

Whatever You Can Still Betray

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1218) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1218>.

Rating: [Explicit](#)
Archive Warning: [No Archive Warnings Apply](#)
Category: [M/M](#)
Fandom: [Star Trek: Deep Space Nine](#)
Relationship: [Elim Garak/Julian Bashir](#)
Character: [Elim Garak](#), [Julian Bashir](#)
Additional Tags: [Psychology](#), [First Time](#), [Oral Sex](#)
Language: English
Stats: Published: 2023-12-08 Words: 5,123 Chapters: 1/1

Whatever You Can Still Betray

by [NothingEnough](#)

Summary

It's not paranoia if you're a spy.

(Set during and after 3x02, "The Search, Part 2". Originally posted on ao3 on 19/04/2013.)

Federation decadence: its own supposed unmaking.

As he saw it, Central Command's only problem--the most minor of flaws, nothing about which he'd complain to anybody who'd understand--was their own well-justified sense of superiority. Naturally, they thought, their people were the envy of the Quadrant. Naturally, then, their agents were targets for a broad spectrum of tactics; naturally, Federation agents would try anything at all to throw decent, brilliant, morally upright Cardassians off their usual game. He was trained, quite uselessly, to fend off any possible attack: the implant was only the most obvious of a number of courses.

Tain told him of an Obsidian Order agent who'd foolishly let his emotions wreck his judgment. This agent thought kindly of the Bajorans during the Occupation, took one for his lover--two, depending on your sources--and his lover was, alas, an agent bent on destroying Cardassian power on her planet. When he asked what became of the Order agent, Tain told him to consult the trial transcripts, which told him all he needed to know.

Little stories--fables, really, if he could borrow a Human word--circulated the Order, all with the same moral lesson: stay single.

Tain's monstrous hypocrisy aside, it was fair advice. After the station changed hands, Garak found that its new keepers only cared about him when he provided them with a much-needed service, the kind no clean-handed citizen of the Federation or any other faction would attempt--assassination, hacking, general hullabaloo--and they behaved as though he was instinctively nasty, reveled in the chance to cut loose.

Truthfully, at his age, he found it all a little repulsive. Not deceit, no, lies were the spice of conversation, but lies on behalf of anyone other than himself... well, he wasn't getting paid for that anymore, was he?

"You know, a honeypot," the Doctor said.

"No, I don't know," he said. "The translator is not giving me any context for your slang."

"Aah--well... when Bond seduces Solitaire, he's a honeypot. He's luring her into betraying her loyalties with, ah, romance."

"Oh," said Garak. "We call them ravens."

And Bashir must be a raven.

The Federation would declare a Galaxy-wide holiday if it broached any of Cardassia's secrets--of which Garak knew a few--and the Federation had easy access to him on Deep Space Nine. Perhaps they'd sent a few agents before Bashir, beings Garak found it easy to ignore or resist, and the Federation finally found the right agent after a few months of flailing. Certainly Bashir was *too* right, too awkward and yet seductive, for Garak to accept him at face value.

All his instincts told him to keep his distance, that ravens existed to attract and what a fool he was to fall for what had to be the oldest trick in espionage; that the Doctor was too smart, too charming, and worst of all, possessed of a delicate neck which pleaded to be bitten... he thought

of Bashir and imagined a raven from back home, a massive broad-winged thing with a pretty, sharp beak and bright, smart eyes, intelligent enough to talk, but, all the same, a thing that would just as soon eat Garak's eyeballs as look into them.

Keep him away, then; just close enough to appreciate his plumage, never so close that he could cause real harm.

"Doctor! I heard you were on assignment, but I hazard to guess what could have kept you from the station so long."

"I don't want to talk about it." A tall wall stood behind those words. "I did miss one of our lunches, didn't I. Let me make up for it now. My treat."

"If you insist. Can't I have a hint as to where you've been?"

"Keep an eye on the newsfeeds," Julian said, and he was so different, Garak worried through the whole meal that Julian was six seconds from shooting him.

Federation ravens used slightly different tactics than swallows--oh, they shared an end-game, but not their gambits.

Humans had some odd preconceived notions about sex, and these ideas manifested in their seductive agents; women flirted with delicacy, hints, emphasizing their vulnerability, encouraging their targets of any gender to protect them; men presented as tough, mysterious, too smart for their own good, luring their targets of whatever gender to swoon into their arms. Strange limitations to place on one's agents, Garak thought. It appeared to him that... honeypots, as Julian called them... should be prepared to seduce anybody from any cultural background, and not every culture in the Quadrant which valued sensitive women and rugged men.

