

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

9x10 - "Fragments and Omens."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novella

"Fragments and Omens"
by J Noah Kym

appearing in

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

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. SIDAU VILLAGE - DAY

The small, isolated Bajoran village from way back in 1x14 "The Storyteller." Except that now... it is destroyed. A massive explosion blew the village apart, and the remains burned to the ground. All that's left now is ash and smoke.

A hand scoops up a handful of ash and brings it up - it is General LENARIS HOLEM, crouching. He stares sadly at the ash before letting it drift back through his fingers. There were no survivors, and he feels like he failed them all.

RO (o.s.)

General?

Lenaris stands on creaking legs and turns to face RO LAREN, walking towards him in her new Starfleet security uniform. He still finds it a little strange to see her wearing it.

LENARIS

Thank you for coming, Lieutenant.
I apologise for the sudden change
in venue for our meeting.

RO

Under the circumstances I would
never expect an apology, sir. To
be honest, I was surprised you
didn't decide to cancel the
meeting altogether.

Ro comes to stand near, gazing around at the wreckage too. She is holding a padd with Starfleet and Bajoran reports.

LENARIS

How much do you know about what
happened here?

RO

I read the initial incident report
on the way over from the station.
It's tragic. I understand there

were nearly three-hundred people living here. For all of them to lose their lives to something so easily preventable as a gas leak.

Lenaris shakes his head - it was no gas leak. Ro continues:

RO (cont)

They were an odd bunch.

LENARIS

Oh?

RO

There's not much about them in the central archives. But from what I can gather, they were a pretty insular community. Out here in the middle of nowhere, shunning any outside contact. And they had this weird annual tradition where the whole village got together to fight off something called a *Dal'Rok*, whatever that is. As I said, an odd bunch.

LENARIS

(darkly)

They were Bajorans, Lieutenant. That they were more eccentric than most, or not as modern as you or I, is irrelevant. Whoever these people may have been, they deserve better than to be remembered as objects of scorn.

Ro blinks, surprised that he took her words so badly.

RO

I assure you, General, I intended no disrespect.

LENARIS

I'm not sure I give a damn what you intended, Lieutenant. What I know is how you came across -

condescending, arrogant and dismissive.

Ro looks like she is about to dig in for a fight, but stops herself, deliberately cooling her jets.

RO

You're right. That was completely inappropriate. It won't happen again, sir.

Lenaris nods his acceptance. Another male Bajoran Militia officer - JAZA - jogs up, handing a padd to Lenaris.

JAZA

You asked to see this, sir?

LENARIS

(taking it)

Thank you. Lieutenant, I'd like you to meet Sergeant Jaza Najem, one of my scientists. Sergeant, Lieutenant Ro Laren.

JAZA

A pleasure, Lieutenant. I've been hoping to meet you.

RO

Really? Why's that?

LENARIS

(inspecting padd)

This is Sergeant Jaza's last week under my command. He's decided to join Starfleet.

JAZA

I submitted my application a few days ago. I understand you and Commander Vaughn are overseeing the evaluation process?

RO

The ones who qualify for direct transfer to active Starfleet duty,

yes. I expect they'll be sending instructors for those who require extra training, and recruitment officers for civilians who want to sign up. Are you hoping to remain in-system, Sergeant?

JAZA

Actually I indicated a preference for starship duty. I realise there are no guarantees, but I've grown a bit restless on Bajor.

RO

(smile)

I know the feeling. I'll remember we spoke when your application hits my desk.

JAZA

I appreciate that, Lieutenant.

LENARIS

That'll be all, Sergeant.

JAZA

Yessir. Lieutenant.

With a polite nod, Jaza heads off back to base.

RO

He seems like he'll make a fine addition to Starfleet.

LENARIS

Sergeant Jaza is one of my best officers. I'm sorry to lose him.

RO

I imagine you're experiencing a lot of that lately, aren't you?

LENARIS

It isn't exactly unexpected. We've known all along that some Militia personnel would be absorbed by

Starfleet once Bajor joined the Federation. But I never stopped to consider how many young people would want to attend Starfleet Academy. My sister's children all plan to report to the recruitment office when it opens. It's a lot of change to accept all at once.

RO

They're good changes, though.

LENARIS

Are they? I thought so too, at first. But then this happened.

Ro is confused for moment, then realises he is referring to the destruction of the village. But she is still confused.

RO

What does what happened here have to do with -

Lenaris hands her the padd in his hand, which she takes and reads with increasing dismay and anger.

RO

(growling)

Deliberate?

LENARIS

That's what the evidence tells us. Traces of triceron explosive at the centre. Satellite information shows a single skimmer leaving the area shortly after, headed towards Jalanda... followed by a Besinian freighter leaving the spaceport... a freighter that had arrived on Bajor only hours earlier.

RO

Son of a -

(slaps combadge)

Ro to *Brahmaputra*, patch me through to Captain Kira -

LENARIS

(interrupting)

Kira already knows, Lieutenant. We confirmed the new readings only an hour ago, while you were en route to Bajor.

Acknowledging, Ro taps her combadge to close the line.

LENARIS

I contacted the station, of course. Once the freighter left the system it was out of my jurisdiction. My understanding is that the *Defiant* set out in pursuit immediately.

RO

But what kind of agenda could anyone have against these people?

LENARIS

That, Lieutenant, is why our meeting wasn't cancelled. Captain Kira expects you to investigate the matter personally.

Off Ro's reaction...

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

2 INT. MOBILE COMMAND CENTRE

A planet-bound temporary set-up, filled with half a dozen computer stations. Ro sits at one, working through reports. At another is CENN DESCA, a male Militia officer. Ro is not making much progress, and is tired and frustrated.

RO

Computer, search telemetry from Deep Space Nine for information on all incoming and outgoing traffic in the Bajoran system for the past twenty-six hours. List any non-Bajoran and non-Starfleet vessels. Pull any scans of those vessels.

CENN (o.s.)

You're looking at it from the wrong angle.

Surprised, Ro turns to look at Cenn, whom she had barely noticed was there. Cenn is tense, unimpressed with Ro.

RO

(bemused)

Were you speaking to me?

CENN

The Besinian freighter. You think if you figure out who they are and where they came from, you'll figure out what they wanted.

RO

That's right.

CENN

You're wasting your time.

RO

Is that so.

CENN

Yes, it is. Whoever was on that ship knew it wouldn't matter what we did or didn't find out about them, or they would have done a better job covering their tracks.

RO

And I suppose you have a better suggestion, Major...?

CENN

Cenn Desca. And yes, I do. But I doubt you'd be interested.

Ro is getting annoyed now. What is this guy's problem?

RO

Since you're obviously hoping I'll take the bait, let me oblige. Why wouldn't I be interested, Major?

CENN

Because it involves looking at Bajor, not away from it. You think all the answers are out there. I wonder if it even occurred to you to look for them here, on Bajor?

RO

The perpetrators aren't on Bajor.

CENN

The crime is. Why else destroy the village so completely, unless they were trying to hide something?

(turns away)

I don't know why I'm wasting my time. You've made turning your back on Bajor into an art form.

