

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

8x16 - "Baby Steps."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novel

*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine
Mission Gamma Book 1 - Twilight*

by David R George III

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING

A nice, peaceful shot of the station, with an important-looking ship just settling onto the docking ring.

2 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

Colonel KIRA NERYYS stands by the docking hatch, in finest lilac Bajoran Militia dress uniform. One Starfleet security and one Bajoran security (Sergeant SHUL, 8x06), are nearby.

The hatch cycles open, and out steps a Trill male, GANDRES - pleasant, civil, elegant but ordinary. Behind him comes another Trill male, GARD. His stocky form and vigilant eyes mark him as security. Handsome and intense, but intuitive, not thuggish. Kira steps forward and shakes Gandres' hand.

KIRA

Welcome to Deep Space Nine. I'm
Colonel Kira Nerys.

GANDRES

I am Seljin Gandres, Trill
ambassador to the Federation. This
is one of my aides, Hiziki Gard.

Gard slinks past his boss and shakes Kira's hand earnestly.

KIRA

Welcome to the station.

GARD

Thank you, Colonel. A pleasure to
meet you.

KIRA

We've planned a reception for all
the delegates this evening. In the
meantime, I'd be happy to conduct
you on a tour of the station, if
you're interested. Or I could have
you escorted to your quarters.

GARD

Pardon me Colonel, but would it be possible to inspect those quarters before occupying them?

GANDRES

Forgive my aide's impertinence, Colonel, but he is in charge of security for our contingent, and he is... thorough.

GARD

(firm, not cowing)

I intended no disrespect.

KIRA

Not at all. We have tightened station security considerably for the summit. I have full confidence in my Security Chief. We also haven't announced the summit to anybody on the station, and First Minister Shakaar has not made a public announcement yet, so few people are even aware it will be taking place.

GANDRES

I appreciate your diligent efforts to ensure our safety.

Nearby, a turbolift door opens and Admiral AKAAR emerges, uncrumpling his large body from the small space. Kira is slightly annoyed to have him butting in on her territory.

He approaches the group, and he and Gandres smoothly do the Admiral's heart-and-hand gesture to each other.

AKAAR

Colonel, Ambassador. I welcome you with an open heart and hand.

GANDRES

L.J., how are you?

AKAAR

I'm well. Colonel Kira has been most hospitable.

Kira is a bit surprised by the compliment, but covers it.

AKAAR

I'd like some of your time today, Seljin. There are some issues I'd like to discuss before tomorrow.

GANDRES

Of course, I can talk right now. Is there somewhere we can go?

AKAAR

How about back aboard your vessel?

GARD

I would recommend that as well, at least until I can verify security precautions on the station.

Gandres acknowledges with a nod, then turns back to Kira.

GANDRES

Thank you for welcoming us to Deep Space Nine, Colonel. I'll be in touch with you later.

KIRA

You're welcome, Ambassador.

Gandres leads Akaar back onto the ship. At Kira's nod, the Starfleet security leads Gard down the corridor. Shul remains, and Kira walks back to the turbolift, still somewhat befuddled by Akaar's style.

3 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

A normal late morning. About a dozen people in, nowhere near enough to make QUARK happy as he plods into his empire. He is definitely in a grumpy mood.

A shout of "Dabo!" comes from the other side of the room, and Quark looks over to see four people around the dabo

table with his new Orion dabo girl TREIR, her scanty outfit barely covering her decency. Quark is not best pleased.

Resident barfly MORN catches Quark's attention by waving his empty glass. Quark heads behind the bar and pours Morn a large orange drink.

QUARK

Thank the Blessed Exchequer there
are some constants in the world.

(hands drink to Morn)

Well, my friend, I hope you're
having a better day than I am.

Morn gives a leer at a passing woman, winks at Quark, raises his glass and is about to drink when a loud CRASH sounds from the other side of the room.

Quark looks over with a scowl - one of his servers, FROOL, has dropped a tray. Glass has smashed all over the floor. Quark stalks over, growing less and less happy.

QUARK

Frool, you idiot!

(to the bar)

Everything's fine, folks. Nothing
to see here. Go back to your
drinking and gambling. Plenty of
room at the dabo wheel.

(to Frool)

Clean that up now. And it's coming
out of your wages.

(to a passing stranger)

You just can't get good help these
days.

Another shout of "Dabo!" goes up, and Quark cringes. He heads over to the wheel, angrily gritting his teeth behind a fake smile. Treir is just handing over money to a player.

QUARK

What's going on?

Treir smiles warmly, much better at faking it than Quark, and drapes herself sensuously over him.

TREIR

We're paying off another lucky winner here at Quark's. Just like we always do.

QUARK

Well, stop it. And get some more people gambling.

TREIR

Get 'em yourself. I can't force people to come into this... place.

QUARK

It's your job to get customers to come in here and gamble.

Uncomfortable with the increasing tension, two of the people at the wheel get up and go to another table.

QUARK

See what you're doing? Now you're chasing customers out of here.

TREIR

You'd better watch it, Quark. You're about two seconds away from chasing me out of here.

QUARK

Listen, if you want to leave -

Quark was about to begin a good solid rant, but he suddenly turns his head, as if having heard something. Nothing seems to be amiss, so he turns back to Treir.

QUARK

Just do your job.

He stalks out of the bar, glowering at Frool on the way.

4 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Kira sits at her desk, talking to an image of KASIDY YATES on the comm screen. Kasidy is sat in her home on Bajor, looking concerned and increasingly pregnant.

KASIDY (screen)
Is there anything you can do?

KIRA
Like what?
(composes herself)
Sorry, I didn't mean to snap. It's just... I've tried really hard these last few months to live with the Attainder. But I'm getting no support from Shakaar, half the Bajorans on the station won't look me in the eye. And now I've got this pushy Admiral breathing down my neck and holding the whole future of Bajor at gunpoint over whether or not I can put on a good show at the reception tonight.

KASIDY (screen)
You don't have to apologise, Nerys. It sickens me what Yevir did to you. That's why I wanted to warn you about this. If there's a problem in the Vedek Assembly, like Prylar Eivos said, they may try to blame you for that too.

KIRA
And they might be right. I'm not saying that I agree with their actions, but I did upload the Ohalu translation, and I defied a Vedek to do it. I did it because I believed it was the right thing to do, and I'd do it again.

KASIDY (screen)
But if he holds you responsible...

She drifts off, not needing to elaborate. Kira looks past Kasidy on the screen, and sees a window behind her.

KIRA
It's snowing there.