In Julian, Garak saw an improvement in the Federation's methods. An ideal blend of both gambits, the little Doctor struck him as brilliant and innocent, yielding and stubborn, strong and weak. Really, he didn't make sense. Anybody could tell Julian was an attractive, ideal partner, but Julian approached his third year of singlehood on the station. Certainly, the nearly-invisible tailor wasn't the only being to notice him--why had no one else taken advantage?

The only explanation: Julian was paid by the Federation to seduce a particular target. Ravens weren't free to share their beds with anybody they liked, and if they did, such arrangements could only last one night, lest they interfere with the mission.

Garak wondered how that first meeting with Starfleet Command went for Julian: *A Cardassian remains on Deep Space Nine... He used to be an intelligence agent, we think... He's full of secrets, Bashir... He'd make a fantastic double-agent... If you can't buy 'em, blackmail 'em, I always say... Whatever it takes... However long it takes...*

He was no fool. He indulged in meals with the Doctor--he did need something to enjoy in life, especially with the implant off--and nothing else. His so-called companion waited, ever so patient, his dark wings folded so neatly under his Federation uniform that Garak couldn't quite distinguish their shape.

"The most brilliant comedic writer your people ever produced," he said, tossed Julian a quick grin.

"Kafka did not write comedies."

"I disagree. Not only was he a gifted satirical comedian, he perceived all the glorious facets of the Cardassian legal system in *The Process*--and he'd no way of knowing at the time! Either he saw farther into the universe than any of your other writers (forgive me for pointing this out, Doctor, but most of your artists are trapped in their own time like a vole in a duct), or he was a Cardassian in spirit."

"Tell me, Garak, do you ever think of anything other than how everything in every Quadrant is for the glory of Cardassia?"

"Sometimes I think about trying a new restaurant."

Julian stopped walking; they'd arrived outside Garak's quarters. He thoughtlessly rapped his knuckles on the door-frame, like he was bound up with nervous energy. Garak smiled, stood nearby, waited. An awkward moment of silence outside one of their personal quarters, less than ten meters from Garak's bed. The perfect moment for a raven of Julian's feathering to make a move.

Very well. Garak was ready for him.

"I met a version of you while I was gone," said the Doctor. "A simulation of you. I was... we all were... being tested. And, you know, when I first entered Deep Space Nine during the simulation, I suspected for a moment that something was amiss... because you met up with me less than ten minutes after I arrived. And you told me you missed our lunches. You haven't said as much since I really came back. Why did I fall for it in the simulation?"

"Doctor, I'm not sure--"

"I'm sure you're not, but I am. It was... exactly what I wanted to hear you say, and I wanted you to mean it. And the simulation gave me what I wanted, because" another hard, frightened rap "because it always intended for you to die later on in its storyline, and it wanted me to *break* when you--"

Garak felt a weird disorientation sneak upon him; he expected a sales-pitch at this juncture, a casual *Look, we're both lonely* meant to dissolve into a hot tangle in the bedsheets, not all this stammering honesty. He gathered himself. "Doctor, I'm afraid you're discussing a story I don't

know. Whatever happened while you, the Commander, and the others were gone, I confess to knowing nothing about it. But if it was not real, why does it concern you?"

"It got me thinking, that's all. I don't know what you're getting out of... this, out of me. You don't miss me when I'm gone; if I died on a mission, you'd count it as one more dead Federation officer, another corpse for the glorious Cardassian Order to stomp on on its way to inevitable victory over its enemies. I watched a simulation of you die. It still hurts, thinking about that, and knowing you were nothing more than a collection of neurons firing off in my brain doesn't lessen the hurt. But you don't care about any of that, do you?"

"I wouldn't say that," Garak said, quickly, looking around the hallway--no privacy here, Humans and Bajorans and who-knew-what-else walked and slithered by. Anybody could be a comrade of Bashir's, deliberately overhearing their conversation (or recording it for later), but then, did the Doctor plan so far in advance? If so, he very cleverly hid it, giving every appearance of making a spontaneous confession of... whatever he was trying to say. "Your distress is obvious, and I can't say I relish it. You are a much better conversationalist when you're happy."

"Is that all you want from me? Conversation?"

