

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

9x01 - "Unjoined, pt 1."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novella

"Unjoined"

by Andy Mangels & Michael A Martin

appearing in

Star Trek: Worlds of Deep Space Nine
Book 2 - Trill / Bajor

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. FEDERATION COUNCIL HALL

The massive room where all Federation delegates meet when the Council is in session, as seen in "The Voyage Home." This is not a full session however, but an emergency security session to which only a few are invited.

There is Admiral AKAAR, and Andorian Councillor zh'THANE. There is also the bulbous Tellarite male GLEER, the ancient Vulcan female T'LATREK, classically African-dressed human male MAZIBUKO, elegant Caitian female M'RELL, the human-looking Centauri female HUANG, and the cerise-skinned, horned-headed (and indeterminate gendered) Damiani RACH.

A door opens and out steps a Bolian man, MIN ZIFE, with Starfleet guards. He is the President of the Federation, and takes his appropriate podium. Far from being strong and decisive, he is in fact rather small and ineffectual.

ZIFE

I call this session of the Federation Security Council to order. Today's meeting is sealed, unless the entire Council votes otherwise at a later date. We will first hear from Admiral Akaar about the situation in question, then discuss the Council's best course of action. Admiral?

AKAAR

Thank you, Mister President. I trust that by now all of you have read Starfleet's official report on the recent crisis on Bajor, and its apparent connection to the world of Trill.

GLEER

I most certainly have, Admiral. And I must ask - how could this have been kept secret for so long?

AKAAR

To what are you referring,
specifically, Councillor?

GLEER

All of it! These parasites and
their connection to the Trill
symbionts. The Trill government's
use of assassins against other
Federation heads of state.

AKAAR

I am prepared to discuss
Starfleet's involvement in those
events. But I cannot speculate
about the internal workings of the
Trill government.

T'LATREK

Indeed, such questions would be
more properly directed to the
councillor representing Trill.

RACH

And just why isn't Councillor Dev
present at this meeting? For that
matter, I should think Bajor would
demand representation at these
proceedings as well.

Akaar is interested in answers to these questions as well.
He looks to the head, where President Zife seems not to
have any. Councillor zh'Thane steps in to the breach.

ZH'THANE

To their credit, the Bajoran
people have not been blind to the
extenuating circumstances
surrounding the death of their
leader. They continue to demand a
full investigation into Trill's
handling of the crisis, as well
they should. But they have agreed
to wait for this council's
recommendations before acting.

(uncomfortable pause)

As to the other matter, our business today might very well be hampered by a representative from Trill.

HUANG

But must we conduct this business behind the backs of the Trill people?

GLEER

Why not?! The Trill have never had a problem concealing essential truths from others. It seems to come naturally to them.

M'RELL

Given its actions, a re-evaluation of Trill's status as a Federation member might be in order.

T'LATREK

I believe that would be an over-reaction. The individuals in question claim to have no affiliation with the Trill government at large.

GLEER

(derisive)

Yes, so they claim.

MAZIBUKO

I agree with Councillor T'Latrek. All the facts are not yet in. We should not rush to judgement. The Federation can't afford to simply cut loose long-standing members. Our post-war recovery depends as much on political cohesion as on physical reconstruction.

GLEER

All of this is a distraction from the clear and present danger. How

do we know that the parasite
threat is truly over?

AKAAR

You raise a good point, Councillor
Gleer. All we have to go on is the
testimony of Captain Benjamin
Sisko... and the complete absence
of any evidence to the contrary.

GLEER

(snort)

Far be it from me to question the
Emissary of the Prophets.

MAZIBUKO

(glare at Gleer)

What my esteemed colleague means
is that our responsibility to the
people of the Federation requires
that we test those assurances.

AKAAR

Agreed. And to that end, Starfleet
teams from Deep Space Nine are
even now retracing the movements
of everyone known to have become
infected by the parasites,
including Shakaar Edon himself.

ZH'THANE

I should also mention that the
Trill government has asked
Starfleet and this council to
withhold information about the
link between the parasites and the
symbionts from the public.

M'RELL

Have we accommodated that request?

AKAAR

So far, Councillor M'Rell, yes.

President Zife quietly clears his throat, bringing the
meeting back to order, and attention back to him.

ZIFE

I have been in contact with Trill President Maz, who has informed me her government is undertaking a full investigation of the parasite issue. She respectfully requests that we grant her time to conduct those proceedings before taking any action. President Maz has assured me that she knows nothing more than we do at the moment.

Akaar is not overly convinced of that, but doesn't argue.

ZIFE (cont)

I therefore recommend we allow her that time to complete the inquest before we make any public statements - or vote on any censure against her government.

RACH

Does she truly believe she can continue to keep this a secret? I find that ridiculous.

T'LATREK

Word of this will get out. It is simply a matter of time.

Off everyone's reaction to that plain, simple statement...

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

2 EXT. MINOS KORVA SURFACE - DAY

A vast expanse of rock and stone, almost all covered with ice and snow. A bitter wind blows up puffs of snow, and the weak sun does little to help matters. As seen from a distance, a group of five FIGURES trudge through the snow.

CLOSER

The figures include DAX, RO, BASHIR and a Cardassian woman, VLU. All wear Starfleet cold-weather gear (as seen in 8x10 "Divided We Fall"). Ro and Vlu lead with their tricorders. Dax is commanding this mission, and is determined to see it through, but she finds it tiring and uncomfortable.

Next to her, Vlu SLIPS on the ice, pinwheeling her arms for balance, and almost makes it. An arm shoots out to steady her - it is TARAN'ATAR. He grabs the back of her collar and lifts her effortlessly off the ground, before placing her back down on safer ground. The group stops for a moment.

TARAN'ATAR

You must be more careful, Doctor Vlu. These surfaces are not to be trusted.

VLU

(grumbling)

Neither is your strength. I think you nearly dislocated a few of my neckbones.

Bashir steps up and runs a medical tricorder over Vlu while she rubs at her neck and shudders against the cold.

BASHIR

Are you alright? You don't look so good.

VLU

I'm fine, Doctor Bashir. I just wish Minister Shakaar had visited

that nice warm farming region
during his visit to Minos Korva.
We Cardassians simply aren't
suited to this kind of cold. Would
you remind me again why I agreed
to come along on this little trip?

DAX
(grinning through
chattering teeth)
Because you said you didn't want
me to have to do all the griping
by myself.

VLU
Ah. What's that Starfleet saying?
'It's a dirty job, but somebody's
got to do it'?

DAX
Precisely.

None of them mentions what they all nevertheless know -
that Cardassians can't be taken over by parasites. The
group returns to walking through the wind and snow.