KASIDY (screen)

Yes, a couple of days now. We've got about a dozen centimetres. When the wind dies down, I like to go out for walks. It's very peaceful and quiet when there's so much snow on the ground. You ought to come for a visit.

KIRA

I know - I will. When I can. In the meantime, don't worry about me. I'm fine.

KASIDY (screen)

I know you're not fine.

KIRA

I am. I won't tell you I'm happy, but I'm dealing with it. The only thing I want you worrying about is that little baby you're going to have in a couple of months.

KASIDY (screen)

Not much chance of me forgetting about that. I'll talk to you again soon, Nerys.

KIRA

Okay. Bye, Kas.

Kasidy disappears, replaced by a Bajoran comnet symbol, then a blank screen. Kira sits back and ponders her life.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

5 INT. DS9 - TURBOLIFT

TARAN'ATAR stands at attention, alone in the turbolift, watching the walls rush by. He is actually nervous about what he is about to do. But Jem'Hadar must not be nervous.

As the turbolift slows to a stop, he SHROUDS himself. The door opens and he steps out.

6 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR (CONTINUOUS)

Invisible, Taran'atar walks down the corridor. He passes a pair of crew walking together and chatting. He turns to watch them go, totally unaware of his presence. He sneers.

He reaches a door and waits by it. After a few moments of nothing, the door opens and a Starfleet WOMAN walks out, calling back over her shoulder.

WOMAN

Okay, bye.

She walks away, not noticing him, and he slips in through the door before it closes.

7 INT. DS9 - STATION PRE-SCHOOL (CONTINUOUS)

The room is the same layout as the officers' Ward Room, but functioning as a kindergarten. Open-front cabinets and shelves line one wall, tables under the windows, and mats and pillows strewn on the floor.

A dozen young children, mostly Bajoran or human, bustle about the room, putting the mats, pillows and various toys away in the boxes and shelves. Two male civilians, a Bajoran (GAVI) and a human (JOSHUA), guide them.

Once they are done, the children sit in a huddle in the middle of the room, and the men perch against the table.

GAVI

Who wants to look at some animals?

The children send up a SHOUT of approval, so Gavi reaches behind him and picks up a set of large cards.

GAVI

Okay, what animal is this?

He flips up the first card, and it shows a vaguely horse-like animal. The children yell back their answers, most of which are correct.

GAVI

That's right, this is a *pylchyk*.
This animal lives on Bajor, and
the people there use it to carry
supplies and to tend their fields.

Gavi flips to the next card. He goes through half a dozen, including a half-rabbit-half-cat thing called a *jebret* from Ferenginar, a *targ* from Qo'noS, and a kangaroo from Earth.

Meanwhile, Taran'atar's attention strays around the room, taking in the shelves, the tables, the decorations.

Wandering, one small boy bumps into something invisible - it UNSHROUDS to become Taran'atar's leg. The Jem'Hadar looks down, shocked and humiliated to have been discovered. The child holds his hands up happily to Taran'atar.

BOY

Look at the alligator. Up!

JOSHUA

Hey, get away from him!

Turning and gasping at the sight of Taran'atar, Gavi slowly approaches with his hands outstretched, scared.

GAVI

Don't do anything. They're only
children.

Taran'atar squints at him, intrigued - what relevance does their age have? Gavi tries to GRAB at the boy's sleeve, but the boy pulls his arm away - he wants to play with the alligator. Gavi grabs him more firmly and pulls him away.

GAVI
Take him, Joshua.

Joshua approaches and pulls him to the back of the room where he has gathered all the children. They are not scared at all, just curious. Gavi's eyes never leave Taran'atar.

GAVI
What do you want?

Taran'atar has not moved or reacted at all. He appraises Gavi dispassionately - the Bajoran's tense posture, ready to fight - before replying.

TARAN'ATAR
Only to observe.

GAVI
I think... I think you should leave.

TARAN'ATAR
Yes.

He turns and heads for the door. As it opens, he stops and turns, looking back at the little boy, who is holding his arms out to him, not afraid at all.

BOY
Alligator.

Taran'atar turns and leaves, now more confused than ever.

8 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

RO LAREN strolls down the Promenade, towards the Security office. As she passes Quark's bar, she looks in and sees him, pauses to watch, unsure of herself. He is too busy haranguing one of his waiters again to notice her.

She continues walking, and passes a pair of random Starfleet officers just walking through. She watches them pass, eyeing their uniforms. She frowns, worried, then finally carries on to her office.

9 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

While Quark sends his waiter scurrying off again, Treir is at the dabo wheel. Standing next to her is a big, handsome hunk of a Bajoran man. Young, dark and packed with muscles, as scantily dressed as Treir herself. This is HETIK.

As Treir leans seductively across the wheel, reaching for the playing jack, her naked arm brushes against Hetik's. He seems to have the same effect on her that she does on most males. She is quite flustered, trying to control herself.

TREIR

So, that would pay off on...?

HETIK

Pass five and half under.

TREIR

Right again, my *cheltol*.

HETIK

Cheltol?

TREIR

Uh, it's an Orion term for a...
uh... capable... male student.
Now, you give it a whirl.

She reaches out, takes Hetik's hand, places the jack into it and curls his fingers closed over it. Hetik grasps the edge of the wheel and gives it a strong spin, then tosses the jack in, smoothly, as if he'd been doing it for years.

QUARK (o.s.)

Treir.

They both look up to see that Quark is staring over, still glowering. Treir steels for the inevitable confrontation.

TREIR

Stay here.

She walks over to intercept Quark, slinking her arm around him as sensuously as she can, putting on a sexy voice. She tries to subtly lead him away from the dabo wheel.

TREIR

Quark. What are you doing here?
Morning shifts are my time.

QUARK

What are you doing? We don't allow
gamblers to touch the dabo wheel.
Let alone let them make spins.
Wasn't that the first thing I
taught you?

TREIR

Don't worry about it, Quark.
There's no latinum on the table.

QUARK

Then what's he doing? Is he
rigging the wheel so you two can
steal me deaf later?

TREIR

Be careful what you say, Quark.
That young man's name is Hetik. He
made a pilgrimage here to see the
Celestial Temple for the first
time, and he -

QUARK

I don't care what his name is or
why he's here. I want him to stop
touching my dabo wheel. And tell
him to put some clothes on.

TREIR

He's wearing more than I am.

QUARK

You have more parts people want to
see.

TREIR

Some people. But others would
rather see Hetik's parts.

QUARK

What's your point?

TREIR

My point is, Hetik can bring in new customers and improve profits.

QUARK

I don't think so.

