

## It's All We Know Now to Never Go Back

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## It's All We Know Now to Never Go Back

by [nonelvis](#)

### Summary

The woman, a curly-haired dirty blonde squeezed into white leather and tight trousers, was stretched out on the brig's bunk with her arms crossed behind her head. She also had an empty gun holster from which Tyler had extracted a compact phaser of unknown origin and which Lorca had already pocketed for future research. "It was very kind of you to provide a pillow, by the way," River said. "Not every prison's quite so thoughtful, and I should know."

### Notes

I blame Lizbee for this fic. And it was going to wait and become a treat for the [Disco Hiatus Fandom Exchange](#), but since an upcoming episode may joss part of my (deliberately vague) spore drive handwaving, I figured I might as well post it now.

Title stolen from the New Pornographers' "Brill Bruisers."

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The blindingly white starburst of a Klingon ship succumbing to a barrage of photon torpedoes flooded *Discovery's* viewscreen. This had been an opportunistic fight; one they'd have never seen had they not spotted the tiny shuttlecraft limping away from the Klingons, nor heard the shuttle's distress call.

As the light faded enough for Captain Lorca to stop shielding his eyes from the screen, he turned back for the aftermath of sparks and debris. He never got tired of the way those last few shreds of metal drifted like clouds in the middle of space.

He was admiring the graceful rotation of a hull door when Lieutenant Tyler broke in on the comm.

"Tyler to the bridge. Captain, that shuttle we saved? I think you're going to want to talk to the pilot."

"I want lots of things, Mr. Tyler. I want a three-hour nap. I want an end to this stupid war. And I could really go for some of the Golden Dragon's mapo tofu, but I'm not going to get that, either. So what makes you think I want to talk to a random pilot we pulled out of the soup, and who we're putting right back in there as soon as possible?"

"Well, sir." A pause. "She said the air smelled like we were running a spore drive, but that the mycelium might have a touch of fungal rot."

"She said *what*? ... never mind. Take her to the brig; I'll question her there. And tell Lieutenant Stamets to go talk to his mushrooms."

\* \* \*

"So, Miss ..." Lorca consulted his PADD. "River Song. Tell me what you know about spore drives."

"It's Professor River Song, thank you." The woman, a curly-haired dirty blonde squeezed into white leather and tight trousers, was stretched out on the brig's bunk with her arms crossed behind her head. She also had an empty gun holster from which Tyler had extracted a compact phaser of unknown origin and which Lorca had already pocketed for future research. "It was very kind of you to provide a pillow, by the way," River said. "Not every prison's quite so thoughtful, and I should know."

"We're Starfleet, not savages," Lorca said, "which means we're going to have a nice, friendly discussion about what you know about spore

drives, unless you'd rather it be a much less nice and less friendly discussion."

"Please, Captain. If you're Starfleet, then your idea of punishment is bread and water and, I assume, taking away my precious pillow. I'll live."

"We can play it that way if you like. Or I can call my friend the vice admiral and see how quickly she can get an interrogator over from Starbase 39. In case you missed that Klingon vessel trying to take you apart, we're in the middle of a war here."

"No, that hadn't escaped my attention, Captain. But neither does it mean I'm going to tell you anything that might corrupt your timeline."

"Corrupt my ... what do you mean, 'corrupt my timeline'?"

River yawned, stretched, shifted onto her side to face the wall. "Wake me when breakfast arrives, there's a dear. Five-minute egg and toast soldiers, please. Do turn off the light on your way out."

"That's not going to fly, Professor."

"Oh, all right, scrambled will do if you can't manage a soft-boiled egg. Replicators can be so primitive. Now, leave me be, Mother needs her sleep."

Lorca slapped his hand against the cell's outer wall. "Professor! We're going to talk this through right now."

"No, Captain. We're not. We're really, really not. You can bang on the wall all you like, you can leave the lights on full, you can feed me the tiniest crumbs of stale bread and foul water. I've survived so much worse. So you can either let me get some rest and hope I'll be a bit kinder in the morning, or you can stand here and yell and maybe rough me up just a tiniest bit further than regulations permit, and you'll still get precisely nothing. If I were you, I'd take the risk that a drop of honey will catch you an extra fly or two."

He glared at the floppy blonde curls on the pillow, and began to consider for the first time that those voluptuous curves of hers might be concealing pure muscle.

When he heard the first soft snores, he left.

\* \* \*

Before breakfast (black coffee, a sausage omelet, more black coffee) and a morning run, Lorca always spent half an hour reviewing the nightly logs. As long as the armory was in top shape, the security log never took more than a minute and a half to skim.

Except today.

"Lieutenant Tyler," he said to the bleary-eyed, stubbly man he'd woken and ordered directly to his quarters, "please explain how our prisoner could have escaped not once, but twice last night."

"She's a real handful, sir."

"I'm gonna need more than that, Tyler."

"Well, the first time she used a concealed set of tools to break open the locking panel from the inside and disable it. And the second time apparently she ... kissed her way out. Some kind of hallucinogenic lipstick. Both the security officers are okay, just a little dazed."

