



The “Comfort Levels” Series

Notes on the 155-word fic concept ... I swiped the idea from [Bree](#), and let me tell you, it’s not easy to get stuff done in 155 words. But it’s a lot of fun to try. Sometimes story ideas pop into my head half-formed, or I get an idea for a scene that doesn’t fit into any larger picture, and this kind of thing is the result. When I wrote the first one, I took one look at it and decided I’d officially lost my mind. There’s no rhyme or reason to the whole thing: none of the stories has any bearing whatsoever on the others. Enjoy ... and don’t try to follow my logic, ‘cause you’ll just get lost.

Comfort Levels

She found him lying on the floor, staring upward with an expression somewhere between fascination and irritation.

“What are you doing down there?”

“At the moment, thinking about repainting the ceiling.”

Typical flyboy wisecrack, but it didn’t explain anything. “Ever think about getting up?”

“No point, since I’d just fall back down.”

“You know this for a fact?”

“Well, I’ve tried twice, and ‘third time’s the charm’ never really worked for me.”

She frowned, folding her arms. “You’re freaking me out, sailor. What the hell happened here?”

He shifted slightly, wincing. “See that hanging lamp over the kitchen island?”

“Yeah.”

“Know how I’ve been meaning to check the wiring?”

She carefully hid her amusement. “Harm, did you fall off a stepladder?”

“Do you see a stepladder, smart girl? ... I fell off the island.”

She gave up and laughed. Then, finally, she dropped down beside him. “Now that you mention it, the ceiling could use repainting.”

THE END

Told you I lost my mind.

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Black Box

My life needs a flight data recorder.

That way, I could go back and analyze each exact moment where I made a colossal error in judgment. You’d think by now I’d have learned how to keep from saying the wrong thing, but there are times when I have the situational awareness of a slug.

Somehow she brings it out in me. My verbal abilities seem to desert me whenever it’s most critical to communicate with her. It’s ironic, really, since she’s the person for whom I most want to be perfect.

Fortunately, she knows me, and my myriad flaws. I hurt her today, but she won’t let it last. I reach for the phone, wondering yet again why she puts up with me.

As soon as I hear her ‘hello’ on the line, I rush to get the words out before I can lose my nerve. “Mac, I’m sorry.”

She sighs softly. “I know, flyboy.”

*** THE END ***

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Analysis

(Maybe this time there’ll be 154 words, or 156. Oh, who am I kidding? Engineers don’t estimate.)

Excuse me?

You want me to sum up my entire relationship with Harm in how many words?

We are talking about Harmon Rabb, aren’t we? My arrogant yet brilliant, dedicated yet obsessive whirlwind of a partner? An encyclopedia wouldn’t be enough. He’s a walking, talking contradiction. He’s a pilot who thinks, a lawyer who feels, an officer who questions. He takes turns amazing me and infuriating me, and does it all before my morning coffee. For all that, though, he’s as constant as the evening star. He doesn’t judge - I think that’s one of the things I admire most. If someone told me I had to place my life in another person’s hands, I’d choose him without hesitation. I’ve never known anyone like him, and I’m convinced I never will.

How could I possibly put all that into a neat, compact package?

My relationship with Harm ... I love him.

There. Are you happy now?

*** THE END ***

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Reflection

(This is the last one. At least for a while.)

"Hey, Mac?"

"Hmmm?"

"Do you ever wonder what you'd be if you weren't a JAG?"

She twisted around in his embrace. "Meaning, something other than a Marine and a lawyer?"

"Exactly." He leaned back against the couch. "Mainly the Marine part. I mean, serving your country isn't the most popular choice these days."

"Well, I did it for the same reason you did. I had a strong role model in uniform. The only real role model I had, really."

"It's hard sometimes, though," he murmured into her hair. "Accepting all the sacrifices that the service demands of us, standing still and saying 'aye, sir' even when it hurts like hell..."

"That's the hard part," she agreed quietly. "But if there were no hard parts, what would be the point?"

"That's why I don't have to get this introspective very often."

"Good. But when you do get like this ... I'm glad it's with me."

"Me, too."

*** THE END ***