TREIR

Well that's too bad. Because he's your new dabo boy.

Quark's mouth drops, utterly dumbfounded. He opens and closes his mouth a few more times before finding his stunned voice, fluttering like he's having a seizure.

QUARK

He's... my... what?

TREIR

Your new dabo boy. I hired him.

QUARK

He's... he's... you...

TREIR

Listen to me, Quark. Just because you're a misogynist, doesn't mean everyone else is. If some people come in here to ogle me, then others will come in to ogle him.

QUARK

No-one's going to see either of you once I have you both thrown out an airlock. I want him gone by the time I come in tonight.

He turns to stomp away again, and Treir looks back to Hetik, who knows he has been the subject of their argument.

Heading towards the exit, Quark turns his head again as if he hears something. On a hunch, he GRABS an empty glass from a passing Frool's tray and LOBS it into the air.

The glass FREEZES in mid-air, and then Taran'atar's hand UNSHROUDS around it, followed by the rest of him. The Jem'Hadar does not react, but customers drop their drinks and get to their feet all around, terrified of him.

QUARK

Quark to security.

RO (comm)

This is Ro. What's up, Quark?

QUARK

We've got a serious disturbance in the bar, Lieutenant. We need help.

RO (comm)

I'll be right there.

The link closes. Quark stands firm, glaring at Taran'atar.

QUARK

Well, what do you want?

Footsteps announce Ro entering, flanked by ETANA (8x12) and Shul, phasers drawn. People are starting to hurry out.

RO

Quark, what is it? What's wrong?
Taran'atar, is there a problem?

TARAN'ATAR

Not with me.

RO

What did he do?

QUARK

He was skulking around here, being invisible. And then he appeared out of nowhere and terrified everybody, me included.

RO

(re the glass
in his hand)
Has he been drinking?

QUARK

What? No. That's just how I got
him to uncloak.

Relaxing, Ro holsters her phaser, and nods to Etana and
Shul to do the same, greatly dismaying Quark. She turns to
Taran'atar, who has remained stood still.

RO

Taran'atar, what are you doing?

TARAN'ATAR

I am observing, nothing more.

RO

You're not here to hurt anyone?

TARAN'ATAR

No.

RO

Alright. Etana, Shul, you can go.

QUARK

What?!

RO

Quark, he hasn't done anything
criminal. You can't deny entry to
someone just because of their
species, you know that. Being a
Jem'Hadar isn't a crime.

QUARK

But disturbing the peace is. And
incitement to riot.

RO

All I see right now is incitement
to not play dabo.

QUARK

That should be a crime too. I'm
not kidding.

RO
I know you're not.

With an indulgent smile, she turns to leave. Nervously, he takes his chance to speak to her more intimately.

QUARK
Laren? I... haven't seen you in here a lot lately.

RO
I know, I'm sorry. I've been very busy. But when I get off duty, maybe I'll come back here and play a little dabo myself.

QUARK
You will?

RO
Might be fun. I've been thinking about taking a few risks.

QUARK
(re: Taran'atar)
You have to do something about him. This isn't just about me, Laren. It's about the people on the station being able to enjoy the vital services I provide.

RO
Alright. I'll talk to Kira.

She leaves with a smile. Quark is caught again between admiring her, and annoyance and fear of Taran'atar.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

10 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE

Ro Laren sits behind her desk. Kira Nerys sits in front, nursing a cup of *raktajino*. She is exasperated, tired.

KIRA

What did he do now?

RO

Actually, Quark's not really the problem. Taran'atar is.

KIRA

(suddenly serious)

Taran'atar? What happened?

RO

He unshrouded in the middle of the bar, scared the customers. That in itself wouldn't be so bad, except that I also received a complaint that he appeared in one of the station's child-care facilities. I'm sure he didn't mean to scare anybody, but he certainly did.

KIRA

Alright, I'll speak to him about it. How are the Trill delegates settling in?

RO

They're fine. Mister Gard has been sticking his nose in a bit, but I can handle him. Minister Shakaar and his party are due to arrive in about two hours, and then the rest of the Andorian delegation two hours after that.

KIRA

All your precautions are in place?

RO

Yes, Colonel. Not that I object to doing my job, but what's all this actually about?

KIRA

I'm sorry you've been kept in the dark, Ro. Admiral Akaar wanted to keep things as quiet as possible. This summit is about Bajor's petition to join the Federation. These talks will result in a final decision, one way or the other.

Ro's face drops, and her face blanches. She gazes off.

RO

I guess it's no surprise he'd want to keep me out.

KIRA

Who, Akaar? Do you know him?

RO

Yes, from when I was in Starfleet. We had a... professional disagreement. I'd prefer not to discuss it, Colonel.

KIRA

Alright. But I have to ask if this disagreement with the admiral will have any effect on your duties.

RO

Colonel, the admiral doesn't like me. I don't like him either. He probably doesn't think I'm capable of doing this job, or any other job for that matter. Frankly, I don't care. I'm going to do my job the way I'm supposed to, the way you expect me to. No matter what the admiral thinks.

KIRA

That's good enough for me. Keep me updated on any new reports.

RO

Yes, sir. Thank you.

Kira gets up and leaves the office.

11 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Kira sits behind her desk. Taran'atar stands at attention.

TARAN'ATAR

I was doing as the Founder instructed me - as you suggested yourself. When a high percentage of experiences in the Operations Centre began to repeat themselves, I decided I should go elsewhere.

KIRA

Where did you go?

TARAN'ATAR

When you ordered me to speak to Commander Vaughn aboard *Defiant*, I took the opportunity to explore the ship before its departure. The gem merchant followed, then the security office, the child-care facility, the flower merchant, and the Ferengi's establishment.

KIRA

But why did you shroud yourself?

TARAN'ATAR

Onboard the *Defiant*, I encountered a Starfleet officer who reacted with great fear. Such a reaction interfered with my mission.

KIRA

Then why unshroud today?

TARAN' ATAR
Because the Ferengi heard me.

KIRA
Quark heard you?

TARAN' ATAR
(annoyed at himself)
I underestimated Ferengi hearing.
And at the child-care facility, I
was... distracted. I allowed a
child to run into me.

KIRA
(stifling a smirk)
I see. Taran'atar, a lot of people
still aren't used to a Jem'Hadar
soldier being on the station. When
you unshroud in front of them, it
makes them feel like you've been
spying on them.

TARAN' ATAR
I have been.

KIRA
Yes, but until they get used to
you, I think it'd be a good idea
not to shroud anymore when you're
observing them.

TARAN' ATAR
But it's clear my presence can be
disruptive.

