in fairness to the group, she also assigned Tysess as Dal's mentor. The Andorian sputtered dramatically when she explained, "He needs discipline and you need to lighten up," but begrudgingly accepted the challenge.

That left Gwyn, the sixth of the five, who was heading off on her own mission far and away from the others. She'd say she didn't need a Starfleet mentor since she wasn't joining Starfleet, and no one knew anything about the Vau N'Akat or Solum, so they couldn't prepare her. But Janeway disagreed on both counts and was determined to connect her to her mentor before she left on her journey.

"Good afternoon, Admiral. I have been expecting you."

"Am I that predictable?"

"Only in your unpredictability," Tuvok answered, an old joke, or as close to an old joke as a Vulcan gets. "Cadet Wildman is delighted to have a protégé."

Kathryn smiled. "Then you know why I am here."

He nodded. "Do you hope I will dissuade her?"

The Admiral shook her head. "I do not believe she is dissuadable. Nor would I expect, or want, you to try." Janeway understood the young woman's determination to change her planet's fate. Gwyn's journey of discovery and displacement mirrored her own. They knew it was far easier to blow up a bridge than to build one. Gwyn had been mute in the face of suffering but now she'd found her voice. She was meant to be a weapon but she hoped to be a shield. She was fearless. But also naive. "I want you to ground her. Like you did me."

Tuvok held her gaze a quiet moment. "Are you asking me to accompany her to the Delta Quadrant?"

"No!" Janeway's eyes went wide, almost panicked. "No, I'd never ask that of you, not again."

"You followed me, Admiral."

"I followed you because I needed you." She raised a finger, stretched straight, and poked him in the chest. Tuvok raised an eyebrow. "You made me a good captain, Tuvok." She didn't mean his endless, monotonous, necessary lectures on tactical drills and constant vigilance, though they landed, changed her ways, and saved the ship more than once. Rather that he'd taken a brash and impulsive young woman who followed her instincts indiscriminately and turned her into a brash and impulsive woman who followed her instincts insightfully and with confidence. "You're the star that guides me. And I want Gwyn to succeed in her mission but I also want Gwyn to find her way back home."

Tuvok declined to point out the contradiction in calling Earth or the Federation Gwyndala's 'home' when she was leaving them to save the planet of her people. Based on his perusal of her file he understood the girl grew up in a prison. In a position of privilege, but not one of agency. The *Protostar* was likely the closest she had to a home, as *Voyager* had been to so many of its crew, and it was gone in the service of saving the organization destined to fail her planet. Now, she sought redemption for both sides. Ah. He understood what Janeway wanted of him.

"I will reach out."

"Vulcan was one of the founding members of the Federation."

Gwyn sat rod straight in her chair, her hands at her sides and her eyes focused on the man across the table. Tuvok's posture was also perfect, yet more relaxed, his hands steepled together on the table.

"Yes."

"I read up."

Tuvok nodded appreciation.

"Honestly, it doesn't make much sense to me." Tuvok raised an eyebrow. "Well, Andorians, Tellarites, and Humans aren't just emotional, they're proud of their emotions. Why did the Vulcans choose to create an alliance with three races they have nothing in common with?"

"Infinite diversity in infinite combinations is a cornerstone of Vulcan philosophy."

"You think difference makes you stronger?"

"I believe diversity is required for growth."

Gwyn looked thoughtful. Tuvok leaned slightly over his hands.

"When I was not much younger than you, I asked my grandfather the same question. Why did we, a people who value restraint, choose to align ourselves with the volatile Andorians, the indulgent Tellarites, and the inscrutable Humans?"

Gwyn frowned. "What did he say?"

"He said some Vulcans— I believe he used the words 'traditional' and 'unimaginative' to describe them— thought our presence would temper the others. That they would realize the efficiencies of Vulcan philosophy and bend to accommodate it."

"I don't think that's how that works."

"No," Tuvok agreed. "Others, the purists who worked against the alliance, or any alliance outside our own, pointed to the founding of the Federation as proof positive that new progressive Vulcans wished to abandon our culture altogether and assimilate."

"That sounds familiar." Such sentiments were the underpinnings of the civil war that tore Gwyn's people apart and doomed her civilization.

