

Deleted scene from *Twin-Bred*

(Mara Cadell talks to her psychologist)

[I initially included this scene to show Mara's incomplete progress toward more and better social interactions. I guess I decided it wasn't interesting enough for the space it took.]

Mara burrowed through her assistant's desk drawer and found some tape. The singletons had given her a handmade poster, signed by all of them, thanking her for her visit. She fastened it to the wall next to her desk, returned the tape, and settled into her chair for her call to Dr. Tanner.

"Mara. Welcome. It's good to see you. Electronically speaking. Is there anything you'd like to start off with?"

"I'm not sure. Something happened that makes me feel a good deal better about things. Whether or not it should. But I can't talk about the details."

Dr. Tanner nodded. "Then I'll pick the first subject. Your social life. Have you had one lately?"

Mara looked sheepish. "Not so much. I chat with people in the meal hall. And I have a walking partner -- though I don't always manage to show up on schedule."

"The walking partner: male or female?"

"Female. Which, before you ask, is still not my romantic preference."

Dr. Tanner chuckled. "Always one step ahead . . . which is yet another form of self-protection. To go on: what you describe is not a complete absence of social interaction, particularly compared to some periods in your life. Yet you describe it as essentially a deficient

effort on your part. Accepting that assessment for the moment, why do you think you have not managed to spend more time, and more meaningful time, with others?"

"Well, I'm very, very busy. I'm in charge of pretty much everything, at one level or another. All the organizational matters, all the scientific research, all the policy planning and re-planning, community relations. Keeping the Council off our backs, which can mean anything from reviewing the wording of status reports -- and there's a truly dreary occupation -- to political trench warfare."

"And as to all of these tasks, you are the one who decides, most of the time, whether they are being done adequately. Which allows you to spend as much time as you can. Have you ever heard the expression, 'Work expands to fill the time available'?"

Mara cocked her head. "No, but I'll try to remember that one. Yes, I would imagine I could be more efficient on particular tasks if I had to be. Or if I thought it important enough to have more free time."

"And are there other reasons?"

"I'm everybody's boss, or something close to it. That's a bit of an obstacle."

"Obstacle, or excuse?"

"Both! It's hard enough for me to open up, or reach out, or whatever it is people do to have friends, let alone lovers. Doing it when I have the complication of being in charge of people -- well, I don't have the emotional energy."

Dr. Tanner snorted. "Energy, Mara, is something you have in abundance. At the moment, you are still using it to stand firmly in your own way. Lifelong habits of that kind are very resistant to change. So I will say, congratulations on lunchtime chats and walking partners. I

hope you will keep pushing yourself, a little at a time, toward relationships in which you can find greater rewards. The possibility being a self-reinforcing cycle.”

The doctor pushed back his chair. “Our time is up. We’ll talk again in three weeks?”

Mara’s smile had a touch of mischief. “It’s a date.”

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