KIRA
But that's the point. You need to
give people the chance to get used
to you, so your presence won't be
disruptive anymore.

Taran'atar tries to think about that.

Quark is plonked miserably in an empty chair in the off-hours lounge. VIC FONTAINE is in the seat opposite.

QUARK

I should never have hired that Treir. She's only been here a month and she already thinks she's in charge of the place.

VIC

Seems to me, if a farmer puts a fox in charge of the henhouse, and then the fox eats the hens, well then it ain't the fox's fault.

QUARK

You're saying it's my fault?

VIC

Hey, pallie, I don't know, I'm not there. I'm just sayin'.

QUARK

Well, stop saying. Besides, that's not all. I've got monsters chasing away the few customers I have, and romance is dead.

VIC

Mister Quark, not only is romance not dead, it ain't even sick.

A waitress places two DRINKS on the table between them. Muttering under his breath, Quark picks up his, takes a sip and promptly sprays it back out, coughing and spluttering.

QUARK

That's... not... snail... juice.

VIC

Course it's not. This is 1962. If there's somebody on Earth drinking liquefied snails in 1962, I don't know about it, and I don't wanna know about it. It's vodka and orange, same as I'm havin'.

QUARK
It's awful. The next time -

RO (comm)
Lieutenant Ro to Quark.

QUARK
(surprised but hopeful)
This is Quark.

RO (comm)
Sorry to bother you, but I stopped
by the bar, and Treir said you
were up in the holosuite. I hope
I'm not interrupting anything.

QUARK
Not at all. What can I do for you?

RO (comm)
Well, I've got a bit of a break
before I'm needed again. Wondered
if you'd like some company.

QUARK
Uh, alright... where are you?

RO (comm)
In my office.

QUARK
I'll be there in five minutes.

RO (comm)
Great. Ro out.

Quark gets up, a grin on his face. Vic is just smug.

VIC
Told ya.

13 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Quark and Ro stroll side-by-side down the corridor.
Friendly, comfortable, gently flirting.

RO

Wait, what about the apprenticeship with the district sub-nagus?

QUARK

I decided to leave that.

RO

You're not telling me everything.

QUARK

What are you going to do, interrogate me?

RO

You'd like that, wouldn't you?

QUARK

The sub-nagus... requested that I leave. Well, suggested... he told me to leave. Ordered me, really.

RO

Now, why would he do that, if he regarded you so highly?

QUARK

I was also highly regarded by his sister. What - can I help it if females find me attractive?

RO

No, I guess you can't.

They reach a T-junction in the corridor, and pause.

QUARK

Well, which way now? Aren't your quarters that way?

RO

I won't ask how you know that.

QUARK

A new security chief is assigned to the station, and I don't know where they live? Please.

RO

What was I thinking. Quark, may I ask you a question?

QUARK

The answer is yes.

RO

You don't know what the question is yet.

QUARK

I trust you.

RO

Don't be so sure. Umm... do you... do you think women like that cologne you're wearing?

Expecting a much more intimate question, Quark sags with disappointment and embarrassment.

QUARK

Not anymore.

RO

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. You obviously like it, and I'm sure Ferengi women must like it too.

QUARK

It's alright. I appreciate you saying something. The last thing I want to do is repel you.

RO

Oh well, even without the cologne, you still repel me.

With a grin, they head off again, away from her quarters.

14 INT. DS9 - GUEST QUARTERS

The door opens onto the empty room, and Kira leads First Minister SHAKAAR into the room, security visible outside. She is back in her dress uniform to receive him.

KIRA

These will be your quarters while you're here, First Minister.

SHAKAAR

Thank you.

KIRA

(turning to leave)

I'll see you tonight at the reception.

SHAKAAR

Would you like to come in for a few minutes?

She takes a moment to respond, surprised at the invitation. She is somewhat uncomfortable after their last discussion.

SHAKAAR (cont)

Unless you really need to get back to Ops.

KIRA

No, not at all.

She comes in, curious, and the door closes behind her.

SHAKAAR

It's good to see you, Nerys. You can still call me Edon. Or have things degenerated that badly between us?

KIRA

(too fast)

No, of course not. Unless there are some Bajorans listening. Maybe then we'd better argue with each other.

SHAKAAR

(laughing)

That actually might work best for me. You've probably got more political enemies than I do.

That's not quite so funny for Kira. Shakaar sobers up.

SHAKAAR

I was wondering who you favour as the next Kai, Nerys.

KIRA

Oh. Well, I guess it's a foregone conclusion at this point that Vedek Yevir will be elected.

SHAKAAR

No - not who you think will be. Who you think should be. Or did I misunderstand you?

KIRA

No... No, I don't think Yevir would be a good Kai.

SHAKAAR

More than that, you think he'd be a bad one, don't you?

KIRA

I think he might actually be dangerous.

SHAKAAR

Dangerous? How, like Winn?

KIRA

No, not like Winn. I don't think he's driven by ambition. And don't get me wrong, this isn't about revenge for the Attainder.

SHAKAAR

What, then?

Kira has to think a moment to put her worries into words.

KIRA

He has a strong faith and a genuine commitment. But his faith is... unthinking. He believes so fully that the Prophets guide his every decision, that he doesn't really consider the consequences of his actions.

SHAKAAR

Then who? Pralon? Ungtae?

KIRA

I'd probably be happy with him. He's a good man, humble. But he's just so... plain. I'd rather have a Kai who inspires the people, not just satisfies them.

SHAKAAR

Someone like Opaka.

Kira smiles, and nods, at the mention of the former Kai.

KIRA

What about Admiral Akaar?

SHAKAAR

For Kai? I don't think we have robes big enough to fit him.

They laugh together at the joke, and relax a little. It's still not the close relationship they once had, though.

KIRA

No, I mean... What do you think of him?

SHAKAAR

He's a Starfleet Admiral. Like all the rest. Perhaps a bit more serious than some. A little...

KIRA
Secretive?

SHAKAAR
Is that a problem?

KIRA
I don't know. It makes me uneasy.

SHAKAAR
About the Admiral? Or about the
Federation?

KIRA
I think I've come to terms with
that. I even believe it will
benefit us. It's just that, with
all the rapid changes Bajorans
have experienced in the last
century, we've had to struggle to
maintain our own identity.

SHAKAAR
And you think Bajor will join the
Federation and become homogenised?
Because my experience has been
that all the member worlds are
very different. Believe me, Nerys.
I've been working on this issue
for months. There's nothing to
worry about. Everything is
proceeding exactly as I'd hoped.