Ah, there--the sweet promise of honey, the spreading and rustling of wings--there it was. Garak saw it in the wide hurt in those gold-brown eyes, tasted it in the petulance of those words, and he smiled, prepared at last. "Are you suggesting our lunches are not all they should be, Doctor?"

"Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying." Bashir sneaked a glance up and down the hall, found it relatively unoccupied, lowered his voice. "Don't you want more?"

He said nothing.

After forty seconds of staring and squirming in place, Julian shrugged, giggled. "All right. I get it. Sorry to have wasted your time, Garak."

Any Cardassian raven or swallow worth their training, Garak believed, would withdraw after so much abject failure--inform their superiors that their target could not be led about by their sexual desires, allow those superiors to determine the next course of action. A Cardassian would have been pulled from an assignment like Bashir's within two days of such a report. No sense in wasting a good agent on a lost cause when more direct action could lead to better results.

Julian stayed.

He showed up for their next lunch-date, and the next, and the next, and each time, Garak waited ever so patiently for Julian to tell him of his reassignment. Something innocent-sounding, like *I've been transferred to a starship, we're going to the Gamma Quadrant, no communications back home allowed*, an elegant bit of cover-up for a job poorly executed.

It occurred to Garak, after the third such meal, that he might be waiting a long time. He paid Quark (far too much) to sneak him some information; six hours later, the Ferengi reported that there were absolutely no plans in any Federation database for Doctor Bashir's transfer from the station.

"But something's gotta be going on in that boy's pointy little head," Quark said, simpering. "Whatever it is, it's great for business. You oughtta see his bar tab."

"Misery is good for profits."

"Ain't it the truth!"

"I liked Unglok," the Doctor said, picking at his bread. He'd the weirdest habits when it came to eating--bread, for example; he always peeled the crusts off and ate them first, used the softer insides to soak up some of the yamok sauce still on his plate. "She reminded me of M--not in the books, but some of the films. Certainly she's a more charming head of the Obsidian Order than its actual leader."

"Unglok has the benefit of being fiction."

"I suppose, but I still pitied her. She had to deal with Agent Dar."

"That was her duty to the State, for which she was handsomely rewarded, so long as she did it correctly."

"Yes, but I know how much fun it is to deal with Cardassian Agents, Garak, and it's not a duty I'd wish on anybody."

"Perhaps you should demand better compensation for your troubles, Doctor."

"But she--wait, what?"

"I'm sure I don't know which Cardassian Agents you've a duty to deal with, but if you feel that Starfleet fails to recognize your talents in ferreting them out--"

"You're--but--this--" Bashir's expression of surprise verged into parody, his widening eyes and his gaping mouth too obvious to be a lie. This was, Garak suspected, no act. "I'm not--what--look, uh, are you suggesting I'm, the, a secret agent?"

"Whatever services you perform for the Federation, it's none of my business."

"Indulge me. I'll tell you about my 'services'." He dropped his bread-crust on the edge of his plate. It tipped over and landed on the tablecloth. He made no move to retrieve it. "I help sick people. Sometimes I pilot. Sometimes I go on missions when my Commander assigns me to one, always either to help sick people or to help fly a runabout. That's it, Garak. I don't spy, I don't lie for a living, I don't recruit agents for the Federation, I don't even know how any of that is *done* nowadays. And if I were? I cannot imagine a timeline where the Federation gives one single damn about recruiting a Cardassian tailor living in exile. If you ever were anything other than a bit player for Central Command, you're not anymore, and that burns, doesn't it?"

Garak, for the first time in his memory (when Tain wasn't in the room), flinched. "You're twisted."

"No, you're twisted. You don't just lie about everything and everyone, you're convinced everybody else is lying, too, all the time." Julian finally picked up his bread-crust, and instead of eating it, began shredding it into crumbs. Almost pouting, sadness winding his mind in on itself, and did Garak feel a twinge of, what a surprise, guilt? "I'm tired of all this. I can handle the lying, but not the accusations. Will you ever trust me?"

"No."

In one moment of silence, he thought of so much: Julian wounded him, seriously, deeper than he'd thought the Doctor capable of digging. With surgical precision he cut out every nasty thought and suspicion Garak ever held, dumped them in a biowaste bin, and held them under Garak's nose for his inspection. A bleeding, cancerous mess of fear. No raven would dare such an operation on his target. Too likely, this level of anger and bitterness would scare the target off.

That left Garak with a very terrifying possibility.

Garak said, "I don't know how."

"Try. Please. It's easy. I'll say something, and you'll practice believing it."

"How childish."

