

## Paved With Good Intentions

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### Summary

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Projectile weaponry is long out of date and not ideal – the noise it makes is far too loud and the shot makes the gun jump painfully in her hand. Her aim is good, though – the latest Section 31 agent falls to the ground with an old-fashioned bullet lodged firmly in his brain. One more down, an unknown and hopefully unwary number to go.

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She lets her arm fall to her side, and then she tucks the gun away into the bag that's slung across her hips. She turns to Julian, sitting tied to a chair a few metres away. She takes a moment to admire the knots that hold him in place – they inspire interesting thoughts that she files away for later – and then she takes a knife from her bag and moves to release him.

"You took too many risks," she admonishes, slicing at the ropes.

"It wasn't a risk," he says, "I knew you'd come for me."

But he does take risks, increasingly so, and he can't be lucky every time. They have a lot to accomplish and neither of them can do it alone. "You're going to get yourself killed," she tells him. "You're going to get both of us killed, and probably Dax as well."

"I'm sorry," he says, and she knows he doesn't mean it. He stands up, looks around the room to find what they came for.

But the gun and the ropes and the knife have given her ideas and she pulls him into a kiss before he can do anything else. The work excites them both and he responds eagerly at first before pulling away with an obvious reluctance. "Business before pleasure," he says, stepping out of her arms'-reach.

He's right, of course, they don't have time to act out any of the fantasies that she's entertaining in her head. She glances over at the body, and no matter how many times they do this she's always surprised by how much blood there is. You'd think she'd be used to those final floods of red by now, but she isn't, somehow. "Did he tell you anything useful?"

Julian is sorting through a pile of PADDs on the late agent's desk, and he shakes his head. "They never do."

Ezri isn't surprised, but the loyalty of Section 31's operatives is always disappointing. Sometimes they won't even break under torture, and then the entire exercise is pointless.

"There's enough information here," says Julian, holding up one of the PADDs. "He kept meticulous notes." He crosses the room, stepping over the slowly-cooling body without glancing at it, focussed on the task at hand. She wonders if it's the childhood remixing of his genes that allows Julian to be so calculating and cold, or if he was just born that way. The war and what happened afterwards sharpened the clinical detachment he was trained to and now he can turn to ice in a moment and the change always makes her shiver, excited.

She can do something like it too, she knows. She doesn't always need Joran's help to get the job done.

When the room has been stripped of useful items they transport back to their base of operations, leaving the corpse where it lies. If anyone

cares about the dead man then they'll surely take care of the usual legal technicalities and death-rituals. If not, then it doesn't matter anyway.

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"Base of operations" is a generous name for it – it's a one-room apartment in the centre of the city with a communications channel more twisted and encrypted than anything else on the planet and a worn-out bed that they're never bothered to make. They'll be leaving soon, anyway, and it's just one more mess for someone else to tidy up after they've gone.

Ezri takes the gun and the knife and places them on the small table by the bed, arranges them neatly in easy-to-reach positions.

After a moment she hears Julian approaching behind her, and she stays calm and still when his hands come to rest on her waist and he nuzzles gently against her neck. He pulls her flush against him and she feels his arousal pressing against her, insistent. As he kisses his way up the line of spots on the side of her neck he runs a hand across her stomach and then up towards her breasts.

The part of her that's still Jadzia always recoils when Julian touches her like this, finds the intimacy unappealing at best. But the others don't mind, and Ezri is the one whose opinion matters and she's the one who finds these contacts enticing and arousing. She leans her head back, exposing the full length of her neck to his attentions and sighing softly to signal her approval as he explores the area with kisses and with those little half-bites that she loves so much.

By the time she turns to face him she's intent on taking this as far as it'll go, and she smiles as she plans her next move. Today he's wearing a collarless shirt rather than one of those asymmetric necklines that don't flatter him nearly as much as he assumes, and she unbuttons it from the top down until he loses patience and pulls it over his head, discarding it on the floor of the apartment, unwanted. It gives her access to a fascinating expanse of smooth brown skin and discreet muscle, the latter a product of the past few months of chasing Section 31 from one shadowy corner of the Quadrant to another and she thinks, again, that the work has been good for him. He might not smile much these days, but it's also been a while since she caught him draped in misery, depressed by his own thoughts.

