

Summary:

Dawn turns to one of her oldest friends for advice. Set March 2017. Published June 28, 2017.

What'll I Do

"Well." Dawn sat down heavily on the end of her bed, staring down at the floor. "That's it, then. He's gone home."

She let out a breath, wondering dimly why she'd never bothered to snip the loose bit of grey fluff off the ratty carpet, and then reminded herself to breathe in again. Gwilithiel chirped worriedly, wrapping loosely around her neck like a self-warming scarf; Dawn stroked the gold fire-lizard on autopilot.

"Food," she mumbled to Gwilithiel. "We should—that. You hungry, dear?"

Gwilithiel rubbed her head against Dawn's chin, chirping again. The agent nodded carefully and, after a bit more staring at the floor, managed to get up and head for the kitchen.

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Two days later, it was almost the end of March (probably) and Dawn was struggling to focus on the words of Tamora Pierce's *Briar's Book*, which she'd been rereading earlier. Somehow, it wasn't quite holding her attention.

She'd heard from Des that he was settling in, that he felt the stones falling from his shoulder. She'd wanted that note, wanted to know how he was doing. But the rest—

'...no long distance. I don't want to do that to us.' And the dreaded *'you deserve better than that,'* which—

Dawn sighed, and closed the book.

She was twenty-four years old, more or less. She had been dating Des for nearly two years. She had no partner to take her mind off things (or to snap at, which might be for the best), and while she did have close friends at HQ, she...well. It was a private thing, wasn't it? She'd tell them at some point, but who said every break-up had to follow the American media clichés?

Besides, she'd known this might be coming. They'd discussed it before he'd left, talking seriously until they'd decided to continue thinking about it. They had agreed, at least, that trying to stay together when she might see him only twice a year or so would be ridiculous.

Retirement. Who retires at this age?

Dawn picked up the book again, staring at the console. *Your move. I'm totally comfortable. Give me a mission already.*

The console remained silent.

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"...and so I've been trying to keep busy, but I've never really gone through this kind of thing before," Dawn finished. "And, I mean, it's kind of getting better, but at the same time, it's really not. And I'm not sure what to do about it."

T'Zar's gaze remained as steady as it had been throughout, but now the tiniest of frowns appeared on her face. "And so you have come to me."

Dawn shrugged. "You're one of my oldest friends here, and you're pretty sensible. Logical. Whichever. And at the very least you won't start going 'oh Dawn, I'm so sorry, let me hug you and tell you what a jerk the guy you still rather like is and feed you cookies'—I mean, you can feed me cookies if you really want to, but you never used to keep them around—"

The frown disappeared. "You chose me for my sense, rather than my loss of Salok."

Dawn looked blank for several seconds before her expression turned to horror. "What, *no*. No. I'd *never*. Salok *died*, not to mention he was your husband. If I wanted to talk to someone with a similar experience...yeah, I know someone. No, that's not—no. I mean, I'm sure there are some similarities, but—no. Definitely not. No."

"I take your meaning," T'Zar said. Her voice was almost gentle, inasmuch as a Vulcan's voice ever really went gentle. "You are aware I am not an expert in human emotion—"

"No, but you're pretty good with *Vulcan* emotions, which are stronger and a lot more heavily controlled." Dawn sighed and rubbed a hand over her face. She leaned back in her chair and resisted the urge to put her feet up on the low table that T'Zar had acquired sometime in the last three years. "How do I...? I mean, it's a constant reminder in the back of my head. I can eat, I can sleep, I can do my job, but it's—I feel like I'm losing the fun of it, and not having a partner really isn't helping. What am I supposed to do? Retire myself? I don't think I'm ready for that, but..."

"You could just apply for a partner," put in a new voice. Dawn twisted to look, and saw T'Zar's partner Abaddon waving at her from the bathroom doorway. His hair had new dyed red streaks running through the blond. "Didn't mean to listen, sorry," he added as he walked towards them, "but since I did—why not?"