"She made it all the way to the hangar bay. If we hadn't had a containment field around her ship, our spore drive spy would be long gone."

Tyler winced. "I know, sir. There are no excuses. But she's in restraints now, and I've got four guards on her, so she's not going anywhere."

"Yes, she is," Lorca said. "Let her cool her heels for a while longer. But I'm going to want her brought to my quarters later. I think I've got something to negotiate with."

\* \* \*

"Another difficult man who enjoys seeing me in handcuffs," River said. "At least I'm used to that."

Lorca nodded at the security guards, who removed River's cuffs, ushered her into his quarters, and left. "If you're implying what I think you're implying, that's not why I brought you here."

"He always says that, too." She draped herself across his couch and patted the seat beside her to invite him over. "All right, what's your thinly veiled excuse for having me brought to your quarters? Cheeky."

"I'd like to offer you a deal. You tell me what you know about the spore drive, and my crew fixes your ship. I'll even throw in dinner as part of the bargain."

"My ship is fine. I was being attacked by Klingons when one of my thermoregulator coils overheated. I needed temporary safe harbor so it could cool down, but all my systems were otherwise functional when I docked."

"That's funny," Lorca said, "because one of my engineers happened to notice that your aft engine's zeta particle transformer is dangerously worn out. Could go at any minute, she said."

"Really." River pulled her legs towards her and eyed him closely. "How unusual, considering I just replaced that part a week ago."

"Heat of battle. You can take all kinds of damage without noticing it."

“Of course. And how long do you think it will take to fix?”

“That depends on whether you’d like to tell me exactly how much you know about spore drives.”

She sighed, shook those magnificent curls in a cascade of tan and gold. “Well played, Captain Lorca. Although you realize that even if I agree, there really is only so much I can tell you even if I fully understood the astromycology. We’re traveling on parallel paths, you and I, separated by a lot more years than I can possibly discuss.”

“We’ll start with that,” he said, “and see how things go from there.”

“Make the call first,” she said.

“Not without at least one piece of information.”

“God, you’re as infuriating as ... oh, never mind. Your spore drive is on borrowed time. I can fix the fungal rot, but that’s it.”

“‘Borrowed time’? How long, exactly?”

“I haven’t the faintest clue. What I *can* tell you is that there’s a reason you’re one of the only ships I’ve ever seen still powered by a spore drive. They’ve been obsolete for years, at least where I’m from.” She paused, flexed her right hand. “Oh dear,” she said, “I must have chipped a nail breaking out of your brig.”

“That’s all you have to say, then.”

“That’s all until you fix the damage you caused to my ship.”

He chuckled, but tapped his comm badge. “Captain to Engineering. Please proceed with the repairs to Professor Song’s ship.”

“That’s better,” River said. “And, look, so’s my chipped nail. It’s a miracle.”

“The fungal rot, Professor.”

“Concentrated beta particle bursts for an hour every day until the rot starts to fade. Shouldn’t take more than a week unless your entire store’s contaminated, in which case you’ve got much bigger problems than a few little beta rays can solve.”

He handed her a PADD and stylus. “Write it down. Every detail.”

“You promised me dinner.”

“After you write things down.”

“And after dinner?”

“Well,” he said, “who knows?”

She finished her scribbles and passed the PADD back to him. “I do,” she said. “I absolutely do.”

\* \* \*

“Let’s start the bidding at ten,” Lorca said, “and my left sock.”

“Oh, you’ve still got that?” River replied, curling her cards closer to her chest, which at this late stage in the game was only covered with a demi-cup brassiere. “All right. I’ll raise you five and ...” She stretched an ankle to the side to confirm what was still available. “... a lacy foundation garment. It’ll look lovely on your floor. Or on you, if you play those cards right.”

“I don’t think it’ll fit. I’ll see your five and raise you another five.”

“You men are always so unimaginative. I can think of at least three separate body parts of yours I’d like to see this on.”

“And maybe someday, if you’re very lucky, you’ll get to see that happen. But not today.” He tossed another chip on the pile. “Call.”

“You’ll be sorry you said that.”

“We’ll see. Full house, sevens and kings.”

River laid four aces on the table, gathered the chips towards an already substantial pile, and stretched out her hand. “Your foot, Captain Lorca. I believe you owe me a sock.”

She had to be cheating somehow; no one beat him at poker that consistently. Admittedly, she had an outstanding poker face, and had managed either deliberately or accidentally to lose just enough clothing to be distracting. But he’d had that pot, he knew it. If only he could figure out where she was hiding the cards.

Well. There were obvious places.

“One more hand,” he said, “and then you’re finally going to tell me why spore drives became obsolete.”

“I told you, even if I understood the astromycological explanation, I can’t contaminate the timeline like that. Besides,” River replied, “one

more hand, and you'll be naked, and then I believe the last thing we'll be talking about is spore drives. And that's assuming we're talking at all."

"You're very confident in how you think this is going to go."

"I'm very confident in how men work."

"I'm not your average man."

"Really." She leaned over, tried to peek below the table. "Prove it."

