

Crown and anchor me

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by [violet_pencil](#)

Summary

Kira walked Ezri home and kissed her.

Ezri's pretty sure she feels some kind of way about it.

Notes

Written for fly_to_dawn for the Space Swap 2023 challenge.

Day Sixty-Three has been... well, it's certainly been a day, as Ben would say. Ezri's been aboard the station for months, and she was almost starting to feel her equilibrium beginning to stabilize. When she first arrived she had to stop herself half a dozen times a day from opening files that weren't hers, finishing reports she didn't start. Walking towards quarters that weren't hers at the end of the day. But she was making progress. She would only lose her way maybe once a day. Then only a few times a week. Just once or twice in the last month, after an especially stressful shift. She was starting to think that at some point, she might even be able to stop counting days.

Last night Kira walked her home and kissed her, and today Ezri feels like her shoes don't fit, like her hair's too short, like her skin's on fire. Her spots itch. She's been pacing in her room, resisting the urge to stand on her head or ask the replicator to generate a portable keyboard. Her door chime rings, and suddenly her heart leaps into her throat.

She stands up, taking a step towards the door, but it slides open a beat too early, making her jump. "Oh!"

"Sorry!" Kira says. She has one hand hidden behind her back, and stretches the other toward Ezri in startled apology.

"No, no, forget it!" Ezri says, waving away the apology. She stares at Kira. "What did you-- Did you--?" She falls silent.

"I'm taking an early lunch," Kira hovers in the doorway, her eyes bright. "I wish I could stay longer, but there's some kind of issue with one of our trading partners in the Gamma Quadrant and I have to be back for a meeting with the representative from Bajoran Interplanetary Commerce... But I brought you this." Kira braces one arm on the doorframe and leans in. She still has one hand tucked behind her back, and suddenly, in this moment, it's all worth it.

Every day of Ezri's life used to be the same. So did a lot of Dax's lives: day after day, walking at a respectable pace along the same prescribed path, hemmed in by the same rules, under the same watchful eyes. Flirting with trouble, like Jadzia and Curzon, but never stepping too far out of line. Suddenly every careful thing Ezri's ever built is in pieces, a chaotic explosion still in progress, and Ezri wouldn't have it any other way. She has no idea what Kira's got behind her back. It could be anything: a Klingon dagger, a Bajoran orb, a bottle of Saurian brandy. Whatever it is, Ezri already loves it. She wants it more than she's ever wanted anything in her life.

Ezri is having a moment of pure clarity. From the outside she must look a bit frozen. Kira hesitates, as though she's missed a cue. She looks down, then pulls her hand out from behind her back. She's holding a small, rounded green-glazed pot. The small heart-shaped clusters of flowers inside are the color of a spring sunrise, yellow and light green fading to pale blue.

"They're Bajoran morning hollies, from Dahkur province," Kira says, still hovering in the open doorway. "Traditionally, uh-- Well, they're outgrowing this pot a bit already, but we could replant them, together. If you want to." She hesitates, glancing around Ezri's quarters, and clears her throat. "I just thought maybe it would brighten up the place."

"You're hovering," Ezri says, wondering why. "Well? I know, I know, you can't stay, but come in!" Surely Kira can't be unsure? Surely she hasn't been as worried and wavering as Ezri, all this time?

Surely there's something you can do about *that*, says a voice inside Ezri, and-- yeah, there is. She goes for it. She steps close as the door slides closed behind Kira, almost backing her into it. Kira inhales a little sharply, but stands her ground. Ezri's gaze is drawn to Kira's, and their eyes meet. She's conscious of every inch of Kira's body, as close as they are, but she's especially drawn to the curve of that thin, beautiful mouth. Ezri lets her eyes flicker from Kira's eyes to her mouth and back as she curls her hands around Kira's warm hands, twining her fingers between and around Kira's, until the small cool pot of flowers slips into her grasp. Kira takes a deep breath at almost the same moment Ezri does, and Ezri can't help but smile. Sometimes-- after knowing her in two lifetimes-- she still has no idea what Kira is thinking, but sometimes it's so easy. Like slipping into a symbiont pool, perfectly body-warm, floating without effort. So easy to let the currents carry you.

"Do I have to write you a formal letter of invitation?" Ezri says softly. She takes a step back, and slightly to the left, towards the door that leads to the bedroom of her quarters.

"I--" Kira says, leaning closer, and then she's laughing as she pulls back. "I really do have a meeting."

"All right," Ezri says. She steps back, and walks around the couch, trying to decide on the best place for her flowers.

