

The Same Kind Of Different

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The Same Kind Of Different

by [nostalgia](#)

Summary

He should have brought a chaperone.

There's a tension in the room. A very inappropriate, very sexual tension. Lauren is flirting, the way she always does, and Julian isn't doing much to dissuade her. Mostly because he doesn't really want to. The two of them alone together was a mistake, which is obvious now that he looks at it from this angle. Augmentation left them both slightly hyper-sexual and in combination they become dangerous.

Notes

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

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There's a tension in the room. A very inappropriate, very sexual tension. Lauren is flirting, the way she always does, and Julian isn't doing much to dissuade her. Mostly because he doesn't really want to. The two of them alone together was a mistake, which is obvious now that he looks at it from this angle. Augmentation left them both slightly hyper-sexual and in combination they become dangerous.

Now, for instance, they are standing far too close to each other, and there's nobody else around to tell them to step back. He feels that he can resist the temptations here, however. He's quite sure of it, in fact.

"I still need to thank you for getting me out of the Institute." Lauren presses her body against his, drapes her arms around his neck.

He stays still, keeps calm. "I simply told them that you're not much worse than me."

She smiles. "You told them you're a slut too." She moves a hand to the back of his head, lets her fingers explore the skin at the base of his neck, drifting upwards to rake through his hair.

He doesn't move, but it takes an increasing effort of will not to respond. "I didn't put it quite like that."

"However you put it, thank you." She says this with her mouth almost touching his, breath mixing when they exhale.

"There are more appropriate ways of showing gratitude," he says, moving his hands to her waist. He'd like to claim it's to stop her getting closer, but it's more to prevent her moving away.

"But they're not as much fun." She touches his face with her other hand, runs it along his jawline. She's putting in every effort to seduce him, but crucially she's waiting for his consent, for him to agree to go further. She isn't out of control, and he was right to help her get out of the Institute. It's something he can feel good about.

He could end this easily, because she's still waiting and it would be the simplest thing in the world to say 'no' to her. She might not be in the Institute any more, but she's still vulnerable. Responding to her advances would be unethical in so many ways. He could end this, and he should. While he considers this his hands begin roaming across her back and he pulls her even closer.

He's going to break. He knows that he's going to break, it's just a question of when and of how bad the consequences will be.

Lauren is breathing hot against his neck. She has one hand tangled in his hair and the other is resting on his shoulder. She whispers, "Give in." There's a pleading note to it.

Why not? They're consenting adults, after all, and nobody else ever needs to know about any of this. There are far worse things they could be

doing to each other.

He tilts his head towards her, and their mouths are almost touching again. The minimal distance between them shrinks rapidly and he kisses her.

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He sits upright in her bed, sheets tangled around his waist, and he runs a hand through his hair. "I'm supposed to be taking care of you."

She stretches against the bed, makes a sound that's almost a contented purr. "You did."

"That's not what I mean." He sighs, because he knows that she knows perfectly well what he means. "I'm supposed to be helping you reintegrate into society, not..." He leaves the rest unsaid, suddenly and belatedly ashamed.

"You can do both," she says, unconcerned.

He shakes his head. "It feels a little too much like I'm taking advantage."

"Like you did with Sarina?" Her casual tone as she makes the accusation throws him somewhat and he finds himself instantly on the defensive.

"It wasn't like that," he insists.

She shrugs. "Seemed like that to everyone else." But she doesn't seem upset, she doesn't sound offended. Her old friend hasn't contacted her, he knows, and that's probably why she has abandoned any real concern for Sarina. He wonders if Lauren will stay in touch with the others now that she has managed to escape from their shared confinement.

"The point," he says, trying to drag the conversation away from the mistakes he made with Sarina, "is that this can't happen again. It shouldn't have happened in the first place."

Lauren shrugs again. This really doesn't seem to be bothering her. Maybe he should be worried about that. "Then we won't do it again. I'm sure you can learn to control yourself a little better."

"It wasn't just me," he protests, rather weakly.

"And I'm sure I can resist you from now on. It wasn't *that* good."

Except it was. It was pretty spectacular for both of them. Just thinking about what they did makes him want to try it again, even with his new and very resolute resolve. He looks at her, lying next to him apparently without a care in the world. He thinks about kissing her, about touching her again. It's going to be very hard to resist her, especially now that he knows what it's like when they're together. But he's going to.