"Yes, very childish, since most children trust until they're taught otherwise. Please, Garak, try, or else, tell me to find somebody who will."

"... very well. I cannot understand what I'm supposed to do, but--"

Julian said: "I am a Doctor. Nothing more, professionally, and nothing less. Do you believe me?"

"I... suppose that fits the evidence most effectively."

"Good. Good. I hated *The Never-Ending Sacrifice*. Do you believe me?"

"I've always believed that, Doctor, thanks to your--"

"Shut up." Julian leaned forward, his voice dropping down to a close whisper. "If you take me back to your quarters, the very first thing I'd do is rip off that ridiculously high-necked shirt you're wearing and sink my teeth into your shoulder ridge. Do you believe me?"

The very suggestion of an act no one had performed on Garak's body in thirteen years was as potent as the act itself; he felt perfectly-maintained Human teeth working over his skin, a hot rush of anticipatory pleasure trembling down his back.

His face must have been priceless, for in the distance, he heard Bashir laughing a little. "I suppose you do."

"Actually," he said, "I'm not sure I do believe you, but, perhaps, we can test your sincerity--that is, if your schedule allows for it."

"I'm free until 1400."

"Not anymore, you're not," Garak said, and signaled for their waiter.

He had spent far too long telling the lie of Plain, Simple Garak--that was the problem. All the little deceits woven into the great network of his grandest lie, a lie he loved like a vanity-pet, a creature who existed solely because it pleased its owner. But it wasn't vanity, not strictly; it was a survival instinct honed when he was too small to defend himself any other way.

Be whoever they want you to be, and everything goes smoothly from there.

He had not thought to unlearn this tactic when the Federation moved in--why, when he was, as ever, surrounded by enemies? Lacking the authority to threaten, torture, or murder his foes, Garak stuck to lies, and he naturally assumed everybody else must be lying, especially Julian Bashir.

But no (he thought, touching the padd by his door, the Doctor standing so closely behind him that Garak felt his body heat--not hard to do with a Human), he had to try and let one thing go, if he was going to make a temporary home of Deep Space Nine. He had to remember that while Plain, Simple Garak was a lie, Plain, Simple Julian was not--he didn't wear masks or invent anything but the most basic socially-accepted fictions.

No blackmail in the works, no devious plots, no secretive assignments from Starfleet intelligence (the door opened, delicate hands settled on his shoulder ridges, pushed him into his quarters).

"Well, then, Doctor?" he said as the door shut.

Julian might well be Plain and Simple, but neither quality meant he couldn't know what he wanted. He smirked, pressed against Garak's back, warm hands creeping under the hem of Garak's green-gold shirt, gave it a yank, urging the collar to slide down his shoulder. Breath along his ridge, the promise of lips, then a sharp, bright jolt, the dig of teeth; Garak imagined a white ring of nerves clenched in Julian's teeth, the ring connected to a thin rope, the rope ran down his spine and tangled directly around his sheath.

A lightening pressure--then Julian struck again, testing the limits of scaled flesh and the sharpness of his exquisite Federation teeth, *grinding*, this time the white rope wound around his knees, the room tilted, he slumped back and, amazingly, Julian caught him.

"Good?"

"More."

The last words they exchanged outside Garak's bed.

Unsurprisingly, Bashir had done his research. Coy little thing, he knew about Cardassian ridges; when he worked off Garak's shirt, his hands ran admiringly and without astonishment over the latticework of scales adorning his upper back, the sculpted dip over his chest; Garak felt thin Human arms clamping round his waist, and Julian used his body weight expertly, tricking them both into bed, Garak flat on his back. Immediately, all the tension in his frame unwound into pleasant relaxation. He'd have grinned but for insistent lips on his own.

The last time he'd let himself be carried away, he was ten years away from setting foot on Terok Nor, and his partner was Cardassian. What a struggle that was! he'd bitten her until her neck bruised, she repaid him by cutting up his back with his nails, every move of their joined bodies as brutally clinical as warfare, nothing Julian would recognize as lovemaking, no matter how well he used his teeth. He took his time kneeling between Garak's legs, kissed the thick ridges running down his hips; the sound of each button on Garak's trousers being freed seemed so loud, the snap of metal on cloth.

He felt hot hands on his knees. Mindlessly he lifted his legs into a slight crouch, watched as Julian, grinning, worked his trousers down to his ankles, then jerked them out of the way. Cold washed like fog over him; it struck him as odd that Julian was still trapped in that blasted Federation uniform while he lay entirely naked, but the chill left him in no mood to remedy the situation.