What should be reassuring words are somehow nothing of the
sort for Kira. Perhaps even disturbing.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

15 EXT. DS9 - ESTABLISHING

The Trill ship is still there, along with a number of Bajoran ships and the Akira-class USS *Gryphon*.

16 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

Busier than it has been in some time. Hetik is working the dabo wheel like a natural. The table is full of gamblers of various races, mostly women but some men too, many of them gazing lovingly at his rippling muscles and dazzling smile.

Treir is doing likewise from behind the bar. The replicator behind her whirs to life, and a plate of something baked and glazed appears. She grabs the plate and slides it across the bar to an eagerly awaiting Morn.

TREIR

Here you go. Skorrian fritters in
a Kaferian apple compote.

(passing him utensils)

Don't eat it too fast. I know one
of your stomachs must be full with
all the Maraltian seev-ale you
drank last night.

Morn rolls his eyes and nods. Treir grabs a glass of water and goes back to watching Hetik - a mix of pride and lust. She spots Quark in the doorway, watching the dabo table.

QUARK

Is this all Hetik?

TREIR

What do you think?

Quark whistles, acknowledging the impressive difference.

TREIR

So, are you ready to start talking
about a contract?

QUARK

Contract? Forget it.

TREIR

Are you sure? I mean, I already told Hetik he'd only be here for another six days.

QUARK

You what?

She leans seductively across the bar, working it for all she's got. He plays along, enjoying the attention.

TREIR

Is that a problem? I realised after you left earlier that you really didn't want Hetik here, so I told him we'd be letting him go.

QUARK

Now let's not be hasty...

She comes around the bar between them, and slinks her arm around Quark's waist, purring, playing the coquette.

TREIR

Quark. Is there something you want to tell me?

QUARK

Yes, of course. Hetik can stay.

TREIR

Anything else?

QUARK

Your idea to hire him was a good one. You're an asset to the bar.

RO (o.s.)

Well, that's almost a declaration of love.

They turn to see Ro watching them, amused by them. Quark pulls away from Treir guiltily.

QUARK

Laren! I mean, Lieutenant Ro.

RO

Hello, Quark. Please, don't let me interrupt. Finish your business.

QUARK

Uh, we were done.

TREIR

Actually, I wasn't done.

She runs a finger sensuously across the edge of his ear. Shuddering, and against his better judgement, he responds.

TREIR

If I'm such an asset to the bar, then perhaps I'm underpaid.

QUARK

I don't think so.

TREIR

Well then, perhaps a change of position.

QUARK

What kind of... position... did you have in mind?

TREIR

Oh, I don't know. Junior partner sounds interesting.

QUARK

I don't know about that, but maybe we can discuss a merger.

RO (o.s.)

Quark.

They realise that Ro is still there. She is now hard-faced and stern, no longer amused by their innuendo.

RO
Colonel Kira wants to see you in
her office right away.

QUARK
Kira? What does she want?

RO
You'll have to ask her.

QUARK
But I didn't do anything.

RO
No. Of course you didn't.

She turns sharply and leaves, hurt and angry but trying -
and failing - to hide it. Quark is only worried about
himself now as usual, and what Kira wants with him.

Treir, on the other hand, has been watching closely, and
has figured the situation out immediately. Quark doesn't
just like Ro - she likes him back.

17 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Kira sits behind her desk, inspecting a padd that Quark has
just given her. She forgot to change her dress uniform.

KIRA
How did you get *foraiga*?

QUARK
Colonel, I've been doing business
in this system for more than a
decade. And I'm a Ferengi. I know
how to get things.

KIRA
You also know how to overcharge
for them.

QUARK
Fine, take it off. I just thought
Minister Shakaar would enjoy it,
but if it's too expensive -

KIRA

I never said Shakaar would be at the gathering.

QUARK

My mistake. I just assumed all this fine Bajoran food wasn't just for you and Ro. Besides, you don't normally wear your dress uniform just to walk around Ops.

KIRA

Alright, Quark.

QUARK

And I was lucky to find that. The shipment won't even arrive until two hours before the gathering. The fees I had to pay just to have the ship diverted to Deep -

KIRA

Alright, Quark.

She confirms the menu with her thumb and hands the padd back to him. He unashamedly checks to make sure it's good.

QUARK

I'm sorry, Colonel. Perhaps if I'd had more time -

KIRA

Yes, you're right. Thank you, Quark. Next time I'll try to give you more notice.

QUARK

I was curious, Colonel, what the occasion was for a gathering of such an eclectic group of people.

KIRA

(deadpan)

We're celebrating my naming day.

QUARK

If you don't want to tell me,
Colonel, that's fine.

KIRA

I don't want to tell you.

QUARK

That's fine.

KIRA

Good. Then I won't keep you from
getting ready for the gathering.

QUARK

Of course.

He turns and leaves. Once he has gone, the comm sounds.

VOICE (comm)

Ops to Colonel Kira.

KIRA

This is Kira. Go ahead.

VOICE (comm)

The Andorian ship *Arieto* is on
approach to the station. They'll
be docking in thirty minutes.

KIRA

Acknowledged.

She gets up again with a sigh, back to playing diplomat.

18 **INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR**

He stomps in and slams down the padd on the bar, not happy.
He heads behind the bar and starts rummaging in a drawer.

QUARK

Something's going on and I don't
know about it. Idiocy must run in
my family.

TREIR

Hey, how did it go with Colonel Kira? Didn't she approve the menu?

QUARK

Yes, yes she did.

(hands her the padd)

Here, can you take care of this?

TREIR

Um, sure.

As Treir wanders away with the padd, Quark pulls out the isolinear rod he was looking for, goes to a comm panel, opens the cover, slots the rod in and presses buttons.

The words LOCATE LIEUTENANT RO appear on the screen, followed shortly by LIEUTENANT RO IS IN THE WARDROOM. The comm signals, surprising him. He taps a panel.

QUARK

Quark's.

TARAN'ATAR (comm)

I want to use a holosuite.

QUARK

I'll send somebody with your program up to holosuite one.

(closes the link)

Not only are they ugly and nasty, they're also rude.

Replacing the cover on the comm system, he looks around for a free server. But everyone is busy - his waiters serving, Treir working on the padd, Hetik at the dabo table. With a harrumph, he grabs another rod and heads upstairs.

19 INT. DS9 - HOLOSUITE CORRIDOR

Quark walks up in a huff and shoves the rod at Taran'atar.

QUARK

Here.

Taran'atar takes the rod with a dispassionate glare, places it into the holosuite controls and starts pressing buttons.

QUARK

Why are you here?

