

## runner-up chicken dinner (october '64)

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1790) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1790>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Explicit</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">M/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Star Trek: Deep Space Nine</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Elim Garak/Julian Bashir</a>
Character:	<a href="#">Elim Garak</a> , <a href="#">Julian Bashir</a> , <a href="#">Julius Eaton</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Domestic</a> , <a href="#">Fluff</a> , <a href="#">Alternate Universe - Historical</a> , <a href="#">Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)</a> , <a href="#">Shower Sex</a>
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of <a href="#">far beyond the stars</a>
Stats:	Published: 2024-09-07 Words: 4,578 Chapters: 1/1

## runner-up chicken dinner (october '64)

by [meriwethersays](#)

### Summary

October 1964. Garak cooks a chicken. Julius makes soup.

### Notes

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

“We should take a vacation,” Garak announces across the dinner table.

Julius squints at him. “I suppose you have a destination already in mind?”

“Oh, no, not at all.” It almost sounds like he’s telling the truth. “Not a—working vacation, my dear. Simply a vacation.”

It’s a little ridiculous that Julius’s next question is “From what?” He’s a writer, it’s not as though he’s going to work in a factory every day. Garak is a spy. As far as Julius can tell, he’s on vacation anytime he isn’t actively skulking or committing violence on the person of another.

Garak reaches across the table to take Julius’s hand. “Call it a change of scenery, then.” He squeezes very gently. “Your dreams have been worse lately.” He’s not wrong. The first few years together, Julius’s dreams subsided to less than one a week. For a little while, he might only have one every month or so. But since Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, they’ve been coming back with a vengeance, and he’s almost certain to have one any night that he goes to the VFW club. “They’re more frequent and it takes longer to wake you.”

Julius squeezes back. “I suppose a change of scenery might help. You really didn’t have anything in mind?”

He’ll never get tired of that smile. “My dear, I *always* have something in mind.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Garak may have something in mind, but they don’t get to implement it. The next evening, Julius comes home and Garak has cooked a roast chicken, which is a bad sign. A roast chicken means plenty of leftovers for Julius to eat while he’s gone. “I take it we won’t be going away,” Julius says. “Together, anyway.”

Garak’s mouth is tight. “I’m afraid not, my dear. If everything goes properly, a man will walk in space in the next six months, but there are—difficulties to manage.” He looks anxious. “It shouldn’t be more than a few days.”

“I lived quite a few years without you here to watch me, I think I can handle a few days.” It’s a particularly unfortunate time, really, with his dreams so bad and the brief dazzling possibility of a trip away, but he knows Garak can’t control it. “I know you’ll set someone to keep an eye on me anyway.”

“Mr. Dorn,” Garak admits. “My latest attempt to replace Mr. Tucker. He is delightfully imposing, though not much of a sense of humor.” He frowns. “You’re certain.”

Julius crosses the room to wrap his arms around Garak, to feel that familiar strength. Garak responds in kind and they stand there in the kitchen, holding each other, as the chicken cools atop the stove. Eventually Julius steps back. “New chicken recipe?” he asks, to avoid saying anything more about his feelings.

Garak brushes an affectionate hand across Julius’s cheek and then trails it down the curve of his neck to his shoulder. He breaks out into pleasant goosebumps. “One of my clients gave it to me when she picked up her dress,” Garak says. “She emphasized that the carcass makes

particularly good soup.”

“Oh?” Julius leans forward to touch his forehead to Garak’s. “I suppose you’ll want me to make soup, then?”

“I’m only relating the instructions.” Garak curls his fingers into the hair at the nape of Julius’s neck. “I would hate for it to go to waste.”

“Mm.” Somehow Julius’s hand has landed at the open collar of Garak’s shirt, and he rubs his thumb across the top button. “I think I can manage that.”

“My dear Julius, I think you could manage a six-course meal if you bothered to try,” Garak murmurs, and then tilts his head just enough to press a kiss against Julius’s mouth. “One of—many things—I think.” His words come between kisses and Julius can’t help but smile. Garak tastes like salt and thyme, and every time they kiss these days, Julius memorizes it, catalogs it, just in case. He holds Garak close and Garak walks him back, slowly, until Julius’s back hits the door of the refrigerator.

“Garak—” Julius loses whatever he was going to say as Garak unbuttons his trousers. “*Garak—*”

Garak kisses just below his ear and whispers, “Don’t worry, it won’t take long,” and maybe Julius should be insulted but instead it sends heat through him, heat that’s only compounded when Garak grips his cock through his briefs. He wasn’t quite hard before, but the way that Garak’s fingers mold to the shape of his cock—the anticipation of what’s coming next—has his hips twitching forward into Garak’s hand. Garak kisses him again, open-mouthed, and then gets on his knees.

