



Graphic by [Steph](#)

Rating: PG

Classification: Vignette, Angst

Spoilers: "Adrift"

Author's Notes: This was written in about an hour, just for the hell of it, so don't expect much. It's just to get you all in the mood for the season premiere. Don't worry, shippers, I have in no way abandoned you. But for some odd reason, I feel the need to be nice to Renee for once. Sorry.

For once in my life, I'm going to admit that there's something I can't handle.

I'm not the type that easily accepts defeat; if I were, I would have given up on this whole situation ages ago. It's not as if I came into this relationship with high hopes. We're about as different as two people can be, but he just looked so damn good in that uniform, with those wings ... and I think I let myself get caught up in his oh-so-honorable determination. Before I knew it, I'd surrendered more of myself to him than any man who'd previously wandered through my life. Even when it was clear that he hadn't done the same.

It's fascinating how he can both boost my self-esteem and trash it at the same time. At the beginning, the fact that he saw something worthwhile in the ultra-bitch attitude I'd been projecting was surprising enough. I couldn't help it: it's how you get things done in my business, and the fact that it wasn't working with these military types was driving me up the proverbial wall. But he gave me a chance, and I gave him a chance, and something actually clicked. He laughed at my jokes, and I felt safe in his arms. For the first time, I started to think that the stereotypical American dream might work for me after all.

If only I could get him to believe that. As incredible as he is, there always seems to be something distant in his eyes. He's not accustomed to letting people see the man behind the uniform, and I've had to fight for every truth I've gotten from him. No matter what I do, I can't get him to take that last step and open up completely ... and so, when I'm totally honest with myself, I know that I don't quite make the short list of things that drive him. Flying. His father, and now his brother. And her.

God, it would be so much easier if I were more like her - strong, confident, with that same passion for justice. At least, that's how he sees her. I know better now, because I saw the fear and the pain when this awful night began. She's not strong tonight, any more than I am. We're both terrified of the same thing - the idea that we might never see his smile or hear his voice again. For some twisted reason, I'm taking some small satisfaction from the realization that it's hurting her as much as it's hurting me.

I guess some part of me always knew that something like this was possible. His work - his duty - is dangerous, and he's never afraid, even when he should be. I've learned to accept the Navy way of life, or at least I've tried. I like his friends, even if I don't really belong with them. But I always secretly thought that he was better than them, somehow, better than this. Heroes aren't supposed to vanish into the storm, even flawed heroes. They aren't supposed to fail in their promises, even to themselves. I know he must have vowed to make it back for her tonight, and I'm not angry about it. If she wants to blame herself, that's her prerogative. I can't let their convoluted, conflicted friendship determine my outlook, or I'll have lost already. Right now, I'm just trying to hold out hope that he's out there, alive, so that all our revelations don't end up entirely irrelevant. I don't want to think about what I'll do, where I'll go, if he doesn't come home.

I can't handle this. The endless waiting, the sympathetic glances - I literally want to scream. Christ, if there's a funeral, I won't even be the one to receive the flag. What do I really have of him, anyway? I know he doesn't love me as unconditionally as I'd hoped, but I still believe that we can get there. I don't know how, but there has to be a way. Maybe that's naïve - bordering on pathetic, even - but I'll be here waiting as long as that hope exists. He's the most amazing man I've ever known, and right now I hate him for showing me how weak I am.

God damn you, Harmon Rabb ... please be out there somewhere.

****THE END****