TARAN'ATAR

I am here to train. This program simulates -

QUARK

No, why are you here? On Deep Space Nine?

TARAN'ATAR

I am on this station to observe life in the Alpha Quadrant. I am also here to keep an eye on you.

Quark's blood runs cold, until he realises what he means.

QUARK

Odo sent you here.

TARAN'ATAR

The Founder sent me, yes.

QUARK

And you believe the Founders are gods.

TARAN'ATAR

The Founders are gods.

QUARK

If that's true, then how could they have lost the war?

TARAN'ATAR

The Founders did not lose the war. The Jem'Hadar failed them. The Cardassians betrayed them.

QUARK

Of course, it's never the leaders' fault. You know, I knew Odo longer than anyone on the station, and I never thought of him as a god.

TARAN'ATAR

That demonstrates nothing about
the Founder, only something about
you.

QUARK

It demonstrates that I'm
observant.

TARAN'ATAR

It demonstrates that you court
death.

Quark refuses to be cowed - he's on a roll.

QUARK

What else did Odo say about me?

TARAN'ATAR

He said that you were a
lawbreaker, scurrilous, loutish,
avaricious, deceitful, devious,
and short.

QUARK

There, you see? He was wrong, so
how can he be a god?

TARAN'ATAR

I have observed nothing to suggest
the Founder's description of you
is inaccurate.

QUARK

Alright, let me ask you this. If
I'm a lawbreaker, doesn't that
mean Odo should have arrested me,
put me in prison? But here I am,
free. Which means either Odo was
wrong and I'm not a lawbreaker, or
he was right, but he wasn't a good
enough chief of security to catch
me. Either way, I'd say that
doesn't make him much of a god.

He stands back, quite proud of his logic. Taran'atar is trying to figure it all through. Quark turns to leave.

TARAN'ATAR

Wait. The Founders created the Jem'Hadar. Created them. Is that not a characteristic of divinity?

QUARK

With enough latinum and the right scientists, you can create just about anything. So what?

Taran'atar stops to think again, really thinking.

TARAN'ATAR

What do you most desire? Wealth?

QUARK

What? Yes, wealth, of course.

TARAN'ATAR

If a Founder chose to, he could become a brick of gold-pressed latinum. Or a thousand bricks.

QUARK

That's not the same thing. He couldn't spend himself.

TARAN'ATAR

And why do you spend?

QUARK

To acquire things, of course.

TARAN'ATAR

The Founders do not need to acquire anything. They can become anything they wish. They are free from the need for wealth, because they already have everything. They already are everything.

QUARK

Yes, but...

He doesn't really have an answer. That stuns him.
Taran'atar turns back to the computer.

TARAN'ATAR
Computer, begin program.

The doors open, and we don't see what is inside, but we hear a blood-curdling ROAR. Taran'atar smiles and heads inside. Quark stands there, dumbfounded.

QUARK
Odo has everything he ever wanted.
Justice, Kira, the Great Link. And
I can't get anything I want.
Anything at all.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

20 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

The wardroom hums with voices and activity. Bajorans, Trill, Andorians, Admiral Akaar, Colonel Kira and all their various security contingents mingle around in their finest.

Ferengi servers move back and forth carrying food and drinks. Ro stands keeping an eye on everything, while Etana and Shul stay under cover as guests.

The evening is going well. Kira is having a good time, amiably chatting with Shakaar, Etana and Gandres. Andorian councillor VRETHA (Shar's mother) floats over.

KIRA

Councillor zh'Thane. I hope you're having a pleasant evening.

VRETHA

I am, thank you, Colonel. And the food is the best I've had since leaving home. The *foraiga* is truly delicious.

KIRA

I'm glad you like it. It's just Bajoran hospitality. Have you ever been to Bajor before, Councillor?

VRETHA

I have not. But your polar ice caps seem like quite an exotic setting. I look forward to visiting them one day.

Behind them, the door opens and Quark ENTERS, carrying a tray of fruits and looking distracted. He scans the room, spots Kira and heads over to her, head still swivelling.

QUARK

Colonel, have you seen Ro?

KIRA
No, I haven't.

QUARK
Is that her?

He thrusts his tray at Kira, and she takes it instinctively. He hurries away into the crowd.

KIRA
Quark! Councillor, if you'll
pardon me.

VRETHA
Of course, Colonel.

Kira takes the tray back to the food tables. Ro is standing near them, keeping an eye on the room. Akaar is nearby in the crowd, pointedly not looking at Ro.

KIRA
Lieutenant, my compliments on the
security arrangements. You've done
a fine job.

RO
Thank you.

KIRA
Quark was just in here looking for
you.

RO
Quark? What did -

Suddenly Quark is there, butting in. Ro ignores him.

QUARK
Laren. I need to speak to you.

RO
Not now, Quark. I'm on duty.

QUARK
Laren, listen. I need to know
what's going on here.

KIRA

Did you ever think that if we didn't tell you, it might not be any of your business?

RO

Colonel, if everything's under control here, there are other matters I need to attend to.

She leaves, and Quark looks like he has been struck.

KIRA

I believe you were about to serve more desserts.

Quark doesn't move, so Kira leans in close and whispers.

KIRA

If you don't start serving, I'm going to penalise your breach of contract by closing the bar.

Kira walks away too, and heads over to talk to Akaar.

KIRA

Good evening, Admiral. I hope you're having a pleasant time.

AKAAR

I am. Thank you for inquiring. I'll tell you something, Colonel. I do not care for Cardassian architecture at all.

(glances around)

I have been very impressed with Bajoran hospitality, however.

Kira's eyes open wide to hear her own words repeated. Is that a signal of some kind? With a knowing smile, Akaar excuses himself and walks away.

The Trill ship, Andorian ship, Bajoran ships, and the *Gryphon*. Just enough to indicate time passing.

22 INT. VIC FONTAINE'S LOUNGE

Quark and Vic back at the table in the empty lounge again, late, after the show. Vic is flicking cards, Quark is drinking vodka and orange with a grimace after every sip.

QUARK

I'm an idiot.

VIC

Hey, you'd know about that better than I would.

QUARK

Yeah, well, trust me. Right now I'm even more of an idiot than my simpleton brother.

VIC

The brother who's in charge of the whole shebang back home?

QUARK

Not to mention ruining the entire Ferengi economy. Thanks for reminding me.

VIC

So that's why you're blue?

QUARK

I'm... blue, because something's going on here on the station and I don't know anything about it.

VIC

You can't know everything, right?

QUARK

If it happens on this station, then I make it my business to know everything.