“Ah!” The kitchen is warm but the air is still a shock to his bare skin when Garak draws his pants down to his knees. Garak’s eyes are very blue as he takes Julius’s cock into his mouth slowly, eyes fixed on Julius’s face. When his lips are almost to the base of Julius’s cock, Garak stops and sucks very gently, tongue tracing over Julius’s skin, and Julius grabs at his shoulder a little frantically. He feels Garak laugh a little around his cock and has to press his other hand flat against the chilly refrigerator door to keep from grabbing Garak’s hair. Garak begins to move, one hand gripping the base of his cock to keep him in place, and his eyelids flutter closed. It’s fast now, hot and urgent, and Julius can’t help lifting his hand from the refrigerator and laying it against Garak’s cheek.

Garak wasn’t wrong—it feels like it’s barely a minute, maybe two, before he’s coming, and Garak holds him the entire time like Julius will disappear if he lets go. Finally he pulls back, stands up, and wipes his mouth. “We should eat dinner before it gets cold.”

Julius looks down to where Garak is hard in his own trousers (the only time that Garak would ever allow something to misshape his clothes). “What about you?”

“Later,” Garak says. He pulls Julius gently to the table and then carves the chicken and passes Julius a plate, hands lingering against his own.

“I really will be all right,” Julius tells him. Garak has been unusually solicitous these last few weeks, both more careful and more tactile, and how did he not notice it until now? “You’re the one running off to—to cloak-and-dagger shenanigans.”

“I know,” Garak says. “Don’t forget to make soup.”

Julius has another dream that night and wishes very much that he hadn’t. There’s the dirty sound of airplane engines overhead and he doesn’t know whose they are but the bombs falling in the distance are just as deadly, whoever they belong to. His unit’s destination is an old restaurant, half-burnt out now, where there’s supposed to be a resistance member waiting. Through binoculars he can see the woman’s face through the smoky window, the fear and the determination in her eyes, and then it’s gone in a flash of fire, the entire building smashed apart as if struck with a giant fiery fist.

He wakes up to the force of Garak’s arm pulling him tight against Garak’s body, so tight it’s almost painful, and he thinks he can half-hear Garak saying, “I’m so sorry I have to leave.” When he wakes up again in the morning, Garak is gone.

It’s a Saturday morning, cold and crisp with October air. Julius wants nothing more than to stay in bed, or perhaps relocate to the couch with a book to distract himself—television is too risky, there always seems to be something about the war, no matter how innocuous the program appears—but he makes himself rise and dress and walk a few blocks down the street to the bakery, where the baker’s daughter will sell him a bun and smile at him in a kind of platonically flirtatious way, and tries to avoid the paper-sellers crying out the latest headlines. It’s impossible to avoid the war, and it shouldn’t be possible but Julius wishes that he could.

The bun and tea make a better breakfast than toast would have. When he opens the refrigerator for milk, Julius sees the grotesque shape of the chicken carcass wrapped in foil and remembers Garak’s admonition to make soup. There’s not much better to do right now, and even if Julius feigns incompetence when it comes to cooking, he can certainly make soup. He finds two onions in the cupboard, a few large carrots and a bunch of celery in the refrigerator, and sets about the business of chopping them all. “Rough chop,” the recipes say, but Julius can’t help keeping his knife strokes precise. He puts them into the pot to sizzle with a bit of the chicken fat that Garak always keeps in the refrigerator. There are few smells more comforting than that of onions in a pan, all across the world. Most of his mother’s recipes used to start with browning onions, in the good times, and when his unit could get onions they would supplement their field rations with them. The tears are an unfortunate byproduct, but he knows better than to wipe his eyes. When the onions are soft and almost brown, Julius adds the chicken carcass and water and sets it to simmer on the stove. He remembers the feeling of Garak’s body, pressed firmly to his back, instructing Julius on the basics from his Betty Crocker book and moving his arms alongside Julius’s, as though he could make Julius’s body perform each task properly.

This melancholy is preposterous. Garak has been gone for less than twenty-four hours. Julius’s life was not empty before him. He has several books from the public library that must be returned shortly, one on the linguistic structure of Tagalog and another on the culture of the Philippines, that he checked out for research purposes for his novel, and he sets his mind to those to occupy himself. They, in turn, spur him to work on his novel, and soon hours and pages have passed.

