

# Mass Effect: Final Error

## Chapters 43 & 44

Novus Peregrine

### Chapter 43: An Ancient Clue

Oriana stood as the last member of the team she'd called together settled into their seat. Present were Shepard, Liara, Miranda and Tali. For all intents and purposes, she'd brought together all of their combat capable members who were good at *more* than just combat. Shepard was the closest to the odd woman out, but of all of them the Spectre had the best native talent for tracking down impossible leads. Even now, after spending so much time with her, Oriana genuinely didn't understand how that worked. She just knew it could be relied upon, and that not including Alliana's odd luck for this particular endeavor would be stupid. With all attention gathered to her as she stood, she addressed the group.

"I've pulled you all in today because we've gotten something interesting out of Task Force Aurora. Most of you are at least passingly familiar with them. Tali, as I don't think you've directly worked with them, they can be best summed up as a multi-species Think-Tank that was put together to hunt down the more esoteric leads regarding the Reapers. Legends, rumors, myths, and so on. Liara gave them a lot of their original leads, from her own work trying to delve into the Reapers' cycles."

Oriana send an acknowledging nod Liara's way, the Asari doctor smiling happily at the recognition. With Tali now given the barebones of background, Oriana turned on the central holo-projector to display two images side-by-side. One was the image of a slightly greying human man, with an identifying tag below his image labeling him as Dr. Garret Bryson. The other was of an oddly glowing spherical relic.

"Dr. Bryson's team had, until recently, been one of the more successful. Unfortunately, he's now dead, under circumstances that leave us nearly certain he was onto something. In order to explain farther, let me introduce you to one more person, who had been working to help several of the Think-Tanks all at once."

Oriana punched a button on her omni-tool, causing the door of the conference room to open. Through it strolled...an android. Not a Geth, but clearly not an organic. Clearly female in basic body structure, and far more refined than the clunky Geth designs. The android woman spoke into the surprised silence.

"Greetings. I am EDI, an Enhanced Defense Intelligence originally created by Cerberus, but liberated from that group during Miranda Lawson's systematic disassembling of the organization. Since being cleared by Eden's Dawn, I have been involved in several of the Think-Tanks trying to solve the Reaper issue. As well as in numerous diplomatic relations with the Geth, as I am better able to bridge the differences between human and AI thought than the Geth are."

All of those present clearly recognized her name, even if they'd never seen this platform. Miranda was, of course, unsurprised entirely. Not only had her sister been the one to recover and vet EDI, but she'd helped create the body EDI was currently using out of another old Cerberus infiltration

project. Oriana, not wanting to get lost in just *why* EDI now had said physical platform, took back attention with a cleared throat.

“Most of you have worked with EDI in some capacity, but only Miranda and I have worked with her directly, as she’s largely been assigned to handle mass data processing for the various Think-Tanks. As it happens, this included Task Force Aurora. She was the effectively the only witness to Dr. Bryson’s recent murder, due to some unusual events that I’ll let her explain. EDI?”

EDI nodded and remotely took over the holoprojector. A third image, that of another human man labeled ‘Derek Hadley,’ joined the original pair.

“Three days ago, while pursuing leads on an entity known only as ‘Leviathan,’ Dr. Bryson was unexpectedly shot by his research assistant Derek Hadley. While there were numerous irregularities, the most important was that Derek Hadley has no recollection of doing the deed, only memories of everything going dark and cold, then a pistol in his hand. I myself witnessed the altercation, and noted immediately the Hadley was moving in a way often more associated with husks than humans. This sounded numerous alarms, as it was feared to be another example of an indoctrinated individual having slipped past the scanners for such. This was particularly worrying, given how frequently *all* members of Task Force Aurora are checked.”

The holoprojection had changed to show the event in question, allowing everyone to see the odd motions for themselves. It was swept away when it finished by a more tightly zoomed in image of the spherical relic.

“When Mr. Hadley was checked, he showed signs of something *similar* to Indoctrination. But not the same. Moreover, the readings involved were consistent with several others taken on relics like the one pictured here. These relics are all, without exception, involved in the Leviathan case. Which, in turn, revolves around a single question. What, exactly, killed the Reaper that the Batarians found on Dis? Dr. Bryson believed that the ‘Leviathan of Dis’ was not the Reaper itself. But rather, whatever *killed* that Reaper.”