VIC

So you missed this one. You'll catch the next one. No big thing. It's just business.

QUARK

Just business?! I'm a businessman. More than that, I'm a Ferengi businessman. Business is my life.

VIC

Yeah, I know that's what you say.

QUARK

I'm not just saying it. It's true.

VIC

Okay, okay, who's arguing?

QUARK

You are.

VIC

Look. You say business is your life. I see something different, is all. How many times you been in here cryin' in your beer over some dame or other? First Jadzia, then Ezri, now the green one.

QUARK

So I have a weakness.

VIC

I understand, I'm fond of the ladies myself.

(gesturing around)

What about this place? Don't wanna bite the hand that feeds me, but you're lettin' this light show run twenty-six hours a day. That don't make the best business sense.

QUARK

I like this place.

VIC

Didn't you risk your life to rescue your mother from the bad guys during the war? I mean, that's great, she's your mother. But it ain't exactly business.

QUARK

She had the Grand Nagus's ear.

VIC

Didn't you also risk your life helping the Feds take this place back from the bad guys?

QUARK

(weakly)

Better customers.

VIC

What about all those rumours about you running food and medicine to the Bajorans back when the bad guys ran the show?

QUARK

That's all speculation. I don't want to hear that outside this room. What's your point, anyway?

VIC

My point is, you're always in here claiming to have this ideal of the Ferengi businessman you want to live up to, but you're always doing something to mess that up.

QUARK

Exactly. So I'm an idiot.

VIC

Maybe. Or maybe that's not what you really want out of life. Or maybe you just don't know how to deal with getting what you want.

(sigh)

Mister Quark, you're not an idiot.
But you know what I think? I think
business isn't the only thing
you're worried about messin' up
these days. Black hair, nice
figure, wrinkled nose...

QUARK

Laren. I messed that up too.

VIC

Doesn't surprise me.

QUARK

She probably wasn't interested
anyway.

VIC

I got news for you, pallie. The
dame digs you.

Quark looks up, wondering if that could possibly be true.
And has he ruined it all?

23 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

Ro walks out of a turbolift, across the night-dimmed
Promenade, and into the security office. The doors open,
and she sees that Quark is already there waiting for her.

24 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE (CONTINUOUS)

She pushes past him, takes her seat and starts working,
ignoring him as much as possible. He tries to get through.

QUARK

Laren, I want to apologise for my
behaviour earlier in the bar. I
don't really know what -

RO

Quark, I really don't have time
for this right now.

QUARK

Laren, just give me a minute, and I promise I'll go. You don't even have to say anything.

RO
(folding arms)
Alright. One minute.

QUARK
I just wanted to apologise.

RO
You already said that. So go on your way.

QUARK
(pleading)
Laren, I'm sorry. The way I behaved with Treir, whether you were there or not, was wrong. But it was especially wrong because I hurt your feelings.

RO
Why, Quark? Why did you do it?

QUARK
I'm not sure. But I think it was out of fear.

RO
Fear?

QUARK
I've been enjoying the time we've spent together lately. And... I hope you have too.

RO
(small smile)
Maybe.

QUARK
So I think I got scared. Scared that you might get to know me better... and then not enjoy

spending time with me anymore. Or scared that... I don't know... I might actually get something I want. Especially something as valuable as... well, as you.

RO

I can't say I entirely understand, but thank you, Quark.

She finally takes his apology and relaxes back. He sits down, feigning nonchalance.

QUARK

You're welcome. So... umm... how's the conference going?

Rolling her eyes, she finally gives in and tells him.

RO

Actually, they're calling it a summit. They're meeting about the issue of Bajoran membership in the Federation. They're going to decide one way or the other -

Quark's face drops again. Ro notices and trails off.

RO

Quark, are you alright?

QUARK

Is it going to happen?

RO

I don't know. Why, what difference does it make to you?

QUARK

If Bajor joins the Federation, then I really am ruined.

RO

What? Why would you -
(realises)

The Federation has an essentially moneyless economy.

QUARK

Exactly - a moneyless economy. I won't be able to make a living from running the bar.

RO

Quark, I'm sorry. I never thought of that. What are you going to do?

(a thought occurs)

What were you going to do three years ago, when Bajor nearly joined then?

QUARK

Three years ago, I was a younger man. But I think I've known for a while that, whenever Bajor finally did join the Federation, it would be time for me to move on.

RO

I know the feeling.

He looks up confused - he doesn't follow.

RO

Starfleet.

Nodding, he understands - she has her own problems with Starfleet. They both look at each other sadly.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

25 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

First Minister Shakaar's face fills a COMM SCREEN on a Promenade signpost. A crowd of residents and crew stand around watching. Similar crowds at other points nearby.

SHAKAAR (screen)

Good day to all of Bajor. For years, since the first days after the end of the Occupation, many of us have discussed the possibility of our people joining the United Federation of Planets. Opinion has always been divided, and likely always will be. But in recent years, a majority of Bajorans have come to favour aligning with the other members, and becoming part of a larger community.

26 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Kira sits alone behind her desk, watching the screen.

SHAKAAR (screen)

Three years ago, the Federation approved Bajor's petition. But on the counsel of the Emissary, we opted not to join at that time. Since the end of the Dominion War, I have spent time on Federation worlds. I have spoken with their representatives, and on behalf of the Bajoran people, I officially requested our petition be renewed.

27 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

Quark stands motionless behind his bar, watching the comm screens. Treir is nearby, Hetik at the dabo table. The large crowd are also paying close attention as the announcement rings through the station.

SHAKAAR (screen)
Today, here aboard Deep Space
Nine, a summit commenced to
consider that petition. Attending
with me are ambassadors from
Andor, from Trill -

QUARK
Yeah, we know who the players are.

TREIR
Shush.

SHAKAAR (screen)
There have been many troubles for
our people in the past. But now we
look towards a bright, peaceful
and prosperous future.

Quark hangs his head. For him, it will be anything but.

SHAKAAR (screen)
Today, after less than one day of
discussion, I am happy to report
to you that Bajor's petition for
membership in the Federation has
been approved.

A CHEER goes up around the crowd. Quark does not join in.

28 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Kira gasps with mixed surprise, relief, and trepidation.

SHAKAAR (screen)
The summit will continue, as there
are many smaller issues still to
be resolved. But six weeks from
today, the official signing
ceremony will take place. At that
time, Bajor will become a member
of the United Federation of
Planets. Congratulations to all of
Bajor. Walk with the Prophets.

Kira sits back, a little stunned. She gets up, walks over to the bookshelf on her wall. Takes down her copy of "When the Prophets Cried."

