

## The Shared Madness of Two

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## The Shared Madness of Two

by [nostalgia](#)

### Summary

The very-much-uncomplicated story of Miles and Julian.

Miles manages not to mention it until they're halfway to Bajor, but somebody has to say something about it eventually and it might as well be him. He clears his throat to attract Dr Bashir's attention and to give himself an extra few seconds to compose his thoughts. "Look," he says, "I know it's not my place to question an officer, but -"

"Oh, please, don't think of me as an officer."

Miles sighs internally and continues. "I have some concerns, and I know I'm not the only one."

Bashir's eyes widen. "Concerns?"

Miles fights the urge to squirm away from the far-too-innocent gaze, and decides to get straight to the point. "It's about Garak."

"Chief?"

"Garak," he clarifies, "the Cardassian spy."

"I wasn't aware we had more than one Garak on the station." He sounds amused, and once again Miles thinks about punching him in his stupid smug face.

But he doesn't punch anyone, and instead he persists: "You know he's after something, don't you?"

A sly, lazy grin suggests that Bashir knows exactly what Garak is after and that it's been freely offered. Miles fights off the mental images – how could anyone even *think* about sleeping with a Cardassian? – and shakes his head. "I don't mean *that*. I mean information. Secrets. Intelligence." Not that there's much of that in evidence here. "The last thing you want is the Obsidian Order chasing after you."

"I can take care of myself," is the easy reply. Bashir looks at him calmly. "Is this supposed to be fatherly advice?"

"How old do you think I am?" he demands, insulted.

"Forty-one."

Miles stares, because that's a bloody good guess. After a moment the doctor grins and says "Your date of birth is in your medical file."

*Of course it is.* "Then you've got a good memory," he begrudgingly admits.

"Quite the necessity for medical school."

"I'm sure." Miles busies himself with a course correction that doesn't really need to be made.

"There must be at least as many things to remember about engineering." Is this an attempt to be generous? Bloody officers – always so patronising, especially the prodigies.

He decides to ignore it. "I just think you should be careful, that's all. I'm sure Garak can be very charming -" The sly grin returns and Miles can barely hide his contempt for the young doctor. "Spies are trained to draw people in, they get you to trust them, get you to tell them things."

“Chief -”

He holds up a hand. “Let me finish. You didn’t fight in the war, you don’t know what people like Garak do to their enemies.”

“He’s not my enemy.”

“Well, whatever he is to you, my advice is that you put a stop to it.” He leans back in his seat, breathes deeply. *If Garak doesn’t kill that man I’m going to end up doing it myself*, he thinks. He doesn’t look at Bashir because he doesn’t want to see that he’s smiling complacently at the daft old engineer and ready to ignore everything that’s been said.

*Bloody idiot.*

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Things are looking up. They might not be friends *yet* but the Chief - *Miles* - has agreed to call him Julian and that has to be a good sign.

Julian has never really had a friend in what he understands to be the usual sense, and he feels an automatic itch to change their status to that of lovers, something more familiar and less intimidating. Miles is married, of course, and not the sort to stray. This, ironically, is part of what makes him so attractive to Julian, who has experienced so little stability and who has never been under any illusions about Elim Garak’s suitability as a husband. Miles is safe.

Or is he? O’Brien’s service record might be off-limits but his medical history is not – there are dangerous scars there, pale flesh memories of combat zones. Julian has memorised this file along with all the others, reads over it once more with his eyes closed. He pictures the scars and then imagines them as fresh wounds to be healed by his own hands. People are always so very grateful when you make the pain stop.

But perhaps it would be a mistake. Perhaps the very appeal of Miles is that he appears to be unobtainable, and the distance between them should remain. He can’t possibly be a riddle as endlessly entertaining as Garak is, in which case he would not be a good replacement.

So, they can be friends.

Soon they are spending most of their free time (which Julian has rather more of) together, and they know some of each other’s secrets (but not that secret, never that one), and Julian is left to wonder why he had never realised that friendship could feel so much like being in love.

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Their kisses always taste of alcohol. So much so that he’s stopped drinking around Keiko, because whiskey tastes of Julian now and Miles can’t stand the guilt.

