

Just Doing His Job

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/617) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/617>.

Rating:	General Audiences
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:	Hurt/Comfort , Pre-Slash , Pining
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2022-12-01 Words: 1,838 Chapters: 1/1

Just Doing His Job

by [jamaharon](#)

Summary

Garak was a tailor. Julian had a new uniform that didn't fit him right around the shoulders. It was as simple as that.

He was just doing his job.

Garak was a tailor. Julian had a new uniform that didn't fit him right around the shoulders. It was as simple as that.

"It occurs to me, Doctor, that you are perhaps the only human I know who regularly gains and loses weight in the shoulder region," Garak said in that melodic, lilting voice of his. He circled Julian, his reflection shifting in the three-way mirror and his body heat pushing up against Julian's chest. Clever hands skimmed over Julian's shoulder, a touch so light he barely felt it.

But still, it made him swallow.

"I wouldn't say I'm losing weight, precisely." Julian's mouth was dry and his cheeks were hot. He kept a refined expression on his face, chin up. "I usually wear shoulder pads."

Garak's touch hesitated, one finger trailing over the curve of Julian's right shoulder. "Subterfuge," said Garak approvingly.

"You never noticed?"

"Not at all!" said Garak, so convincingly that it had to be a lie. Julian's blush deepened and Garak, diplomatic conversationalist that he was, changed the subject. "Tell me, why have you elected to eschew them now?"

"These new jackets are a bit bulkier," Julian admitted. "I was hoping that, with some clever tailoring, I might not need the shoulder pads at all."

Garak's palm pressed down on Julian's upper arm. Through the clothes, it was a gentle touch, and somehow comforting — it reminded Julian of childhood, the way adults sometimes wrapped their children in blankets and hoisted them into the air for a hug. He could vaguely remember something like that. When he was little — before the hospital — before everything changed. He'd had a favorite game he liked to play; he'd play it for hours, hiding under a blanket and jumping out at his parents, trying to goad them into chasing him. Really it was a good excuse for a hug. If they caught you, they'd pick you up, squeeze you tight, let you go...

Only he wasn't very successful at that game, he remembered. He could never persuade Father to leave his desk. And after the hospital, the urge to play that game in particular faded away.

Warm fingers hooked in Julian's collar, brushing the vulnerable flesh of his throat, and he resisted the urge to jump.

"Sorry?" he said, only now aware that Garak had been speaking.

"I said it might be conducive to our purposes here if you removed your jacket," Garak said. He circled around to Julian's side, pale eyes studying Julian's face. "Although, if you don't mind me saying so, Doctor..."

Here it comes, thought Julian, with a crashing wave of disappointment. He'd never told anyone about the shoulder pads before. O'Brian would laugh at him if he knew. Jadzia, too. But he'd fooled himself into thinking that Garak — Garak, who always surprised him, who veered between wry and thoughtful and philosophical and cruel—

Garak clamped his hands down on Julian's shoulders with a smile.

“...I don’t think you *need* enhancements,” he said brightly. “*These* are quite nice, you understand? They suit you. More importantly, narrow shoulders work marvels with an Ecclesian silhouette, and Ecclesian silhouettes are *very* in this season.”

Julian blinked as Garak gave his shoulders a firm squeeze. The wave of disappointment turned cold and rose up inside him again, morphing into something else. Something that left him blinking rapidly and swaying into Garak’s touch.

“That’s — that’s very kind of you, Garak,” he said, keeping tight control of his voice.

“However, I also approve of your instinct for deceit and trickery,” Garak said. “If you’d like to continue manipulating the perceptions of those who trust you, I will of course do *everything* in my power to aid you.” He let his hands trail down Julian’s arms, one clawed fingernail scraping lightly at Julian’s wrist — and just as Julian’s skin started to tingle, Garak spun away.

“What are you doing?” asked Julian as Garak rooted around in a box of padding.

“I’m searching for something more form-fitting. More subtle. Tell me, are you allergic to telio-plast?”

Julian took a deep breath. His chest was liquid fire. The sight of Garak, bowed over a chest of supplies, elbows shifting as he searched for just the right thing ... Julian swallowed against a tight throat and shrugged out of his jacket, his shoulders bare and unpadded for the first time in — well, probably years. He didn’t have to hide them, of course. He knew that. And Garak had just explicitly told him so. But he didn’t have to not hide them, either. There was no pressure to cast off the padding forever, no judgment if he chose to do so.

Only enthusiastic appreciation — either for Julian’s natural body or for his conniving machinations — either way.

“I have no allergies,” Julian said. He rubbed his shoulder where Garak had touched it last, soothing an imaginary ache. “Show me what you’ve got.”

He was just doing his job.

“No bother,” said Garak when the first few drops of silver blood hit the floor. But when he tried to hide his wounded arm, Julian reached out and snatched his wrists with the reflexes of a cobra. He dragged Garak’s arm into the light, flesh shredded, muscle exposed, and...

“What the hell is this?” Julian asked, picking at a piece of mesh embedded in Garak’s skin.