Ro has had enough now. She stands sharply, sending her chair skidding and crashing backwards. She is fuming.

RO

I don't know who the hell you think you are, but I am not required to put up with this.

CENN

Go on then, leave. Again. That's what you do best, isn't it? I'm sure now that half the Militia is following your example, you must feel vindicated for giving up on Bajor during the Occupation.

LENARIS (o.s.)

Major Cenn!

Cenn jerks to his feet and to attention as Lenaris appears in the doorway, clearly having overheard Cenn's tirade.

LENARIS

(steely)

Report to Colonel Doul, Major. Tell him I said you're to assist in sweeping the western slope for additional evidence.

CENN

Yes, sir.

Without a glance at Ro, Cenn scurries for the exit. Lenaris steps aside to let him pass, closes the door, approaches Ro carefully. She is full of anger, embarrassment, confusion.

LENARIS

I'm sorry about that. Do you want to file a complaint?

RO

No. But... Do you... Do you think he's right about me?

Lenaris sighs, unsure how to answer. He straightens Ro's chair for her, invites her to sit, takes a seat himself.

LENARIS

I remember the day you testified before the Chamber of Ministers

about your activities with the Maquis. It was a struggle just to keep them from letting Starfleet arrest you, much less give you a job. To them, you were unreliable and unpredictable. Worse, in their minds you'd turned your back on Bajor when it needed you most.

RO

Maybe they were right.

LENARIS

I didn't think so.

RO

Why not?

LENARIS

You never said why you came home. That lack of explanation told me more than anything you could have said out loud. I think that deep down you regret leaving Bajor, and you've carried that guilt with you ever since.

Ro stares blankly, unsure how to process all this.

LENARIS

Joining the Maquis gave you the chance to do what you hadn't for your own world. When the Dominion wiped out the Maquis, you switched the fight to them. And once you ran out of fights, and you thought you'd finally atoned, you came home. That's what you didn't say. And I thought you were right.

(pause)

For what it's worth, Major Cenn isn't usually such an ass. It's just that, to some people in the Militia, the transfer of so many people to Starfleet is a shock.

RO

And I suppose that my being here,
at such a time, back in a
Starfleet uniform, just pushed him
over the edge.

LENARIS

I'm just asking you to understand
what some of us are going through.
We're not stupid, Laren. We know
Bajorans need to be in Starfleet.
But there needs to be Bajorans who
will put Bajor first, and their
voice needs to be heard too.

With that, Lenaris stands and walks out without another
word. She ponders a moment, then turns to her computer.

RO

Computer, access the Bajoran
Central Archives and search all
databases for all references to
Sidau village.

3 EXT. TALUNO MEMORIAL PARK - DAY

A calm, quiet area in Bajor's capital city. Trees, flower
beds, a central memorial made from one broken building
girder in a stone base. ELIAS VAUGHN strolls comfortably
along a flower-lined path with OPAKA SULAN at his side.

Vaughn asks a question MOS about the flowers; Opaka bends
to cup one in her palm, answering MOS. He reaches down to
courteously help her up. They are so content just strolling
that Ro has to clear her throat to announce her arrival.

VAUGHN

Lieutenant! There you are.

RO

Commander. Ranjen.

OPAKA

(warmly)

It is good to see you again,
Lieutenant.

RO

Likewise.

Ro genuinely likes and admires Opaka - her humility, grace and lack of airs. Ro turns to look at the memorial in the centre of the park. Vaughn follows her eyes, smiling.

VAUGHN

It's quite moving, isn't it? When Sulan offered to show me this place, I wasn't prepared for the tranquillity it evokes.

OPAKA

This memorial was just being started when the Prophets called for me to leave Bajor. I'm glad to see how well it turned out.

VAUGHN

Sulan, I must be going. But I want to thank you for a most enjoyable time. I look forward to speaking with you again.

OPAKA

As do I, Elias. Be well.
(to Ro)
Good day, Lieutenant.

RO

And to you, Ranjen.

Ro and Vaughn leave Opaka and walk over to a bench. They sit, and Vaughn gazes happily out across the sunny green.

VAUGHN

You come from a remarkable world, Lieutenant. The more I experience Bajor, the more I understand Captain Sisko's feelings for it.

RO

I'm starting to learn a few things myself.

VAUGHN
(to business)
You have a report for me?

RO
(hands him a padd)
The current figures on Starfleet's
absorption of Militia personnel.
Close to one-hundred-and-ninety-
thousand personnel from all
Militia divisions have submitted
transfer applications. Around ten
percent of those will be ready for
direct transfer to active service
without any additional training.

VAUGHN
(sigh)
I was hoping to meet each of them
individually before they got their
assignments, but that's obviously
not going to work. We'll have to
make other arrangements.

COMPUTER (comm)
Brahmaputra to Commander Vaughn.

VAUGHN
Hold that thought.
(taps combadge)
Go ahead.

COMPUTER (comm)
Incoming communication from Doctor
Girani Semna aboard starbase Deep
Space Nine.

VAUGHN
(resigned sigh)
Very well, put her through.

GIRANI (comm)
(stern)
You've missed your appointment
again, Commander.

VAUGHN

And I apologise again, Doctor.
Perhaps we can reschedule?

GIRANI (comm)

Oh no you don't. The annual crew exams are due to be filed with Starfleet Medical tomorrow. You're the last one, Commander. I may not be Starfleet, but I still have the authority to pull medical rank on any member of the station crew. You're to return to the station immediately and report to the infirmary. That's an order.

Ro smothers a smile, unaccustomed to seeing Vaughn brow-beaten. He catches it, and scowls at her.

VAUGHN

Alright Doctor. I'll be on your biobed in two hours. Vaughn out.
(taps badge)

Damned doctors. If she wasn't already transferring dirtside...
(pause)

I spoke with Dax a while ago. She filled me in on the latest about the situation at Sidau.

RO

Any word from the *Defiant*?

VAUGHN

Only that they managed to pick up the scent. It was leading towards the Badlands. I imagine Lenaris must be feeling pretty frustrated.

RO

(nodding)

Having to turn the matter over to Starfleet galled him. He's worried the Militia is becoming obsolete.

VAUGHN

He knows that's not true.

RO

Intellectually, sure. Hard to remember when you're standing in the ashes of three hundred people you failed to protect.

VAUGHN

It wasn't his failure. And if he believes it was, then that's our failure. We're in this together.

RO

Then I think we need to make an effort to make sure that those who aren't joining Starfleet understand they still count.

VAUGHN

What are you suggesting?

RO

That we re-establish the position of Militia Liaison Officer.

VAUGHN

(dubious)

A token Bajoran?

RO

(bristling)

A voice specifically for Bajoran interests within the predominantly Starfleet command structure.

VAUGHN

Lower your shields, Lieutenant. I think it's an excellent idea. I just want you to be prepared for how others may react.

(standing)

Let's continue this discussion on the *Brahmaputra*. I don't want Girani sending out search teams.

(she stands too)
You probably haven't heard this
from enough people, Lieutenant,
but I for one am glad you decided
to put the uniform back on.