Lorca shuffled the deck three times and dealt the cards. "You're just going to have to wait and see whether you win this hand."

"And if I lose?"

"Well," he said, eyeing his three spades and pair of twos, "I don't think either of us is really going to lose, do you?"

\* \* \*

River straddled Lorca on the couch, pressing him against the upholstery. Somehow, thousands of years after humans had first developed fabric, Starfleet had not yet figured out the secret of couch covers that didn't itch, but with River's thighs clamped around his, her ass cradled in his hands, her teeth nipping at his neck, he hardly minded a scratch or two. She moved like a woman who knew exactly what she wanted: a fast, hard, and rough ride, though that had been easy enough to guess from the way she'd dragged him from the chair and shoved him to the couch after his last scrap of clothing had hit the floor. A hand on his cock and a hand pulling his head back by his hair and her tongue in his mouth, and she was on him as soon as he was hard, which frankly hadn't taken all that long given that he'd been half-hard from the moment she'd literally lost her shirt in the game.

She straightened her posture, arched her back so that Lorca could take a nipple in his teeth, licking and biting, River's skin sweet and salty. She braced herself against the couch and ground into him with a moan, then another as he thrust into her. He slid his lips to her breastbone, where her heart sounded an irregular rhythm beneath his mouth and palms, a beat subtly wrong for a human, but not so unique he could trace it to a species he knew. Whoever and whatever she was – not quite a spy, probably a time traveler, definitely a woman who had set off Saru's threat ganglia from four decks away – he'd file that information away for a time when he wasn't distracted by her steady motion at his waist, the tightening at his groin as he slipped closer to the edge.

River's fingers scraped across his scalp. Her mouth was warm at the pulse point below his jaw. She bit down, lightly at first, and Lorca gasped, jolting into her. Another bite, harder now, her tongue slick on the skin she held captive, and just the thought of the mark she'd leave spurred him on. Her other hand clawed at his back, nails digging in deep even through the tough skin at his shoulderblade, deep enough for him to flinch once, then again as she rose up and dropped down upon him.

"So, it's like that, is it," River said.

"Like what?"

"Like this," she said, and reared back to slap Lorca's face.

He groaned. "You think you can –"

She slapped him again.

His eyes closed, and his rhythm stuttered, and he came hard, shuddering to a stop within her and collapsing against her breasts.

"Mmm," she said, her voice tinged with laughter. "I thought that might work." She slid off him, lay back on the couch. She was still breathing hard, but her fingers shifted between her legs to stroke herself slowly.

Lorca grabbed River's wrist mid-stroke, pulled her arm above her head. River obligingly moved her other arm to match, pinning it beneath Lorca's wrist. "Fair's fair," she murmured.

He let her wait, and only after half a minute, when she opened her mouth to object, did he slip two fingers inside her. Whatever complaints she'd been about to make turned into a low, long moan instead as he moved his hand, keeping his thumb outside to rub slow circles around her clit.

She was so close already, as close as he'd been a moment ago; she sighed with every motion of his fingers, her thighs tense around his hand. He pressed her wrists deeper into the couch, drove himself into her harder until she cried out, her breaths coming in huge gasps, while her body shook beneath him.

In an instant, she freed herself from his grip and latched onto his wrists herself, pulling his hands to either side of her head. A drop of sweat meandered from her forehead to her brow, where her curls spread beneath her in a glorious yellow tangle.

"I should have played poker with you sooner," she said.

"There's still time for another hand."

"Is that a promise?" She let go of his wrist, slid a finger down his waistline. "Or just a really terrible pun?"

He leaned down, his lips half an inch from hers. "Let's go with both," he said, and closed the distance.

\* \* \*

He'd given River permission to launch minutes ago, but her ship was stalled off the port bow – no, not stalled; a deliberate pause, he thought, a very deliberate shift forwards and then slowing to make sure he could still see her from his quarters.

Her ship's aft door swung open, and River, clad in a spacesuit, drifted outside, then clamped herself magnetically to the hull. Step by step, she clambered below the ship, and while Lorca lost track of her as her ship's nacelles blocked his view, he was quite certain he knew where she was headed.

When she re-emerged at the stern, she turned her hand towards *Discovery*. Her thumb and forefinger were clamped together as if holding an object, albeit one too tiny to see at this distance. They opened up, and she made a shooing motion with her fingers.

Lorca didn't need to bother ordering a scan to know what River had sent flying into the void. After all, he'd placed the tracker on her ship himself.

In the distance, River leaned outside the bay door, extended her palm from her lips, and blew a kiss through the vacuum of space. It was the last he saw of her before the door closed and her ship slipped away at impulse.

\* \* \*

His floor was littered with cards and poker chips, and when he finally climbed into bed for the few hours of sleep he had remaining before morning, there was an ace of diamonds stuck to the sole of his foot. Did the card smell of River's perfume, or was that another of her tricks, letting him think she'd left anything of herself behind that he could keep?

He tossed the card aside. It fluttered to the floor, brushing his ankle on the way.

He left it there in the morning.

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