"I know I pushed you to stay here," Kira says, and Ezri stops, standing still. "I don't want you to feel like I'm pushing you to-- If you--"

Ezri opens her mouth, then closes it again. "You have a meeting," she says. "Don't you? I don't think this is the kind of conversation we should have in a rush."

"I just want to know that you-- that you want this, that you think it's worth it." Kira says urgently.

"Sometimes I don't know what I want," Ezri says, voice cracking a little. She doesn't even know where to put down these flowers! She turns, her fingers white against the ceramic. "But I know I don't want you to go."

Kira nods. She looks like she's glowing, like the lights in the Bajoran Temple, illuminated from the inside. "Well," she says. "That's a start."

Day One. She died in the Bajoran Temple. She goes to the Bajoran Temple. She knows it's a bad idea. She goes anyway.

She's met a Bajoran or two. (She's lived on this station for six years, eating Bajoran food, celebrating festivals, studying their science and politics, charming their representatives--)

It's just a room. (She's attended weddings here, birth celebrations, harvest blessings--) Maybe the one room on the station that doesn't feel Cardassian, and it's a surprising relief to step away from the cold sharp colors and fanged angles of the station's bones. To be here, inside-- in her heart, maybe?

She doesn't know the symbolism or the stories behind the imagery or the colors or the angles of the walls and floor. (She's been to Bajor and seen their great temples. She's had an Orb experience; she's had a few of them. And--)

"It's a strange sensation, dying," she says helplessly to Kira.

"It must be stranger to be dead," Kira says, then stretches out her hands as Ezri flinches. "I didn't mean--"

"I'm not-- she's not. She is--" Ezri is hopeless. It's a good thing she's leaving. Poor Kira. She and Jadzia were so close. "I'm sorry."

"There's no need to apologize. We should be grateful to you. You're-- you're keeping some part of Jadzia alive. When so much that we lose is lost forever... It's nice to know some things won't be."

Ezri tries to regulate her breathing. It comes out as a shuddering sigh. Kira comes closer and throws her arm over Ezri's shoulders, startling her. *When* did everyone on this station get so tall?

"I don't care what they said on Trill," Kira said, and Ezri's head jerks up. "No, they wouldn't say it, would they? They'd just look down their nose."

"How did you... Never mind." Of course. She's been friends with a Trill for six years. She knows how it is. "Yeah. Well, to be fair I'm pretty hopeless."

"Don't say that, never say that," Kira says, shaking her a little, then tightening her arm to give Ezri an encouraging squeeze. Ezri says nothing, looking down, and Kira sighs. "There's no going back. I know that," she says, looking around at the temple walls. "That's been a hard lesson for us to learn on Bajor. That just because we won, we can't just go back to the way things were before. I'm never going to be an artist. We're all changed. We're all broken, more or less."

Ezri has temporary quarters on the outer habitat ring. She got rid of most of the furniture, so that she can sit and try to meditate in an empty room. So she stops looking down at a side table and expecting to find her bone-handled hairbrush that Worf gave her, or overturning the couch cushions looking for Tobin's notepads, or Audrid's stitch-needles, because she *just set them down* and-- Kira gave her a little clay bird once. It actually looked a lot like a Trill species of frog. She doesn't know what Worf did with it. It doesn't matter now, because it's not hers. But-- she wants it. She used to rub her thumb over its head. She misses it now.

"You helped me a lot with that," Kira says, with an odd twist to her mouth. "Well. Jadzia did."

"It must be hard for you," Ezri says, a wave of depression sweeping over her suddenly. "Me being here." Is it fair that she came back here at

all? Poor Ben, losing Dax twice in a decade-- poor Worf, the war stole so much of their time together-- and poor Kira, trying to comfort *Ezri* when she's so clearly uncomfortable to see Ezri here, in this place! "You shouldn't feel like you have to comfort *me,*" *Ezri* says, stepping away. "I'll-- It'll just take time. I should let you get to your prayers."

Kira catches her again before she leaves, stepping forward and holding Ezri's wrists gently in her warm hands. Waiting until Ezri looks up and meets her eyes. When did Kira get so-- not old, but-- She always looked so young to Jadzia. But Ezri can see the hard-fought wisdom carved into her face by the years.

"Come to me if you want to talk," Kira says. "Will you?"

Ezri looks down. "I don't know if anything I have to say makes any sense, these days."

"Please," Kira says. She looks back at the dim glowing interior of the temple. "Don't come here to be alone. Come to me, okay? Promise?"