KIRA

"Anew will shine the twilight of their destiny." Not the end of the day. The beginning.

29 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

The crowd is still celebrating. Quark is not.

TREIR

I guess that's really something.

RO (o.s.)

I'm sorry.

They both turn to see Ro sat at the bar with a sympathetic expression. Treir immediately clues in and moves away.

RO

So, what are you going to do?

Quark takes a deep breath, thinks a moment, then reaches behind him and touches a panel. A double CHIME rings out in the bar. He calls out loud, keeping his eyes on Ro.

QUARK

The next round is on the house!

Another CHEER goes up. Quark grabs two glasses and fills them both up. He passes one to Ro, lifts the other, and as the party goes on around them, they toast to their own questionable fortunes.

QUARK

Not everything turns out the way you expect. And you know what? That's not always a bad thing.

30 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Kira strides purposefully along a corridor. She reaches a door, taps the panel. The door opens, and she looks inside.

31 INT. DS9 - AKAAR'S QUARTERS

Admiral Akaar is sat at the low central coffee table. The room is sparse and mostly undecorated. He does not stand.

AKAAR
Colonel. This is unexpected.

Kira steps inside and does the heart-and-hand gesture.

KIRA
I come with an open heart and an open hand.

AKAAR
Indeed. Then I must certainly greet you likewise.

He stands, and does the gesture. She begins to pace.

KIRA
I have to tell you, Admiral, I'm not sure what to make of you.

AKAAR
I am a Starfleet Admiral. I am here simply executing my duties.

KIRA
And they include interrogating me?

AKAAR
Interrogating you? Yes, they did.

KIRA
Why? To understand Bajor through me? That's not really fair. I'm not an elected representative.

AKAAR
You believe I have been trying to judge Bajoran society through you?

KIRA
Haven't you been?

AKAAR

No, Colonel, I have not. I have been attempting to judge you through your feelings about them. I believe that how a person sees their society, how they fit in and do not fit in, can say a great deal about them.

KIRA

The Attainder...

AKAAR

It is not the Attainder that interests me, but how you have dealt with it. You have carried on, not just for yourself, but in continued service to your people.

KIRA

Then perhaps I owe you an apology. Or perhaps you owe me one.

AKAAR

Perhaps neither. I believe that you and I have similar feelings about our peoples, Colonel. For a long time, I have wished for the opportunities for Capella that Federation membership would bring.

KIRA

Will it ever happen?

AKAAR

Certainly not within my lifetime. I've had to admit we Capellans are not ready. I find myself envious. Bajor has come a long way since the Occupation, Colonel. You should be proud of that.

KIRA

I feel privileged to serve.

AKAAR

And you will continue to do so.
I'm not supposed to tell you this
yet, but when the Militia is
absorbed into Starfleet, not only
will you be offered a captaincy,
you will also be asked to remain
in command of Deep Space Nine.

Kira lets out a breath she didn't know she'd been holding.

KIRA

Thank you.

AKAAR

It was not my decision alone, but
those were my recommendations.

KIRA

And what were your recommendations
about Lieutenant Ro?

Akaar stiffens noticeably. An uncomfortable subject.

AKAAR

They differed considerably. My
opinions about Ro Laren have been
on record for a long time.

KIRA

I dare say opinions about
Capellans have existed for a long
time too. But maybe in the future,
how they handle themselves going
forward will matter more than how
they did in the past.

AKAAR

(grudging)

Perhaps.

32 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S QUARTERS

Kira sits in casual dress in her quarters, chatting again
to Kasidy Yates on the comm system.

KIRA

Not disturbing you, am I?

KASIDY (screen)

Not at all. I always love hearing from you. Now if I could only get you to visit...

KIRA

I will, I promise. As soon as I can get away.

KASIDY (screen)

Nerys, if I have to wait for you to have free time, this child will have a command of his own sooner. So how are you?

KIRA

I guess... I'm pretty excited.

KASIDY (screen)

That sounds good. About what?

KIRA

About Bajor.

(blank look)

You haven't heard, have you?

KASIDY (screen)

Apparently not. Tell me.

KIRA

Bajor's been accepted into the Federation. The official signing will take place in six weeks.

KASIDY (screen)

I didn't realise this was so close to happening.

KIRA

I don't think any of us did.

Kasidy's shocked smile drops, becomes a more wistful look.

KIRA

Are you alright? Does this bother you?

KASIDY (screen)

I'm fine. It's just... I'm not exactly sure how I'm supposed to feel about this. I mean, I'll be living in Federation territory, so that's good. But...

KIRA

Kas - you had a sacred vision. You know that Benjamin is with the Prophets. And that means he must know about this.

KASIDY (screen)

You're right. I'm sure he's very happy about this.

KIRA

It's all happening because of him.

KASIDY (screen)

He really was - he really is - something, isn't he?

KIRA

Yes, he is.

33 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

It's late again, the lights dimmed. Ro is just locking up the security office, heading home for the night.

QUARK (o.s.)

Well, what a coincidence.

She turns and sees Quark just locking the doors to his bar, and begins walking towards him.

RO

I don't know if I believe in coincidences.

QUARK

What are you suggesting? That I stood right here, staring over at the security office and waiting for you to come out, when I could have closed up half an hour ago?

RO

Well, didn't you?

QUARK

Actually, it was more like forty-five minutes. May I walk you to your quarters, Laren?

RO

(stretching it out)

Well, I suppose since you've been waiting here sooo long...

QUARK

Now that's what I like. A female who knows her own value.

With a smile, they stroll down the Promenade together.

34 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Still strolling amiably along.

RO

You're not wearing that cologne anymore.

QUARK

You didn't like it. Three-hundred-and-fifth Rule of Acquisition - "Always be considerate."

RO

No, really?

Quark feigns offence. They reach the same intersection as before. Ro begins to head to her quarters, but Quark hovers back nervously.

RO

Aren't you coming? I thought you were going to walk me to my quarters?

QUARK

Laren, may I ask you a question?

RO

The answer is yes.

QUARK

(thrilled)

You haven't heard the question yet.

RO

I trust you.

QUARK

I, uh... I wanted to, uh, know... I wanted to know if you'd like to go out with me?

RO

You mean on a date?

(Quark nods)

Then the answer is yes. Now walk me to my quarters. I'm exhausted and I need to sleep.

They start moving again, towards Ro's quarters. As they walk off into the distance, a corridor light bathing them in a sunset-like glow, Ro's hand reaches out and takes Quark's. They walk along hand-in-hand.

FADE OUT:

THE END