RO
Thank you, sir. But... why?

VAUGHN
Because I know what really
happened on Garon Two.
(taps combadge)
Vaughn to *Brahmaputra*. Two to beam
up.

Ro looks shocked as the transporter beam takes them...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

4 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

A standard establishing shot. The *Defiant* is not present.

5 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

Vaughn perches unhappily on a biobed, shirtless. Bajoran doctor GIRANI SEMNA runs the scanners...

GIRANI

Oh, before I forget... happy
birthday, Commander.

VAUGHN

Thank you. But I think it's only
fair to tell you that I stopped
celebrating my birthday about
forty years ago.

GIRANI

Not even your hundredth?

VAUGHN

Where I was that day, celebrating
was the last thing on my mind.

GIRANI

You're showing another two percent
decrease in bone density.

VAUGHN

I've been on a regimen of Ostinex-
D for the last twelve years.

Deciding to let his harsh, impatient tone pass for now, she
moves on, finding a large white scar on his neck.

GIRANI

Where'd you get this scar?

VAUGHN

Back home, when I was a kid.

GIRANI

I'm detecting foreign DNA, but I can't find a database match.

VAUGHN

Expand the search to include Q-class lifeforms. You'll find it belongs to *draco berengarius*.

GIRANI

It looks as though you were lucky to have survived. You've never experienced any side effects?

VAUGHN

No.

GIRANI

Your medical file says you had a cardiac episode six years ago.

VAUGHN

A mild one. Nothing since.

GIRANI

What about your energy level?

VAUGHN

(irritated)

I'm a little slower getting up in the morning. Are you satisfied?

GIRANI

That depends. Any other symptoms Starfleet should know about?

Vaughn turns to face her, feeling invaded and resentful.

VAUGHN

I'm old, Doctor, and getting older all the time. Starfleet knows that. Putting a microscope on every creaking bone and aching muscle won't tell them anything they're not already aware of.

GIRANI

(patient, delicate)

Commander, you are one-hundred-and-three years old. While you're in excellent health for a human male of your years, at some point, you'll have to face the end of your ability to continue serving in your current capacity.

VAUGHN

Is it your medical opinion that I am unfit for duty, that my health is a liability to this crew?

GIRANI

No, but -

VAUGHN

Then we're done here.

He gets off the biobed and reaches for his shirt, dressing.

GIRANI

For someone of your experience, I'd expect a little more wisdom.

Furious, Vaughn SLAMS his hand down on the biobed, making Girani jump. Then he makes an effort to rein his emotions.

VAUGHN

I apologise, Doctor. It's just... I'm simply not ready to give up this life yet.

GIRANI

Like it or not, the time is coming when you will have to stand down. My hope is that you'll recognise it when it does, or else someone will make that decision for you, and I suspect you're the type that would find that degrading, even humiliating. I doubt that's how you'd want your career to end.

VAUGHN

(quietly)

No. I can't say it is. Thank you,
Doctor. Your candour is sobering.
You'll be missed. By all of us.

GIRANI

Thank you, Commander.

She steps to the back of the room to allow him to dress.

QUARK (o.s.)

There you are, Commander! I heard
I might find you in here.

He turns to see QUARK in the door, hands behind his back.

VAUGHN

Mister Ambassador. What a pleasure
it is to see you.

QUARK

Ah, you say that, but you don't
mean it. But I'm willing to
overlook your insincerity,
Commander, given your situation.
At your age, another birthday
would make anyone cranky.

Vaughn sends a sharp look back at Girani, who responds with
a shrug of "don't blame me."

QUARK

As it happens, I was at the
station's florist picking up a
shipment of Kaferian lilies, just
as Mister Modo was processing an
order - for you! A birthday
present from someone on Bajor. As
a good citizen, not to mention the
senior Ferengi diplomat in
residence, I volunteered to bring
it to you personally.

Quark brings his hands out- he is holding a single flower wrapped in presentation paper. It is an *esani* flower. His stern expression softening, Vaughn takes the gift and reads the attached card with a wistful smile. He also finds an isolinear rod attached.

VAUGHN

What's this?

QUARK

Compliments of the Ferengi Embassy. An hour of holosuite time at our special birthday discount rate, and two free drinks.

VAUGHN

Top shelf?

QUARK

Ha-ha! Good one! Oh, for a small fee, you can get an official proclamation from the Ferengi Alliance naming this Elias Vaughn Day. Comes with a certificate.

VAUGHN

You're enjoying your diplomatic appointment too much, you know?

QUARK

Take joy from profit, and profit from joy. Rule of Acquisition number fifty-five.

VAUGHN

Some other time, perhaps. But thank you for the gift.

(to Girani)

Doctor.

Vaughn walks past Quark and out onto the Promenade. Quark seems to realise for the first time that Girani is there.

QUARK

Doctor! When's your birthday?

6 **EXT. SISKO'S HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY**

BENJAMIN SISKO sits on the ground, up against a large tree in his property. His baby daughter is cuddled up against his chest, fast asleep. He is pleasantly miles away, just enjoying a warm rest in the sun. He looks up at one of the larger branches, hanging near to the ground.

ON THE BRANCH

Leaves wave gently in the breeze. A tiny insect crawls along the bark of the tree, finding its way peacefully.

ON SISKO

...as he watches these events closely, seemingly fascinated by them, by their simplicity.

CLOSER ON THE BRANCH

The leaves wave, the insect crawls... and things seem to slow down, becoming more focused, lines more defined, actions more precise, more there...

ON SISKO

...fascinated. It is as if he understands something about the tree, about the life within it. But then a shadow crosses his face and a tiny voice sneezes, and Sisko is snapped out of his enthrallment and back to the real world.

BACK TO SCENE

Sisko looks up to see that KASIDY has walked over to him, oblivious to his trance-like state. He smiles up at her, but she looks worried as she sits beside him on the ground.

KASIDY

I think Rebecca's caught a cold.
Which means we'll both have colds
too in a couple of days.

SISKO

Can't we immunise her for all
these little diseases?

KASIDY

We could, but Julian said we
should let some take their course
so she can build up immunities.
Nothing works better than nature.

As Rebecca sneezes again, Sisko looks down at his daughter
adoringly, stroking her tiny cheek with his finger.

SISKO

I should make lunch.

KASIDY

Just heat up that gumbo.

SISKO

Excellent idea.

(to baby)

But none for you, little girl.
Maybe when you're older. None of
that replicated school lunch food.
I'll send you jambalaya.

KASIDY

Will you? Pack her lunch on school
days? You see that in our future?

SISKO

What makes you think I can see the
future?

KASIDY

Then what do you want to happen
next? You must have some plans,
some hopes for how you want our
lives to unfold...

Sisko looks back to the tree, a different branch, where a
mother bird is feeding her baby birds.

SISKO

What I want... is to be here with
you and the baby. But you know the
truth. It's never going to be
about only what I want. I still
have a duty.

KASIDY

To whom?

SISKO

(considers)

To the Bajorans. To the people who have placed their trust in me. To the Prophets who allowed me to return here. To Starfleet.

