

501 For Beginners

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by [nostalgia](#)

Summary

It's just a friendly game of darts.

Ezri's first dart thuds into the thick black rim around the dartboard and she swears quietly.

"At least you hit the board."

"Don't patronise me, Julian."

He holds up his hands, defensive. "I'm not! Darts is a difficult game."

Placated, she takes aim with her second dart. This time she's more successful and manages to score three points.

"Just aim for the centre of the board for now," Julian advises, "we can worry about the rules later."

She nods, and with her final dart she hits the triple eight.

"That gives you twenty-seven points. Not bad for a first go," says Julian as he steps forwards to retrieve the darts from the board. He tugs them from the cork and heads to his usual position well behind the line.

Ezri turns to stare at him as he walks past her. "Where are you going?"

"Miles always makes me stand back here. My hand-eye coordination was enhanced, you see, and so -"

She cuts off his explanation. "I'm not going to win anyway," she points out.

He nods and he moves back up to the line. He throws the darts quickly, without much care – it doesn't quite seem fair to try his best when he's playing against a complete beginner. "One hundred and forty," he announces.

"Now you're just showing off," says Ezri, but she's smiling and there's humour in her voice.

"Miles and I have been playing this game for years," he reminds her as he plucks the darts from the board again. "You'll get the hang of it eventually."

She takes the darts when he passes them back to her, and she looks down at her feet to check that she isn't over the line. She adopts the stance he showed her earlier. "Like this, right?"

He corrects her posture with his hands on her shoulders. "Almost. Move your left foot back a bit." She bumps against him as she changes position, and he lets a hand slide down her arm, more for the sensation of contact than to help her. The touch is almost entirely innocent, but he's suddenly very aware of the heat that radiates from her body. It's nice. Too nice, really. He drops his hands to his sides and takes a step back, away from temptation.

Unaware of the subtext, Ezri stands as she was shown and aims for the dartboard again. Her eyebrows move downwards in a frown of concentration and she draws her lower lip between her teeth.

Not for the first time he wonders what it would be like to have sex with her. He's never slept with a Trill, it would be a new experience, another species to cross off the list of untried partners. Julian has read up on the topic, a true xenophile and one who's willing to do the research. Apparently Trills taste sweet. The mental images are appealing – Ezri on her back with her legs wrapped around him, her eyes closed

and her lips parted, fingernails digging into the skin on his back as she –

“Julian?”

He blinks the fantasy away and drags his attention back to reality. She’s on her third dart, and she’s looking at him with a questioning expression. He has no idea what she asked him about but there are only so many possibilities. He nods at her, hoping it’ll do for an answer, and she turns her gaze back to the board in front of her, apparently satisfied by his response.

He feels slightly embarrassed by how easily he was distracted, but not by the thoughts themselves. There’s no harm in thinking about it, after all. Just because it’s never going to happen that doesn’t mean he can’t indulge in a bit of daydreaming on occasion. And not just daydreams – fantasising about Ezri has helped him get to sleep more than once on lonely nights, fucking his hand and pretending it was her. He generally rotates the starring role between people he knows, but he has to admit that she’s been making quite a few appearances in his masturbation fantasies recently.

“Forty-eight,” she says, with a smile. “I’m improving already.”

As she walks up to the dartboard he lets his eyes wander – her uniform clings nicely to her curves, but it also hides too much. He’d like to see more skin. He knows exactly how far down the spots go – the information isn’t exactly a secret – but he’d like to be able to confirm it for himself.

And he really needs to stop letting himself get distracted like this. She’s standing in front of him now, the darts held out before her, smiling and expectant. He takes them from her, make three poor throws in a row and adds a mere seventy points to his total.

“If you’re trying to let me win you’ll have to do a lot worse than that,” she says.

He glances to the side and finds that she’s still smiling at him, and now there’s a mischievous sparkle in her eyes. He can’t quite pin down what it means, but if she were anyone else he’d end this game right now, take her back to his quarters and fuck her until she was screaming his name.

But she’s Ezri. She’s Dax. She’s not attracted to him and she never will be. The interest isn’t mutual, and he doesn’t want to be rejected again. She asked him not to flirt with her and he’s been doing his best to stick to that. She certainly doesn’t want someone who chased after Jazdia for several years, even if that’s no longer the thing that draws him to her – she seems more at peace with being Joined now, but she has every right to be upset by the idea that people are comparing her to previous hosts.

It’s Ezri’s turn to throw again, and Julian tries to focus on what’s actually happening in front of him, rather than on the distracting thoughts that form themselves unbidden when he looks at her. He mentally shakes himself and tries to rationalise it – he likes sex, he likes her, is it really so surprising that he likes the idea of combining these two interests?

Eleven. Double nineteen. Another three that this time just misses the outer bullseye. She’s right that she isn’t going to win, no matter how poorly he’s playing today, but she’s getting there. There might come a day when she’s a tough opponent. He finds that he’s already looking forward to that.

This time as he takes the darts from her he lets his fingers stroke the soft skin of her wrist. She looks up at him, her eyes widening and her cheeks turning pink. Suddenly he is flustered, because if he didn’t know better he’d take that as a sign that she’s just as interested as he is. He is struck by the sudden urge to kiss her, and he leans towards her, hopeful.

Before he can act on the impulse he spots something in the corner of his eye that grabs for his attention and he looks up, across the crowded bar, to see Worf staring at them. Glaring, really. Julian smiles at him and tries to look innocent.

Ezri turns her head, following his gaze, and then she steps back. “We can finish this another time,” she says, and he isn’t sure if she means the game or the awkward moments of what might have been mutual attraction.

“Of course.” He tightens his grip on the darts, holding on to something undeniably real.

She moves away, disappearing into the crowd before he can think of a way to stop her leaving. With a frustrated sigh he turns back to the dartboard, makes a half-hearted throw as he wonders what exactly all of this means. Surely it has to mean *something*?

The lights around the board flash excitedly as the dart hits the bullseye.

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