Shepard leaned forward at that, visibly intrigued. When EDI nodded acknowledgement to her, the redhead spoke.

“What made him think it was worth investigating? We’ve run across other Reapers that had been killed before. Not to mention we’ve killed quite a few ourselves since the war started.”

EDI, rather than being put out by the question, simply pulled up footage showing the Leviathan of Dis, taken by the Salarian STG before it disappeared. Everyone around the table quickly saw the issue, though Shepard was the one to give it voice.

“It’s not damaged. No more than the crash itself would account for. No obvious sign of the sort of massive battle damage we usually have to inflict on them to ‘kill’ one. Whatever killed that particular Reaper, it did so *without* a prolonged fight.”

EDI nodded confirmation of Shepard’s thoughts, picking up her explanation.

“Precisely. And anything that could kill a Reaper in such a fashion, we could potentially weaponize to kill them without taking as many losses as we currently do in the process. This matches

our current doctrine, designed around the need to inflict multiple Reaper losses for every ship of our own that is destroyed. As a result of that very observation, discovery of what killed the Reaper at Dis was prioritized. Analysis of intercepted Batarian communications indicates that they knew something, that the Reaper corpse itself was *not* the Levithan. But no one among the Batarians who knew anything is known to have survived the Batarian Hegemony's defeat by Citadel forces."

Shepard nodded and leaned back, with Tali prompting the meeting to move on a moment later by asking EDI if there were any leads.

"Yes. One of our field researchers had been tracking odd Reaper movements, which he deemed possibly related to the Levithan. Despite their difficulties with our forces, the Reapers have consistently flown a search pattern of sorts. It has kept some of their forces busy, which was welcomed by the Citadel Alliance. But the fact that they have not even once paused, despite their setbacks against us, indicates that this may be a *renewed* search they perform every cycle. Rather than something new to ours."

Orianna stepped in at that point, with EDI easily surrendering control of the holotable as Oriana used it to display an asteroid in the Aysur system of the Caleston Rift.

"This is where we come in. EDI has already done the initial legwork, tracking where the field researcher went. Said researcher, Alex Garneau, has not responded or checked it. But EDI was able to track his likely location to large asteroid named Mahavid in the Aysur system. There is a small mining facility belonging to T-GES Mineral Works on it, and Mr. Garneau appears to have disappeared there while tracking another relic. Given the potential dangers and potential payoff, the powers that be decided it was something to assign some of our people to. As all of us have proven to be indoctrination resistant in the past, and possess both technical skills and combat ability, they want us to try and run this Levithan down. Though they are unwilling to lose us for long, and as such we have a limited window to get this done in."

From there the questions started, as they all tried to figure out what they knew and what their approach should be. Even as they worked the details out, Shepard ordered the Phoenix to move out towards the Aysur system...

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It was a good thing that standard operating procedure for the Phoenix was to enter any new system under stealth, as the Aysur system hosted a Reaper presence. It wasn't the presence of a concentrated fleet, but dispersed signals...which were likely there for the same reason they were. Garneau had been certain that his field teams were being shadowed by Reapers, who were attempting to use the Task Force's own efforts to find what both sides were looking for. The only good news about that little detail was that the Reapers were, apparently, well aware that they didn't do 'subtle' very well. Not outside indoctrination anyway, and such a tactic wouldn't have helped them in this case. That meant that the shadowing Reaper units were in system, but not actively engaged with the mining base, leaving an opening for them to slip a ground team in via a stealthed shuttle. No Reaper troops were on the ground when they arrived, but that didn't mean what they *did* find wasn't incredibly disturbing.

"Goddess, they are like robots...no offense meant EDI."

“None taken, Doctor T’soni. I am confident I am more lifelike than these...people.”

She was correct. Which was, of course, what was so disturbing. All of the T-GES Mineral Works personnel were behaving as if they were following set scripts. Very basic scripts. Offering tours, making excuses, disengaging with any complex topic and discouraging their visitors from going any farther into the facility. The ground team had all pulled back to a corner, keeping a close eye on the robotic personnel, as they discussed the situation. It was Shepard that spoke next.

“This isn’t indoctrination. Not of the type we’ve seen before, at any rate. Some sort of primitive version of it?”

Oriana hummed as that sparked a few ideas.