(slightly
perplexed)

And to those others...

KASIDY

What others? Who else is more important than your family?

Realising he is worrying her, Sisko brings all his attention back to Kasidy and scoots closer, trying to reassure her.

SISKO

None of them is more important than my family. But consider this - what do you think we need to do to protect our daughter?

KASIDY

What do you mean, Ben? Is someone going to try to hurt Rebecca?

SISKO

Not specifically Rebecca, but yes... something is coming. The Prophets tried to explain it to me. I wish I could be plainer than that, but it's difficult.

KASIDY

But it's something that could harm Rebecca?

SISKO

It's something that could affect us all, every Bajoran, yes.

KASIDY
Bajoran, Ben? Is that what we are
now?

SISKO
(smile)
Aren't we? If Rebecca could
answer, what would she say about
this place?

Kasidy looks around, at the same tree, the same birds, the
house, the countryside, the hills far away.

KASIDY
It's home, Ben. It's our home.

SISKO
Yes. And if we need to defend
it...

KASIDY
... We'll do what we have to.
(pause)
So, what do we do now?

SISKO
First, we should have lunch. Then,
when we're done... I think we
should plan a dinner party.

7 INT. FREIGHTER INTERVIEW ROOM

A light suddenly flicks on, harsh and glaring. It reveals
HOVATH, the young Sidau Storyteller from 1x14. He has been
beaten bloody and raw, lying on the deck in a huddle, his
cheek against the cold metal. He blinks his swollen eyes.

NAUSICAAAN (o.s.)
Up.

Rough hands grab and drag him upright, throwing him roughly
into a thin metal chair, before a basic metal table. The
growling NAUSICAAAN thug who grabbed him goes to stand by a
computer monitor on the wall of the bare, featureless room.

The bright light shines right into his face, blinding him and hiding the person in charge here. The CAPTOR only appears as a shadowy, silhouetted figure, sat calmly at the other end of the metal table, impossible to see clearly.

CAPTOR

Ke Hovath.

He does not recognise the woman's voice, but he knows enough to realise he is in major trouble. They know who he is, and they killed his entire village to get to him.

HOVATH

(croaky, whisper)

What do you want with me?

CAPTOR

The same thing you want. Answers.

HOVATH

I won't help you.

CAPTOR

I think you will. Show him.

The Nausicaan presses a button on the monitor.

ON THE MONITOR

It shows a young Bajoran woman (mid 20s), beaten even worse - INIRI, Hovath's wife. She huddles in a corner, hugging her knees, weeping. Behind her is a window showing stars at warp and the wisps of the Badlands. She is in an airlock.

BACK TO SCENE

As Hovath recognises her, the blood drains from his face.

CAPTOR (o.s.)

As you can see, your wife lives.
If you wish her to stay that way,
I require your full co-operation.

HOVATH

Please. Let her go.

CAPTOR (o.s.)
No. Not until you give me what I
need. Otherwise Iniri dies.

HOVATH
How can I possibly help you? I'm
no-one.

CAPTOR (o.s.)
Oh, but that's hardly true. Until
this very morning you were the
sirah of Sidau village.

HOVATH'S POV

From what little shadow we can see, the Captor seems to be quite relaxed, sitting back from the table, speaking calm and level as if having a pleasant conversation.

CAPTOR
But that's not all, is it, Hovath?
You've also spent the last six
years at Musilla University, where
you pursued what can only be
described as an atypical course of
study for one of your upbringing.
You also published a rather
remarkable document.

Still hidden in shadow, the Captor casts a padd across the table to Hovath. It comes to rest in front of him.

ON THE PADD

It is a university dissertation. Bajoran characters in the top half. In the bottom half:

SPECULATIONS ON THE ARCHITECTURE
OF THE CELESTIAL TEMPLE
by KE HOVATH

BACK TO SCENE

Seeing this, Hovath begins to weep, starting to understand what this is all about. He pushes the padd away.

HOVATH

This is nothing.

CAPTOR

I very much disagree. I find it quite compelling. Your approach is not merely imaginative, but inspired. You believe the wormhole is not what it appears to be.

HOVATH

No... I believe it is more than it appears to be.

CAPTOR (o.s.)

Explain.

HOVATH

If you've read my paper, you already know the explanation.

CAPTOR

(tensing)

Indulge me.

Still unsure and scared, Hovath says nothing. Taking that as a refusal, the Captor turns to the Nausicaan thug and his screen, which shows Iniri in the airlock.

CAPTOR

Space her.

As Hovath's eyes widen in horror...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

8 INT. FREIGHTER INTERVIEW ROOM

As the Nausicaan reaches for a button on the monitor...

HOVATH
(panicked)
Wait!

CAPTOR
(to Nausicaan)
Stop. Is there something you wish
to say, Hovath?

HOVATH
Please don't kill her. Please!
I'll tell you whatever you want to
know. Just don't kill my wife.

CAPTOR
Then we have an understanding?
(he nods)
Begin, then. Tell me your thoughts
about the wormhole.

HOVATH
Bajorans do not question why the
Temple opens above our skies. We
merely accept it as validation of
our connection to the Prophets.
But to learn that the Temple
opened in two directions puzzled
us. It left us to wonder if Bajor
was as unique as we believed. And
the next question is obvious...
what if Bajor and Idran are not
the only two points at which the
wormhole may open? What if they're
only the first two?

CAPTOR
How can that be? The termini we
know about are triggered at an

event horizon. If the wormhole can open anywhere in the universe...

HOVATH

The Alpha and Gamma openings are unlocked. My speculation is that, while the Temple may have an infinite number of doors, most of them are locked from the inside.

CAPTOR

Which suggests you would need a key to open them.

HOVATH

No such key exists. Don't you understand? My ideas were fantasy. They have no credibility. They're merely philosophy, not theory.

The Captor's hand places an object on the table - the ORB FRAGMENT from 1x14, in its bracelet. Hovath recognises it.

CAPTOR

(gently)

What if I were to suggest... that you have had the key all along?

Too scared and traumatised to understand anything, Hovath simply buries his head in his arms and cries.

CAPTOR

You disappoint me, Hovath. So thirsty for knowledge, and yet you refuse to drink.

HOVATH

(through
the tears)

It was presumption. Arrogance. Vanity. I thought the Temple was an invitation to understanding. But I see now it was test of my faith. And I failed it. I doomed my people, and damned myself.

CAPTOR

(smooth, cajoling)

Hovath, how can you believe such a thing? The Prophets have rewarded your vision. The death of the village is not a condemnation, but an affirmation. A sign from Them that you are on the verge of something new and wonderful.

HOVATH

The death of nearly everyone I love is not a sign from the Prophets! You are twisting my faith to justify mass murder. You know nothing of my faith!

HOVATH'S POV

Calmly, confidently, the Captor stands. Leans forward out of the darkness. Before the face comes into the light...

ANOTHER ANGLE

From behind the Captor, looking towards Hovath, as she emerges into the light. WE STILL DO NOT SEE HER FACE.

CAPTOR

Are you so certain of that?