3 EXT. MINOS KORVA SURFACE - DAY

Further along on the trail. They come to a black and craggy
gap in the rocks - a dark CAVE entrance. The BEEPING from
Ro and Vlu's tricorders suggests this is the place.

RO
Here it is. Everybody ready?

Dax glances around at the others, looking for their
answers. All but Ro and Taran'atar look suitably nervous.
With a deep breath, Ro puts away her tricorder and raises a
wrist-lamp and phaser - Taran'atar raises his own weapon.

RO
Then let's go.

And she leads the way into the darkness of the cave.

4 **INT. MINOS KORVA CAVE**

Ro's bobbing wrist-lamp shows icy rocks and stalactites forming a crude stairway further down into the darkness. The walls GLITTER with occasional opalescent colours. Ro leads the team further on.

DAX
Anything on the tricorder?

BASHIR
I'm reading minute DNA traces on some of the rock faces.

VLU
Confirmed. Some are Bajoran.

BASHIR
More specifically, Shakaar's.

RO
Shakaar was a resistance leader long before he was a politician. He wouldn't have gone down without a fight.

The passageway WIDENS out around them, and the team emerge into a larger cave. Dax comes up short to avoid walking into Taran'atar, who has suddenly stopped.

TARAN'ATAR
Turn off your light, Lieutenant.

RO
Are you crazy?

TARAN'ATAR
Indulge me for a moment.

Still looking sceptical, she does as he asks, plunging the room into total darkness.

RO
Alright. What am I supposed to be seeing?

As they grow accustomed to the darkness, they realise it is not absolute. A faint, sickly yellow-greenish GLOW can be seen coming from veins of material running through the rocky walls. Just enough to cast dim light on Dax's face.

FLASHBACK - 8x24 "UNITY, pt 1"

Audrid Dax leads her similar team through the caves on the comet, with their own threads of luminous sickly green ice.

BACK TO SCENE

Dax shudders from the memory, forcing herself not to run.

BASHIR

Bio-luminescence. But whatever produced it no longer appears to be active.

VLU

I would estimate that it died on the order of five weeks ago. The bio-luminescence we're seeing now is simply a residual effect of life processes that have ceased.

RO

That would tend to prove that the entire hive died when the main matriarch was killed. I'd feel a lot better if we could actually find some dead parasites though.

BASHIR

At the very least, we have to verify that this nest is empty.

RO

Alright. Where do we look?

Under all this, Dax has been staring at the green veins. She is facing her horrible memories again, and moves forward, following the path they seem to prescribe.

DAX

This way...

As she walks on into the darkness...

FLASHBACK - 8x24 "UNITY, pt 1"

Audrid leads on...

BACK TO SCENE

After a few more moments of walking - Dax continuing to gaze with barely suppressed revulsion at the green veins - the team comes upon a raised BASIN-like formation in the rock, filled with the sickly green ice. Again Dax has to fight the urge to run away.

Ro reactivates her wrist-lamp and cautiously approaches the basin, holding out her tricorder with the other hand. Dax watches this with increasing trepidation...

FLASHBACK - 8x24 "UNITY, pt 1"

Jayvin Vod, Audrid's husband, leans over the similar basin-like shape in the comet cave, looking at the indistinct shape hidden beneath the ice. Then the shape launches out through the ice and right through his faceplate.

BACK TO SCENE

DAX
(warning)

No!

Ro pauses, and Dax suddenly realises the entire team is looking at her. Bashir approaches with gentle worry.

BASHIR
Ezri?

DAX
I'm fine, Julian.

BASHIR
Is there something you'd like to tell me?

DAX

(getting indignant)
You tell me, Julian. I'm sure it's
nothing your tricorder can't pick
up.

BASHIR

This is one of those times when my
instincts are telling me more than
my tricorder can. You cried out as
if you were having a nightmare.

VLU

I have detected the remains of
several parasites in this chamber.
We have already established that
they possess limited telepathic
abilities. Perhaps their
decomposing nervous tissue can
exert some residual influence on
members of... related species.

(beat)

But none of this tells us why they
chose such a remote base as Minos
Korva anyway. Why set up shop so
close to Cardassian space? They
don't appear terribly interested
in us, after all. Cardassians.

RO

No, they don't. But they are
interested in Trill. I think they
originally planned to mount their
next offensive directly from here.
But getting hold of Shakaar gave
them something even better - an
entire world about to enter the
Federation. The damage they could
have done from a position like
that is incalculable.

BASHIR

Trill appears to have dodged a
bullet. That's something to be
thankful for.

DAX

If there's nothing more to see here, I'd like to get back to the runabout.

She takes a step back the way she came, but her foot crunches onto something hard, scraping between her boot and the ground. She crouches down, and picks up a slightly curved piece of POTTERY, greenish-grey, about six inches. She brushes off the dust and ice, holds it up to the light.

DAX

Can anyone hazard a guess about this thing?

BASHIR

Perhaps the parasites enjoy making ceramics. Even monsters must need hobbies.

Before Dax can reply, her combadge BEEPS. Handing the piece of pottery to Bashir, she taps to answer.

DAX

Dax here, go ahead.

COMPUTER VOICE

Incoming priority message from Captain Kira Nerys on starbase Deep Space Nine.

DAX

Send it through.

COMPUTER VOICE

Channel open.

DAX

Dax here, Captain.

KIRA (comm)

(static-y)

How's the search going, Lieutenant?

DAX

It's going just the way we hoped
it would.

INTERCUT W/:

5 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

KIRA NERYS sits behind her desk in her shiny new Starfleet captain's uniform. ELIAS VAUGHN sits opposite her, mid-conference, listening in to the conversation.

DAX (comm)

(continuing)

We found the parasites' nest and confirmed that Minister Shakaar was lured here, and probably infected here too. The parasites themselves are all dead now.

KIRA

Good work. That goes for all of you. Well done.

(pause)

Ezri, Starfleet Command has just informed me that the Trill Senate is conducting official inquests into the whole parasite affair.

DAX (comm)

That's kind of surprising, Captain. I thought the last thing they'd want right now is publicity on that subject.

KIRA

I don't think they have a choice. The word's already gotten out, and the public are demanding answers. Other Federation officials are making similar demands about 'Trill secrecy.' Admiral Akaar and I agree that your testimony could be invaluable in heading off a real crisis. We need you on Trill, Ezri.

DAX (comm)
(hesitant)
Alright... Once we get back to the
station I can -

KIRA
No, Ezri. Immediately. Tenmei is
en route to Minos Korva in the
Nile to pick up the rest of your
team. I want you to take the *Rio
Grande* directly to Trill.

DAX
(deep breath)
Yes, sir. I'm on my way. Dax out.

With the channel closed, Kira looks back to Vaughn.