“That begs an old question that’s never been fully answered. Specifically, just what *is* indoctrination. Is this an older version, perhaps from a rogue Reaper from many cycles past? Or...was indoctrination originally a natural ability? Something like what the Thorian has. In which case...”

Liara caught on quickly.

“In which case Leviathan might just be a survivor, or a colony of survivors, from whatever species originally developed it. Naturally or unnaturally, actually. Even if it’s pure technology, it’s possible the Reapers stole it from some other civilization in a previous cycle.”

Shepard, in her usual role as corralling sheepdog for her more scientifically inclined minions, interjected before they could theorize too far, calling them back on point.

“Nice theory, but we have some more immediate issues. Like if these guys are going to attack when we dig deeper looking for Garneau.”

It was Tali’s turn to speak up.

“The lift can be easily fixed, and I tapped into the access logs already. Garneau passed through it within the last seven days. No outgoing log for him either.”

That information firmed up Shepard’s expression.

“Then it doesn’t matter if they do attack. Fix the lift, Tali. Everyone else, keep your eyes on the robot people. If they attack, knock them out if possible, lethal force only if necessary.”

Thankfully, it took less than three minutes for Tali to repair the lift and the locals did nothing more than stare at them creepily as they all backed onto it and took it up toward the mineral labs. Labs which proved to be filled with more of the same listless, robotically half-functional crew. All of the ground team grew progressively more unsettled as they combed the labs, EDI and Tali easily hacking their way past any security doors. And then, they found someone claiming to be Garneau...or something possessing him.

**“THE DARKNESS MUST NOT BE BREACHED.”**

Multiple people cursed as Garneau shattered the glass between them with nothing but his naked fists...but none of them were rookies. Instead of flinching like some sort of B-Grade action movie

heroes, three warps, a stream of SMG fire, and a carnage round turned Garneau into little more than paste.

“Fuck! Now what?”

Of course, human-paste was unhelpfully non-talkative. Thankfully, the man’s omni-tool had somehow survived intact. Well, intact *enough*. Specifically, intact enough to indicate that the man had indeed discovered another of the odd relics that EDI was half-sure was behind the primitive indoctrination. The artifact, whatever it truly was, was apparently in the mines themselves. Which made that their next destination...

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The moment they tried to get to the mines, they ran into problems. First, the power was cut...and then the Reapers came when they tried to use an alternate route. It surprised them all when there were both Marauders *and* the Yang version of Brutes present. Whatever the Reapers were trying to find, it apparently warranted the use of even units which the Reapers were struggling to create enough of to supply their ground forces. Of course, with Shepard, Oriana and Liara all present, they’d had the brute biotic power to punch through the vanguard of the Reaper ground units quickly. Which was a good thing, since they’d only just barely managed to do everything they needed before more Reapers arrived.

They’d recovered the artifact, along with the actual Garneau’s real body (the previous possessed individual having apparently lied to them about this identity) and evacuated the suddenly disoriented station crew. Said crew had abruptly recovered the moment they put the relic in one of the containment units that had been developed to block indoctrination in the last few years. Which certainly seemed to indicate that the relic was both the cause, and similar enough to Reaper indoctrination to be affected by the same containment procedures. Now, as they slipped away from the system, they just needed to figure out what to do next. EDI, who’d taken the lead on collating the new information they’d gotten from Garneau’s omni-tool and a datapad, spoke to the same group they’d started this side mission with.

“Garneau’s notes included two things that could help us, in two entirely different ways. The first is a method of blocking the indoctrination effects of the artifact. Considering how similar the effect is to the Reaper method, this bares immediate research efforts. Previously, no known method of blocking the effect has been created that was small enough to be man portable. If this new method can be adjusted for anti-Reaper use, it could help us farther mitigate the effects of indoctrinated agents.”

Everyone around the table nodded firmly at that. The containment unit they’d used for the artifact was, in fact, the smallest device anyone had yet created for such purposes. And it was easily the size of any two of the people in this room. Tali was the one to ask the obvious question, a moment later.

“Is it similar enough, though? Obviously, Reaper indoctrination is more advanced than whatever this was. Those people we recovered have *no memory of the last ten years*. Indoctrinated agents, on the other hand, merely have their loyalty shifted, with far less effect on their capabilities.”