Hovath recognises her, and he gapes, utterly stunned. He simply cannot understand how this can be.

HOVATH

Why would you do this?

CAPTOR

Because like you, I thirst for understanding. I burn to see what only the Prophets can reveal.

HOVATH

But... you are -

Suddenly, the room SHAKES and loud BOOMS sound. The ship they are on is under attack. The Nausicaan checks...

NAUSICAAAN
Attacked. *Defiant*.

CAPTOR
How timely. Report to the bridge.
I'll be there shortly... after I
secure our new friend.

The Nausicaan switches off the monitor and leaves as the ship continues to shake. The Captor picks up the padd and the bracelet off the table, receding into the shadows.

CAPTOR
Now comes the fun part.

9 **EXT. SPACE - THE BADLANDS**

The smoky wisps that indicate the beginnings of the Badlands. The Besinian freighter, a standard cargo hauler that looks like nothing special, warps towards the plasma storms. It shudders under fire from off screen. Pulse phasers pounding at the freighter precede the *Defiant*.

10 **INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE**

RED ALERT lights flash. BOWERS is at tactical, TENMEI at helm, and Ensign T'RB (Bolian male, 8x19 "Cathedral") at sciences. KIRA sits confidently in the centre seat, staring angrily at the evading ship on the main screen.

BOWERS
Their shields are still holding.

T'RB
I believe I know why. Their shield harmonics are Dominion.

BOWERS
Sir! They're charging weapons!

KIRA
Evasive!

Tenmei's fingers work nimbly to avoid the first yellow beam from the freighter, but not the second. The ship ROCKS.

BOWERS
Direct hit to starboard nacelle.
They're using Cardassian spiral-
wave disruptors.

KIRA
I've had enough of this.

11 EXT. SPACE - THE BADLANDS

Defiant suddenly surges closer to the freighter, closing the distance. Phasers rip out, and the freighter's shields finally SPARK and evaporate. The next phasers hit the hull, and small explosions wrack the ship. A third round catches a warp nacelle. The ship shudders and drops out of warp.

Defiant curves around, dropping out of warp itself and coming back around to meet the crippled freighter.

12 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

As before, viewing the drifting freighter on the screen.

T'RB
They're on emergency power...
weapons systems are off-line.

KIRA
Life signs?

T'RB
Twelve. Five on the bridge, the
others in engineering. I thought I
saw a slight power spike under the
ship... it's gone now.

BOWERS
I can't confirm it. Could easily
have been a ruptured conduit.

KIRA
Lieutenant, if they so much as
twitch, remind them why they
shouldn't. Open a channel.

(Bowers nods)

This is Captain Kira Nerys of the
USS *Defiant*, representing the
United Federation of Planets.
You're ordered to surrender and
prepare to be boarded.

A garble of STATIC, possibly with a voice in there.

KIRA
(to T'rb)
Can you clear that up?

T'rb works his panels, but shakes his head in frustration.

KIRA
Alright, we'll go in two teams.
Have Gordimer take three security
to the bridge. Nog and Neeley can
join me to secure engineering.
I'll take Doctor Tarses too, in
case there are injuries. You have
the bridge, Lieutenant.

She gets up, heading for the door, but Bowers approaches.

BOWERS
I respectfully remind the captain
that Starfleet regulations call
for the commanding officer to stay
on board, not lead away teams.

She smiles, appreciating what he is trying to do. But she
won't be swayed. As she walks to the exit...

KIRA
Sorry. I guess I haven't gotten to
that part in the manual yet.

13 INT. FREIGHTER ENGINEERING

An entirely functional and ordinary-looking ship's engine
room. The door opens, and NEELEY (female human, security,
6x02 "Rocks and Shoals") pokes her head around the corner.

NEELEY
Clear!

She enters, leading Kira, NOG and Doctor TARSES (male, one-quarter-Vulcan, medical, TNG 4x21 "The Drumhead"). All are armed. The room is silent, and Kira soon sees why - dead bodies everywhere. Two TELLARITE females, a male HUMAN, a male ROMULAN and a male ARKENITE in drab paramilitary garb.

Tarses approaches to inspect the closest, and spots a phaser burn on the back of his neck. The next body is the same. No other phaser burns around the room - they were all executed, quickly and bloodlessly.

TARSES

All dead. Shot by a phaser within the last thirty minutes.

KIRA

Any life signs?

TARSES

(off tricorder)

Just us. Wait - something in that direction... it's Bajoran.

NOG

Maybe the one who killed the crew?
A survivor, getting their revenge?

KIRA

Tarses and I will check it out.
Neeley, stay with Nog. Let me know
if there's anything new. Doctor?

Acknowledging, Tarses follows his tricorder. Kira follows.

14 **INT. FREIGHTER AIRLOCK**

Looking out through the window to the corridor outside...
Tarses' tricorder leads him up to the window. He looks in.

TARSES

Oh my God...

The door opens, and Tarses enters to see Iniri, huddled in the corner up against the outer hatch. Clothing torn, skin burned in patches, hair matted with blood from a head

injury. She is half-catatonic with pain and terror. Tarses approaches cautiously, careful not to alarm her.

TARSES

We're here to help you. I'm a doctor. My name is Simon. Can you tell me your name?

Snuffling and mumbling, Iniri pushes herself away, further into the corner. Then Kira gently steps forward too...

KIRA

Easy. You're safe. We're not going to let anything else happen to you. My name's Nerys. Kira Nerys.

At the sight of Kira, Iniri SHRIEKS in fear, scratching at the outer hatch as if trying to escape through it. Shocked at the reaction, Tarses takes her chance to touch a hypo to Iniri's neck. One more terrified scream, and she collapses.

KIRA

(taps combadge)
Kira to *Defiant*. Beam Doctor Tarses and the Bajoran next to him directly to sickbay.

BOWERS (comm)

Acknowledged. Stand by...

Standing back out of the way, Kira watches the transporter beam take Tarses and Iniri.

KIRA

Sam, have T'rb scan again for life signs. What do his readings show?

T'RB (comm)

(pause)

Nineteen, sir. The seven remaining members of the boarding party, plus the original twelve...

KIRA

The problem is, everyone else we've found on this ship is dead.

BOWERS (comm)
Captain, I strongly suggest you
abort the mission.

KIRA
Not yet. Kira out.

She heads out of the airlock...

15 **INT. FREIGHTER BRIDGE**

Like the engine room, plain and functional. A door opens and Kira enters. Ensign GORDIMER (security, 8x12 "Demons") and three extras are already there. Plus more bodies...

GORDIMER
All dead, sir. A phaser, point
blank...
 (re Nausicaan)
...except for him.

A female ARKENITE in command, a female human and male BOLIAN elsewhere, all executed like the others. Only the Nausicaan made any attempt to fight back - his wound is to the chest and his weapon in his hand. A phaser burn on the opposite side of the bridge suggests he got one shot off.

Kira observes all this and comes to her conclusions...

KIRA
The killer began here. Engineering
wouldn't worry if they lost touch
with the bridge for a few moments.
Then he made his way down to the
engine room and killed everyone
there. But for him to get the drop
on all of them like this... he had
to be familiar. One of them.