KIRA
Do you really think anything she
can tell them will make it better?

VAUGHN
We can only hope. It's true that
Trill society seems to make a
habit of... shall we say,
selective disclosure. Starfleet
didn't even know about the
existence of the symbionts until a
few decades ago.
(beat)
Perhaps the system may finally be
about to collapse under the weight
of its own secrets.

Kira is not encouraged by the prospect. On a different but
related subject...

KIRA
What about Mister Gard?

VAUGHN
He's already gone. I'm not
entirely sure of the details, but
Sergeant Etana told me that the

Militia has officially extradited him back to Trill custody.

KIRA

Okay. With Dax away I'll need you to run Ops, Commander. I have a meeting with Quark.

(exasperated)

The little troll is already pestering me for special diplomatic privileges.

VAUGHN

(grin)

You mean Ambassador Troll, surely.

Kira rolls her eyes and practically retches. Vaughn gets up with a chuckle and heads out.

6 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

The ship is parked on the ground. Through the windows we can see the cold, snowy landing pad for all those cargo ships we saw earlier.

Dax is in the pilot's seat, doing pre-flight. Ro is on the transporter pad and Bashir works the panels. As Ro dematerialises, Dax turns to Bashir.

DAX

Your turn, Julian. I need to get underway to Trill.

BASHIR

(simply)

I'm going with you.

DAX

I'm not sure that's such a good idea, Julian. This is Trill business, and -

BASHIR

- And Trill are notoriously reticent about letting non-Trill in on their affairs, yes, I know.

He comes forward and casually sits in the chair beside Dax, as if it is all already decided.

DAX

I appreciate the offer, Julian.
But I really think this is
something I need to handle on my
own.

BASHIR

And I think you'll need my help.
Or at least my moral support. You
told me yourself how guilty you
feel about Audrid's cover-up of
the first parasite encounter a
century ago. And I've seen for
myself how traumatic this entire
business has been for you.

DAX

This is all very 'who counsels the
counsellor,' isn't it?

BASHIR

You're not a counsellor anymore.

DAX

(indignant again)

And you never were one. I love
you, Julian, but I think you're
straying a bit too far from your
specialty.

BASHIR

Alright, then. I'll give you three
very solid, rational reasons why I
should accompany you to Trill.

DAX

(crosses arms)

Alright. Let's hear them.

BASHIR

(ticking off fingers)

One. We haven't spent nearly enough time alone together since before this whole parasite business started.

(beat)

Two. I have entirely legitimate medical concerns about your current emotional state after observing your behaviour here on Minos Korva.

(beat)

And three... I outrank you.

She can't decide on anger or affection. Bashir's wide, impish grin helps her make up her mind.

DAX

You win, Julian. But remember, I'm the only one here dressed in command red. And Kira placed responsibility for this mission with me, not you. So that extra pip on your collar doesn't mean all that much at the moment.

He effects a chivalrous, courtly bow.

BASHIR

I remain, as ever, your obedient servant.

With an unconvinced mutter, Dax turns back to the panels while Bashir grins.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

7 EXT. RIO GRANDE

The runabout warps through space.

8 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Dax sits alone in the pilot's seat, glum and pensive.

DAX

Computer... create subspace link
to Trill Defence Ministry, office
of General Taulin Cyl.

COMPUTER

Unable to create link due to high
signal traffic in Trill system.

DAX

Keep trying.

An affirmative BLEEP. She decides to get up and see what
Julian is up to. It will fill the time.

9 INT. RUNABOUT - REAR CABIN

Dax enters the rear cabin to see Julian working at a
computer station. He's so engrossed he doesn't notice her.

DAX

Hi, Julian.

(no response)

Lieutenant Dax to Doctor Bashir.

BASHIR

Sorry. Thought I'd get started on
a little research.

She peers at the reams of text on his screen, bemused.

DAX

Since when did you become so
interested in exo-archaeology?

Bashir grins and holds up the shard of pottery she found.

BASHIR

Since you found this. Don't worry, I was happy to take charge of the investigation. You seemed to... have other things on your mind.

DAX

So, what have you found?

BASHIR

The first thing is that it's about twelve-thousand years old. It's not Bajoran, so it's unlikely that Shakaar left it there. And there's no chance it's native to Minos Korva. So I wondered if it might have some significance to the parasites themselves. Then my tricorder detected this.

He taps the screen, and it displays a SCAN of the pottery piece. He ZOOMS in closer on it, and in between some of the layers is a pattern of lines - a symbol of some kind.

BASHIR

From this, I've been able to determine that the object came from the planet Kurl.

DAX

(remembering)

Kurl... that's the site of a long-dead civilisation, isn't it? Way outside Federation space.

BASHIR

The Kurlan civilisation died out five-thousand years ago. And it's hundreds of light-years from Minos Korva. So however this fragment ended up in that cave, it's had a remarkable journey.

DAX
Sounds like quite a mystery.

BASHIR
Indeed it is. In fact, I can think of only one thing I'd rather do to pass the time until we reach our destination.

DAX
Well, we have three days. No need to tire yourself out... studying.

She smirks seductively as she takes his hand and pulls him out of his seat and towards the bunk area.

CROSS-FADE INTO:

10 INT. RUNABOUT - BUNK AREA

Compact but cosy, hidden from the rest of the room by a curtain. Bashir is asleep - Dax lies awake, watching him breathe. The distraction has not helped her to relax.

She stares up at the ceiling, sighing. After a moment, she quietly gets up, taking care not to disturb Julian, throws on a light robe, and heads out of the bunk area.

11 INT. RUNABOUT - REAR CABIN (CONTINUOUS)

Dax emerges through the curtain back into the main rear cabin, whose lights have been dimmed for ship's night. She goes to the computer console, and speaks quietly.

DAX
Computer. Any luck contacting General Cyl?

COMPUTER VOICE
Negative.

She sighs, increasingly worried. Comes up with a new idea.

DAX
Okay... connect to Trill civilian news nets.

Affirmative BLEEP. The Trill logo appears on the screen, followed by the Trill news service we saw in 8x10.

A NEWSREADER sits in foreground, as the background images show a large and modern building with a huge crowd in its forecourt, shouting and protesting. Trill security can just be seen trying their best to keep them under control.

NEWSREADER (screen)
(picking up halfway)
... at the Senate building in Leran Manev. The Senate's hearings into the recent "parasite crisis" remain closed, although Senate representatives have promised that its findings will be made public "at the appropriate time." The protesters themselves appear to have a variety of agendas, which has led to some sporadic violence on the city streets...

DAX
No wonder Cyl's not answering.

Under the following, we ZOOM in closer on the scenes of unrest on the Trill city streets....