“Second skin,” Garak said. “Cardassian trade secret.”

“You’ve been wearing false skin all this time?”

“You mean to say you haven’t been?”

Julian pursed his lips and gave Garak an unamused look, but his expression flickered when Garak winced, his arm jerking in Julian’s grasp. Gently, Julian adjusted his grip. He hooked his fingers around Garak’s broad, ridged thumb and turned his arm over as slowly and gingerly as he could.

“Let’s get you out of here,” Julian murmured.

All Garak could do was nod, his jaw tight. Julian held his wounded arm between them, elbow bent, but he moved in close and he walked in step with Garak, so all the Bajorans watching them would think they were just two pals, walking arm in arm. Odo’s rough growl of a voice faded into the background as they exited the bar and left the evidence of the one-sided fight behind.

Julian still had a grip on Garak’s hand, his smooth, soft, too-cool human thumb rubbing a circle on the heel of Garak’s palm. Garak’s scalp tingled and he kept his eyes forward. “Your quarters, then, or the infirmary?” asked Julian.

“I am, of course, grateful for the assistance, Doctor,” Garak said, his voice stilted. “But I am perfectly capable of tending my own wounds.”

“I would rather you didn’t,” said Julian softly. “There’s an awful lot of broken glass in your arm, Garak. And those bottles have been sitting on Quark’s shelves for who knows how many years, pawed over by countless dirty hands — you could be developing Didruvian fever as we speak.”

“Not possible,” said Garak. “Cardassians are immune to Didruvian fever.”

Julian gave him a narrow-eyed look. “Garak, I treated you for Didruvian fever last year.”

“Did you? Hm.” Garak tilted his head innocently to the side. “In any case, I will bow to your expertise, Doctor. But I insist we do this in my quarters, away from Bajoran eyes.”

“Very well.”

Another light squeeze of the hand, and Garak’s cardiac organ was suddenly hammering at the inside of his throat. He kept his breathing light and even, and disguised any symptom of pain all the way to his quarters. There, Julian replicated a simple medical kit, including an archaic little metal device he called “tweezers.”

“Sit down,” he said to Garak in that soft voice of his.

Garak lowered himself onto the edge of his bed. He rested his injured arm on the end table and kept his eyes on the wound as Julian

approached. Instead of pulling up a chair, he simply knelt at Garak's feet, tweezers spinning between delicate fingers.

"No painkillers?" he asked, just checking.

Garak ground his teeth and gave a nod. "Cardassians possess no nociceptors in the forearm region," he said. "I am in no pain."

"Garak, that's a bald-faced lie."

"Is it?" asked Garak. He gave a one-shouldered shrug. "Proceed."

The metal arms of the tweezers descended. The nociceptors Garak didn't possess lit up with electric agony. He kept his face set in a calm, inquisitive mask, and he watched every movement. Shiny shards of brown-green glass were embedded in his flesh, and it was only with a great deal of careful pressure that they came loose one by one, sending rivulets of silver blood down to the table. In his mind's eye, Garak saw again the bar fight — heard the murmurs of discontent from the visiting Bajorans, a hold-out cell leftover from the war and only recently brought back to civilization. He'd heard them muttering behind his back while he talked with Julian, felt the weight of their glares on his shoulders. In truth, or in half-truth, perhaps he'd sensed the first blow coming. Maybe he'd seen the reflection of his attacker in his whiskey glass.

Maybe he'd had time to fight back.

Maybe he hadn't.

"This one is fairly deep, Garak," Julian warned him in a gentle murmur. Garak nodded. He eyed the sliver of glass lodged in his forearm, splitting the muscle. "And once I get it out, I'll have to tackle these fibers left behind by your artificial skin."

"I trust you," said Garak before he could stop himself. Julian's expression didn't change. He just gave an absent nod and went to work, and only stopped to tap his blood-stained tweezers against Garak's knuckles and whisper,

"Unclench your fist. You're losing more blood than you need to."

Garak opened his stiff fingers with difficulty. His palm felt vulnerable, exposed — easy to jab that tender flesh with the tweezers, if Julian were so inclined. But of course nothing happened. And earlier, in the bar, when Garak saw the flash of movement behind him and failed to duck — hadn't he thought, just for a second — hadn't he wondered, in some small part of his mind, whether Julian might leave him there? Back away? Throw him to the Bajoran dogs?

Hadn't part of him wanted Julian to go?

But Julian had stayed; Julian had stood between Garak and his attacker; and Julian was treating Garak's wounds, his eyes sharp and his brow furrowed, with no judgment and no exasperation. There was nothing but concentration on his face, nothing but gentleness in his hands.

Garak caught himself studying Julian's face, the curve of his cheekbones, the darkness of his lashes, instead of staring at his open wound. He forced himself to look away again, fought the urge to close his hand into a fist.

"Thank you," he said to the wall.

He expected Julian to state the obvious: Just doing my job. But Julian deposited the sliver of glass on the table and covered Garak's arm with gauze to soak up the blood, and all he said was,

"Any time."

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!