Dawn scoffed. "You think I haven't tried? I kept putting applications in for years. It never worked. All I've had since Kozar left are temporary partners, and he left...uh, four years ago, now. The closest I got was Zeb, and he was my partner for all of about two months. We didn't even share an RC."

"That sucks." Abaddon found a third mug and poured himself a cup of the Vulcan spice tea they were drinking. "Put one in recently?"

"Yeah, in January," Dawn said. She pulled out a chair and gave him a pointed look. "Sit if you're joining the conversation, kid."

"I'm two years older than you," Abaddon complained, but he took the seat anyway. "So you haven't heard back yet?"

"I'm not even expecting to, really." Dawn sighed and stared down at her tea. "Maybe I should switch departments again, or something. I usually get a partner when I switch departments. Maybe that'd work."

T'Zar raised an eyebrow. "Do you really want to switch departments?"

"Maybe?" Dawn looked up at the Vulcan and shrugged. "I don't know. Not really. I mean, I've thought about it before, but...it's never felt like the right time. And it doesn't now, either, but I'm *sick* of not having a partner. I really am."

"Maybe you should try to get a vacation," Abaddon suggested. He took a gulp of tea; fortunately for his tongue, the pot had cooled considerably since it had been poured. "Go away for a while, take your mind off things—"

"No." Dawn shook her head firmly. "I don't want a vacation, and I'm not going home for Pesach this year, either. I love my family, but I can't take—I want to move *forward*, not deal with sympathy all the time. I had enough of that when Des got stuck in that bloody suit. I just want—I want to stop having all this low-key *sadness* in the back of my head. It wasn't even a messy break-up! He didn't leave because of me!"

"Y'know," Abaddon said, "I'm not sure that matters." He clapped her on the shoulder and stood up, taking his now empty mug with him. "Good luck, kiddo. Hope you get that partner."

"You said that in your Doctor accent," Dawn informed him. "Thanks, though."

Abaddon groaned and kept walking towards the sink, grumbling under his breath in as strong a Cockney accent as he could manage.

T'Zar put her hand on Dawn's wrist, the warmth of her skin sinking into the human's bones. "I suggest that you find a project to occupy your time and focus your attention on finding temporary partnerships or communicating with your friends." She let go and stood; Dawn stood with her, recognizing the cue. "Accept that the sadness will be with you," the Vulcan said quietly. Abaddon helpfully began washing his mug, lending them some background noise; when that was done, he reached for the next dirty dish with a sigh. T'Zar went on. "Accept as well that you can continue your life around it. Eventually, you will find that it has lessened."

Dawn frowned at her. "You're not going to give me an exact time? I'd actually kind of appreciate that right now. For once."

"I am neither human nor reading your emotions," T'Zar said. "In this, you will have to manage without a forecast."

"Just like the rest of us," Abaddon put in. He had run out of dishes to wash, and was now leaning on the two feet of counter that Dawn still remembered wrestling into place. He grinned at her. "You can do it!"

"You are a terribly annoying human being," Dawn informed him. She headed for the door, smiling a little when he began to cackle. "T'Zar—"

The Vulcan had followed her, well-accustomed to Dawn's own cues. "You are welcome," she said. "If you wish to speak again, inform me. We will find a time."

"Thanks," Dawn said quietly, and walked out.

Slowly, the door swung closed.

***A/N:** The title comes from the song ["What'll I Do?"](#) as sung by Frank Sinatra ([lyrics](#)). It appeared in the first ever Dawn and Des interlude (["Happy Idiot Talk"](#)), and seemed appropriate here.*

There will eventually be an interlude about the fate of Des' partner the Librarian as well. It's currently unwritten, but I know more or less what's going in it.

Thanks to Karen DuLay and PoorCynic for betaing!

***Disclaimer:** The PPC was begun by Jay and Acacia. Agent Desdendelle was written by Desdendelle, and handed over to me to retire. Agents Dawn McKenna and Abaddon were*

created by me (Zingenmir); T'Zar was created by Tawaki and I adopted her. Gwilithiel was introduced by Neshomeh but primarily characterised by me. Doctor Who, Star Trek: TOS, and the Pern series' rights go to their respective owners and not to me.