NEWSREADER (v.o.)
One of the loudest voices is the radical Neo-Purist movement, inspired by the terrorist Verad Kalon, who was killed last year...

SEGUE INTO:

12 EXT. TRILL SENATE BUILDING

Now we can more clearly see the protesters - all colours and types of Trill civilians. Some are holding home-made placards, bearing messages like "SYMBIOSIS EQUALS DEATH," "JOINING FOR ALL" and the more ambiguous "TIME FOR TRUTH."

In the sky over this, against a pleasant mountainous backdrop, the *Rio Grande* curves slowly down towards the

Senate building. It comes to land in an adjacent shuttle concourse, heavily controlled by the police.

CLOSER

Once the runabout settles to the ground, the hatch opens and DAX and BASHIR emerge, both looking out with dismay. Dax leads them a few steps towards the building, seeing two familiar figures approaching.

TAULIN CYL is wearing his Defence Force uniform, while HIZIKI GARD is in a smart but functional black outfit. Both are wearing efficient ear-mounted comm devices. Bashir and Dax greet them professionally but slightly uncomfortably.

DAX

General Cyl. Mister Gard.

BASHIR

Mister Gard... I take it the rumours of an official pardon are not so off the mark.

GARD

(enigmatic smile)

Never listen to rumours, Doctor.

CYL

Lieutenant, Doctor, the Senate's inquest is already underway.

(nods to crowd)

Needless to say, there's been a lot of popular interest.

GARD

At any rate, the Senate is particularly eager to hear your testimony, Lieutenant.

BASHIR

When does the Senate want Dax to testify?

Cyl replies directly to Dax, practically ignoring Bashir, who bristles with suppressed indignation.

CYL

Immediately, if that's alright with you. I'll be at your side throughout, just in case. So... are you ready, Lieutenant?

DAX

(deep breath)

I suppose so.

BASHIR

Lead on, then.

Bashir begins to head towards the doors of the building, but Gard raises a polite but firm hand, blocking his way.

GARD

If you don't mind, Doctor, we would prefer that you don't accompany us into the Senate Chambers themselves.

BASHIR

Excuse me?

CYL

You're welcome to walk around inside the building, of course. Or tour the city. But the Senate has requested that no non-Trills be present at the inquest.

DAX

I did try to talk you out of coming along, Julian.

BASHIR

Yes, you did at that. I suppose I could go for a walk. I'll catch up with you in a few hours.

CYL

This way, Lieutenant.

He turns and walks away, his pride clearly hurt. Feeling guilty, Dax follows Cyl and Gard into the building.

13 **EXT. LERAN MANEV STREETS**

Bashir walks through the city, passing the grand and attractive buildings, watching the world go by. He cannot shake his doubts about this entire situation.

In a couple of places, he passes police questioning Trill civilians or dragging them off. He doesn't like it.

CROSS-FADE INTO:

14 **EXT. LERAN MANEV CEMETERY**

A large, dignified graveyard, holding hundreds of markers. The vast majority are simple stone, but about ten percent carry gentle coloured lights - green, purple or yellow.

INSERT

One gravestone carries a purple light. On it is carved:

JADZIA IDARIS
BELOVED DAUGHTER, SISTER, STUDENT, FRIEND
HOST OF DAX

ON BASHIR

... who is standing in the lengthening shadow of this grave stone, gazing solemnly at the words. It's getting dark now.

DAX (o.s.)
I thought I might find you here. I suppose I owe her a visit myself.

BASHIR
Why? You never knew Jadzia.

DAX
True. But in some ways I know her better than anyone.

BASHIR
I think she would have liked you. How did your testimony go?

DAX

Bumpy, but serviceable. Cyl seemed nervous about some of the Senate's questions, insisting they be redirected to a private session.

(holds up the
pottery piece)

This especially, he was quite jumpy about.

BASHIR

Then I suppose he'll be doubly glad I wasn't testifying beside you. I carried on researching Kurl and Trill historical records on the way to Leran Manev.

DAX

Would have been nice to know that before going in there, Julian.

BASHIR

I'm not sure it has any significance.

DAX

That's not your decision to make.

(annoyed pause)

Anyway, be that as it may, what did you find out?

BASHIR

(taking the piece)

Just that this is a fragment of an ancient Kurlan *naiskos*.

DAX

A what?

BASHIR

A ceramic figurine in a squat, roughly humanoid shape. They stood about forty centimetres high, and they were designed to be opened. The inside was filled with similar but smaller figures, illustrating

the Kurlan people's belief that each individual is made up of a diverse chorus of impulses and desires, sometimes conflicting. One thing in particular intrigued me... The philosophy behind the *naiskos* made me wonder if perhaps the Kurlans might also have been a joined species, like the Trill.

DAX

That sounds like a bit of a reach.

BASHIR

Different personalities, different voices all inside one body, not necessarily agreeing with one another... We know the parasites are related to the symbionts.

(re: pottery)

This thing suggests they also have a connection to Kurl. Maybe all three points are connected.

Still not sure, but unwilling to argue with him on the matter, Dax lets it go. She changes the subject.

DAX

The violence is getting worse. These Neo-Purists, they're winding up the whole population with their wild accusations.

BASHIR

Don't blame the Neo-Purists, Ezri. Blame this... "aristocracy of the joined" your culture has created. Surely you can understand at least some of their grievances. You can't have missed how all the best opportunities seem to be filled with joined Trill.

DAX

Of course - the joined have the most experience. Otherwise what's

the point of doing it? And everyone has the chance to apply for joining if they want.

BASHIR

And what if they don't want? Should that mean they don't get the same opportunities? You've said yourself you wouldn't have got the first officer position on the *Defiant* if you hadn't been joined by accident to Dax. And look at the current situation. Dax, Cyl and Gard all knew each other from past lives. And here you are, working together again. The Old Boys Club.

Bashir is trying to keep it civil and reasonable, while Dax continues to take offence at Bashir's every insinuation.

DAX

Julian, these are extraordinary circumstances. And the whole idea of the ban on reassociation is to prevent exactly that kind of thing from happening.

BASHIR

Are you telling me you agree with the ban now, Dax? Because it wasn't all that long ago you were willing to suffer exile rather than go along with it.

DAX

Julian, in the time since I was joined to Dax, I've run into one ex-husband, one ex-wife inside my current boyfriend, my daughter reincarnated as a man twice my age, and two people who have killed me. Now I'm standing over what feels like my own grave. None of those encounters has exactly been fun. So yes, I'm beginning to

wonder if the taboo against
reassociation is such a bad idea.

BASHIR

What happened to the woman who
refused to join Ethan Locken's
"elite minority"? I think you've
gone native, Ezri.