Gordimer brings Kira a small box of wires and circuits, a few inches across.

GORDIMER
Sir, we found this attached to the
helm. There's a sophisticated

autopilot program, able to respond to external stimuli. It was also sending out the false life signs.

KIRA

I bet it sent that garbled comm signal too. All of which means the crew were already dead before we even got here.

NEELEY (comm)

Neeley to Captain Kira.

KIRA

Go ahead.

NEELEY (comm)

Sir, I've found a shuttlebay, just large enough for one vessel. The doors are open and the bay's empty. I'm also reading atypical graviton emissions.

KIRA

A cloaking device...
(realising)
T'rb's power spike.

Kira ponders, knowing something is horribly wrong here.

NOG (comm)

Captain, I've begun a restart sequence on the warp drive. We should be able to get this thing back to the station for analysis by oh-one-hundred tomorrow.

KIRA

Thank you, Lieutenant. Stand by.
(to self)
The killer expected, even wanted the ship to be caught. The autopilot was designed to keep us busy while he escaped. He killed the crew to stop them talking. But why not just destroy the ship?

(suddenly realises,
with alarm)
Kira to Nog, shut down the restart
sequence, right now.

NOG (comm)
Aye sir. Initiating core shutdown.
(pause)
Uh-oh.

KIRA
What is it?

NOG (comm)
The injectors aren't responding.
They're cycling up to overload.
Captain, this thing is going to
rupture any second.

KIRA
(urgent)
Kira to *Defiant*. Get us out of
here, now!

Transporter beams take everyone just as panels begin to
explode behind them on the bridge...

16 **EXT. SPACE - THE BADLANDS**

The freighter buckles as its warp core overloads, and it
EXPLODES in a massive conflagration. Holding station right
next to it, the *Defiant* is hit hard by the shockwave and
THROWN off its axis, TUMBLING deeper into the Badlands...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

17 EXT. SPACE - THE BADLANDS

Rolling from the explosion of the freighter, the *Defiant* soon rights itself and SURGES away from the Badlands.

18 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

Tenmei is in the zone again, deftly keeping the *Defiant* safe. Kira enters; Bowers vacates the centre seat for her.

KIRA

(bitter)

We were played. Someone's throwing down a gauntlet, and we need to figure out who, fast. Helm, set course for DS-Nine, warp eight.

TENMEI

Aye sir, warp eight.

BOWERS

(confidentially)

Sir, I want to apologise. I never meant to challenge your authority earlier. Only to remind you, you have others you can depend on to walk into danger on your behalf.

KIRA

No apology necessary, Sam. But you need to remember that even though this uniform is new, I've sat in the *Defiant's* centre seat before. I'm no stranger here.

BOWERS

Understood. I suppose some of us veteran Starfleet people need reminding from time to time. It won't happen again, sir.

Kira nods, accepting that, and Bowers returns to his post.

19 EXT. BAJOR - ESTABLISHING - DAY

The Ashalla monastery, a lovely sunny day.

20 INT. ASHALLA MONASTERY - GARDEN - DAY

VEDEK SOLIS (8x20 "Twist of Faith") sits on the stone bench in the garden, where we have seen Opaka sit before. He is thrilled and privileged to be here - it is his first visit. After a moment, Opaka enters and greets Solis warmly.

OPAKA

Vedek Solis, welcome to Ashalla. Please forgive my lateness. I was delayed in Janir, where the Oralian temple is being built.

SOLIS

The work goes well?

OPAKA

Well enough that services may be held, as of today. Cleric Ekosha invited me to join the first gathering. It was a most moving experience. So like, yet unlike, our own devotion to the Prophets.

SOLIS

Which is closer to the truth, I wonder?

OPAKA

(smiling)

Why, Tendren... they're all equally true. And equally false.

SOLIS

Because if one world's religion is true, then all must be?

OPAKA

No, though I believe there is some merit to that argument. Rather, it is because any religion is about

trying to comprehend the universe.
Though we may scratch the surface,
we each see only a fragment of a
larger and more complex reality.
Different religions see different
fragments - none of them wrong,
but none the entire truth either.

SOLIS

But together...

OPAKA

...Together, we gain a clearer
picture than ever before.

SOLIS

You know why I have come... I know
I am not the first to ask, but I
must add my voice to the others...
will you be Kai for us again?

She shakes her head sadly, sorry to have to disappoint him,
but resolute and serene.

OPAKA

No, Tendren, I will not.

SOLIS

The Assembly never recovered from
your loss, Sulan. It fell into
discord, politics, corruption...
we lost our way, and we need
desperately to find it again. Can
nothing persuade you?

OPAKA

It is not a matter of persuasion.
I will continue to walk the path
on which They have set my feet, as
we all do. But I have come to
understand that my path does not
lead back to the Vedek Assembly.

SOLIS

(softly)

Bajor needs you, Sulan.

OPAKA

Bajor has me. Just not in the way it perhaps imagines it should. A true kai does not lead. He does not wield power, nor decide for others what the Prophets require of them. He merely helps them to find their own way, and not to fear the journey.

SOLIS

But if you will not become kai again... then what should we do?

OPAKA

What the Prophets teach us to do, when faced with doubt. Look for solutions from within.

Solis blinks, realising her implication - she means him.

OPAKA

Come, join me in my chambers. We'll take tea.

She is on her feet and moving - he has to rush to catch up.

21 **INT. ASHALLA MONASTERY - PASSAGE**

They walk together down a long stone hallway, past open archways, towards a door at the far end.

SOLIS

(taken aback)

You're saying... you're saying I should seek the chair?

OPAKA

(smirk)

I don't believe I said any such thing. Although I have heard you gave the matter thought before...

SOLIS

Only to challenge Yevir.

OPAKA

So that you could help our people.
As a Vedek of Ilvia, you have
guided a great flock for years. As
an Ohalavar, you have advocated
new ideas. And you fought for Kira
Nerys before the Assembly, to have
her Attainder lifted.

SOLIS

I failed in that last endeavour.

OPAKA

But you spoke from your *pagh*. What
does your *pagh* tell you now?

They reach the door, and pause before it. Solis smiles.

SOLIS

That there is much good I can yet
do for our people.

Nodding her approval, Opaka opens the door and steps into
her chambers.

She walks in, but then turns in shock as she sees hundreds
of *esani* blossoms filling the room, arranged in bunches and
baskets and displays. Opaka's amazed but radiant smile
suggests she knows who they are from.

22 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

Vaughn stands smiling, his thoughts far away. But as Kira
strides through the airlock from the *Defiant*, he snaps back
to attention.

VAUGHN

Welcome back. Heard you had some
trouble.

KIRA

It was a trap. Someone's toying
with us. What makes it worse is
that I didn't learn a damn thing
about why this is happening.

They walk down the corridor. She hands him a padd.

KIRA

Nog's analysis of every reading we took during the encounter. See if you can reach Gul Macet. The fact that the ship was equipped with Cardassian weapons and Dominion shields should be of interest.