The soup isn’t as good as Garak would have made it, but it’s hot and flavorful. Even as he eats it, Julius realizes it’s soothing an incipient sore

throat. All those drugs from the War Office improved his mind immensely, but they did nothing for his immune system; a cold always knocks him out hard. Once he realizes, he begins to feel worse almost immediately, and of all the times to get sick—

Sleep would help, but that's the thing he's worst at. He wakes up screaming and, when his heart rate has slowed, tells himself that maybe the sore throat is only from that.

It isn't. He shuffles into the elevator and tries to cover his face with his handkerchief so that he won't sneeze onto Mr. Rivera, who looks both sympathetic and less than pleased to have Julius in his elevator. The corner druggist sells him a decongestant and a cough suppressant and, when Julius asks, sleeping pills. They've never done much for him, but at this point he's willing to try almost anything.

The sleeping pills are the wrong choice. They leave him groggy and grumpy, as they always do. He only takes a single dose before giving up and camping out on the sofa—Garak's replacement is infinitely more comfortable than the old—with a few books and a notepad within reach, as though he'll be struck with brilliance, and cups of tea that he occasionally knock over when he flails awake from a nap. He leaves the television on the Summer Olympics, pulls a blanket off the bed in the spare bedroom, and hunkers down to wait it out.

"Of all the things." Garak's voice wakes Julius from his miserable congested doze. "Julius Bashir, laid low by a cold." He sets his suitcase by the door and strides over to the couch, clearing teacups and discarded handkerchiefs out of his path. "I hate to say this, but you look dreadful."

Julius squints at him through one crusty eye as Garak presses a cool hand to his forehead. "I don't see a single cut or bruise. Are you sure you haven't just been lounging at a villa somewhere?"

"That sounds delightful, but no. Perhaps when we finally take a vacation together." Garak brushes a kiss on his forehead. "Have you managed to feed yourself while I've been gone?"

Julius forces himself up into a sitting position as Garak switches off the television. He didn't realize he'd turned the living room into such a pit. "I made chicken soup," he protests. "And—tea."

"The staples of a sickroom," Garak says. He pulls the curtains open to let in—afternoon? light. "Can you heat up some for both of us while I—pick up a bit?" Julius stands a little unsteadily, and Garak catches his elbow and pulls him into a hug. "I'm not going to kiss you, the way that your nose is running, but I'm very glad to see you."

"I accept that." Julius gives him a watery-eyed smile and goes into the kitchen. He's allowed a few bowls to pile up in the very small sink, but he finds a clean pot to reheat soup in and sets it on the stove. In the cupboard he finds the jar of dry pasta and waits for the soup to reach a simmer.

"How's the soup?" Garak deposits an armload of teacups next to the sink. "You've been contemplating it for quite a while now."

Julius laughs a little and reaches for the ladle. "Sorry about that."

Dinner, if it's late enough for dinner, is quiet—they're both focused on eating, and Julius is too fuzzy headed to have much of interest to say. Garak presses his ankle against Julius's beneath the table, and when they're done, guides him back to the couch and pulls Julius against him as they lie down. The couch is too narrow for it to be comfortable, exactly, but there's a kind of particular comfort to squeezing onto it, Garak's arm wrapped around him to hold him close, forehead pressed against the back of Julius's hair and breath warm on his neck. It reminds him of the only part of the war that he didn't hate, the moments when he felt some sense of belonging. He slips into sleep between one of Garak's heartbeats and the next.

Garak must have either carried him to bed or walked him there so gently that he didn't register it, because he wakes up in bed in the morning and feels the strangest sense of—being well-rested? It's nearly 9 AM, the morning light gray from rain against the windows, and he can smell buttered toast.

"Good morning." He finds Garak in the kitchen, a mug of—tea? at his hand and a half-eaten piece of toast on his plate. "Dear?"

"I hate you," Garak mumbles. His voice sounds dreadful.

"Oh, no." Julius puts his hand on Garak's forehead and feels the heat. "Tell me this is my cold and not some kind of infection from a wound that you failed to mention."

"No," Garak says, "It is *most certainly* your cold." He manages to sound peeved, hoarse, and congested all at once, and Julius has to swallow back a laugh.

"Did you put honey in the tea? It helps." He strokes Garak's damp hair.

"I feel *dreadful*."

That's not exactly responsive, but given that this is the first day that Julius has felt human since Garak left, he's sympathetic. Julius fetches the honey pot and stirs a small spoonful into Garak's tea, then offers it. "Drink it and go back to bed," he suggests.

"No," Garak says, though he drinks the tea. "I have—customers. Orders to complete." He gets this way when he's sick, every single time, fussy and obstinate.

