



Nightmares

Rating: PG

Classification: vignette, romance

Spoilers: "Adrift," "In Thin Air"

Summary: Missing scene from the eighth-season episode "In Thin Air," based on the most shipper-friendly moment of the ep.

Author's Notes: For the first time in ages, I don't have many. Enjoy the respite while it lasts. But extra points go to those who can identify the origins of the phrase "simple and good" in this context. I'll give you a hint - the same episode is referenced later, somewhat obliquely.

"Do I give you nightmares?" he asked me today.

I didn't have time to sit down and think about it until now, but it just hit me with the force of a truck. What a patently ridiculous question ... what a hopelessly complicated answer. I'm the world's foremost authority on nightmares. I have intimate knowledge of that feeling of dread, the one that starts in the pit of your stomach and eventually claws its way into your brain. It's my birthright. When I close my eyes at night, I have a number of horrific scenes to choose from: my father's drunken rages, Eddie's shattered body lying beside our totaled car, Dalton's last gasping moments of life, the surprise in Chris's eyes when the gun went off ... the admiral's grim voice saying that a Tomcat had plunged into the Atlantic on a rainy night over a year ago ...

I think I need a whole new section of my brain to catalogue all the traumatic memories that surround my relationship with this particular man. Nothing has ever been simple and good when it comes to him. Simple sometimes, and other times good, but never both at the same time. I've been terrified of losing him on more occasions than I could comfortably count. The moron doesn't think before he acts half the time. Well, that's not entirely true: he thinks, and then he invariably decides that whatever risk lies ahead is worth assuming, because he's come through worse and lived. Personally, I think he's nearing the edge of his own personal flight envelope, but I don't dare tell him that.

But I'm afraid for him in other ways, too. I'm afraid that he'll never step back from his ironclad convictions long enough to realize that he has a life of his own to lead. He's about to turn thirty-nine years old, which in and of itself is bizarre to envision, and he's hasn't been on a date since ... oh, that's not a good road to take, is it? Suffice it to say that I don't think he's left his apartment after hours in months, except to fly or to see his brother or Bud. JAG is all he does, and after the difficulty he had with this case, I'm beginning to worry that even JAG may not be the guiding star that grounds him these days.

I'd like to think that there's more in his life, or that he's at least reaching for something more. I'd also like to think that the 'something more' is the face that I see in the mirror every morning, but I'm far too realistic to get my hopes up at this point. Whenever I get too wrapped up in could-bes, some nasty voice in my head calmly reminds me of the day I cried

in his arms and watched him walk away. When that doesn't work, it shows me that damned ferry ride over and over in living color - and if that still doesn't do the trick, it takes me back to the night he asked me to come to him, only to be pulled away again.

You'd think I would have learned by now. But I haven't. I still care about him, more than even Sturgis knows. Probably more than he deserves, actually. Shutting him out of my heart and my life simply isn't an option. And so my real fear isn't of him, or of anything he might say or do. It's the fear of watching him tackle yet another impossible mission, only to discover that this time, his bag of tricks is empty. Right now, he's in the air with an uncertain aircraft and a man who killed his best friend, and it's destroying the last vestiges of my sanity. No matter what I do to keep myself distracted, my mind keeps returning to that awful May night, when my partner came within moments of dying for my sake. For countless nights afterward, I kept imagining the doctors working furiously over him, Skates clutching his pale, cold hand and begging him to hold on as she'd later confessed to doing ... I wonder how many miracles he has left in him, and it terrifies me beyond anything I could ever explain.

"Do I give you nightmares?"

Oh, flyboy ... you have no idea.

*** THE END ***