"I promise," Ezri says, because some part of her trusts this woman she just met with her life and her soul. Standing here on the threshold she can hear the clatter and noise of life on the Promenade creeping in, so strange and so familiar. "And I-- I should get going."

Kira holds on for one more moment, her lips parted as if to ask a question, then shakes her head as if she's startled and lets Ezri go.

Ezri walks out into the spinning station. She feels a little dizzy. She closes her eyes in the lift, though she already knows from experience that it doesn't help. Maybe she should go back to her guest quarters and stand on her head. Maybe she should just go to bed so this day will be over. Maybe Day Two will be better.

One foot in front of the other, says a voice in her head. Not a previous host, for a change; it's Kira.

Well, Ezri thinks.

It's good advice.

Day Sixty-Two. It's been a pretty good day. A pretty good week. Ezri feels like she's finally starting to find her feet. She and Kira have dinner once or twice a week at the Bajoran restaurant on the upper ring, and Kira fills Ezri in on all the Ops gossip that she misses out on these days, due to spending most of her time as a counselor.

"So I go in there and the Captain's desk is gone! Just gone! How am I supposed to-- anyway. I ask maintenance and they say the Chief approved it. So I pull up the authorization and sure enough, he did! So I call the Chief in--"

"I was there for that part," Ezri says, laughing as she scrapes the last bit of pudding out of her dessert bowl.

"Oh, right. Well, he blamed Nog."

"Ah, that makes sense," Ezri says thoughtfully.

"How? Why?" Kira demands. "In what universe?"

"Did Ben ever tell you about the time Nog and Jake formed a consortium and bought land on Bajor? Right before they built that big reclamation facility in Kendra Province."

"What? No, I never heard about this. When was it?"

"I'll tell you the whole story," Ezri says, waving away the questions. "But the point is, Nog started with a couple of crates of expired yamok sauce and ended up making a pretty sharp land deal. Maybe he's done the same with the captain's desk." She licks her spoon happily, and Kira laughs despite herself.

"Okay, but I still actually need the desk *back!*"

"What did the Chief say?" Ezri says, looking down into her bowl and wondering if it would be bad manners to lick it. The pudding is just so good! Thank goodness she's finally getting her appetite back. Being spacesick for weeks is no joke.

"He said he'd look into it," Kira says, frowning doubtfully. "If he doesn't have good news for me first thing in the morning... The Captain's getting back the day after tomorrow, you know."

"Ben does have a sense of humor," Ezri says hopefully. "Certain things do strike him as particularly funny."

Kira's face goes fierce and serious. "I have a sense of humor," she snaps. "Who's been saying I don't?"

"I--" Ezri actually believes it for one flitting second-- then realizes Kira's teasing her. Holding back laughter, she screws up her own face into what she hopes is a convincing expression of therapeutic concern. "And when did you first start seeing signs that you might be developing, uh... this 'sense of humor...?'"

"Why you--!" Kira says gleefully, and breaks first, falling into raucous laughter. Ezri is swept up with her into a storm of giggles. Every time they try to settle down and look at each other again, one of them sets the other off; essentially, they make a spectacle of themselves in the Bajoran restaurant. That's all right though. Kira's got a lovely laugh.

Afterwards they go for a walk on the upper level, as they usually do after their dinners. Not that often, maybe once or twice a week. It's helpful, because it's different. It's a new routine for Ezri, one that belongs just to her. And it keeps her from drifting into Quark's, reflexively challenging any visiting Ferengi salesfolk to a game of Tongo, and absolutely losing her shirt. So there's that.

There's not that many people out; it's been quieter than usual on the station, and it got late while they were talking. Ezri sees Odo pass by on the lower level, shoulders back and walking in the straightest of straight lines, and frowns a little, glancing at Kira. She knows they broke up sometime last year, but Jadzia and Kira never had the chance to talk about it, so all Ezri knows about it is either station gossip or her own assumptions. And from Jadzia's perspective, well, she knows how deceptive rumors can be.

She's almost asked about it half a dozen times. She doesn't... well, that's a lie. She knows exactly why she hasn't pushed Kira on this particular subject.

They're talking about Nog and Jake, and that leads to Ezri telling Kira about how she first met Ben, back when she was Curzon. It's a pretty funny story and it lasts almost all the way back to Ezri's quarters.

When they reach Ezri's door, she sighs. "You know... you probably don't have to walk me back here every night."

Kira blinks at her, mouth slightly open. Ezri plunges in to fill the silence.

"I haven't started walking towards the wrong quarters in weeks. I think I've finally got the habit locked down. Under my belt. Is that a mixed metaphor? Anyway, I-- I really appreciate it, but..."

