

## Rifts

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# Rifts

by [Tarlan](#)

## Summary

Rodney tries to console John on the anniversary of his father's death.

## Notes

**trope\_bingo** Round 4: Jock dad nerd son  
**mcsheplets** 198: Laugh

It was obvious from a very early age that Rodney was exceptionally gifted - at least intellectually - and so was his sister so most people naturally assumed their parents were equally intelligent. Admittedly they weren't completely stupid but Rodney spent most of his youth frustrated by two people who should have been teaching him about the world but who, instead, knew far less than he did by the age of seven.

It wasn't until he was sitting in a holding room with two CIA agents watching him intently, scared beyond belief that they were going to lock him away forever that he came to truly appreciate his dad.

"My dad... was a Phys Ed teacher at the local high school," Rodney admitted to John as they lay curled up in bed together. "He might not have been a genius but he was as stubborn as they come. Jogging six miles every morning before school, then more warm-ups and laps before lessons. He was coach of both the swim team and football team." Rodney waved a hand dismissively. "Not your American football, or Carson's soccer."

"Yeah, I know what football is in Canada, Rodney."

"You do? Huh! I guess you would, being a... a..."

"Jock?"

Rodney frowned because the word held self-derision and that was not Rodney's intention.

"Well, yes... and no. You have brains under that hair whereas my dad... My dad was just a jock."

The silence lingered almost too long for comfort before John added softly, "But he was stubborn."

His voice held a small hint of apology, carefully steering Rodney back to the story.

"Yes. Stubborn. Unrelenting. He pushed at the CIA until they let me go."

John frowned, scrubbing the back of his neck before letting his arm drape back over Rodney's waist, and tightening his hold for a moment as he pressed up against Rodney's back.

"Still not sure where you're heading with this, Rodney."

Rodney looked over his shoulder momentarily, his smile lopsided, before settling back against John. He ached pleasantly from their recent exertions of a highly pleasurable nature, but hadn't failed to notice how John had seemed a little more desperate, a little more needy for touch.

"He was a jock dad with a nerdy geek for a son. He wanted me to be like him. He tried to make me like sports. I-I have these excruciating memories of being forced to run up and down a field while he threw the ball at me, expected me to catch it and throw it back." Rodney huffed out an awkward laugh. "The other kids found it amusing... at my expense."

He looked back over his shoulder again and caught John pulling one of those pain-filled expressions in sympathy because they both knew how bad Rodney was at catching, especially when taken by surprise. He wasn't that much better at running either, though spear-wielding natives had been far more of an incentive than all of his father's cajoling.

"I was this weedy kid who spent more time in the library reading books or working on a computer than out on the playing field." Rodney sighed. "He was disappointed in me, and I was frustrated by him. By his inability to understand... me."

He felt John nodding but John was probably thinking of his similar, poor relationship with his own father, recalling one late night not long after the funeral when John had tried to explain how he and his father simply never saw eye-to-eye over anything. Today was the anniversary of Patrick Sheppard's death and even John's hair seemed depressed, lying flat against his head.

"That day... with the CIA. That's when I realized disappointment didn't mean he didn't care. Didn't mean he didn't love me. He just wanted me to fit in." He gave another soft huff of a laugh. "But he was proud when I gained an early placement at Northwestern. He was proud of both me and Jeannie." He paused, a little nervous. "He might not have shown it but... but I'm sure your dad loved you too."

The silence lengthened and Rodney tensed, wondering if he'd made things worse for John rather than better by reminding him of what he had lost.

He had not endured years of estrangement for choosing not to follow in his father's footsteps - though foolishly he had caused a rift between himself and Jeannie over her decision to have a family rather than follow a bright career in theoretical physics. Fortunately he had come to his senses and she'd forgiven him.

John hadn't been granted the same opportunity to heal the rift between him and his father before it was too late.

"He did... Love me," John clarified, but then fell silent for so long Rodney thought he might have fallen asleep. Just as Rodney closed his eyes, preparing to let it go and follow him, he felt John's shoulders rise and fall. "It's the regrets that hurt the most."

"Regrets," Rodney echoed.

Rodney knew all about regrets. Some he had vanquished over time but others would remain with him forever, a constant companion reminding him of poor choices and bad decisions. He regretted the years spent at odds with his father until they found they had one sporting passion in common - a love of ice hockey.

"My biggest regret was not doing this sooner," John added, pressing a kiss into Rodney's hair as his hold tightened again fractionally, and Rodney fancied he could feel John's lips curving into a smile to match the warmth in his voice.

It was Rodney's biggest regret too, wasting years looking for love in all the wrong places, only to realize that special someone was standing beside him all along, discounted as a

possibility because he had too often seen the jock instead of the nerd when he looked at John. Yet life had a way of balancing out the regrets with moments of joy and happiness - such as the feel of soft, warm breaths against his hair, slowly deepening as John finally relaxed into sleep.

As he surrendered to sleep too, wrapped in John's arms, he wondered if John had ever learned how to ice skate.

END

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