

Dirt

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Dirt

by [SLWalker](#)

Summary

McGregor, Molly, Cutler, illegal drug smuggling. What could possibly be right about this mission?

Notes

To Kev, with love.

The fine dirt swirled around his feet, clung to his boots, flaked off when he shifted his weight. In the lowering light of violets and deep blues, with an edge of pink on the horizon, he was a study of calm and dust, sliding a thumbnail along the seam in the casing of his phaser, cleaning it out and waiting for the delivery. His hat did little to keep more dust from clinging to him, but it kept his vision mostly unobscured; sometimes he raised his head to peer straight ahead, but mostly it was his peripheral vision he relied on now.

The buildings, low and squat, were dimly lit and he didn't doubt there were eyes peering out, calculating, waiting, planning. Preparing. Outside, the streets were mostly deserted. From his vantage in the shadows of a porch, he had an excellent view of everything he needed to, and what he couldn't see he could hear.

The dust hissed softly in the steady, chaotic breeze of coming night. Other than that, it was deceptively quiet.

McGregor blew off the tip of the phaser, and grinned.

Drug smuggling was always an adventure.

"If you screw this up, I'm leaving you there."

Molly needed no threat more colorful than that, given where they were. A more hopeless ball of pointless rock had never been colonized.

Well, maybe that wasn't true. But it was pretty damn bad.

Noah Cutler always seemed to be two seconds from being overwhelmed, for many and varied reasons, not the least of which was the mere existence of Captain McGregor. His inclusion in this particular adventure pretty much was counting on that fact and using it to their overall advantage. Molly had been under strict orders (ha!) not to tell him, however, that he was basically cannon fodder right now and that the fate of the mission rested entirely on his ability to be overwhelmed, and to look two seconds from it before he was.

Well, that and what they were doing was *highly illegal*. Not a little illegal, not even moderately illegal. *Highly illegal*.

Somewhere down on that dusty, over-farmed, desperate little ball of a planetoid, McGregor was playing the long game. Up here in the transporter room, the drugs were packed in the most inconspicuous crates possible, the kind that looked like they'd been kicked around a cargo hold half a dozen times (actually, they had been for camouflage purposes) and were filled with nothing of any great importance (which was a calculated lie), hopefully giving away no clue that they were actually chock full of drugs, the kinds of drugs where the ship they were taken from in a perfectly legal search and seizure somehow never made it into the inventory reported back to Starleet Command.

If this were her first ride on this particular mag-lev, Molly might have been more nervous. But it wasn't even close.

Cutler looked green around the gills, but he nodded and swallowed and mounted the platform, nervously adjusting the slightly too-clean folds of his robes and coat, trying and failing to be prepared for what was essentially an exceptionally unauthorized mission to smuggle illegal drugs.

He wasn't stupid, that one. Just green in more ways than one, and no doubt he had already figured a few things out. Just, thankfully, not the things Molly didn't want him to.

She climbed the platform herself, and inside of thirty seconds, found herself and her hapless ensign standing in the deserted back alley they'd chosen prior, the tickle of dust and darkness making her fight down a sneeze.

Perfect.

They moved with the ease of professionals.

As well they should have: That's what they were. Clad in specialized clothing, wearing screens across their eyes, moving with the practiced polish of ninjas. McGregor made no move on them, he just watched from his shadows, blended into the dun-like walls of the building's porch, practically invisible himself.

By the time Molly and Cutler were about thirty meters away, those ninjas melted out of their own shadows and surrounded the cart.

Molly did what Molly does; reacted with picture perfect shock, hands thrown out to her sides, an award-winning performance. Cutler...

Cutler screamed. Screamed, shrill and shaken, stumbling backwards and reaching for a phaser he wasn't carrying.

McGregor had a very, very hard time choking down that laugh. He still made no move to intervene, just watched as the terrified ensign scrambled, all but leaping out of his skin and then finding himself on the business side of a disruptor. The black-clad bodies didn't even bother firing. Probably too busy trying not to laugh themselves.

One ninja scanned the crates, two more shoved Molly off to the side (sorry, Molls), another kneed Cutler in the gut and left him laying in the dust, while the last kept a lookout. Very slick. Very, very nice.

Then, just as quickly as the ninjas appeared, they were gone, scattering like cockroaches, each with a crate.

None of them saw the flash of yellow-green eyeshine from one direction, or the steely sharp flicker of feral pleasure from the other. By the time Cutler and Molly pulled themselves back to the now-empty cart, there was no one left on the road but them.

The crates, aside being inconspicuous and filled with illegal drugs, were perfectly cromulent in terms of their inability to be tracked, provided what was tracking you was electronic in nature. Shielding for small transmission devices, like bugs, was difficult to refine, and too easy to detect with the right set of eyes, though it worked well on phasers with certain clever, if crotchety, engineers working on it.

The regrouped ninjas were examining their purloined gains, right on time, right on schedule.

The building they had taken residence in was surprisingly dust free, and no doubt due to their professional natures, rather spartan. Like all buildings, it was low to the ground, dun-colored, giving no hint that what was behind it was a drug-smuggling ring of the finest caliber. No doubt, as they were busy counting up their goods, they were waiting for the call of the supercargo who set up the usual ambush so they could direct payment for the information.

They just didn't happen to know that said supercargo would never be calling again.