VAUGHN

Ro's made some progress. She also experienced some problems with Militia officers feeling... left out. She suggests we reinstate the liaison position to allay their fears. Lenaris agrees. She has someone in mind already, and she'd like them to start right away to help with the investigation. With your permission, of course.

KIRA

Send Ro to my quarters in thirty minutes with his file. But unless there's something on there I don't like, I think it's a sound idea.

(reach turbolift)

Hey, did I hear right? Is today your birthday?

VAUGHN

(sigh)

Gossip. It's the only sound that travels at warp.

KIRA

So, what does someone get a hundred-and-three year old human for his birthday anyway?

VAUGHN

Girani would probably suggest a few organ replacements.

KIRA

Much too practical. How about
dinner and a drink at Quark's?

VAUGHN

Tell you what...
(re isolinear rod)
Quark gave me this. It's good for
a couple of free drinks at least.

The turbolift arrives and they step inside.

KIRA

Top shelf?

VAUGHN

Don't ask Quark that.

Vaughn chuckles as the doors close on them.

23 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

A normal afternoon, with numerous pedestrians milling. One of the circular pressure doors rolls open, and Cenn Desca steps out. He looks around at the strangers, the Cardassian architecture - he does not enjoy being here. Taking a deep breath, he walks on and heads to the security office.

24 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE

The doors open and Cenn walks in, to find Ro sat behind her desk. She holds up a finger to tell him to wait a moment, because she is busy on the comm screen with JULIAN BASHIR.

BASHIR (screen)

...wish I could be more helpful.
But as odd as the incident was, it
barely seemed of any consequence
eight years ago, let alone after
everything that's happened since.

RO

I understand, Doctor. Would you be
willing to open your personal logs
for that stardate? Any additional
details could prove significant.

BASHIR (screen)
Of course. But the one you really
want to speak to is Chief O'Brien.
I dare say his memories of that
event are more vivid than mine.

RO
I've got a call in to Cardassia
already. Thank you again. And
sorry for interrupting your leave.

BASHIR (screen)
Oh, not a problem. The *Alexandria*
is departing Earth for the Bajor
sector this evening. I should be
back on the station in a week.

RO
See you then, Doctor. Ro out.

The signal ends. Ro looks up at Cenn, who is standing at
attention, expecting a thorough chewing out.

CENN
Lieutenant, I'd like to apologise
for the manner in which I spoke to
you this morning. I was out of
line. Although I do have genuine
concerns about the future of the
Militia, I was wrong to take my
frustrations out on you. I hope
you can forgive my disrespect.

RO
Apology accepted, Major. Please
sit down.

He does, a touch flummoxed. That went easier than expected.

RO
You were half right.

CENN
I'm sorry?

RO

About my natural instinct to look anywhere but Bajor for answers. I didn't even realise it until you threw it in my face. And if you hadn't, my investigation might have continued going nowhere.

CENN

You mean you found something?

RO

The beginning of the answer, I think. Turns out this station's chief medical officer, and its former chief of operations, once visited Sidau village. And spoke about it in their logs.

CENN

What did you find?

RO

I'll get to that in a minute. I thought about what you said, Major. And some things Lenaris said too. That's why you're here. You've been assigned to DS-Nine as our new Militia Liaison Officer, effective immediately.

CENN

(dumbfounded)

Is this a joke?

RO

I'm completely serious. You'll be the Militia's eyes and ears on the station, and coordinate any joint endeavours with Starfleet.

CENN

But... Lieutenant, I understand what you're trying to do. And I realise that we who serve seldom have the choice of where we serve.

But... I have no desire to live
and work aboard Terok Nor.

RO

Then stop thinking of it as Terok
Nor. This is Federation Starbase
Deep Space Nine.

CENN

I realise everyone here has
accustomed themselves to that. I'm
not sure I can. This station was
the Cardassian seat of power
during the Occupation. That it's
been allowed to operate all this
time is, quite frankly, offensive.

RO

Get over it. You think because you
have a few chips on your shoulder,
you're unique? That the people who
work here casually put aside what
went on between these walls? Are
you really that arrogant?

CENN

Wh... I...

RO

The point is, it's easy to be
dismissive when you're ignorant.
Which you are. You're as ignorant
of DS-Nine as I was of Sidau.

CENN

Maybe I am. But this place -

RO

- Is just that, Major. A place.
It's defined at any time by the
people in it. Its past is
important, no doubt. But its
present and future matter more.
You can help define those things.
What do you say?

She stands hopefully, holding out her hand to him. After a moment, he slowly stands and takes her hand, shaking it.

CENN

I say that I don't think I have the slightest idea what I'm getting myself into.

RO

Then you'll fit in perfectly.
Welcome to Deep Space Nine.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

25 EXT. SSKO'S HOUSE - ESTABLISHING

Early evening, the usual pleasant and sunny weather.

26 INT. SSKO'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

The aftermath of a dinner party. Sisko clears plates away to the kitchen. Kasidy has taken the baby out of the way to the corner of the room, and is giving her her dinner too.

Kira and First Minister ASAREM sit around a central coffee table, while Vaughn and Opaka share a couch. Kira pulls out a small bottle of liquor - Capellan *grosz*. Vaughn groans.

VAUGHN

Oh, I know what that is.

KIRA

It does have something of a kick.

Sisko gets some small glasses (Opaka and Kasidy decline), and pours. Sisko takes a sip and GASPS as the powerful drink burns down his throat. As he recovers from the drink, he takes a seat, coming to the reason for the evening.

SISKO

I know it's been a difficult day.
But all of us gathered here...
it's going to be up to us. If Odo
hadn't gone back I'd want him here
too... but he's needed elsewhere.
Nerys... the Sidau situation?

KIRA

Nothing new yet. Ro's on it.

ASAREM

I've made sure all our resources
are available to the Lieutenant.
That someone could come to Bajor
and kill so many, and get away
with it... we can't allow it.

SISKO

Sulan, how is the Vedek Assembly taking the news about the Eav'oq?

OPAKA

Cautiously. It is potentially a cause for great celebration, to learn the Prophets have touched others. But it has shaken them, perhaps more than the rediscovery of the Ohalu prophecies.

SISKO

And the other side of the coin...

OPAKA

(understanding)

The Ascendants. I'm afraid it is only a matter of time before they return to the space near the Temple... and what will follow then is anyone's guess.

ASAREM

We need to prepare for the worst.

VAUGHN

We need to move quickly - reach out to the Eav'oq, build a relationship with them. Learn about them, their history... and hopefully learn more about the Ascendants in the process.

OPAKA

I will go.

They all turn to look at her, surprised by the speed of her decision. Vaughn is troubled, reaching to take her hand.

VAUGHN

Sulan...

OPAKA

This is where my path leads.
Towards opportunities for hope, as

it was with the Ennis. The Eav'og
are children of the Prophets, as
are we. Perhaps together we will
see the tapestry more clearly.

She is firm, unmovable. Understanding, the others nod in
agreement. But they are still daunted by the possibilities.

27 EXT. SISKO'S HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

Sisko emerges from the house, pacing across the garden
towards the great tree. He leans his hand against it,
taking comfort from its solidity, its realness. He is still
troubled by the knowledge that is just out of his grasp.