"Indeed. But my grandfather, who by all accounts was one of the new progressive Vulcans, told me both those points of view were narrow, and unsound. He said Vulcan chose to unite with Andorians, Tellarites, Terrans, and more, because the universe is wide and Vulcans are not alone."

Gwyn looked away in frustration. "I don't understand. You're talking about conflict. Three Vulcan schools of thought plus the rest of the Federation— how do you combine diversity that's in opposition? How do you practice IDIC with purists who think non-Vulcans are inherently inferior? And why should I be forced to *combine* with someone like that?"

Tuvok was calm in the face of her ire. "Infinite does not mean equal, or inclusive. It means limitless."

"Do you ever give a straight answer?"

"Vulcan mentors provide context and guidance, not answers."

Gwyn sighed loudly and slumped back in her chair. Tuvok waited.

"What if I can't do it?" she asked in a small voice. "What if no one will listen to me?"

"If they will not listen to you, you must listen to them." Tuvok gave her a measured look. "You, Gwyndala, are limitless."

For a split second the air between them was electric, and infinite. Gwyn breathed deeply and felt lighter.

"Did that conversation with your grandfather really happen?"

"Yes." She scrunched her nose. "I may have embellished the language," he admitted. "In my many dealings with other cultures I have learned it is often beneficial to provide 'flair'."

Gwyn burst into laughter. Tuvok's lip quirked ever so slightly up.

"Hullo?"

"Mr. Crusher, please come in."

The door swished closed as he stepped over the threshold. Jack glanced around the small-ish office. It was brightly lit and there was a decided lack of clutter that, frankly, disturbed him. Though probably made her a highly efficient aide. The Commander's collectibles included a model of a ship he didn't recognize and a floating globe of a planet he also didn't recognize. She was a bit of an enigma.

"Have a seat." She gestured to the chair across from her own.

Jack dropped into it with as much nonchalance as he could muster. "Is this like, therapy?" he asked with some trepidation.

She shook her head. "I've been assigned as your Starfleet mentor."

Jack frowned. "Seven is my mentor."

"Sure." She smiled. "But Captain Seven is your commander. It's appropriate to have an advisor outside the command structure."

"Okay," he said, elongating the vowel. "But why— I mean, no offense Commander—"

"Gwyndala. Gwyn."

"No offense, Commander Gwyn, but why you?"

Gwyn sat back in her chair. "Well, for one, you're being fast-tracked to a commission. Ten or so years ago, so was I. I didn't go to the Academy. I had a crash course in Starfleet and a lot of firsthand experience with the limitations of the Federation. Sound familiar?"

Jack shrugged but his expression was thoughtful.

"I grew up sheltered," Gwyn continued. "I was alone a lot. It was hard to make friends. And when I finally did..." Dal's smiling face flashed through her mind. "It turned out I was the villain."

Jack looked up sharply. Gwyn glanced at the strange gold filigree that adorned one shoulder of her uniform. Jack's eyes went wide as it morphed into some kind of creeping metal vine that engulfed her arm and ended in a sharp point an arm's length away.

"I was born— created to be a weapon against the Federation. It was my destiny to destroy them."

Jack turned away, his eyes dark.

"I lost a lot in that battle. Nearly everything." She pictured her father dying in her arms, the *Protostar* exploding, Holo Janeway blinking out of existence. "But the Federation prevailed, and Starfleet gave me a chance to fix things." Gwyn relaxed her arm and the intricate weapon reverted to a decoration on her uniform.

Jack swallowed.

"Captain Tuvok was my Starfleet mentor," she explained. She thought it was silly when Janeway introduced them, but his lessons stayed with her even when they were separated by space and time. "But when I was assigned to his ship, he introduced me to Seven of Nine."

"Someone outside the command structure," Jack murmured.

Gwyn nodded. That was Tuvok's lesson, too. "She wasn't even in Starfleet at the time. I think— I think Tuvok hoped helping me would help her, too. She knew what it was like to be all alone in a crowd. To feel apart from everyone else."

Jack looked over with that same clinging separateness evident all over his face.

"Tuvok did, too. And I think we did all help each other. And I think we can— I can— help you, too. If you let me."

She held out a hand. Jack glanced between her upturned palm and her kind eyes. Slowly he reached out and grasped her hand.

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