He gets out of her bed before he can change his mind.

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He meets with Ezri in her office for a discussion of Lauren's progress. They try to be professional in the workplace in any case, but he's especially careful about keeping his distance this time. He's sure he must reek of Lauren. He can still taste her. He should have showered, and he should have checked that she left no visible marks on him. Too aware of his movement he tugs at his collar in case it helps to conceal any unsuspected evidence of his lapse in judgement.

Ezri is speaking, "It'll take her a while to adjust."

He pulls himself back to the conversation, hopes he hasn't missed anything vital. "I know. How was her latest counselling session?"

"Pretty good. She's honest about herself."

He hopes she isn't going to be honest about *everything*. He hopes she knows when it's better to lie. Better for him, at least. He's not sure how talking about it would affect Lauren herself.

"Actually, I think she has a bit of a crush on you." Ezri smiles as she says it, like it amuses her.

Julian shrugs and tries to play it down. "She has a crush on everyone."

"Well, she likes you." Ezri leans back in her chair, looks up at him. "Has she said anything? Has she tried to make a move?"

He decides that a flat denial wouldn't sound plausible. Ezri knows Lauren well enough to know that she'd have said something to him by now. "Nothing serious."

"What do you mean by 'nothing serious'?" Now she sounds slightly worried, perhaps even jealous.

“A little flirting, perhaps. It’s nothing. She knows I have you.” He smiles, and it’s one of those disarming smiles that tend to win people over. He tries to look sincere.

Ezri frowns and looks down at her notes. Julian takes a step towards her before remembering that he might still carry the scent of another woman. “You’re really worried, aren’t you?” he ventures. “Nothing’s going to happen, I promise.” He lies so easily; after all his years of obfuscation constructing falsehoods is almost no effort at all.

She looks up again. “I know that.” She shrugs her shoulders, shakes her head. “I trust you. Completely.”

She shouldn’t.

He makes himself smile and he changes the subject.

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Inevitably there’s a second time, and even as he recovers from that he knows that there’s going to be a third time, and a fourth. He and Lauren seem to have formed a feedback loop of flirtation and lust, playing off each other and making each other worse.

“Who else are you sleeping with?” he asks, as she retrieves her clothes from the floor of her bedroom.

“Just you. Don’t look so surprised,” she adds, but once again she doesn’t even sound offended as she says it.

He apologises anyway. “Sorry. I just thought that… well, I was wrong.”

“You’re different. We’re both different.” She sits down on the edge of the bed, underwear in her hands, and she leans towards him. “We’re the same kind of different.”

He is drawn back into her orbit, lets his forehead rest against hers. “We are,” he says, with a sigh. He moves to catch her mouth with his but she’s pulling away from him a moment later.

“I’ve never committed adultery before,” she says, contemplative, as she begins to clothe herself again.

“I’m surprised,” he admits. “I didn’t think that was something you’d be too concerned about.”

“Well, it is.” She reaches behind herself to fasten her bra. “Have you cheated on her before?”

“Once, at a medical conference.”

Lauren nods and reaches for her dress, which is lying across the end of the bed. “Does she know?”

“No, and she’s never going to. It’s not like I’m planning to leave her for someone else. I was just… well, you know what it’s like.” He looks at her, hopeful. He wants someone to understand.

“You needed sex and she wasn’t there.”

He nods. “Yes.”

She struggles a little with the zipper on the back of her dress. “It’s not like you did it to hurt her, or because you don’t love her.”

“Exactly!” He laughs. “Where have you been all my life?”

“Institutionalised.”

He doesn’t quite know what to say to that. If she deserved to be locked up for her lusts then so does he, and they both know how unfair it is that she was and he wasn’t. He reaches out and takes her hand, pulls her back towards the bed.

“I’ve just put my clothes back on,” she points out.

“And they’ll come off again easily enough.” He lifts her hand and kisses it, turns it until his mouth is against her palm.

She smiles. “I thought you were teaching me how to fit in with polite society. You can’t even control yourself.”

“Why should I?” He knows why. He knows exactly why.

