
Nina Dallas grabs a hold of Tom Wreke's arm- much to his surprise. His mouth falls open a little, as she hauls him off towards a lone supply closet. Tom's back thuds against the wall as she pushes him into the room- and he grimaces.

He has to slouch significantly- at six feet and nine inches, he's entirely too tall for the tiny cupboard of a room. Nina barely comes up to his bicep, as she crosses her arms, glowering up at him.

NINA DALLAS

Why didn't you ever tell me?

Tom winces. He looks at the papers held in her hand, crumpled up- clearly printouts from the Molecular Genetics laboratory. She kicks the door closed behind herself, trapping them into the closet.

TOM WREKE

My brother- your father didn't want me to.

TOM WREKE

When he took on Daryl's name- after they got married, they assumed it wouldn't come up on board, because our last names are different. It wouldn't have tripped anyone's notice, during your admissions process.

TOM WREKE

It wasn't my place to overstep his parenting decisions.

The light overhead jostles wildly as Tom accidentally bumps into it- cringing back from the hot lightbulb. It's metal chain bonks against his nose, before he reaches out to still it with one hand.

NINA DALLAS

I'm an adult, I deserved to know-

NINA DALLAS

I shouldn't have had to find out through genetic sequencing, for God's sake-

She's stomping her foot on the ground, and Tom sighs, reaching out to gently put his hand on her shoulder, patting her placatingly.

TOM WREKE

Nina...

TOM WREKE

I understand that this is difficult to come to terms with.

He's kneeling down to be closer to her eye level, dislodging a few bottles of cleaning supplies as he does so.

TOM WREKE

I'm sorry.

TOM WREKE

I did what I thought was best, given the information that I had, and the instructions I was given. I understand that you wish things had gone differently- and if I had the chance to, I would go back and do things differently.

He's cradling the side of her face with one calloused hand, swiping his thumb across her cheek gently.

TOM WREKE

But can you understand why I wanted to let your fathers have that conversation with you?

Nina sniffs, haughtily. The papers are loose in her grip- and Tom takes them from her, sticks them into the pocket of his overalls for a moment, still crumpled.

NINA DALLAS

We're related-

TOM WREKE

We are. But the last time that I saw you, you were still gurgling in Charles' baby carrier.

He's smiling sadly as he recalls the memory- as if unable to reconcile the young woman in front of him with her as a baby.

TOM WREKE

I didn't want to make your adjustment to life on board any more difficult than it had to be-

Tom smooths Nina's hair down gently with the hand that'd just been cradling her face, patting her lightly on the head.

TOM WREKE

I didn't want people to accuse me of playing favourites. It would've made your time on board more difficult than it had to be. We all know that nepotism does rule the ISS Pathfinder, like it does so many other galactic corporate advancements- but I didn't want others' perception of you having an unfair advantage, seeing as I'm the Head of Engineering, to outshine the work that you've done, all on your own.

TOM WREKE

They would've torn you down, Nina. They would have thrown you to the dogs. I've seen how cutthroat the office politics can be.

His expression darkens for a moment, discomfort bleeding into the edges of his expression- as he thinks back to his own experiences with the Board personnel on the ISS Pathfinder.

TOM WREKE

And you are a talented, intelligent young woman- who is dedicated to her field of study, and who can achieve anything she sets her mind to. You do have a bright future ahead of you- and I *am* glad to have played a small part in that, while supervising you in Laurel's lab.

TOM WREKE

That doesn't change.

TOM WREKE

I said it because I meant it- not just because you're my niece.

Nina chews on this for a moment, before looking at him- insecurity stark across her face. She's biting on the inside of her cheek.

NINA DALLAS

Does Dr. Scoresby know?

Tom sighs, settling back a little.

TOM WREKE

There isn't anything in my life that Laurel doesn't know- but she didn't know, until after she had handpicked you for her lab rotations.

TOM WREKE

You earned that spot, honey- I didn't give it to you.

Nina's lower lip is sticking out in a pout. Her voice sounds younger than she is- softer, childish.

NINA DALLAS

You promise?

Tom nods.

TOM WREKE

I promise.

Nina nods, accepting this- before she's rolling her eyes a little playfully.

NINA DALLAS

You owe me, big time.

Tom laughs. He ruffles Nina's hair for a moment, fluffing up the dark brown curls.

TOM WREKE

Whatever you want, kiddo.

NINA DALLAS

I'll take an IOU on it. And you know, I do still remember you- a little bit, like kids do. Fuzzy. I remember going over to Uncle 'Toto's' house to eat blue freezies.

TOM WREKE

That doesn't surprise me- you were so young, before I left for college. The electric blue ones- you didn't like the darker blue, the blueberry flavour. I know.

TOM WREKE

I remember- you couldn't say my name correctly when you were young. So you wound up nicknaming me Toto- like the dog in the movie you were obsessed with, as a little girl.

TOM WREKE

You were Dorothy for your first Halloween- Daryl handsewed those bows for you.

Nina tilts her head to the side slightly.

NINA DALLAS

Does Dr. Scoresby call you that? Toto, I mean.

Tom looks off to the side for a moment, cheeks flushing with colour.

TOM WREKE

...No, but she does have a nickname for me.

NINA DALLAS

Really? She doesn't really seem the nicknaming type.

TOM WREKE

Er- yes. I call her Lolly, as an endearment- and she calls me her teddybear. Teddy for short.

Nina doesn't seem surprised by this.

NINA DALLAS

That's got to be confusing, with all of the Teddies on board that she knows.

TOM WREKE

A little. But that's besides the point.

TOM WREKE

Are you going to be okay for now?

NINA DALLAS

A-huh.

She nods, moving to pick the pages back out of the front of Tom's pocket.

He lets her, before looking down at his pocket- there's a beeping coming from his pager. He pulls it out to examine the screen, before sighing.

TOM WREKE

Alright. They need me over in Aeronautics- you take care now, Nina.

NINA DALLAS

You too, Toto.

She sticks her tongue out at him- and Tom laughs, before walking out of the closet.
