

And the earth cracks where you're standing

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/953) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/953>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	Star Trek: Voyager
Relationship:	B'Elanna Torres/Tom Paris
Character:	B'Elanna Torres , Tom Paris
Additional Tags:	Depression , Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of Exchanges , Part 4 of inking it out
Stats:	Published: 2019-07-21 Words: 1,165 Chapters: 1/1

And the earth cracks where you're standing

by [lilly_c](#)

Summary

Getting straight to the point wasn't something she could handle doing at the moment even with Tom coming back for her. Yet she knew that she at least had to try to let him know why she'd been struggling to cope with everything recently.

Notes

Written for [livejournal.com profile] alchemicink's [not primetime](#). Takes place during Extreme Risk with references to Hunters. The title is from Change My Mind by Lucie Silvas. Any mistakes are my own and unintentional.

Having successfully retrieved the probe from the gas giant, the crew of the Delta Flyer were ecstatic following the maiden voyage of their new shuttle. Most of them went to celebrate with a glass of synthenol in the mess hall, however, B'Elanna politely declined the offers opting to remain inside the craft after insisting that she would try to join the others after she had run diagnostics and noted any repairs that needed to be done before they could take the Flyer out again.

"You're still here," Tom noted from the entrance, his voice breaking her from her thoughts.

B'Elanna glanced across the confined space at him. "Yeah, I guess I just needed a little time to revel in our accomplishment and get a head start on repairs."

Tom noticed that she'd left the word *alone* out, knowing they needed to talk about what had been troubling her over the past few months, he moved farther inside, sitting on the floor with her. "It's been a difficult time lately hasn't it?"

Getting straight to the point wasn't something she could handle doing at the moment even with Tom coming back for her. Yet she knew that she at least had to try to let him know why she'd been struggling to cope with everything recently.

"I think that," she started then shook her head as the words she wanted to say were trying to come out all jumbled up. "Start again," she whispered more for her own benefit than his.

"Take your time," he gently spoke, his hand resting on her shoulder as it had done thousands of times before when he was trying to offer comfort without stifling her need for distance.

Heaving a sigh, she slowly spoke. "I guess I've let this latest bout of depression consume me in a lot more ways than I normally would, and I can usually recognise the earliest symptoms of it to be able to get a hypospray with my medications but with travelling through the void, then having bad dreams about some of my friends in the Maquis who were slaughtered, it's..."

"Been a difficult time for you lately," he supplied. "That's why you turned the safety protocols off on the holodeck." Connecting the missing pieces of the puzzle.

B'Elanna meekly nodded acknowledging his observation. "I had to, I mean I knew all of the risks and the danger involved but I did it anyway. Every time I ran one of my programmes; I used the override, despite the computer warnings because it was the only way that I could forget about the darkness that was, is, consuming me."

Tom let out a desolate sigh at her admission. "You know that you could have come to me."

“You know that I wouldn’t ever burden you with this because my depression is mine to deal with.”

There it was, the sentence he’d heard before from his father and also from the Captain after they were held captive by the Cardassians and struggling to cope with the aftermath of their ordeal. “One of your programmes,” he carefully started unsure of how to broach what was a difficult subject for a lot of people on the ship. “Has a Cardassian in a cave. Is that how you got that new scar on your left elbow?”

B’Elanna glanced at him. “When we were in the Badlands, we could never beat them and whenever we thought that we had the upper hand on them, they would just come back at us harder and nastier. I wanted to prove to, myself, maybe, that yes, I could take on a Cardassian and kill him. What I hadn’t factored in at the time was that fighting a hologram with the safety protocols off would mean that I still came away from it looking like I’d gone ten rounds with Mike Tyson.” A weak smile graced Tom’s mouth at the twentieth century sporting reference.

“Once I was back in my quarters, I used the medical tricorder that I replicated to heal my injuries but I stopped what I was doing to look in the mirror and I didn’t recognise the person staring back at me. That scared me and hurts more than any injury a Cardassian could inflict on me.”

“Did you tell anyone about that?” he queried, realising that she had bottled everything up so tightly that she was slowly coming undone and that all of her actions and behaviour were a cry for help and not a manifestation of suicidal ideation.

Taking a couple of minutes to reflect on her admissions, B’Elanna realised that she also needed to clear the air between them having pushed him away constantly for months.

“When I left the project to run the Flyer’s microfracture problem on the holodeck, I ran it without the safety and I tried to justify it as an issue that could happen during a real mission. I just hadn’t planned on getting knocked unconscious or having Chakotay find me and then the Captain relieving me of duty.”

“The intervention,” he mused.

B’Elanna shot him a confused glance. “Afterwards when I was in sickbay and the Captain came in. She looked furious and dismissed The Doctor before going into detail about all of my injuries, especially the life threatening ones, as though she was trying to scare me or shock me or something. It didn’t really work but I’m not sure that I was doing my best to convince her that I was fine and could still work. She didn’t believe me.”

“Hurts when she sees through our denials,” Tom uttered, not quite agreeing with all that she was telling him.

“It does hurt but in a way it helped me because she was right when she dropped me from the shuttle project and I told her I wasn’t bothered. That was when she knew that something was wrong and in a way it was also when I realised that I had to try to get a handle on the depression and learn how to be a part of this crew again.”

Tom finally had a chance to inform her of the meeting in the ready room while she was on medical supervision. “We had a talk about you in the Ready Room. We were, are, worried about you and it was difficult admitting to the Captain and Chakotay that I never knew you were hurt because you’d almost completely closed me out by the time it came up.”

That certainly explained why Chakotay had been so eager to show run Torres-Zeta-1 for only the second time since it had been created. She had recoiled in horror once again at the sight of their fallen Maquis comrades, feeling helpless for not been there to fight with them to keep them alive during the massacre.

It had been when she had received the news that she started to slowly withdraw allowing the darkness to consume her, numbness fitting her like an old favourite dress.

-end-

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