A few moments passed by with no contact, other than Julian's hands lingering on his thighs. Garak cracked open an eye. His companion had a pensive look about him, dark eyes narrow, head tilted to one side, his gaze settled like a tickle of fingers on what appeared to be the one part of Garak's anatomy which daunted him.

"What's the matter, Doctor? Surely a man of your experience has seen a goen'thi or two before." Dimly, he thanked the universal translator's refusal to translate the word. Humans tended to call goen'this a *vent*, and he cared neither for the ugliness of the word, nor for the connotations to unthinking reptiles.

"Not like this," and Garak nearly rolled his eyes, he found this much honesty distasteful. "But I know what I'm doing, if that's what you're worried about."

"Doctor--"

"Julian, please." He shifted, lazed on his stomach, his left hand slid up under Garak's thigh; he briefly admired the contrast of brown skin against gray; he dipped his head, gave him a lick, he knew *just* what to do, the tip of Julian's tongue teasing around the tight seal of his goen'thi, circling, then thrusting, sinking within, withdrawing, returning.

Garak hissed as his whole body wracked a hard shiver, his shoulders shrugging back into the mattress as his hips pushed up and away, urging Julian to plunge deeper, his tongue threatened over the head of Garak's sex; the cunning little Human earned a loud growl, cold fingers tangled in his mussed hair. A shift inside Garak's body, a rush of blood and a tense of muscle, and Julian pulled back quickly as he everted, just a little, the head pushing out of his goen'thi.

"You're..." Julian muttered.

"Gorgeous?"

"Yes," he said, laughing, "and also blue."

"Blue-ish. Is that a problem?"

"Of course not." Down Julian went, soft lips kissing around Garak, and he did not have to be told that this was a delicate operation--as he sucked, his fingers pressed between his mouth and Garak's body, massaging his goen'thi, begging it to give up its secrets, and after such skillful pleading, it would be rude to not grant him what he wished. He distantly heard Julian's satisfied groan as Garak fully everted, his sex strained into *oh* his charming companion's mouth.

This he simply had to watch, if only because his inborn paranoia worried that, if he did not keep a close watch on Julian, he might miss a flutter of raven's wings, fingers sliding casually out of sight to get a grip on a phaser. Tragically, it appeared that he really was just a tailor to the Federation, and (not so tragically) that Julian's interest in him was truly carnal. His golden-brown eyes were shut in concentration as he rocked down, his full lips commanding around Garak's sex as he strained to kiss his goen'thi one last time, couldn't quite make it, drew up for a breath and tried again. Inelegant, perhaps, but so eager to please, Garak felt warm fingers tremble up the insides of his thighs, so warm and *faster*, yes; Julian's hair was so soft under his fingers, he loved the way the Human whimpered when he yanked, forcing him to take Garak more deeply into his mouth.

Julian's eyes flickered open, he glared, he grabbed Garak by the wrist and wrenched his hand away with surprising strength--then, still rocking, still sucking, still staring up as though looking for approval, he gave Garak's hand a little squeeze. He knew, he knew what it meant for Cardassians to press palms and he did it anyhow, so ridiculously intimate and romantic, just the sort of trick a sentimental Human played. It

was *ah!* enough, quite enough, heat and wet around his cock, tongue worshipping the ridge running down the underside (not growling anymore, that was more foreplay, moaning and pleading were currently in fashion), and when he came not long after, he nearly broke Julian's wrist.

"Well," Julian said, ran a hand through his messy hair, grinned like the wolf who ate the shepherd.

He didn't take the bait. His Human companion might be chatty when he took another to bed, but Cardassians, verbose though they were, did not believe in pillow-talk. He said nothing when he sat up, when he pushed Julian onto his back, when he knelt beside those lovely legs; when he cursed the Federation monster who designed their uniforms with a microzipper, he did so silently.

"Garak...?"

He still said nothing--he was too busy resolving an inner conflict he'd not anticipated, one that commenced the same moment Julian's trousers dipped below his waistline. He understood how Humans differed from him in their anatomies, but, like Julian, he hadn't had the opportunity of undressing anybody outside his own species. The Doctor looked and felt, well, for lack of a kinder word, frail. No vestigial plating to protect his stomach; his hip-bones barely existed; no goen'thi, Garak wasn't expecting one, yet being able to visually study his friend's entire arousal was... audacious. Titillating, mostly because Garak lacked the moral sense required to be mortified.