DAX

You know what, Julian? I'm a
Trill. And whether I like it or
not, I'm a joined Trill. And that
means I know a hell of a lot more
about my own people than you do.

Suddenly, the growing tension between them is broken by a
wailing SIREN from across the other side of the city.
Moments later, Dax's combadge chirrups.

CYL (comm)

General Cyl to Lieutenant Dax. I'd
like to see you back at the Senate
building as soon as possible.

DAX

What's going on, Taulin?

CYL (comm)

The transcript of your testimony
has been leaked to the media. And
the people down on the streets are
starting to riot.

Off Bashir and Dax's dismayed reactions...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

15 INT. TRILL SENATE SECURITY CENTRE

Trill Defence OFFICERS move urgently around the room, many shouting instructions into ear-mounted comm devices. Cyl and Gard lead Dax and Bashir into this, tensions high.

BASHIR

(*sotto*, to Dax)

Thanks for inviting me this time.

GARD

President Maz has just announced that the hearings will be placed on hold until some semblance of order is restored on the streets.

DAX

Where is President Maz?

CYL

Busy, as you can imagine.

Cyl grabs a female officer, a stern and formidable woman who is in charge of this room. This is RIANU.

CYL

Colonel Rianu, report.

RIANU

Sir. We've identified several known members of the Neo-Purist movement among the agitators. We're moving as quickly as possible to apprehend them.

Rianu casts a suspicious eye on Gard, which Cyl notices.

CYL

Something to say, Colonel?

RIANU

Permission to speak freely, sir?

CYL

I don't have time for protocol
right now, Colonel. Out with it.

RIANU

(re Gard)

I'm not sure it's such a good idea
to bring that man down here,
General. He has no formal rank or
position within the Defence Force.
I believe he constitutes a
significant security risk.

CYL

Colonel, Hiziki Gard is my right
hand, at least for the current
crisis. I expect you to give him
whatever resources he asks for,
and obey his orders as if they
were mine. Do I make myself clear?

RIANU

(snap to attention)

You do, sir.

Cyl and Rianu go back to discussing the current situation.
Under this, Dax and Bashir talk *sotto voce*.

DAX

That's Colonel Behza Rianu. She's
supposed to be one of the best in
the Defence Force.

BASHIR

She seems to have everything well
in hand down here.

DAX

She has political ambitions, too.
As well as a quick temper that's
kept her out of a Senate seat.

BASHIR

Are you sure she hasn't advanced
just because she's not joined?

DAX
(gob smacked)
I can't even find the words to
answer that, Julian.

Cyl walks up to the monitors, gazing with dismay at the riot scenes outside. Shaking his head in exasperation, Cyl walks back to the doors. Dax, Bashir and Gard follow. They reach the doors, which open onto a large elevator.

As they step in, another officer, TALRIS, jogs over pushing a trolley before him, carrying an object draped in a sheet.

OFFICER
General, hold the elevator,
please.

They do, and Cyl after-you's for Talris.

16 INT. ELEVATOR (CONTINUOUS)

Talris pushes his trolley on first, to the back of the elevator. The rest step in, turning their back to him.

TALRIS
Thank you, sir. Seventh floor, if
you would, please.

Dax presses the buttons, and they talk quietly.

DAX
There's got to be a way to resolve
this without so much violence.
Can't we release some neural gas
in the plaza, or set up a wide-
dispersal phaser stun blast?

CYL
Either of those options could
still cause some deaths. The
colonel's forces should be able to
handle the worst of it.

The elevator comes to a stop at the seventh floor, and Talris timidly pushes past them to exit.

TALRIS

Excuse me... thank you.

He leaves, and the doors close. The lift begins to move again. The others are too distracted to realise that Talris has left his trolley behind in the lift.

DAX

Perhaps if President Maz spoke directly to the people...

CYL

Though I have little truck with the malcontents, I can't argue against Maz's credibility out there amongst the Great Unjoined.

GARD

Um, General... I believe we have a new problem.

Gard has noticed the abandoned trolley, and removes the sheet, revealing a two metre-long metal CYLINDER.

GARD (cont)

I think that's a bomb.

Tension, as they all realise they are in a bad situation. Cyl reaches out and presses the elevator's emergency stop.

DAX

If they bomb the Senate tower, they could cripple the government for months.

DAX

Okay, so how do we disarm it?

CYL

I'll call for an evacuation. Try to save as many lives as we can.

BASHIR

(stopping Cyl's hand)

Wait.

(taps combadge)
Bashir to *Rio Grande*.

COMPUTER
Rio Grande acknowledging.

There is not a second to lose. Bashir takes his combadge off the front of his uniform and attaches it to the bomb.

BASHIR
Lock transporter onto my combadge.
Program a five second delay, then
transport the large metal object
to which it's attached.

COMPUTER
Please specify coordinates.

BASHIR
Deep space. Directly overhead.
Maximum range.

CYL
(taps comm)
This is General Cyl. Warn every
orbiting ship to raise shields or
break orbit. Immediately.

COMPUTER
Energising.

The bomb disappears in a transporter beam.

CYL
Well done, Doctor. We'll know soon
enough if -

RIANU (comm)
Rianu to Cyl. Patrol vessel TDM-
one-twelve reports that a small
device detonated in low orbit.
They say it sent out some kind of
electromagnetic pulse, but it
dissipated before they could
analyse it. They say it was more
flash than substance, though.

CYL

Colonel, I want Sergeant Talris found and arrested immediately. He's a Neo-Purist agent. Send an alert to look out for more bombs at other prominent locations.

RIANU (comm)

Sir... the Neo-Purist leader has sent out a planet-wide message. It's going out live right now. We're trying to trace it, but we can't block the transmission.

DAX

I guess they learned some new tricks since Verad.

CYL

Colonel, we'll view the message in the Senate offices. Cyl out.

He punches the controls again, getting increasingly annoyed with these protestors, and the elevator starts moving. The others relax - but only a little. They know it's not over.

17 INT. TRILL SENATE OFFICE

The lift opens again onto a well-appointed office, featuring a large, dramatic desk and a huge window looking out over the plaza, many floors below. Cyl stalks towards the desk, and works the computer screen sat upon it.

CYL

Computer, begin playback.

The screen fills with the intense face of a Trill WOMAN, speaking with conviction and confidence into the camera.

WOMAN (screen)

Thanks to the recent Starfleet testimony before the Senate, information has come to light about an ancient link between the parasitic creatures who recently

attacked Bajor - and tried to attack our world - and the extinct civilisation on the planet Kurl. Clearly, this implies that Kurl is the missing link between symbiont and parasite. President Maz has concealed this from you, as have the entire Senate and centuries of their predecessors.

