

Second Chances

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Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Categories:	F/M , M/M
Fandoms:	Star Trek: Deep Space Nine , Star Trek: The Next Generation , Star Trek: Voyager
Relationships:	Julian Bashir/Elim Garak , Kira Nerys/Odo , Keiko O'Brien/Miles O'Brien , William Riker/Deanna Troi , The Doctor (Star Trek)/Seven of Nine , Rom/Leeta
Characters:	Elim Garak , Julian Bashir , the O'Briens , Kira Nerys , Odo , Quark , Admiral Janeway , Admiral Ross , Reginald Barclay , Gul Evek , Grand Nagus Rom , Leeta , Ezri Dax , Deanna Troi , Admiral Picard - Character , Captain Riker - Character , Seven of Nine , The Holographic Doctor , Illiana Ghemor , Original Characters
Additional Tags:	rebuilding Cardassia
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2020-05-17 Updated: 2020-12-20 Words: 2,662 Chapters: 2/?

Second Chances

by [HelenofBorg](#)

Summary

Garak finds himself as the first elected leader of Cardassia, and he has a monumental task of rebuilding after the damage done in the Dominion bombardment. Characters from TNG and Voyager do make appearances, but it is primarily a DS9 fic.

Prologue

Six months after the Dominion War, First Castellan Elim Garak stood in the ruins of what was once Central Command. Few of the computers were functional, much like the rest of his war-torn planet. After the death of Legate Corat Damar, the task of rebuilding and defining a New Cardassia had fallen to him, a former exile. And here he was, stood at the very epicentre of the destruction, trying to reconstruct his traumatized world with scarce resources and a government consisting of less than ten people.

Everywhere he looked, there were piles of household garbage, piles of rubble where beautiful buildings once stood, and even worse was the smell. Because the sanitation plant had also been destroyed, the stench of excrement, mildew and death hung heavy in the air. Disease and malnutrition were rife, with many families resorting to catching and eating vermin because their crops would no longer grow in the contaminated soil.

As he stood there considering the pitiable condition his people were living in, a tear came into his eye. In times gone by he would have considered this a weakness, but not any more. He was no longer that person who shoved his emotions to one side because they were inconvenient. His time living amongst aliens on Deep Space Nine had changed him forever. He had discovered that when he ignored much of his Obsidian Order training, he was highly empathetic, and it was these qualities which would serve him now, not the thirst for information at all costs.

He watched as children played ball with a crunched up mass of discarded rags, all painfully thin, filthy, with glassy looking eyes. It was obvious that despite their street games, they'd been deeply traumatized by the Dominion bombardment, even as they played, there was no joy on those little faces. Some of them had lost both parents in the bombardment, living on the scraps they could scavenge, beg or steal. Orphans had little to no rights under the old system, that had to change, these kids had already suffered enough injustice in their short lives without suffering the further injustice of social exclusion and having decent careers closed off to them.

Entire families lived in the shells of the ruined buildings, able to keep dry only because of large sheets of plastic, but there was barely enough to go around. These plastics had not been produced in over five centuries because of the long term toxic side effects of their use, but right now toxic shelter was better than none at all. It would be winter soon, with temperatures as bone chillingly cold as those he remembered from his days on Deep Space Nine. Mammalian species such as Humans, Betazoids and Vulcans had of course found this frigid environment perfectly comfortable, but to any reptile species, it was fucking COLD.

Garak then thought about their hospitals, they were operating at above capacity. By now, the wounded were either healed, or buried in one of the mass graves. But, were the survivors the lucky ones? They faced starvation, disease and living conditions so terrible that even a Pakled waste extraction engineer would gawk at them.

Just yesterday, he had the misfortune to watch a little girl and her mother die from Vole Fever. The woman's husband had been executed by the Dominion for collaborating with the Klingon-Federation alliance. It had been right then, when he watched the lights drain from their eyes for the last time that he made up his mind. No matter what else happened, even if it cost him his life, he had to reach out to the Federation. He was pretty sure they wouldn't deny him a shipment of mass replicators given the circumstances, and some gravatic turbines. Without those, they couldn't even feed themselves, let alone begin the monumental task of rebuilding the cities to their former glory.

He wasn't going to have this conversation over subspace, especially as he didn't want Romulan ears prying into the conversation. No, he intended to travel to the very heart of the Federation, in person. At the very least, he should have Admiral Ross on his side, given that during the latter part of the war, he had practically worked for Starfleet Intelligence by decoding Cardassian messages. Something he was only able to do since he was one of the few who had actually helped to invent that particular code during his time with the Obsidian Order.