The common conclusion was that Lauren was out of control. That she was at risk from her own desires. But Julian understands her better than that – Lauren knows what she wants and she knows *who* she wants, and he is lucky enough to be the one that she wants. For now, at least.

She pulls her hand away, laughing.

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The three of them sit together in Quark's, Julian seated between the two women as though that might prevent them talking to each other about things he doesn't want them to discuss.

"I miss the others," Lauren is explaining. She's leaning towards Ezri across the table, because she's grown used to sharing secrets with her.

"You could visit them," says Ezri, ever eager to help. "Or write to them at least."

Lauren looks doubtful. "I don't know if they could forgive me for leaving. We never quite got over losing Sarina," and here she shoots a resentful glance at Julian, who ducks his head despite knowing that in the end he did the right thing.

Ezri looks from one to the other, reading the lingering emotions and (he hopes) missing the more recent ones. "You said you wanted to hear from her, though. Maybe it would have been easier if she'd kept in touch."

"Maybe. But -"

"Can I get you anything else?" Quark has appeared at their table, tray in hand and casting a speculative eye over Lauren.

"We're fine," she tells him, smiling.

"If you need anything -"

"We'll let you know." She says it with a wink, and Quark touches a hand to his left ear.

"I'm sure you will," he says, voice low and eyes wandering.

Julian interrupts, "Quark, this is a private conversation."

He holds up his hands. "Just trying to help." He steps back, turns away after a moment's hesitation and then he leaves them alone.

"I'm sorry about Quark," says Julian, with a tired sigh. "You'll get used to him eventually."

"He's not my type," says Lauren. "I prefer them taller." She smiles at Julian and he tries not to look flustered by this minor but very public declaration of interest.

But Ezri just smiles, unconcerned. She thinks this kind of flirting is as far as it goes. She thinks Julian is a better person than he really is.

"So how did you two meet?" asks Lauren.

"Oh, we knew each other before we met," says Ezri, with a twinkle in her eye. She explains, "Julian was friends with Dax's previous host, Jadzia." She glances at him, and she smiles. "At least after he gave up on trying to get her into bed."

This isn't a conversational direction that Julian is particularly keen to explore, but he's not quick enough to change the topic before Lauren is hooked.

"Really?" Lauren lifts her drink to her lips and she leans back in her chair, ready to hear the rest.

Ezri drops her voice a little, says in a theatrical whisper, "He was very persistent."

"Annoying?"

"A little."

They both laugh, and Julian tries not to flinch. He wants to get away from this discussion, quite desperately, but he can't risk leaving them alone together. Who knows what they would say to each other? He tries to interject, "Perhaps we should -"

"Did he harass you?" Lauren has gone straight for the jugular, as usual.

"I wouldn't put it quite like that..." Ezri looks rather uncomfortable as she picks through Jadzia's memories. "He didn't mean any harm."

Lauren smiles. "Well, I guess it worked out in the end. The two of you seem to be very happy together."

Ezri reaches for Julian's hand and he feels her fingers tighten around it. He manages to smile at her. He doesn't look at Lauren, in case he can't meet her eyes. She has a bold gaze that can be hard to confront at the best of times. And this is not, by any means, the best of times.

He looks round when he hears Lauren's chair scraping against the floor as she stands. "I think it's time I went to bed. Alone," she adds, with self-aware raise of her eyebrows. "Do you two want to escort me back to my quarters to make sure?"

"No," says Ezri, without any obvious concern in her voice. They need to show Lauren that they trust her. "But I think it's time I turned in as well." She gets to her feet too, and Julian follows her lead. They say their goodbyes to Lauren, letting her leave on her own before they head towards the habitat ring themselves.

As they walk together, Julian asks the question that's been worrying at him. "Do you think I'm like her? The way other people see her, I mean."

Ezri looks at him carefully. "You'll have to be more specific."

"Did I harass people? I know Jadzia could get a little frustrated with me at times, but I didn't think..." He falls into silence, not quite wanting

an answer to his questions.

“You could be a little intense,” admits Ezri, “but if you had really bothered her she’d have let you know about it. Probably in a very painful way.”

He nods. It’s a good enough answer, and it lets him off quite easily. It’s better than he had any right to hope for.