DAX

Can you pause the playback?

Cyl touches a control and the woman's face freezes.

CYL

This proves that the radicals have infiltrated the government pretty thoroughly.

BASHIR

They also came to the same conclusions I did about the history between Trill and Kurl.

DAX

(dismissing him)

That just proves you're not the only one who loves ridiculous conspiracy theories.

BASHIR

(bristling)

Regardless, from my reading of Trill history, your people didn't make much use of warp technology until about three centuries ago. But the Kurlans were already extinct millennia before that.

DAX

Exactly. Which makes it very unlikely that the Kurlans were connected to the Trill at all.

Dax curtly nods for Cyl to restart the message. He does.

WOMAN (screen)

The Neo-Purist movement calls upon Maz and the ruling joined class to stop concealing the truth about our past. To stop perpetuating the lies and secrecies that have begun to engulf other worlds as well as our own. To stop concealing the connection between parasites and symbionts, which has only left us vulnerable to their vendetta. It is the lies of the joined that have led us to this place, and to them we say - be warned. We will not allow you or the creatures who control you to lead us to our destruction. In the defence of our world, we are prepared to take drastic measures.

The message ends, and the screen goes blank.

DAX

Think there's any truth in this?

CYL

She's not the first to suggest a long-term conspiracy within our government. Your own Captain Kira said the same.

GARD

It needn't necessarily be a conspiracy. We could have simply... forgotten.

BASHIR

Forgotten? I thought the Trill revered and cherished memories.

GARD

We do. But any society that collects and preserves its memories for long enough must inevitably lose track of some.

DAX

So we need to fill those gaps. We have to find out the truth. That's the root of the problem.

Bashir walks over to the window and looks down to the crowd below, which is still shouting and fighting. The police down there are forced to use occasional phaser fire to stun some of the rowdier protesters. He points to them.

BASHIR

That is our main problem. Putting a stop to the violence, not plowing through some prehistoric archive that you already searched, looking for something that probably isn't there.

DAX

If we don't get to the bottom of this Kurl business soon, that -
(also pointing)
- may just prove unstoppable. And I think we may have a short cut to the oldest memories on Trill.

She looks at Cyl, who smiles slightly, on the same page.

CYL

The Guardians of Mak'ala.

Decision made, Dax and Cyl stride away from the desk, back to the door. The puzzled Bashir and Gard try to keep up.

DAX

I'll take the runabout straight to Mak'ala. Julian, report to the Emergency Response Med Centre and assist with the injured.

They all step into the lift, and Dax punches the controls.

Dax is now in command mode, certain she knows the answer and determined to see it through. Bashir doesn't like this out-of-the-loop feeling. As the lift moves...

BASHIR

Okay. But I don't understand. Why go there now?

DAX

Because the monks who watch over the symbiont pools have been doing that job for more than twenty-five thousand years.

CYL

So if anyone knows our people's ancient past, it's the Guardians.

BASHIR

Do you remember Timor? When we came here five years ago, about Jadzia's problem? He didn't care a thing about the outside world, and he wasn't exactly forthcoming with information, even when we needed it to save Jadzia's life.

DAX

(uncowed)

I think they'll see that the stakes are a little higher now.

CYL

And if they agree to let us reveal some additional information about the Kurlan-parasite connection, the protesters might take that as a gesture of good faith from the joined, and stop their attacks.

19 EXT. TRILL SENATE BUILDING - DAY

The group emerges from the front doors of the Senate tower, carries on past the crowds being held back by police, and heads towards the shuttle plaza. Bashir is still trying to get through to Dax, but she is forging ahead heedless.

BASHIR

And what if you turn up something that only confirms what they're saying? That vindicates their paranoia?

DAX

Look around you, Julian. Something has to be done. I don't have time to debate this with you now.

He grabs her by the arm, tries a last impassioned attempt.

BASHIR

Please, Ezri. Think for a minute about what you're about to do. Suppose you uncover some entirely new unknown horror from Trill's past. What will you do then?

She stares back at him, her eyes smouldering.

DAX

(an order)

Report to Emergency Response, Doctor. Ask Mister Gard to help you if you have trouble finding your way around.

She turns smartly, walking with Cyl towards the runabout. Bashir is left behind, frustrated, with Gard.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

20 INT. TRILL SENATE OFFICE

Bashir and Gard are back in the office. On the floor of the office, a TRANSPORTER signal deposits Bashir's medical kit, and a small bag of additional items. Still smarting about his treatment by Dax, Bashir goes to inspect it with a petulant manner, while Gard speaks into his comm.

GARD

Good luck, Lieutenant, General.

(glance at Bashir)

Doctor Bashir wishes you the same.

He closes the line, and steps closer to Bashir.

GARD

You seem to be taking her actions personally. I can understand your position, but you must understand hers.

BASHIR

What I understand is that she and the general seem more interested in ancient Trill history than with what's going on here and now.

GARD

Perhaps. But General Cyl is trying to get to the bottom of what the agitators are agitating about. As a doctor, surely you can see the wisdom of curing the cause rather than just patching up the symptom.

BASHIR

Yes, but you still deal with the most immediate problem first. That's why it's called first aid. And the immediate problem is that the streets out there are becoming drenched in blood.

Bashir stands and hoists the med-kit onto his shoulder, ready to leave. But Gard comes over all philosophical.

GARD

Haven't you ever had a secret you couldn't share with anyone, because you knew - you knew - that it would change everything?

Bashir pauses - he has indeed held such a secret.

GARD (cont)

Surely you've kept confidences in the course of your duties as a Starfleet officer. Surely you've concealed actions or decisions that could have caused grave damage if they were revealed.

BASHIR

Say it like that and lying to your own people sounds so reasonable.

Gard does not rise to the bait, even though Bashir's annoyance is becoming more and more obvious.

GARD

I'm not like most joined Trills, Doctor. Rather than redefine my life with each new incarnation, my existence has always been about one thing - neutralising aberrant joinings.

BASHIR

Like Joran Dax.

GARD

Yes. Although it's important to understand that neither Joran nor Dax were dangerous individually. If Joran had been joined to another symbiont, or not at all, he might have lived a long and normal life. It was the unique combination of Joran and Dax that

gave rise to a monster. The point is that, despite all the best intentions in the world, sometimes bad things just happen.

BASHIR

(becoming curious)

How often?

GARD

(shrug)

Centuries can pass. Spotting them requires constant vigilance.

BASHIR

And you're the one who maintains that vigilance? You alone?

GARD

A number of us keep watch. But whenever a threat arises, I'm the one who deals with it. It's what I've always done.

BASHIR

That's why you keep such a low profile. When not assassinating heads of state, that is.

