

## The Thirty-Fourth Rule

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## The Thirty-Fourth Rule

by [Beatrice Otter](#)

### Summary

Quark and Odo, war.

"I'll be glad when the war is over, one way or another," Odo overheard Quark say to a customer. "Thirty-fourth Rule of Acquisition. Peace is good for business."

It being that rarest of all things on Deep Space Nine, a quiet day, Odo waited as the customer left and slid into his place at the bar, to indulge in one of his favorite hobbies: keeping Quark in no doubt that the eye of the law was firmly pointed in his direction. "I thought the Rules of Acquisition say that *war* is good for business?"

"That's quite perceptive, Odo, I had no idea you were a devotee of the Rules of Acquisition," Quark said with a snaggle-toothed smile. "In fact, you're right. Rule Thirty-five *does* state that war is good for business. But Rule Thirty-four, which I just quoted, says that *peace* is good for business. You see, a sharp businessman can make opportunities in either war or peace. Different kinds of opportunities for profit, of course; in war, it's mostly guns and information and army supplies whereas peace has a greater diversity of opportunities available. But as you can see," he gestured around his bar, "my establishment is not a hub of gunrunning or military supply of any kind. I sell drinks. And while people do drown their sorrows in war-time or escape through the time-honored traditions of gambling and dabo girls and holosuites, they also tend to be too busy to spend much time doing it. My profits are much higher in peacetime, and whatever sidelines I may occasionally operate, I truly do love being a bartender. Therefore, at the current time I put my faith mostly in the Thirty-fourth rule."

"So you want peace," Odo said. "Very noble goal. But do you care which side wins?"

Quark shrugged. "I'd prefer the Federation, of course. I already have a good working relationship with them and a large supply of drinks and programs tailored to their needs. And the Vorta and Jem'Hadar don't drink, gamble, or use holosuites, which would put a damper on my business. But once peace is established, I'm sure I could come to an understanding with the Dominion, if they win."

"Ah, such noble loyalties you have, Quark," Odo said with heavy sarcasm. He leaned in over the bar. "I'm sure everyone who's currently fighting to keep you and everyone else on this station out of the hands of the Dominion will be happy to hear you say that."

Quark shrugged. "Believe what you want. You Federation types complain about Ferengi profiteering—and the Bajorans do, too, and did all through the Occupation—but ask yourself this: how many wars have Ferengi fought? How many worlds have we occupied, how many massacres have we done, how many bloody battles have we fought? How many people have we killed in pointless battles? We may sell you weapons and information, but we're not the ones that made the choice to fight in the first place. We're not the ones that do the killing. You can look down on us for making a profit out of your bloodshed, but don't forget that *you're* the ones spilling the blood."

"Sometimes it's necessary," Odo said, stung.

"Maybe," Quark said. "That doesn't make it right."

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