When she kisses him again she pushes him backwards, guiding him blindly towards the bed. They tumble down onto it together, and the tired old springs in the mattress creak to protest their combined weight.

He reaches to undress her in turn, slipping the straps of her dull grey dress from her shoulders and tugging the bodice down to expose her breasts. The air in the room is usually cold, because the heating was broken when they moved in, but here and now her skin feels warm and then his mouth on her is hotter still.

He's hard and she's wet and Dax is squirming furiously around inside her, as aroused as its host and just as eager to do something about it.

Julian abandons his study of her torso and kneels between her parted legs as she makes wordless sounds of encouragement and excitement. He pushes the skirt of her dress upwards, letting it gather in heaps around her hips, and then pulls her underwear down her legs and off her with a series of quick, careless movements. He reaches to unfasten his trousers with hands that shake only slightly – months of living dangerously have calmed such automatic physical reactions to a minimum.

There's a pause – far too long – in the action before they manage to fit themselves together, and then for a quiet, aching moment neither of them moves, content to enjoy the sensation of penetration alone. She pulls his mouth to hers for a searing kiss, and he draws his hips back before sliding back into her quickly and smoothly. She moans her approval and bites at his mouth.

She doesn't intend to do it but she draws blood, and while he doesn't seem to mind – quite the opposite – she knows that she isn't quite herself right now. Once she lets Joran out he can be hard to get rid of, and so these days she's used to sharing things with him, and that includes these intimate games. Joran likes Julian, kind of admires him for that chilled surgical precision that he unleashes as needed. It's nice to have someone's support for the relationship, even if that someone is technically herself.

She turns her attention back to Julian, to someone who isn't just a voice in her head. He looks entranced by her, the way he almost always does, even as the remainder of his emotions slowly fall into disuse and freeze over.

They move a lot this time, ever-willing to experiment with position and form. Julian is over and under and behind her, then finally above her again. She may not be as supple as Emony was, but she remembers a few tricks that even Ezri's untrained body can manage and the responses she gets from Julian make dredging up the memories worthwhile.

The pace becomes frenetic, the need frantic, and Ezri blinks sweat from her eyes, draws much-needed breath into her lungs between impatient movements. When she comes it hits her hard enough that she almost forgets where she is, everything shifting off-kilter as she loses control of herself. Julian follows soon after, falling over her with a hoarse cry and a shudder.

She comes back to herself slowly, gentle aftershocks still pulsing between her legs as her breathing slows and she regains her mental equilibrium. Julian lies unmoving for too long, and his weight reminds her of how small she is, how vulnerable. But there's a knife lying within easy reach and he wouldn't even see it coming.

She blames Joran for these occasional thoughts of killing Julian. It's how Joran relates to everyone, which means that Ezri can't help herself sometimes.

Julian pushes himself up, takes his own weight again. His apology is a slow, deep kiss that makes her press herself against him despite her sated mood. Jadzia flinches from it but Ezri doesn't unintentionally move so much as a muscle – it's her life now and she'll do what she wants with it.

They lie in bed for the rest of the afternoon, relaxed and once more able to focus. They plan their next move in the long game that will hopefully lead to the destruction of Section 31. Ezri is struck by a moment of regret as she considers the future – they’ve spent far too much time encouraging the darkness in each other and themselves, and now there’s likely no way back to the way things were before. If the quest doesn’t kill them then it’s either going to tear them apart or leave them stuck together with an insoluble emotional glue. There’s no way to know which it will be before it hits them, and that means there’s only so much they can do to prepare.

But the work is important, and worth whatever price it exacts from them. No one else is willing to do it and that means the task is left to them. It’s a good cause. They’re going to change everything for the better.

And with luck there might even be something left of them when they’re done.

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