GARD

(ignoring the jab)

Maintaining secrecy is essential. It's the only way that our society can maintain faith in the system that enables us - even a tiny minority of us - to enjoy the immortality of joining.

Bashir lets out a frustrated sigh. He doesn't like this.

BASHIR

What about your previous hosts? Other Trill symbionts are guided by the needs and desires of the humanoids they join with. But you're telling me that your hosts

set all that aside to follow the goals of the Gard symbiont.

GARD

It's entirely voluntary, I assure you. The screening process is even more stringent than the regular initiate program. And when the Commission finds the right match for Gard, that initiate is brought into the loop, and allowed to make an informed decision.

BASHIR

And if one of them declines the honour? What happens to them then?

GARD

(eyes narrowing)

What makes you think something happens to them?

BASHIR

You said secrecy is paramount. So I have to assume that either their memories are wiped, or they're killed. Which is it?

Gard holds Bashir's hard gaze, but declines to answer.

BASHIR

Alright, answer me this, then. How many hosts have you had?

GARD

A good deal more than any other joined Trill you've ever heard of.

BASHIR

And you remember all of them?

GARD

(hesitant)

No. Beyond a certain point, I can't remember anything. As I said earlier, anything that's old

enough must eventually forget things. But frankly, I don't care. My role, my function, is all that matters. In fact, I can't remember ever doing anything else.

BASHIR

Then, is it possible...

GARD

Yes?

BASHIR

If these aberrant joinings are as rare as you say, might your role have originally been created for an entirely different reason?

GARD

(way ahead of him)

What are you suggesting, Doctor?

BASHIR

That perhaps you were originally created to deal with joined parasites. Like Shakaar.

GARD

(straight-faced)

That would imply a very ancient knowledge about the threat the parasites pose.

BASHIR

Yes. Do you think it's true?

GARD

(enigmatic smile)

I think, Doctor, that some things should never be forgotten.

21 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Flying through the atmosphere. Dax is in the pilot seat, Cyl beside her, mid-relaxed and unofficial conversation. Dax's hands play absently with the *naiskos* fragment.

DAX

Of course I questioned it. Even if my symbiont hadn't lived through nine hosts, two of us have been Starfleet officers and another was a Federation diplomat. It's inevitable that we'd have a wider view of things than most. That we'd question the status quo more.

CYL

So what makes you different from the protesters?

DAX

Questioning and exploring aren't quite the same as anarchy and outright defiance of authority.

CYL

Ah, so it's a matter of degree, not necessarily the goal. And you would never defy the authority of accepted morality by, say...

(fake blasé)

...reassociating?

She purses, knowing she's been caught out.

DAX

Point taken. But it seems to me you're painting anyone who disobeys the rules with the same broad brush you'd use on the radical fringe.

CYL

(lightly)

I hope I'm not. I've broken plenty myself in my time. But no matter what comes in the next days, we're all going to have to re-examine our values and beliefs. We'll have to decide if our traditions should change... if they can change.

Evolution is about change, after all. Do we allow our society to evolve? If we examine the mistakes of our past, how will that affect our future?

Dax looks askance at Cyl, surprised and impressed.

DAX

You're certainly not Audrid's little girl Neema anymore. You've become quite the warrior-philosopher.

CYL

Six lifetimes will tend to do that to a person. Not that I have to tell you... mama.

DAX

(quietly)

I'm sorry, Neema. I would give anything to change what happened to your father.

Cyl nods, accepting Dax's statement without judgement. He is in a very thoughtful mood.

CYL

Perhaps neither of us is really so different from those crying out for radical change.

DAX

There's that broad brush again. Not everyone in favour of change wants what the Neo-Purists want. Yes, they'd like to erase the lines between the joined and the unjoined... but they'd do it by erasing the joined altogether.

Dax looks back down at the *naiskos* fragment in her hands, twisting it around, wondering about it.

DAX

What do you think the truth really
is about Kurl?

CYL

My people have found similar
artefacts in some of the other
parasite lairs we've investigated.
We wondered if they were some kind
of message, or functioned as
calling cards. But neither idea
made sense. Now I suspect they
hung onto them as artefacts of
memory. Perhaps they revere their
history as much as we do ours.

She closes her eyes, remembering for a moment...

FLASHBACK - 8x24 "UNITY, pt 1"

Audrid Dax runs terrified through the caves as her
possessed husband chases her, screaming incoherently.

BACK TO SCENE

Gripping tightly onto the *naiskos* fragment, she turns and
suddenly hurls it against a bulkhead. It shatters.

CYL

Feel better?

DAX

For now.

Her reflections are interrupted by beeps and blinkies from
the computer. She checks a panel.

DAX

We're only a few dozen clicks from
the Mak'ala caves.

CYL

So... we've managed to make it
half way around the planet without
once discussing the problems in
your relationship with the doctor.

DAX
(surprised, annoyed)
What? I don't think - I don't...
We aren't having any problems.

CYL
(blank-faced)
Oh.

DAX
What is that supposed to -
(reacting to panels)
I'm detecting weapons fire at the
caves.

Suddenly concerned, Cyl is all business. Dax begins to pilot the runabout closer, and through the windows, we can see the cliff-side entrance to the caves approaching.

22 EXT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA - DAY

Several hundred people have gathered at the entrance to the caves, mostly held behind a barricade but growing more restless by the moment.

A small garrison of Trill Defence Force are trying to control them, but are almost completely overwhelmed.

One police vehicle has been overturned, another is aflame and belching black smoke. The police are firing on the protesters - the protesters are firing back.

23 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Seeing this through the cockpit window, Dax and Cyl are extremely dismayed...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

24 EXT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA - DAY

In the mouth of the cave, RANUL KERU emerges (8x10 - "Divided We Fall"). The big, bearded Trill man looks out at the crowds with fear and worry - not for himself, but for the symbionts under his care. He looks up as the runabout *Rio Grande* appears in the sky over the worked up crowd.

25 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

As Dax pilots them closer, Cyl leans forward and looks through the windscreen with worry at the crowds.

CYL

Why haven't we received any
distress calls?

DAX

Incoming transmissions are being
jammed from outside.

CYL

Can you do what you said earlier?
Set the ship's phasers on stun?

DAX

Yes, but the wider the dispersal,
the less effect it'll have. A
ship's phasers weren't exactly
designed for crowd control. It
might knock them down for a few
minutes, but no longer.

CYL

Do it. I'll try and get a message
through.

As Cyl goes to work on the panels...

26 EXT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA

Ranul Keru sees the runabout OPEN FIRE on the crowd - a wide beam that sweeps over the agitating crowd and knocks

almost all of it unconscious. He is momentarily horrified, until he sees that they are all unharmed, just stunned.