EDI made a shrugging motion, even as she changed the display to show two different wavelengths on a brainwave graph. Most of those there instantly recognized one of them as the set of

frequencies that had been isolated as Reaper indoctrination indicators. The other was similar, but simpler.

“That is unknown at this time. If nothing else, you can see the similarities. Figuring out the differences may allow us to project possible refinements or alterations the Reapers may use in the future. Even if we can’t figure out how to block indoctrination any better, we may be able to use this in our efforts to keep ahead of any changes the Reapers make, by looking into the past and seeing what changes they’ve *already* made.”

Everyone nodded again, and this time no one else spoke up. Oriana, noting that fact, prompted EDI to get back to her original track.

“The second thing we discovered was that Garneau had been attempting to contact Dr. Bryson’s daughter, Ann Bryson. This failed, due to Ann Bryson’s current location. She is the leader of Project Scarab, which is another Task Force Aurora group investigating the planet Namakli in the Pylos Nebula. As the Pylos Nebula has nothing of value to the Citadel forces, they have not tried to prevent Reaper forces from taking it. Currently, the entire Nebula is occupied by Reaper forces, and thus anyone operating there is forced to operate under coms blackout protocols.”

Shepard frowned, raising a finger for attention.

“Doesn’t the project have a QEC? I know our production of them is still limited. But this seems like a project that should have had access to them.”

EDI nodded at the question, responding easily.

“Task Force Aurora does, indeed, have access to several QEC sets. However, there are far more field teams than there are QECs, and Ann’s team did not have one. If we wish to make contact with her, we will need to utilize our stealth systems and sneak in.”

Shepard grimaced.

“Which will take time, several days at least. It sounds like she’s our best lead, however. We’ll check in with command to make sure they don’t need us for anything critical, then get on top of this if they don’t...”

Murmurs of agreement came from all around the table. After a few more short minutes of discussion, the meeting broke up.

#### **Chapter 44: Downtime Teasing**

Oriana was fairly certain that she’d surpassed all previous achievements and created her kinkiest experience yet. Predictably, she’d won her little contest with Ashley, back on their last stop at the citadel. That victory had *nearly* gone to waste when they’d been pulled away by the needs of tracking down Leviathan. Sure, Ashley had been left stuck in a chastity belt, with a few toys to keep her properly edged whenever she wasn’t actively deployed, but the Spectre had been deployed on an entirely separate missions from them. Oriana had refused to let Ashley entirely get away from the consequences of the bet, sending along Samara to both help the former gunnery-chief with her mission, as well as to act as Oriana’s minion in deciding when it was safe to torment Ashley. She’d been

incredibly disappointed that she didn't get to slowly dominate the usually-straight woman herself, but she'd been confident in the older Asari's ability to encourage Ashley's renewed interest in subspace.

Then of course, fortune had turned in her favor. With their new high risk/high reward mission behind enemy lines approved by command, Ashley and Samara had ended up back aboard the Pheonix. Their own mission to plant hopefully-undetachable transponders on large quantities of Brutes and Marauders had already been completed. It had yet to be seen if the Think-Tanks hopes for that project would play out, of course. That hope being that the relatively rarity of those troops would mean the Reapers moved them around from theater to theater. If they did, it would allow the Citadel Alliance to gain an overview of general enemy movement patterns. It would take time, and recovery of many tags from killed units, to determine if they were right. But the actual mission to tag the enemy units in the first place was done. Which meant that Ashley and Samara had been free...and ordered back aboard the Phoenix as backup as they sought out Ann Bryson.

Which also, of course, meant that Ashley had fallen directly back into Oriana's devious hands while they spent *days* sneaking through Reaper lines. Since they were under a com blackout now, save for the limited QEC bandwidth, Oriana had two full days left of Ashley's original week forfeit to play with the poor woman. Bonus points that Samara was apparently *very* good at encouraging subs. She'd taken Oriana's instructions and run with them, working on Ashley until the woman was able to enter subspace just from a specific set of neural stimuli and the snap of a collar around her neck. Oriana was delighted...and more than happy to reward both of them!

