

## You're Just a Little Boy

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## You're Just a Little Boy

by [squireofgeekdom](#)

### Summary

'There is nothing wrong with you. No hidden monster inside' Neera's voice tells you again.

If what's inside you isn't a monster -

'You're just a little boy'

You have come face to face with him now, haven't you? And -

He was just a little boy. A little boy with the capacity for terrible actions. But still just a little boy.

'You were just born with a capacity for actions, good or ill. Just like the rest of us.'

If Neera was right, what had you been holding down, keeping sedated all this time?

What had you been living like this for?

'It's how they make us feel. They look down at us for so long that we begin to look down at ourselves.'

You were the problem. Are the problem. You have to be.

### Notes

Cross posted from AO3!

Thanks to my favorite Musketeer for being my first reader on my angsty trans masc La'an feels!

At some point, your tears dry up, but the well of grief is still there.

There is a dark screen of a datapad with a starfleet logo. His face had looked out at you from it and his voice had spoken to you and he had not been there.

There is an empty room.

He is not there. He is not there and there is no one else who knew him to know there is someone to mourn

And you can't speak of it.

The datapad is shoved off the bed, as if that will make the mirror of the ghost go away.

Mirror mirror mirror -

You shove your face in your hands.

*James - your James - walking out in the matching outfit as a mirror and something there was -*

*- recognition*

You need that, you realize.

That's -

You need to see his face again. That's it. You need to know -

You need to know something.

*You need to know where the recognition came from*

You need to know. You need to remember there was someone to mourn.

You look up. You force yourself up. You go to the mirror.

You go to the mirror and there's nothing. There's no recognition.

There's no recognition of him.

*Is there recognition of you?*

He'll never be you, he'll never have the shape of your eyes.

But -

It's not that. It's not your uniform being the wrong color.

It's -

Jaw and shoulder you can't change but - but -

Hair, the way his short hair had swept back -

*Recognition.*

"Computer, scissors."

You yank on one braid, pull it forward against your neck.

Then you stop.

For a moment, your image in the mirror isn't quite there, the image now with shorn hair hanging loose about the face.

It looks more like him.

It looks more like you.

It looks more like the little boy.

You *can't*.

So you stand there, still pulling on the braid, still feeling the pain in your scalp as it anchors you to the moment.

The scissors clatter against the sink.

As you start crying into the sink, crying *again*.

It doesn't matter how many times you cried or laughed the coldness and hard edges was all anyone would ever call attention to or remember. Even when you were a kid. *Especially* when you were a kid; when you weren't a survivor or a security officer and there weren't other reasons for you to be hard edged.

For as long as you could remember they were looking for him in you - and you could never be him.

You could never be him.

No more than you could be James.

You stare in the mirror as that thought hits you and suddenly you don't just feel the pain but you feel the braid in your hand.

Your hair -

The scissors are still sitting in the sink.

You could. And you can't.

Almost without thinking, you untie the end of that braid, start to undo the braid, your fingers moving of their own accord, and maybe you're tangling them in something else so they don't reach for the scissors -

Strands of dark hair loose in waves along your neck, by your face.

You look up.

You should see a mirror in Una now that you know. Now that you accept.

Una is not a monster. Una is everything aspirational.

(Neera said there was no monster inside you.)

And you see...

What you see in her is. It is.

(You can't think about that. You can't think about -

Can't talk about James. Can't think about this. There are things you can't change. Not without breaking other things. Time and computer programs and little boys.)

It's not what you saw in James. But what -

(What does that mean, when you kissed him back and -

What you wanted was different. You don't know how. You just know.)

He didn't see Khan in you. Didn't look for him. Didn't look at any part of you that could look like *him* askance.

And that freed you for -

For recognition? Of what? He was just a man.

He was just a man.

That -

(That you had connected with, without even realizing at first, without realizing that you stopped watching him for signs he was watching you for signs of *him*. When you weren't holding up every layer you have to make sure they see you, Security, Starfleet, Crewmate, before they see *him*.)

You run a hand down your other braid.

There are things that are allowed for people who are not you. Una is not a man regardless of labels at birth.

People who are men are ... there's nothing *wrong* with being a man. That's not just a truism to recite, you know that in your bones, in the love of your brother, your step-father. Your doctor, your captain. James. In the fact that every person you've ever met has been a mix of impulses and potential - capacity for actions.

The problem isn't any of them. Not anyone you've ever known, truly come face to face with.

It's just -

(The problem is you, it has to be. It can't be anything else.)

Something else, cold in your marrow, tells you not to reach for the scissors. Tells you to not ask certain questions in medical. To think about something else when you hear your own voice, rough with a cold. When you look at James' jaw. When you see your own outfit on a different frame.

(When you lie awake thinking about how it would feel if it fit that way on you. You have to think of something else.)

You have to ask something else, want something else -

You can't ask that. That - that's too close to -

You can't be *him*.

If they see you - if they see something that looks like the monster -

You can't. You can't put that fear in anyone. You can't ask -

'*There is nothing wrong with you. No hidden monster inside*' Neera's voice tells you again.

If what's inside you isn't a monster -

'*You're just a little boy*'

You have come face to face with *him* now, haven't you? And -

He was just a little boy. A little boy with the capacity for terrible actions. But still just a little boy.

*'You were just born with a capacity for actions, good or ill. Just like the rest of us.'*

If Neera was right, what had you been holding down, keeping sedated all this time?

What had you been living like this *for*?

*'It's how they make us feel. They look down at us for so long that we begin to look down at ourselves.'*

You were the problem. Are the problem. You have to be.

*'The fear you have of yourself, it's not your own. It was drilled into you.'*

The children on the playground. Una, on the stand. If she -

She's different. She's not you.

Neera knows her. Knows that Una isn't a monster.

She doesn't know you. Doesn't know what's inside.

And that little boy -

You stare down at the scissors.

Isn't the lesson of all this there are things you can't change without breaking something - *everything* - else?

When things were broken there had been your James. There had been a you in his eyes without the ghost of a monster.

There had been a mirror you could see; no ghost in between, no gaze searching for the monster from either side, so instead you could *see*.

There was a mirror who was just a man.

And there was a monster inside who was just a little boy.

And none of those events were meant to happen.

You were never meant to be aware of them.

*He's gone.*

You look in the mirror, and for a moment, in a haze, it's like you can see *yourself* - your face, your eyes, your skin, but - something of James in the jawline, you can imagine there, your long hair gone, short hair still away from your face.

There's a boy there. A man. Not a monster.

You look away.

He's gone. Looking for him only hurt you.

(You can't, *can't* look for this in your own face. You can't ask for this; can't want it.)

When you catch a glimpse the corner of your eye, your loose hair still hangs around your face in waves.

*Just a little boy.*

You walk away from the mirror.

(You can't know *this*.)

The scissors are still in the sink.

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