He was going to have to get to Earth, somehow. He had an antiquated scout ship about the size of a Federation shuttlecraft at his disposal, small, and manoeuvrable, and armed with phasers only. Sure, it had plenty of antimatter, but the small problem was that there was only enough dilithium crystal in it's core to get as far as Deep Space Nine, and even that was pushing it. Knowing his luck he would probably end up running out somewhere in the Denorious Belt, but he had to try. If he could just reach his former home in exile, then perhaps Kira could help him with his dilithium shortage.

There was just one thing he knew for sure, if he succeeded in rebuilding his shattered planet, then things had to change, big time. No more warmongering, no more occupations, no more torture and executions of prisoners, no more trails in which people couldn't defend themselves, and absolutely no rule by the Military. A Cardassian Gul should defend his homeland, not go out terrorizing alien races. He should also answer to his government, not be the government. When he truly thought about the crimes of men like Dukat, it made him want to throw up. Major reforms were necessary, reforms that would bring Cardassia and the Federation much closer, at least this was his hope.

He also knew that many on his world would not agree to such radical changes, but enough did that they had actually voted him in. As the very first elected leader of his people, he had an obligation to show the people that these reforms could work, and could be beneficial to everyone.

Dilithium shortage

Chapter Summary

Garak travels to DS9, but runs out of dilithium on the way.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this has taken so long folks, I have been very sidetracked this year. I promise that the wait for the next installment won't be anywhere near as long!

After saying goodbye to his work colleagues, Garak promptly departed for Federation space. He had packed some warm clothing, what he had left of it anyway. Much of his personal belongings had been raided over these last few weeks, and he was sure that even his shoes would go missing were it not for them being on his feet. Earth was colder than Cardassia, perhaps much colder, he didn't want to be caught out unawares.

As the power came back online in this little old ship, it became evident that he had to replace a couple of transistor coils, but thankfully it wasn't outside of his ability to repair, and there were spares onboard. The replicator was online, albeit with a limited menu. That said, this might well be the only functional replicator on Cardassia, and limited choices was certainly better than no food at all.

He checked over the warp drive, just to make double sure that it was still in functional order, and thankfully it was, except for the dilithium shortage. He also thanked the stars that his claustrophobia was under control, given that space was at a premium inside. All pre-flight checks completed, he lifted off gently, carefully monitoring his speed until he had cleared the atmosphere. This old vessel was still deemed space worthy, but he didn't want to put too much stress on the hull given that it was almost ninety years old.

So, he plotted a course for Deep Space Nine, his old home in exile. He wondered how the station would have changed. Was that dart board still hung up at Quarks? Was Quark even still running the place, given that his brother was the new Grand Nagus? What had become of his old shop? Was Captain Sisko still inside the wormhole? What of Odo? Had the constable remained in the Great Link, or had he returned to the station since? He had after all been in love with Kira.

This trip was going to be fairly boring, and so Garak broke out his very favourite book, 'The Never Ending Sacrifice'. He mused how his old friend, Dr Bashir had not appreciated it's repetitive nature, but then, such repetition was a common stylistic form on Cardassia,

especially when it came to service of the state. Now it was up to him to ensure that New Cardassia was a state worth serving.

A few minutes before he was due to arrive at the station, his engines stalled, immediately dropping him to impulse speed... he had run out of dilithium a mere two light years from his destination. There was only one thing to do now, send out a distress call, and just hope that the Defiant picked him up before someone else did.

So he sat and waited, read some more, ate a bowl of salad, and stared into space, literally. It really was very frustrating to be stuck like this, knowing that there was nothing he could do to help his predicament beyond the actions he had already taken.

Suddenly, after what seemed like an eternity, he was being hailed. After pressing a couple of buttons, Kira came on-screen. She was dressed in a Starfleet Captains uniform, and was obviously on the Defiant.

“Garak!” she exclaimed, “What brings you out here?”

Her friendly smile was a welcome relief. Although for most of his exile, they had not been on the best of terms, during the war they had developed an understanding and mutual respect, and whatever he was able to do for Cardassia now, in part he owed that to Kira. She had after all helped save Cardassia from the Dominion, fought alongside him.

“I’d much rather discuss that in person if you wouldn’t mind.” he said, “However, my immediate problem is rather embarrassing. I seem to have run out of dilithium.” Of course, he knew full well that he would have had to ask for more if he had actually reached the station, but that didn’t negate the humbling situation of running out in the Denorious Belt.

