



A Stitch in Time (Star Trek: Deep Space Nine #27)

By Andrew J. Robinson

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The enigmatic Garak - Cardassian-in-exile on space station Deep Space Nine - refers to himself as just a simple tailor, but everyone knows that there's more to him than that. Why was he banished from his home planet? And why does he choose exile on Deep Space Nine?

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Editorial Review

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Chapter 1

To: Dr. Julian Bashir
Chief Medical Officer
Deep Space 9

Entry:

How odd you humans are. Or is it just the Starfleet people? Captain Sisko has just invited me to join the invasion -- for which I am eternally grateful. The opportunity to liberate my homeland renews and animates my sluggish spirit. But the good captain makes no mention of the fact that this invasion is now possible because of the incident with the Romulans. I am simply to report to his office at "oh-nine hundred hours" with ideas as to where the Dominion defense perimeter might be vulnerable. Oh, our dealings with each other are nothing less than proper ("Mr. Garak," "Captain Sisko"), but what's so odd is that he pretends the incident never happened. And you and I both know how deeply affected he was by the whole business. Only when we exchange direct looks do I perceive a flicker of...what? Anger? Betrayal? Violation?

Odd people.

Humans seem to walk through life's infinite variety of relationships and situations taking them all at face value. They rarely look behind the facade or the mask, where real intentions -- the truth of our motives -- live. And the fact is, more often than not they deny that they have any mask at all. These humans (and I do exclude you, Doctor -- I will come to that shortly) believe that what they present to the world and, conversely, what the world presents to them, is the truth. It's this belief that makes them dangerous.

In Cardassian society, we are taught from an early age to mask all feelings and thoughts, to deflect all outside perception and observation. The objective of this education is to create a citizen who can work within the group to accomplish a group goal established by the leader, and at the same time work in such a way that none of the other members of the group knows what he or she is doing. As long as the goal is accomplished, it's nobody's business how you went about your work.

So why Captain Sisko is so upset with me because I accomplished the goal (which he established!) of getting Romulus into the war against the Dominion baffles me. And it's not because of the few lives that were sacrificed. Federation expansion has taken a toll in countless life-forms -- about most of which they are blissfully unaware. The moment you step into a garden and begin to cultivate and prune, you become a killer. Perhaps the captain was upset because he had hesitated to do what was necessary to insure the integrity of his garden. Sentimentality is another trait that makes humans dangerous.

But why am I writing this to you, instead of waxing philosophical over one of our lunches? I see that overly polite smile, your "Get to the point, Garak" mask. Patience, dear Doctor. First, let me explain why I can exempt you from this human bondage to appearance and sentiment. Long before it was revealed that you were genetically "enhanced," I recognized in you an intelligence, a capacity for understanding that I found lacking in other humans. As much as the subject irritates you, you have not been so much genetically enhanced as "arranged." The people who did this to you had specific reasons, which you have long since outgrown. And having assimilated these changes you've accommodated yourself to this "arrangement"

according to the demands of your life. For me, this means that in a sense you are more Cardassian than human. Which is why I am able to share this document with you...and why I sat down to lunch with you in the first place.

Before you cringe with horror at the thought of being a Cardassian, let me give you an example. Human memory is selective and linear. Simply put, a human remembers the best of times in progressive order, beginning with earliest childhood. The rosy memories are only challenged by nightmares. A Cardassian remembers everything on every level all the time. For us, past and present are not neatly separated. We live with everything in the moment -- including the nightmares. And so do you. To a human this would be chaotic, unbearable. For us it's just the way it is.

This is one reason why I am addressing this recollection to you. Fate lines are converging, like memories to a dying man. I need to write this, Doctor, and you're the only person on this station who will understand. The invasion of Cardassia is momentous. Many will die. If I don't survive, I want you to deliver copies of this to some people I will name at the end.

There's another reason. I know that we have grown apart and that's as it should be. We learn what we can from certain people, then we move on after we've taken what we need. When we learn nothing new about ourselves in a relationship that's when the relationship is over. Or it's over the moment when we're afraid to learn something new about ourselves. But what I have been learning about myself...whatever it was inside me that was sparked and challenged when I first met you...is deeply connected to this story. I'm an unfinished man, Doctor, like a suit of clothes hanging on a display rack waiting for the final touches that may never come; I need to tell this story to make a peace with those parts of me that were left unfinished. A healing. Indulge me, if you will; I need you as a witness. A stitch in time....

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Users Review

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