Nor did they realize just how fucked they actually were.

The crates were inconspicuous and untraceable by any reasonable, sensible means. Dye packs, electronic bugs, maybe even special inlays of certain metals into the wooden crates... none of those, no.

No one out here would expect to be tracked by Kzinti pheromones.

Inside, sensors failed to register the blind spot as being anything worth alarming the occupants about, and really, there was no sense in upsetting them before they needed to be. The windows were all shuttered against the wind and dust; the doors were bolted, triple locked and had a bar across them. Good security, really, but there needed to be *some* point of egress.

So, McGregor simply made his own.

He grinned as he fired the phaser, illuminating and then dissolving a large chunk of the wall, and he grinned wider as he dropped to one

bended knee and Rah leaped over his head, a powerful leap, right into the middle of the group of cockroaches, right in the heart of their den.

"Save some for me," McGregor said, pushing off to follow.

"But why?"

"Why not?" Molly asked, leaning beside the clinic's side entrance with her arms crossed, eying Cutler, who had not entirely stopped trembling from the encounter.

"Now, I know you slippery little worms think that no one's paying attention out here," McGregor said, the toe of his boot firmly aimed right into crotch of the head-cockroach, resting on the chair between the man's knees and making him gulp nervously, "But surely you must have realized someone would have noticed, hmmm?"

The man tried to wiggle his butt further back in the chair, away from the implicit threat, a sweat breaking out on his brow. Across the room, Rah's grin was scaring ten years off of the lives of the rest of them.

"Well? What say you for yourselves?"

The ensign's wide eyes answered incredulity. "We stole stolen drugs so that they could be stolen from us so that we could steal them back and donate them to a clinic on a border colony that hardly anyone even knows exists?"

"Pretty much," Molly said, not bothering to explain that McGregor had set up the initial theft in the first place.

"That's--" A look from Molly shut him up. "...uh, aye aye, Commander."

"--crazy!"

"Eeeee, wrong answer!" McGregor's boot slipped, and the man almost screamed, turning his head away. In fact, McGregor had worn these boots, capped in silver with a serrated edge along the front, for just this exact purpose. "The correct answer is: 'Captain McGregor, master of the *U.S.S. Kestrel*, all-seeing eye of the Border Dogs, I do *not* intend to use my right to remain silent, and I will sing like a fucking canary for you about my entire supply chain, right now.'"

"McGregor...? Oh, shit," one of the others said, before Rah's growl cut them off.

The man was practically in tears, staring at the end of any possible future paternity suits at the tip of a captain's boot. "--fine, fine, just get that thing away from me!"

"Maybe." McGregor winked. "We'll see. Start singing, Birdy."

"Why me, though?" Cutler asked, finally done trembling. At least until one of the alley-lizards knocked the lid off a trashcan and made him jump all over again.

"That's why," Molly answered. "The bigger the threat when they went to take the drugs, the more force they would use. Some middle-aged woman and some wet-behind-the-ears screamer? No major use of force." She paused a moment, then clearly chewed down a smile. "At least, not against us."

By the time it was said and done, the leader of the newly dubbed Cockroach Crew still had his wedding tackle, and the entire group was rounded up, cuffed up, and sent up. Now, getting them to not claim entrapment might be some trouble, but honestly, it was a very borderline case. More fun would be trying to explain where the cargo of drugs went, all of which were illegal several times over, but none of which were pleasure-drugs. Most could be used as such with some tweaking, but in current form they were pain meds, asthma meds, some antibiotics, some other stabilizers.

All of which were going to disappear for the last time, into the hands of the sole clinic on this depressing ball, into the hands of people who

could maybe make a difference here for these people.

In the meantime, they also had all of the records of shipping and receiving to go through from the Cockroach Crew's computers, and lots more roaches to flush from the shadows using those.

"I have a present," McGregor said, dragging the cart with little effort, a self-satisfied little smile more in the corners of his eyes than in the line of his mouth. "Not nearly so much fun as the presents in our brig, but ah well."

"Took you long enough," Molly grumbled, but she hit the intercom on the clinic's door to inform them that for once, their shipment actually arrived when and how it was supposed to.

"I was savoring it, I must admit. Two screamers in one night. Shame I couldn't go for a full house, hm?"

Molly rolled her eyes, but she was trying not to smile herself. "And the rest of the delivery, Captain?"

"Have it beamed directly down."

Cutler had been silent through the exchange, shrunk back and staring wide-eyed between them. He still had very little idea of what was going on, aside that it was illegal, unorthodox, dangerous and had him getting kneed by ninjas. From his point of view, they had just broken probably a dozen regulations, several laws and willfully put his life in danger in the process.

"Uh, forgive me, sir, ma'am, but couldn't we have just done this through official channels?" he finally asked, timidly, as the clinic staff came out to retrieve the drugs and the first of the rest of the cargo -- all of it in non-Starfleet packaging -- that was appearing steadily nearby.

McGregor eyed him, the corner of his mouth creeping up in a dry little smile. "And miss out on a drug smuggling adventure? Never."

And if Cutler happened to miss out on the number of people helped, the number of illicit dealings stopped, the enforcement of justice instead of just plain, boring, inapplicable law, McGregor wasn't going to be the one to tell him.

He slid his phaser into his pocket, knocked the dirt off of his ass-kicking boots, and walked away with a whistle.

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