KIRA (o.s.)
You alright?

SISKO
Just needed a moment.

He stares out into the distance, across the fields. Two
dark spots can be seen at the far edge of vision - two
people walking towards them. Kira frowns...

KIRA
You sure you're alright?

SISKO
I keep thinking about how close I
was to missing it all. Seeing my
son again. My wife. Being there as
my daughter came into the world.
But even when I was with the
Prophets, there was always this
thread, this lifeline connecting
me to the people I love.

KIRA
And now?

SISKO
Now that thread is running the
other way. And I feel it tugging
me. Part of me is still there,
Nerys. With Them, in the Temple.

KIRA
(realising)
You're going back to Them...

SISKO
No... I'm where I need to be, for
my family, for myself, and for
Them. This place and time, what's
happening out there...
(to the sky)
They're important to the Prophets.

KIRA
Benjamin... what exactly is
coming? If you know something -

SISKO
It doesn't work like that. I don't
have any insight into the Eav'oq,
or the Ascendants, or anything
else the new day may bring.

KIRA
Whatever comes, we'll be ready.

Sisko shakes his head sadly - no, they won't.

KASIDY (o.s.)
Nerys?

They turn to see that Kasidy is calling from the doorway.

KASIDY (cont)
There's a comm from the station.
It's Ro. She says it's urgent.

SISKO
Take it in the study.

Kira nods in thanks, and passes Kasidy on her way inside.
Kasidy comes over to Ben by the tree, smiling warmly. The
walking figures are growing closer in the darkening night.

KASIDY
Everything okay?

SISKO
You tell me. How was dinner?

KASIDY
The Emissary's cooking lights the way, as always.

SISKO
Suck up.

KASIDY
Hey, they get to leave. I have to live here.

Warmly, they reach in to kiss and hug each other. After a moment, Kasidy pulls away, looking with shock and surprise out across the fields.

KASIDY
Jake...?

Sisko turns in amazement, and sees that the figures are JAKE and RENA (9x03 "Waiting for the Mist to Clear"). Grinning wide, Jake jogs the distance and throws himself into a hug. Rena approaches politely but nervously.

SISKO
Jake-o, what are you doing here?

JAKE
Sorry I didn't call ahead, but I wanted to surprise you. There's someone I wanted you to meet.

He takes Rena's hand, gently pulls her closer, and turns back to Ben and Kasidy, nervous but with a huge smile.

JAKE
Dad, Kas... This is Azeni Korena.
My wife.
(excited)
We just got married!

Ben and Kasidy are gobsmacked with elated surprise.

RENA
It's wonderful to meet you, Mister
Sisko, Captain Yates.

SISKO
Married... Jake, that's...

Unable to express himself, he simply pulls Rena into a hug,
grinning wide himself. Kasidy grabs Jake for another hug.

KASIDY
Oh Jake, congratulations!

Sisko pulls back and gazes deeply into Rena's face, as if
he recognises her. Realising that's a bit weird, he smiles.

SISKO
Go on inside. Nerys and Sulan and
Elias are all here.

Jake leads Rena to the house. Sisko holds back, watching
them go. Kasidy sees the odd expression on his face.

KASIDY
Ben, what is it?

SISKO
Korena...

FLASHBACK - 4x03 "THE VISITOR"

Older Jake introduces his wife to his father...

ADULT JAKE
This is Korena... my wife.

BACK TO SCENE

SISKO
He's married... to the same woman
I met in an alternate future. One
that Jake doesn't even remember.

KASIDY
And that means... what?

SISKO

I don't know. That some things are unavoidable? Inevitable?

KASIDY

Ben. You're a father-in-law now. Don't overanalyse it, just be happy. Not everything's an omen.

SISKO

(smiling)

Of course. You're right.

Taking Kasidy's hand, Ben leads her back into the house.

28 INT. SISCO'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

They re-enter to find the house in happy uproar. Vaughn, Opaka and Asarem greet Jake and Rena with joy. Jake holds the baby, while Rena is star-struck to see the First Minister and the former kai here. Vaughn grabs the *grosz* and pours a toast. Even Opaka and Kasidy partake this time.

VAUGHN

To young Mister Sisko and his beautiful new lady wife. May they have a long and happy life together.

SISKO

Hear, hear.

Kira emerges from another door. Sisko turns to her, too happy to notice her worried expression at first.

SISKO

Nerys, Jake just returned. He's married, can you believe it?

VAUGHN

Captain... is something wrong?

KIRA

Sorry to interrupt... but I need you all to join me in the study. Right now.

29 INT. SISKO'S HOUSE - STUDY

The group (excepting Jake and Rena) files into this new room, featuring a reading chair, bookshelves, and a large wooden desk, which carries a large computer screen. Ro is on the screen, calling from the station's security office.

KIRA

Lieutenant... will you go through it all again, please?

RO (screen)

Yes, Captain. As you all know, the village of Sidau was attacked and destroyed this morning. Sidau was unremarkable in all respects except one - its annual ritual of fighting the mythical creature, the *Dal'Rok*. I'd assumed it was all nonsense, but Doctor Bashir's logs convinced me the *Dal'Rok* was real - at least to them.

ASAREM

And only to them?

RO (screen)

Yes... it was a manifestation of their own fears, channelled by the village's shaman, the *sirah*.

OPAKA

(translated)

"Storyteller."

SISKO

I remember this now. The doctor and the chief visited years ago, while we were negotiating with the Paqu.

VAUGHN

So, this *Dal'Rok* was a psionic construct. Were these *sirah* telepaths, then?

RO (screen)
Sirahna. And good guess, but no. They used an artefact to conjure and control the *Dal'Rok*. They called it the *pagh-varam*. It was a bracelet, at the centre of which was a small green stone, reputed to be a fragment of an Orb.

VAUGHN
An Orb fragment? I didn't think that was possible.

Surprised and confused, the room all turns to Opaka for an explanation. But she says nothing, only frowns.

RO (screen)
Neither did I. And for what it's worth, I haven't had any luck confirming the legend. But if it really was a piece of an Orb, it might explain why the village was destroyed.

VAUGHN
Someone learned about the bracelet, and went after it.

KIRA
And maybe got it.

VAUGHN
Wouldn't it have made more sense to go after one of the actual Orbs, not just this bracelet?

KIRA
The Orbs have all been hidden away, after the close call we had with the parasites.

ASAREM
Bajor is determined that they will never be misused again.

RO (screen)

Besides, a missing Orb would be noticed right away. Almost no-one outside the village knew about the bracelet. By incinerating it all, the perpetrators presumably hoped to stop us learning about it, or at least slow us down.

(pause)

As it was, I only found all this out after an exhaustive search through every archive we have.

SISKO

Then how did the destroyers of Sidau find out about it?

KIRA

(deep breath)

The same way. The only conclusion we can come to... is that this information was obtained from Deep Space Nine itself.

(significant look
with Sisko)

We have a mole.

Off Kira's troubled face...

FADE OUT:

THE END