Samara's reward was kinky in its own way. Specifically, a way that was only possible because the woman was an Asari...and so was Liara. It wasn't actually rare for Asari so widely apart in age to meld. But when it happened, it was normally for purposes of the older Asari to guide the younger. Even in sex this was true, yet there was a reason it still wasn't all that rare. In part, of course, that was simply the Asari culture. They just flat out didn't have the same set of cultural stigma that other races had regarding sex and sexuality.

The other half of the equation, however, was that the elder of the pair gained *newness* from such a joining. While the younger Asari gained a broadening of mind and deepening of experience, usually being blown away and overwhelmed to submissiveness by the sheer difference in skill, the elder of pair with a significant age gap gained the *innocence*. After several hundred years, even the best sex *should* get boring. Yet, even the eldest of Matriarchs were often sexually active. Typically, with their own acolytes. The acolytes learned...and the Matriarchs got to vicariously feel what it was like to experience *firsts* again. To revel in *new* sensations after they had long since tried everything.

Oriana had leaned into this fact, hard, when coming up with a reward for Samara. Samara was comparatively inexperienced for an Asari of her age, due to her dedication to the Justicars for the last several centuries. Liara, on the other hand, had been a near-total innocent to sex in general just a few years ago. Even with someone as kinky as Oriana to guide her, that meant Liara had a lot of *new* things to experience still. Samara, meanwhile, had never done a deep dive into the more esoteric type of sex games. All of which explained what was going on in *their* side of the Pheonix's dedicated sex dungeon. A small but well equipped room that Shepard had been amused to discover Oriana had built into the ship from the start.

The two of them, Liara and Samara, were bent just slightly at the waist, leaning into each other. The lean squished their breasts together, while also bringing them into a parody of a kiss around a ball gag. The physical contact was more than sufficient to establish a meld, which was a good thing given the challenge that had been presented to them. While their upper bodies were leaned together, both of their lower halves were straddling a bondage bench, strapped down thoroughly enough that they weren't going to be able to do much more than squirm on the toys impaling them both. Two toys each, one for each entrance. Not a one of them the type that could thrust. Instead, each toy could do four things. Heat up, freeze, vibrate, and rotate. But only one toy could do each of those things at any given moment. The entire setup was, in fact, a giant puzzle.

Neither of the Asari would be released until they both came at least twice...and they needed to coordinate via the meld to determine which toy did what at any given time. Just for good measure, the only way to change the pattern was for them to both shift the peddles under their feet in the right pattern and *hold them against the springs*. They hadn't been told the patterns needed, and the springs on the pedals were strong enough to make holding them through an orgasm monumentally difficult. Both of them were helplessly moaning messes as they tried to sort things out, and Oriana was quite sure that both of them were enjoying it immensely.

She, however, would not need to get involved until they'd accomplished their task. Which left her to her fun with Ashely. Which again brought back the thought that, in some ways, this might be the kinkest thing she'd ever done. After all, she was making Ashley eat her out while effectively anally reaming the woman with her own cock. Oriana had *zero* intention of letting Ashely out of that chastity belt until the very last moment of the bet's duration. But that fact only made it easier to make the Spectre *beg* for a chance to cum. She'd been teasing the woman all day, then collared her the moment they were both off shift. Combined with the pattern of pleasure via her locked-in neural stimulators that Samara had trained Ashely to respond to, the snap of that collar had sent the older woman straight into subspace.

She'd eagerly complied as Oriana strapped her to a bondage bench that adjusted to leave her fellow ravenette's mouth perfectly positioned to service Oriana. That, however, had been fairly tame. The far more interesting thing Ori had done had been activating Ashely's Neuralux toy. The artificial cock, tied to Ashley's implant but detached from her body, had been fastened to a fucking machine piston, lubed up, and lined up with the only hole Ashely had available at the moment. The usually-composed Spectre had moaned like a whore when her own 'cock' had nudged its way into her well-lubed rear entrance. Now, Oriana idly played with her breasts with one hand, while toying with the control for that piston with the other, all while the neural stimulators under Ashely's belt played out a near-violent pattern on the woman's pussy and clit. All, of course, with the actual orgasm sequence for the fake cock currently disabled. Ashley still had to earn her release, after all, by proving how good at eating pussy a 'straight' woman could become in a week, with the *proper motivation*. Oriana wondered just how many questions she was giving the poor woman about her own sexuality...

Well, it wasn't like the Spectre didn't have plenty of women around her that would happily help her answer those questions!

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