"All right then." There's no point trying to argue Garak around when he's like this. Julius gives him four hours, at the most, before he gives in and comes home to collapse. "I'm going to have a shower. Do lock the door when you leave." He kisses the top of Garak's head, and he can tell he's getting better because he can actually smell the vaguely antiseptic scent of their soap.

By the time Julius gets out of his own truly excessive shower—his toes have begun to prune and his skin is wonderfully sensitive from the hot

water—he's starting to feel almost healthy. Garak has abandoned two pieces of buttered toast at his place, and Julius scarfs them down. It's not as though he's going to get re-infected with his own cold, anyway. He even manages to tidy up a bit before his body reminds him that he may feel better but he isn't exactly *well* and he returns to the couch.

Garak lasts three hours before he returns. His cough announces him before the key in the door, and when he walks in, he looks truly pathetic. Julius goes to him, takes his hat and coat, and says, "Please come lie down, Garak."

"Don't hang the coat on a hook." Garak's enunciation is hampered by his congestion. It's rather an unfortunate thing, Julius thinks, to be on the upside of a cold that someone else has just caught. He lays the coat over the chair by the door and sets the hat atop it, then guides Garak into the bedroom. When Garak sits on the bed, he looks a little baffled as to what he should do next.

There's a distracting wave of affection rising inside Julius at the idea that a man this dangerous should trust him so totally. It ambushes him, sometimes, the rush of it. "Come on," he says. "Shoes." Garak looks at him blankly and Julius bites back the smile and kneels to untie his shoelaces and pull off his shoes. Somehow there's never a scuff mark, even after walking through the New York streets. He unbuttons Garak's shirt as well, one button through one crisp buttonhole at a time, and says, "I don't think you want to sleep in your trousers."

"I blame you for this," Garak warns him. Garak shrugs slowly out of one suspender, then the other, so that Julius can remove his shirt too. When Garak is finally undressed and maneuvered into bed, Julius looks at him and thinks, why not, Julius is still sick too. He's never bothered to dress, only pulled on a dressing gown after his shower, and he shrugs out of it and climbs into bed alongside Garak. "I feel as though I'm seconds from death," Garak says. He coughs pointedly.

Julius curls up against him and presses a kiss to the back of his neck. "You've been much closer many more times. Try to rest." The memory of Garak's wounds beneath his hands is visceral. He doesn't exactly sleep, not with Garak coughing periodically and sniffing, but it's still more restful to lie there close together than it was to try to sleep alone in silence.

\* \* \* \* \*

Garak is a truly dreadful patient. The man can be bleeding from four different wounds and barely able to see and never complain, but give him a stuffy nose and a cough and it's as though the world is ending. "It's a good thing I like you so much," Julius says as he makes Garak drink another cup of herbal tea and provides a fresh handkerchief. Julius has moved on to a Benzedrine inhaler to clear up the last of his cold, which works just as well as it always has and is giving him a somewhat sunnier outlook.

"I'm going mad," Garak says pathetically. "I'm too tired to read and I'm so bored from all of this—this useless lying around."

"I know for a fact that you've conducted 24 hours straight of surveillance in the rain. This can't be worse than that." At Garak's moan, Julius offers, "I could read to you."

"Your latest novel?"

Julius shudders at the idea. His latest novel is a slipshod patchwork mess. "I have several books that are due back to the library soon that I ought to read anyway."

"Reading one to me will slow you down," Garak points out. He sneezes into a handkerchief. It's a good thing that Julius is a proper Englishman and has such an ample supply of them.

He isn't wrong. Julius could read a textbook in an hour flat. "A sacrifice for love," he tells Garak, and picks up the book. They don't say the word much, but it means something when they do.

Two days into his misery, Garak finally says, "You know, my dear, I believe I could stand up." This is a bit of an exaggeration—he's stood a number of times, though primarily to go to the bathroom—but Julius helps him up anyway.

"You might consider a shower," Julius points out. "Not that you aren't rosy, but—"

"If you assist me," Garak says, and apparently he's feeling quite a bit better. Julius has rallied fully with the help of a Benzedrine inhaler, and the thought of a shower with Garak is extremely appealing.

They maintain some pretense that this is an ordinary and highly decorous morning routine, brushing their teeth and locating fresh towels, until they're both naked and Garak turns on the shower, causing Julius to swallow back a shriek at the cold. "You know," he says, "I've always thought that one of the nice things about leaving the military was never having to take another cold shower." The water is already warming up, though, and Garak lathers his hands and offers the soap to Julius so that they can wash each other. This is familiar, hands slipping across wet skin with dual intent, and Garak's fingers are slippery on Julius's wrists when he pushes Julius back against the wall to kiss him.