It would be nice to try sober kissing, but then Miles wouldn’t have an excuse for his adultery and would certainly push Julian away when he leaned in close and pressed their lips together. Definitely. Absolutely. It’s just the alcohol making them stupid.

“We should stop drinking,” he announces, pushing himself up to sit straight on the couch.

“We have to,” says Julian, upside down, “that was the last bottle.”

Miles pushes Julian off the couch and then helps him sit the right way up on the floor. “I don’t mean now,” he says, “I mean always. We should switch to synthahol.”

Julian frowns. “That’s a truly terrible idea.”

Miles has a lot of truly terrible ideas, many of which involve Julian. He shakes his head. “Things happen when we drink. Bad things.”

Julian looks up. “Bad?” He blinks a few times, which has the effect of fluttering his eyelashes in a way that Miles finds far too appealing.

“It’s alright for you, you’re not married to Keiko.”

“I’m not married to *anyone*.”

“Exactly. So Keiko won’t mind if you kiss people she’s not married to.”

Julian frowns. “I’m not attracted to Keiko. Not that she’s not a beautiful woman,” he adds, as though he might have caused offence.

“She is.” Miles sighs. “She’s wonderful.”

Julian pats his leg clumsily. “You’re a very lucky man.”

Miles brushes away the hand on his knee. “That’s what I mean. I don’t want to lose her. We have to stop drinking.”

“Ah,” says Julian, “this about the kissing.”

“Of course it is!”

“Well, you could just have said so.” He leans back against the couch. “I thought you wanted me to kiss you. You’ve never complained.”

“Because I was drunk!”

“Oh.”

“Now, don’t sulk,” says Miles.

“I’m not sulking. I thought we, you know... I thought we had something. Something special.”

Miles sighs. “We do, but it doesn’t have to be the sort of something special where we kiss. We do plenty of other things together, we don’t need there to be kissing as well.” He manages to get to his feet. “I’m going back to my quarters.”

“To be with Keiko.”

“Of course.”

“Well, I’ll... I’ll stay here.”

“Good idea.” Miles looks down at his best friend. “And there won’t be any more kissing, no matter how much we drink.”

“But she’s your wife, she’ll be upset if you don’t kiss her!”

Miles rubs his eyes. “Don’t pretend to be stupid, Julian. You know what I meant.”

Julian looks suddenly much less intoxicated, rather more sincere, a bit older. “I know what you meant,” he agrees. He shrugs. “If that’s what you want.”

“Are you upset?” asks Miles, hesitant. “You mean a lot to me, you know. It’s just that...”

“Keiko means more.”

“Yeah.”

The silence that fills the space between them is awkward and Miles is the first to break it. “I’ll see you tomorrow. We’ve still got to try out those new darts.” He ducks through the doorway before he has to deal with whatever Julian might be about to say.

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“I haven’t done this before.”

“Miles, you have two children.”

“I mean with a man.”

“Would you like me to draw you a diagram?”

“Could you at least pretend to be taking this seriously?”

“I am taking it seriously,” says Julian. He kisses him again, pressing Miles against the bulkhead with his weight. “See?”

“Well, what if I do it wrong? What if you don’t like it? What if *I* don’t like it?”

“Stop worrying,” says Julian, and he sinks to his knees.

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Miles can’t stay. This much is obvious but neither of them wants to be the first to say it out loud.

“Why does this happen?” asks Miles. “You and me, why does it have to be so complicated?”

“We’re star-crossed lovers,” suggests Julian, glibly.

Miles shakes his head. “It’s not that.” He looks at Julian. “It’s because of the genetic enhancements, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” says Julian, deadpan, “my parents paid extra to make sure I was impossibly sexy.”

“Shut up,” says Miles, and Julian laughs.

“It’s not going to happen again,” Miles insists.

“Of course.”

“I mean it.”

Julian sighs. “You always mean it.” He turns onto his side. “Go home, Miles, Keiko’s waiting.”

“If she wasn’t…”

“I know,” says Julian, “but she is.”

“We’re a pair of bloody idiots,” says Miles, sitting up.

“Perfectly matched.”

“More’s the pity.”

- -

Sometimes they’re friends, sometimes they are something else. Most of the time they love each other, one way or another.

It never gets any less complicated.

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