“That’s fine.” she said, “I should be with you in around two minutes. I’ll have your ship tractorbeamed into the docking bay, we’re a couple of shuttles light still, so there should be plenty of room.”

“That is most appreciated, I will see you shortly.” he answered.

With the hail terminated, he wondered what he was going to say to Kira after all this time.

What seemed like only a moment later, the Defiant suddenly dropped out of warp, and locked on the tractor beam, gently guiding his ship into the docking bay. Kira had been right, there did seem to be plenty of room in there despite his ship being a little larger than the average Federation shuttle.

Once his ship had come to rest, he opened the hatch and climbed out, to find Kira greeting him, “Welcome aboard.” she said.

“Thank you.” he said, “Now, if you wouldn’t mind, there are some things we need to discuss, if we’ve someplace private?”

“Of course.” she replied, leading him through this familiar little battleship on which he had temporarily served, and right to the small but functional ready room. “What brings you out here, Garak?” she asked.

“In truth, things are not well on my planet, not since the war.” he said, “People are dying of disease and famine, and the soil is contaminated with something, we do not know what, but it is preventing our crops from growing. We’re facing a massive ecological disaster.”

“So, Cardassia needs aid.” she said, it was a statement, not a question.

“Yes.” he said.

“I saw the destruction.” she said, “But I had no idea that the Dominion had done something like this on top of the bombardment.”

“We didn’t at first.” he said, “We had no idea until our crops began to fail.”

“What about your replicators?” she asked.

“Most were destroyed in the bombardment.” he said, “But those that weren’t are all offline. We haven’t even got enough power to keep the lights on, let alone power the replicators. Even what’s left of Central Command doesn’t have one.”

“Then I assume you’re heading to Earth?” she asked.

“Yes.” he said, “But I’ll have to ask you for a loan of some dilithium so I can get there.”

She smiled, “I don’t think that will be a problem, it’s not exactly hard to come by, and the Federation keeps us pretty well stocked.” she said. “I’ll have to let Admiral Ross know you’re on the way, I’m sure he would be glad to meet you again.”

Garak had never spent a great deal of time with the admiral, but he did respect him, “I’d appreciate that.” he said, “And there is one other matter.”

“Oh?” she asked.

“I would like permission to address the Vedek Assembly, it is about time New Cardassia offered Bajor a formal apology for the crimes committed by our predecessors, namely the occupation.”

Suddenly, Kira looked rather emotional, “That would mean so much to so many Bajorans,” she said, “and to me.”

Garak would have previously become more aloof when he saw someone emotional, but this time he didn’t. He instead placed a reassuring hand on her shoulder, and said, “As did your help in expelling the Dominion from my planet. I know what my people did to yours, and it was every bit as wrong and as evil as what the Dominion did to mine. My job is to make sure nothing like these atrocities ever happens again. There has been enough suffering, and enough killing for several lifetimes.”

Kira nodded. He knew that during the war, they had developed a deep respect and understanding of each other, even if one could not exactly call it a friendship as such. "I'll contact the Kai, let's just get us back to the station first and I'll take it from there."

"Just one thing." he said, "Do not tell the Admiral the purpose of my visit, not over subspace, I do not want the Romulans eavesdropping and knowing just how vulnerable we are."

Kira smiled, "I don't think you've anything to worry about with our Romulan friends, since the war ended they've pretty much kept themselves to themselves. From what I understand there isn't even a whisper from that side of the Neutral Zone. We were hoping for some communication, perhaps even a formal peace treaty, but as of yet they have not responded to Starfleet."

Yet this was precisely what worried him, it was all TOO quiet, and when Romulans were quiet, you just knew that SOMETHING was up with them, and that they were even ignoring the Federation, the most dominant superpower in the quadrant, was even more worrying. "Nevertheless, I would feel more comfortable if we kept this off of subspace, knowing the Romulans as I do, they've likely got their ways of hacking into even your most secure channels. The Obsidian Order had access to some of their technology, but I suspect that they kept the majority to themselves. If they find out for sure that we are this vulnerable, that we can't even feed ourselves, who knows what the may do."

"I understand." said Kira, "And don't worry, I won't say anything more than that you're coming and that you need to see Admiral Ross in person immediately."

"Thank you." he replied.

Kira took a deep breath, and said, "Well, you might as well sit on the bridge for the ride to Deep Space Nine, we'll find you some guest quarters for a day or two while you're visiting Bajor, and I'll get one of the engineering teams to restock you with dilithium. Is there anything else you might need for your ship?"

"I doubt it." he said, "It seems to be otherwise in working order."

"Glad to hear it." she said.

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