Julius melts into it, tastes the clean water running down his face and then sucks in a breath when Garak's cock slides against his own. There's energy surging through him and Garak must feel some of it. He guides Julius beneath the spray of the shower to wash his own hair, and then as Julius does, Garak's fingers dip down between his cheeks to rest against his rim—not moving, only set there, and Julius swallows the noise in his throat and pushes back a little, just enough to feel the pressure of Garak's fingertips. He closes his eyes against the hot water as he hears the click of the bottle of body oil that they keep in the shower. Garak tips it just at the top of the cleft of his cheeks and lets the oil run down, rubbing it into his hole as the excess collects on his balls. His cock is hard beneath the hot water, and Julius fumbles for the tap to turn the water off before bracing himself against the wall. Garak's fingers are eager, seeking, and Julius can't help saying "*Garak*" when he feels the head of Garak's cock pressed against his hole.

"I know," Garak says, and he doesn't push all the way in yet, just short jolting thrusts that go a little deeper and open Julius a little more each time. He's still too tight for this—at least the way they usually would go, slow and thorough—but there's something about the urgency of it that makes him push back hard against Garak with each thrust. Garak pours on a little more oil and it's everywhere now but the thickness of Garak's cock is easier to take, even better as Garak works it inside him. When he's all the way inside of Julius, Garak kisses his neck and says

“All right?” and Julius nods a little frantically so that Garak will *move*. Garak puts one hand on his hip and then cups his balls with the other hand to collect the oil, and strokes it onto Julius’s cock.

It’s good that the walls are thick because Julius *shouts* when Garak pulls most of the way out and then thrusts hard back into him at the same time as a single long stroke of his cock. The shower tile is wet, nothing for him to grab onto, and all he can do is fuck forward into Garak’s hand and back onto Garak’s cock as his legs shake from the effort. He’s so tight around Garak that every slide of his cock inside Julius feels as intense as the first, insistently spreading him wider. Garak’s grip is firm and steady, and he tightens it at the base of Julius’s cock just when Julius is about to come. He holds Julius like that, pinned in place, as he speeds up, and Julius is so close to coming but he can’t with Garak’s hand so tight—and then Garak comes with a groan. He doesn’t release Julius, though, only pulls out of him and replaces his cock with three fingers. Julius must make some kind of whining noise in protest—his brain isn’t functioning at peak capacity—because Garak crooks his fingers and loosens his grip just enough on Julius’s cock that he comes, shuddering, on the shower tile.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Garak,” Julius says, “Please tell me you didn’t steal the Star of India.” He gestures at the unfolded morning newspaper, where for once the headlines about Vietnam have been replaced by a headline declaring “DARING JEWEL THEFT SHOCKS MUSEUM AUTHORITIES” and large photographs of the jewels.

Garak raises an eyebrow. “Certainly not. Gemstones of that size make very tacky jewelry.” He presses his shoulder against Julius’s. They don’t usually sit next to each other at the breakfast table, but they’re both still damp from the shower and the apartment is a little chilly.

“All right, then. Did you depose Khrushchev?” *That* headline is everywhere.

“I have it on good authority that he was angry to have missed the Voskhod launch,” Garak says, “but no, I did not.”

“All right, then, this one.” Julius points to “LASER LAUNCH DAZZLES SCIENTISTS.”

Garak ducks his head with the sheepish smile that means Julius has found his latest exploit. “Quite the dramatic headline,” he says. “It was a single pulse to a retroreflector on Explorer 22, not the deployment of a secret weapon. Not even visible to the naked eye.

“But it’ll make it easier to track orbital flights, won’t it, and that’s what matters.”

Garak doesn’t answer that. Instead, he taps a very small news item below the fold. SEEKING SPACEMEN, it reads. “You know, this astronaut group is going to be scientists instead of pilots, for the first time. I say it’s only one or two more groups until they start taking novelists.”

He can’t help a wistful smile at that. “Can you imagine what it would be like, to actually go up there? See the world as a whole, with your own eyes?”

“I have the space programs and your novels for that, my dear.” Garak opens the paper, skipping past the sections where the coverage is more grim, all the way back to the crossword. “From what I’ve heard of the astronaut training program, I would be quite ill if I ever tried to go into space. Now, where’s that pen?”

Julius passes him the pen and kisses his temple. “I did the Sunday already,” he admits.

“Well,” Garak says. “I do love you. I suppose I’ll forgive it. Just this once.”

## End Notes

I wanted to keep this super light and fluffy, but it turns out that 1964 wasn’t a super light and fluffy year. I did my best, guys.

Also, they used to just...sell amphetamine inhalers.

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