Garak coiled up, his chin tucked over one knee, and just as his hands dipped between bare thighs, he heard: "I'm due back in twenty minutes."

"Is that a 'no'?"

"It sounded like a time limit to me."

"You'll have time for a shower." He unfolded his frame, stretched, took his sweet time, let Julian wonder whether Garak was lying for the fun of it. He knelt humbly at Bashir's side, leaned down as though he'd a sudden urge to pray; his arms slithered under his companion's fragile body, just above and below his hips, lifted him three centimeters off the bed.

"Gar--" Julian breathed out a crowlike sound, needful and startled, no, don't think it; Garak thrust down, and he tasted the same as anyone else, really, heat and salt and vulnerable skin. Similarities aside, his scent betrayed his Humanity--even if Garak shut his eyes, he could smell the warmth of Julian's blood. His nose wasn't made for his friend's pheromones, but he swore he detected them, bittersweet and inviting, urging him to *perform*, to push down until his mouth claimed so much of Julian that the tip of his sex verged on the back of his throat.

Warm, so warm, Garak drew back, swirled his tongue around the shaft, soft skin, he fought back a delirious temptation to use his teeth; such a simple motion, down and up, his lips burned and Julian still reminded him of a bird, not a raven, something with brown plumage and a sweeter voice. He moaned so well, sang his joy into the humid dark air of Garak's bedroom, his fine dark fingers hooking like talons into the sheets. He wished he'd gotten Julian out of his shirts. He could just observe the ripple of muscles over his companion's stomach, a thick line of black hair running from his sex up beneath the hem of his bluish undershirt; the view could only improve with less clothing in the way.

No matter how enchanting the partner, Garak thought, this particular act was not memorable when he was on the giving end--just the same half-a-dozen movements of tongue, lips and neck. One thrust blended into another until Julian's hips shook like a note dragged out in vibrato, he heard his name hover through the air, unsteady and surprised, very well, this was what they'd both wanted. Garak pulled back for the last time, his mouth imperious around the head of Julian's sex, tongue circling the head (much larger than he was used to, Cardassians who everted didn't have much more than a tapered tip), his arms pinning Julian mid-air, he was not permitted to fuck Garak's mouth just because he was on the verge, and--

Julian throbbed, and--

Oh, it was *rank!* Did Julian have a salt-lick hidden in his quarters? He tolerated the indignity of holding the stuff in his mouth until the Doctor slackened in his grip, and his sex finally relaxed. Garak unceremoniously slid his arms from beneath Julian, dumping him on the mattress, then clambered off the bed.

"Garak?"

He couldn't reply; his eyes were shut along with his mouth, his entire being focused like a perfectly-aimed torpedo on the closest thing he could spit into, which, as things turned out, was an empty glass sitting on top of his bureau.

He glanced back over his shoulder, and he wished he could capture Julian's expression. It was priceless. He sprawled over rumpled sheets, his trousers still half-pulled down, his chest jerking as he tried to steady his breathing--his gold eyes were wide with offended hurt.

"Thanks," Julian said, sneering.

"You're welcome," Garak said through a smile.

"You didn't have to act like it was poisonous."

"Frankly, Julian, I was surprised that you swallowed any of me."

"It's polite!"

"We disagree. It's more polite to let me decide what I'm willing to put in my body, wouldn't you say?"

"All right," Julian said. Garak noted with a little thrill that the displeased expression melted off that handsome face, replaced by amusement. Much more attractive. "What time is it?"

"Ten minutes until you're due back."

"Just enough time for a shower."

"Just as I said." Garak was in no hurry to dress; he intended to bathe after Julian, and putting on clothes only to take them off again in five minutes was a redundant exercise. He strolled back to the bed, sat on the edge, his back to the Doctor.

"I'm sorry for what I told you before."

"Oh, no sense in bringing all that up," Garak said, as though Julian had emotionally destroyed him thirty years ago, rather than thirty minutes.

"But--"

"You've only got time to shower, Doctor, not to talk. If you insist, we can discuss it over dinner."

"...when?"

"I'm available tonight."

Julian sat up, that cheeky grin of his firmly in place. "I'll meet you here at twenty-hundred."

"Certainly," said Garak, and when his friend tried climbing past him and off the bed, he leaned in, as if for a kiss.

Instead, at last, Garak discovered that his fantasies of nipping at Julian's neck matched exactly with reality.

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