Ezri stops walking, because they’ve arrived at the door to her quarters. She turns to face him and she waits, leaving the door unopened.

“Good night,” he says, and he leans down to kiss her lightly, just the briefest touch of his lips against hers.

“Is that all I’m getting?” she asks, with a cheeky grin on her face. “I was hoping for a lot more than that.” She lifts a hand to touch his chest.

“I’ve got a lot on my mind,” he tells her. She moves her hand away, looks a little puzzled. “What?” he asks, when he notes her expression.

“It’s not like you to turn down sex, that’s all.”

“Well, if you’re going to insist -”

“No, it’s okay. I should probably get some sleep anyway.” Ezri turns away and keys in the code for the door. “Good night,” she says, and there’s something in her voice that he can’t quite place. Disappointment, perhaps, or just tiredness. It’s been a long day, after all.

Julian waits for the door to close behind her and then he starts walking towards his own quarters. After a few dozen steps he changes his mind, doubles back and heads for Lauren’s instead.

-

Their next meeting about Lauren starts off badly, because Ezri has suspicions although not quite in the direction she should have (thank God): “I think she’s seeing someone, but she won’t say who it is.”

Julian pretends that he has nothing to worry about. “It’s not really any of our business, is it? As long as she isn’t harassing anyone. Which, I remind you, she hasn’t been.”

“As far as we know.”

“As far as we know,” he agrees. But he does know, because he thinks that Lauren has been telling the truth about him being her only lover at the moment. Certainly he can’t imagine a reason for her to lie. It’s not like they’re a couple, it’s not like she’d be cheating on him. “Leave it for now,” he suggests. “If she wants to tell you then she will. And you *could* be wrong about this anyway.”

Ezri looks doubtful. “I’m good at this. I know when people are hiding things from me.”

He doesn’t laugh. He doesn’t even want to laugh. He’d rather scream, but that’s out of the question as well. “Maybe you’re right,” he allows, “but still, I think you should wait. Don’t push her on this.” He leans against the wall of Ezri’s office and tries to calm himself down. His heart is racing, because Ezri has wandered too close to the truth and he still doesn’t know what he’ll do if she finds out what he’s been up to behind her back.

He could lose everything over this affair – and surely by now their string of reckless encounters has earned that title. His career is at risk, and he’d certainly lose Ezri if she knew the truth. It’s not just the infidelity, it’s that he’d have let her down. He’d have shown her what he’s really capable of, despite all his efforts and all his better impulses.

Ending it should be easy, it wouldn’t take more than a few carefully-chosen words. It could be over by this evening. He really should stop this nonsense before it wrecks everything.

Why can’t he just stop?

-

His arguments with Lauren almost always come back to the topic of Sarina. She likes to throw that series of mistakes at him when she’s annoyed, probably because it’s the easiest way she has to hurt him.

They’re supposed to be talking about finding Lauren some work to fill her empty days. They aren’t. Instead they are, again, going over how badly he misjudged things with Sarina. Maybe Lauren worries that he’ll do the same with her. Maybe she’s realised that he already has.

“Was it the wide-eyed innocence?” she asks, as she paces the room, arms folded across her chest. “Was it the appeal of the untouched maid? You’d have been her first, you know. She’d have been impressed no matter what you did.”

“It was nothing like that,” he protests, already tired of the argument. “She just... she was like me. *You’re* like me, you know I can’t resist that sort of connection.”

“So first you wanted the Madonna, and now you want the Whore?”

“You’re not a whore,” he says, quietly. “But if you really must know, I prefer my partners to be experienced. I don’t have some unexamined fetish for virgins.”

“Well, if it’s experience you’re after then you’ve certainly come to the right place.” But Lauren has done nowhere near as much as she likes to imply. She was institutionalised for a large part of her life, she didn’t have much in the way of opportunity. She stops pacing. “When do you think we’ll get bored of each other?” She asks this in a softer voice, at a less irritated volume.

“I don’t know. But it needs to stop even if we don’t. I’m risking too much here.” He steps towards her, almost reaches out to touch her but stops himself at the last moment. “And so are you. You don’t need me getting in the way of you having a normal life.”

She laughs at that. “You think either of us could ever be normal?”

