

In The Ranks Of Death You'll Find Him

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In The Ranks Of Death You'll Find Him

by [nostalgia](#)

Summary

You can see yourself in him now, so clearly, and it hurts.

(Miles, and Julian, and the war.)

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

You have scars from the war with the Cardassians, from wounds that had to heal themselves because someone else needed a doctor more than you did. They're not as bad as they could be, but they're hard to miss if you're looking carefully, if you're paying attention.

And Julian, like everyone else who's given you a medical examination since then, tells you that there are treatments now, that he could reduce the scarring if you want. It wouldn't be difficult, it wouldn't hurt.

You mumble excuses as you pull your shirt back on. He doesn't understand your reluctance, but of course he wouldn't, he's young and innocent and naive. And even though you still can't stand him, you hope he gets to stay that way.

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Loud noises don't usually bother you, though you have old friends who hate them. But you're in the bar when a power converter breaks and starts rattling and whistling, and it's not even that loud but you first heard that noise when the Rutledge was under attack, and there you are again, young and terrified, and you could die at any moment, and -

"Chief."

Back in the present Julian is looking at you with obvious concern. Does he recognise your reaction for what it is? He must, surely, because he'll have read all your medical files. You don't want to have to talk about it, you don't want him to patronise you. You wish he wasn't here, but you don't want to be alone either. You just wish... well, you wish, and there's not much point in that, is there?

There's a long and awkward pause while he decides how to respond to your reaction. "Let's go somewhere quieter," he says, and he leads you out of the bar.

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You don't talk to each other for two weeks after he tries to cure the Jem'Hadar of their addiction. You tell yourself that you don't want to be friends with an idiot like him anyway. You tell yourself that he's idealistic, and you're pragmatic, and that there's not much hope of a friendship lasting when you're so different from each other.

But by the second week you miss him, a lot, and at the end of that week you go to his quarters with a bottle of whiskey and the two of you

manage to get drunk enough to mutually apologise for everything you've ever done in your lives. You even mean it, more or less.

You're glad you didn't lose him, you're glad that the Jem'Hadar didn't kill your friendship the way they kill everything else. You lean against him, very much under the influence of alcohol, and you tell him that you love him.

It's fine, though, because he has fallen asleep and he doesn't hear you say it.

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Somehow you don't notice any difference when your best friend gets replaced by a Changeling. You tell him it was easier to get along with, because that way he won't ask you why you didn't realise. Of course, Changelings are good at what they do, they can copy someone exactly, they're perfect spies.

And nobody else noticed, did they? You all spent a month with an imposter and nobody thought there was anything amiss. It wasn't just you, the Changeling fooled everyone. This was an incredible piece of espionage, it made a thoroughly convincing Julian Bashir.

But *you* should have noticed. You really should have. You feel sure he'd have noticed if it was you that was replaced, and then someone would have gone looking for you, and you'd have got home inside a week. It's nothing to do with these enhancements that you're still adjusting to the idea of (and that's another thing you should have noticed, isn't it? You should have realised he was lying to you all the time); it's that you're his best friend, and he pays attention to things. Julian would have known if you'd been replaced, you're sure of it.

You've let him down, and you hate yourself for that.

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It takes you a while to worry about the fact that he's stopped sleeping around. At first you just think, *good, he's finally grown up a bit, next thing you know he'll be settling down, starting a family*. It's progress. But when you do finally think about it properly you realise that his promiscuity died around the time he got back from that Dominion prison camp.

Then you connect it with the fact that he's less annoying now – or to be kinder about it, he doesn't talk quite as much as he used to – and that he seems to have aged a bit more than the five years you've known him for. Julian has changed, and it's not a good thing.

You try setting him up with someone you work with, someone pretty and given to casual flings, but Julian makes excuses, says he's busy, says he's seeing someone else even though you know perfectly well that he isn't. Eventually you stop asking, stop trying to play matchmaker. You tell him – and you mean it – that you're there for him if he ever wants to talk about his time in that prison camp.

He says "Thanks," but he never takes you up on the offer.

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There's not really enough room on the Defiant to carry out a sordid affair with anyone, but when the Seventh Fleet is lost the two of you find a quiet corner of the ship – a storage cupboard, as it happens – and get drunk together because you're an engineer and you know how to make the replicators give you things that they shouldn't.

You're losing this war, and there's almost nothing you can personally do to change that, and there's a good chance – a very good chance – that Keiko's going end up a widow fairly soon. And then, *shit*, you're crying, and you don't cry, you *never* cry, you just don't.

Julian wipes a tear from your cheek with his thumb, and he doesn't say anything and that silence is exactly what you need.

And then he kisses you, offering a distraction, and you take it because you need to think about something else, anything else. You want something that isn't destruction and death, just for a while. You fuck him in that storage cupboard like it's the last thing you're ever going to do, and at the time you don't know that it won't be.

You don't talk about it afterwards, and you don't need to. Sometimes these things just happen, and there's a war on, and there's no need to get sentimental about it when either or both of you could be dead by this time tomorrow.

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When you're back on the station you start sleeping together, and you really do mean sleeping, it's not just a euphemism. You just find it harder to sleep without Keiko there beside you, and Julian doesn't have anyone waiting for him in his quarters, so you sleep together, sometimes,

sharing the bed because you might as well, there's no harm in it, it's a good enough idea.

So you're there when he wakes up from a nightmare, breathless and terrified, the way you've woken yourself more times than you can count.

"It's okay," you tell him, because that's what Keiko always says to you, "you're safe." And you hold him, like she'd hold you.

You don't ask what he was dreaming about, because it's too easy to imagine and remember the sort of things it might have been. You just stay there, quiet, at his side until he falls asleep again.

The two of you have more in common now than you did before the war started, and you hate that. You wish he still annoyed you by talking too much. You wish you were still the cynical one in the relationship. You can see yourself in him now, so clearly, and it hurts.

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The war can't last forever.

You'll win the war, somehow, and Keiko will come back to the station, and Julian will go back to his own bed, and everything else will go back to the way it should be. You'll get to spend time with the kids again, and you won't have to spend every waking minute with Julian, because you'll have other options. Maybe he'll find someone else too, maybe he really will settle down. Either way, you won't have to be everything to each other forever. You're looking forward to that, and you're also dreading it.

Right now you love him, one way or another, and he loves you as well. It's intense and it's horrifying and you care about him so much that your bones ache. You need each other more than you've ever needed anything. Sometimes you're sure you love him more than you love your wife.

But it's okay, because surely the war won't last forever.

End Notes

The title is from *The Minstrel Boy*, as sung in TNG's *The Wounded* where we learned a bit about what Miles did in the war. As you possibly/probably knew already, but in case you didn't. I listened to [the Joe Strummer version](#) a bit for the ambience while writing this, so if there's a soundtrack it would be that.

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