"I haven't been doing it just as a favor to you," Kira says evenly, and Ezri flinches and looks up, just as Kira steps close. She takes Ezri's chin in her hand and tilts her face up, pressing an unmistakably hungry, thorough kiss to her trembling mouth. She breaks off just as Ezri starts to respond, stepping back with a gasp.

Ezri stares, wide-eyed. There are voices in the corridor behind her; it sounds like Miles and Julian coming back from a night of darts, singing one of their silly songs. Meeting Kira's eyes, Ezri takes her by the arm and pulls her through the door into her quarters.

"I, um--" Ezri begins, but Kira holds both her hands up, palms out, and stops her.

"I shouldn't have done that. I shouldn't have done that, I'm sorry."

"Why?"

Kira just shakes her head. "Can we forget about it?"

"I... If you want to?" Ezri says, and all of a sudden she feels like she wants to throw up. Did the artificial gravity just shift or are they falling into the wormhole-- "But why?" Kira just shakes her head, and Ezri circles around her, getting in close. "No, I'm serious, I want to know! Why!"

"Because it's not fair to you," Kira says. She turns away from Ezri without further explanation, walking over to the low oval window and staring out at the stars.

"How is it not fair to me?" Ezri demands, honestly confused. Because Kira used to have feelings for Jadzia? She doesn't *think* so, but maybe she missed it? Is it because Ezri is younger than Kira, or technically beneath her in the station's command structure? As if Ben would ever allow anyone to treat her unfairly! That can't be it, can it? "Is it because I'm still-- struggling with my joining sometimes? Because I--"

Kira doesn't turn around, just plants her hands on the windowsill and lets her head hang down, staring at the floor. Despite that, her voice is strong and clear when she cuts Ezri off.

"Because I'd never let you go!"

Ezri's head is in a whirl. Kira slaps a hand against the windowsill and turns around, taking a few steps towards Ezri. Her eyes are dark and hot.

"Because I'd be like Lenara," she confesses in a whisper, and Ezri's mouth falls open. "If I let myself, if I-- if we do this, and I lost you, I'd-- you think I'd be able to walk away?" She reaches out a hand and touches the side of Ezri's face, peering deeply into her eyes. "I don't think I could. I'm bad at letting go," she says with a sad little laugh. "No. I'd be like Lenara, and that's not fair to you. To be exiled on top of everything else you've gone through, trying to work out how to be a host-- I can't ask you to--"

Ezri surges forward and pulls Kira into a kiss, letting her fingers slide into Kira's hair. Kira resists for a moment, vibrating with tension. Her breath catches and she relaxes, kissing Ezri back fiercely.

It's almost overwhelming. Ezri's sensitive, is the thing. She has no idea how she's going to survive this.

She doesn't think Kira would let her run away, though. Not at the moment. She looks so hungry, so intent. She smiles, catching Ezri's eyes, and laughs, a low strange laugh-- no laugh Ezri has ever heard from her-- and leans in close, catching Ezri's wrist and pressing a kiss to her pulse point. Ezri gasps, and Kira follows, eyes half-closed, her lips brushing against Ezri's ear. "You think too much."

"Occupational hazard," Ezri says.

"It's *one* of the reasons why I like you, actually."

"What, what are the other reasons?" Ezri asks, mainly to see if she can string five words into a coherent sentence. She can, barely, but who can blame her, distracted by Kira's lean body against hers, the heat everywhere they brush and touch. Her hands are roaming adventurously over Ezri's body now, learning her anew, and Ezri reaches out, trying to grab some of that bravery for herself. Kira is so beautiful, so young,

deceptively slim but all lean muscle under that drab red Bajoran uniform.

"I'll tell you later," Kira breathes, and steps away-- or tries to. Ezri doesn't let her. Awkward and clumsy as the girl she is, Ezri crushes her mouth against Kira like she needs her to breathe; Kira doesn't laugh. Doesn't push her away.

Trembling, Ezri wonders if Kira can feel it. If it's turning her on. And then Kira leans further into the kiss, a soft noise escaping her, and maybe-- maybe she's as nervous as Ezri is? Maybe she's overwhelmed too? Ezri shudders harder. "Tomorrow," she says, pulling back. "We'll talk tomorrow-- is that all right?"

Kira nods once, her eyes bright, and leaves without another word.

Ezri takes one step back, collapses onto her low sitting couch, grabs a pillow and screams into it.

Is this going to kill her?

Well. Life is short, and that's the truth. And if Ezri had to pick a way? What a way to go.

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