It’s a sore point and her comment antagonises him. “We can at least try.” They shouldn’t have to, but he’s used to pretending and he doesn’t like to entertain the alternatives for too long.

Her amusement doesn’t fade. “You really believe that, don’t you?”

He glares at her, because he’s angry and she’s laughing and he’s very much aware that they’re both turned on. Conflict does that to them, it’s just the way they were accidentally made. Sooner or later one of them is going to move in an ill-advised way and then... well, whatever happens it’s certainly not going to help matters.

Julian is quite determined that he’s not going to be the one who makes that move, that he isn’t going to make things any worse than they already are. He can control himself around her, he can do the right thing. In fact, he’s going to leave. He’s going to end this now and then it’ll be over. He can do that. He can do that quite easily.

He realises that he’s taken another step towards her.

They end up fucking on the floor, pressing against each other desperately, trying to merge together at least for a while. It’s not much, and it’s certainly not enough, for either of them.

When they’re done she pushes him off her and the argument begins again.

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Ezri is pleased with the progress that Lauren is making. She has become quite the debutant, making her entrance back into the real world with considerable success. Most importantly, she has proven everyone else wrong, and has shown that she can operate within the normal rules of society.

Julian would be pleased too, but he knows that she has achieved these things despite him rather than because of any positive influence he has had on her.

Ezri remains blissfully unaware as she showers him with undeserved praise. “You’ve done good work with her, you can be proud of this.”

It’s the sort of thing he has always longed to hear, the sort of approval he craves, but it just sounds hollow.

Later, in Ezri’s quarters, the accolades continue until he can’t stand it any longer and he silences her with a kiss. It should be obvious that he’s trying to shut her up, but she just presses herself against him, deepens the kiss and turns the distraction into something else entirely.

She touches his cheek, strokes her fingertips over his skin. “Shall we go to bed?”

This time the offer is welcome. “Yes.”

-

He thinks while Ezri sleeps. He thinks, and he worries, and he tries to make sensible plans for the future. He thinks he loves Ezri, and he’s quite sure that his other, much less wholesome dalliance means more to him than it does to Lauren. It’s not worth losing what he has, it’s not worth ruining so many lives.

Ezri shifts in her sleep, pulls herself closer to him, mutters something under her breath.

Julian keeps thinking.

-

The end, when it comes, is a shock to him. He goes to Lauren's quarters and finds her packing her few possessions away.

"I'm going back to Earth," she says. "I'll be able to visit Jack and Patrick more often that way, and there's a lot more to do there than there is out here." She doesn't need to add that it'll put a good distance between her and Julian. She hands him a PADD, and it feels so very deliberate that their hands don't touch as she passes it to him. "But first I need a report from my caretaker telling them all what a good girl I've been while I was on this station."

"You'll have it by morning," he tells her and she nods, satisfied.

Trying to talk her into staying would be the worst mistake either of them could make at this point, so he doesn't make any attempt to do so. Nobody else will understand why she's leaving so suddenly, but the reasons she has given are sound and should convince most of the people with an interest in her life.

"I should thank you," he says.

She raises her eyebrows. "For a brief and steamy affair?"

He smiles and shakes his head. "You've made me realise that I'm not quite the gentleman I thought I was."

"I won't argue with that."

"It's a valuable insight," he admits. "I wish I could offer you something half as useful."

"You got me out," she reminds him. "You gave me back my life."

He nods. He did help her that much and he did, after all, have the very best of intentions at the time. "Then shall we call it even?" He moves to shake her hand, then sees the possible dangers in that and doesn't follow through on the gesture.

Lauren notices and smiles at his awkwardness. "Don't worry, at least one of us can control herself." And she kisses his cheek, very lightly and very quickly. She steps back again more hastily than she really needs to, and it's the last time that they'll ever touch each other on purpose, skin against skin.

But Julian doesn't know that yet, and so he smiles. They're the same kind of different, after all, and that has to count for something.

End Notes

This is mostly the result of some conversations on Discord about how Lauren is in literal horny-jail for behaviour that isn't really any worse than Julian's. So I decided he should get her out of there, because why the hell not?

And then they had a torrid and sordid affair.

(Also I made myself like this pairing and there's no content for it, so well done me, eh?)

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