The runabout curves in to land behind the lines, between the crowd and the caves. The hatch opens and Cyl and Dax step out. A Defence Force officer, DOYOS, meets them.

DOYOS

General, I'm Captain Doyos. We've been calling for back-up for an hour now. More protesters arrive all the time, and some of them have brought vehicles and weapons.

CYL

Your messages never got through, Captain. We didn't know.

(turns to Dax)

Ezri, I'll leave the research in your hands. I need to coordinate with my people out here and keep the caves defended.

As Cyl moves away with Doyos, Keru emerges from the cave entrance and approaches Dax - they shake hands warmly.

KERU

Lieutenant Dax.

DAX

Ranul! Oh, it's good to see a friendly face. And it should make things a lot easier for me - I've come to ask for the help of the Guardians.

KERU

I'm happy to assist however I can... especially if it'll help rein in the madness out here.

Keru leads Dax further into the darkness of the caves.

Bashir hurries through the mostly empty streets, carrying his med-kit, on his way to the hospital. He is escorted by an unimpressed young female officer, ASAL. The continuing background noise of rioting and protesting distresses him, and the heavy police presence frustrates him.

ASAL

I don't know why Starfleet would be here. This is Trill business.

BASHIR

(muttering)

Well, perhaps if Trill had made a better job of managing its business, Starfleet wouldn't need to be here.

They turn a corner and see three figures slumped in the shadow of a building. Asal raises her weapon at them.

ASAL

You there! Stand and identify yourselves!

One of the figures, a young GIRL of about eleven, stands on wobbly, frightened legs and calls back.

GIRL

My name is Dula Seng, and this is my mother and brother. They're injured. They can't stand.

BASHIR

(starting forward)

I'm a doctor, I can help -

ASAL

(holding him back)

Wait, Doctor Bashir. We don't know if they're armed.

GIRL

Please... they wouldn't help us at the hospital. Mama is very sick.

Bashir determinedly shakes off Asal's arm and approaches the family. She keeps her phaser aimed, wary just in case. Bashir talks gently as he leans down to tend to the woman.

BASHIR

What happened?

GIRL

We were at the Najana library when all the yelling started. Mama was trying to get us home, but we kept getting caught in the crowds. They sprayed something on us, and Mama started having trouble breathing. The hospital turned us away because Mama isn't joined.

Furious inside, Bashir keeps a gentle bedside manner. He presses a hypo to the woman's neck - her hitching breathing gets easier. Then he does the same for the little boy.

BASHIR

Don't worry, this won't hurt.
You'll both be alright, I promise.
You had a reaction to the gas they used. You should be able to walk in a few minutes.

MOTHER

(croaky whisper)

Thank you...

(with difficulty)

Have the bombs gone off yet?

Bashir's blood chills. Asal approaches in great concern.

BASHIR

The bombs?

MOTHER

I heard some people talking about bombs at the library. That's why I got the kids out of there.

ASAL

Why didn't you inform anyone?

GIRL
(angrily)
She tried to, but nobody would
listen. They sprayed gas on us.

BASHIR
Did you hear where they were?

MOTHER
No... but they said the joined
would be sorry when they went off.

ASAL
I've got to report this.
(pointing)
The hospital is that way. You
should be able to get there
without too much trouble. I've
gotta go.

BASHIR
Good luck.

Asal rushes the way they came; Bashir turns to the family.

BASHIR
I'd get home as soon as possible
if I were you. And thank you for
the information.

MOTHER
Thank you.

Bashir stands and walks in the direction Asal pointed.

28 **INT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA**

Dax waits to one side, gazing into the depths of the milky
symbiont pools. Across the cave, a group of robed and dour-
faced GUARDIANS - including Keru - confer in hushed voices.

After a moment, they break. Keru goes to stand by the main
pool, staring into it - the meeting did not go his way. The
oldest Guardian of the group approaches Dax.

GUARDIAN

What you told us is troubling,
Ezri Dax. Not just because of the
unrest it causes our people now,
but because it undermines the
trust between symbiont and
humanoid. But we cannot help you.
We cannot concern ourselves with
anything other than caring for the
symbionts.

DAX

Do I really have to point out how
impossible that will become if
those protesters break in here?

Unhappy but determined, the Guardian turns away. All the
others will not meet her eyes either. Dax is incensed.

Four SYMBIONTS bob to the surface of the water. Jagged
forks of electricity arc between them as they discuss the
problem silently. The Guardians turn, transfixed.

After a few more discharges, one of the symbionts sends an
electrical finger out to gently touch Keru's stomach. He
smiles, and turns back to the others.

KERU

It seems my superiors have just
been over-ruled. I think you're
going to get your answers.

DAX

What do I have to do?

KERU

Just swim to the very bottom of
the pools. Where nobody's ever
gone before.

As Keru smiles and the other Guardians are shocked...

29 **EXT. LERAN MANEV STREETS - DAY**

As Bashir enters and walks down a dim and narrow alleyway,
a gang of Trill YOUTHS enter from the other direction.

They are heading towards him, and it looks like they have been caught in the fighting. Bashir keeps his head down and steps to one side to let them pass.

But as they reach him, a FIST shoots out and smashes into his jaw. He is knocked back against the wall, and another PUNCH gets him in the stomach, another in the ear. He goes down, coughing blood.

The youths grab the med-kit off his shoulder, KICK him in the ribs one last time, and run off down the alleyway, laughing. Bashir begins to slowly lose consciousness, the youths melting back into the shadows as he goes.

30 INT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA

Dax now stands by the side of the pool, wearing a Starfleet environment suit. Keru stands beside her, checking the settings on the suit.

KERU

You realise this might not work,
right?

DAX

I have to try.

KERU

(chuckle)

That sounds like something Sean
used to say right before he did
something brave but stupid.

DAX

Speaking of which... if I don't
make it back, you'll give Julian
my message, right?

KERU

You'll come back. Just watch the
time. You'll be racing against
your air supply and the water
pressure. Not to mention whatever
else might be living down there.

DAX
Okay then... I'm ready.

KERU
I'll be waiting.

DAX
I have a better idea. Since you have a Starfleet background, how about you get out there with Cyl and make sure these caves remain defended for my triumphant return?

KERU
Yes, sir.

Then he stands back, as Dax gingerly steps into the pool and begins to wade deeper. Deeper... deeper... with a last glance over her shoulder at Keru, she submerges completely.

31 **UNDERWATER**

Lit only by the lights of her environment suit and the rapidly fading glow from the entry to the pool, far above her head, Dax descends deeper into the water.

Moving deeper and deeper, the light getting further and further away, until eventually she reaches the point of no return and is swallowed in the darkness of the depths.

FADE OUT:

THE END