

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

12x16 - "The Blame Game."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on characters from the series

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

and on the *Star Trek* tie-in novels
by Pocket Books

TNG 17x16 - "HEGLU'MEH QAO JAJVAM"

Honoured by the starship *Ranger's* sacrifice at Khitomer, Chancellor Martok pledges the entire Klingon Empire to fight the Borg. Even his rivals on the High Council, who had previously considered the invasion purely a Federation matter, eventually support him in what may be the greatest battle in the history of the Empire. Martok assembles a fleet of over 500 warships, ready to take on the Borg. Meanwhile LaForge has detected sirillium traces on every Borg ship Starfleet has fought recently, and calculates that the range and decay rates mean they must have come from the [Azure Nebula](#) (VOY 3x02 "Flashback"), a supernova remnant on the triple border of Federation, Klingon and Romulan space. While LaForge oversees the creation of new transphasic torpedoes, Crusher confides in Worf her worries about Picard's erratic behaviour - when the Borg are involved, you never know how he will react. Approaching the Azure Nebula, *Enterprise* comes under attack by several cubes...

TTN 1x16 - "WHATEVER IT TAKES"

2381: *Titan's* super-sensors detect a planet hidden by a metal shell. As they approach, Keru asks [Torvig](#) to collaborate on security training, planning for every possible Borg tactic. 2168: Major Foyle and a team go to the city of *Mantilis* where they coerce the pacifist Caeliar - open a subspace tunnel and send us home. Foyle beams back to *Columbia* with a Caeliar prisoner, Arithon. Before they can do it, a massive feedback pulse hits the Great Work, forcing the sun to nova. The Caeliar attempt to escape through subspace tunnels, but Foyle's interference means only three city-ships succeed - *Axion*, *Mantilis* and *Kintana*. *Columbia* escapes via another tunnel, [crashing in the Gamma Quadrant](#), killing everyone but Arithon. 2381: *Titan* arrives at the shelled planet. Vale, Troi, Keru, [Ree](#), Tuvok, Torvig and two security are allowed down in a shuttle. Erika Hernandez welcomes them to *Axion* - she has been here for 800 years, and now they must stay as well.

VOY 10x16 - "INVISIBLE"

The SCE ship [Da Vinci](#) is assigned to work with *Voyager* on recreating the enhanced shields and phasers that the 29th-century drone [One](#) used against the Borg (VOY 5x02 "Drone"). *Da Vinci*'s chief engineer Nancy Conlon works with Vorik, and she also catches Harry Kim's eye. They are interrupted when they detect a Borg ship heading for the [Troyian](#) system (TOS 3x13 "Elaan of Troyius"). *Da Vinci* have been working on a phase-shifter that should be able to hide the entire planet from attack. They detect a convoy of ships trying to escape, and the Borg are practically on top of them. They only have one shot, so while *Voyager* takes on the Borg with their enhanced systems, *Da Vinci* chooses the planet over the convoy. The planet disappears, so the Borg destroy the convoy and move on. Only later do they realise that the convoy contained all of Troyius' children. Did they save the wrong target?

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. COLUMBIA

The dark and ominous insides of the ancient and crashed Earth ship. Boots CLANG hard across its deck-plates as they stride quickly and with purpose.

Lt KEDAIR, security chief of the *Aventine*, walks towards a light at the end of the corridor. Four security officers stand in a circle, shining their palm beacons down onto one spot. Two of them hold their hands to their noses.

Kedair reaches the circle and breaks through it to see what they are shining their lights on:

Two dead bodies, KOMER (human female) and YOTT (Bolian male), both bodies twisted in agonised poses, cavities burned straight through the corpses to the deck below, pools of liquefied biomatter.

Kedair steels herself. It's a horrifying sight - and smell - but she is the senior officer here and must show dignity. She turns to the team supervisor, Lt DARROW (human female).

KEDAIR

Who were they?

DARROW

Komer and Yott, sir. Engineers. They were dismantling the power relays, as per Lieutenant Leishman's instructions.

KEDAIR

(squats down
to inspect)

What killed them?

DARROW

We're not sure. We picked up some residual energy traces, but nothing that matches any known weapons.

KEDAIR
(re burns)
These look like thermal effects.

DARROW
Partly. But we think those are
secondary. The actual cause of
death looks like molecular
disruption.

KEDAIR
(shakes head)
I've never seen a disruptor do
this. Did you check for
biochemical agents?

DARROW
Yes, sir. No biochem signatures of
any kind.

Kedair stands again, not happy with this mystery.

KEDAIR
Who else has been down here?

DARROW
Just us. We locked down the area
as soon as...
(pause)
...as soon as we heard the
screams.

KEDAIR
Keep it that way. Have the bodies
beamed to sickbay on the *Aventine*.
I want Doctor Tarses to start the
autopsies immediately.

DARROW
Aye, sir.

KEDAIR
And not a word of this to anyone.
If anyone asks -

DARROW

If...? Sir, everyone heard -

KEDAIR

Alright, when you are asked about what happened, the only thing I want you to say is that there was an incident, and that it's under investigation. Do not mention fatalities, injuries, or anything else. Do not mention Yott or Komer by name. Is that understood?

She looks around at the other security officers - a human male, a Vulcan female and an Andorian *chan* - making it clear she is including all of them in this. They all nod their understanding.

KEDAIR

Good. I want you four to secure this deck. Move in pairs and keep an open channel to the *Aventine*. If you encounter anything that might be capable of this -

(re bodies)

- fall back immediately and call for back-up. Clear?

(they all nod again)

Make it happen.

DARROW

Englehorn, sweep aft with T'Prel. ch'Maras, forward with me.

(to Kedair)

Sir, I recommend you beam back to the *Aventine* and track our search from there.

(back to rest)

Move out.

The four security officers move out as directed, leaving Kedair alone standing over the bodies, illuminated in the light of her own palm beacon. She looks down at them, full of bitterness and self-blame.

KEDAIR

I was so focused on not indulging
their fears that I failed to
protect their lives. I should have
kept an open mind.

She looks around at the deserted ship, listens to the
clanging of her officers' boots, the keening of the wind.

KEDAIR

I still don't believe in ghosts.
But there's one thing I believe
without question... we are not
alone down here.

As she looks out into the darkness...

BLACK OUT

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

2 EST. AVENTINE

Establishing the *Aventine*, still in orbit of the golden-coloured desert planet.

3 INT. AVENTINE - SICKBAY (AUTOPSY ROOM)

Aventine's Doctor TARSES pulls a medical mask over his nose and mouth, and steels himself. He steps through a door and into a closed room within the sickbay - the door seals itself behind him immediately.

In front of him are the two dead bodies. Tarses has to hold back a retch at the gruesome sight and smell of them. He has done this before, and it never gets easier.

He picks up a medical tricorder and begins to scan...

4 INT. AVENTINE - SICKBAY (MAIN ROOM)

Out in the main part of the sickbay, Kedair stands. She is still full of self-blame for what happened.

The main door opens and Captain DAX strides in. Kedair immediately snaps to attention, but Dax waves her down.

DAX

As you were. Please. Where's
Doctor Tarses?

KEDAIR

In the autopsy room. He's been at
it about fifteen minutes.

Dax walks towards the back of sickbay, where the glass of the door reveals Tarses still at work. She KNOCKS on the door, he turns and sees her, and she beckons him out.

Dax returns to the main part of sickbay, with Tarses joining her soon after, stripping off his face mask. All three are tense and upset but powering through it.

DAX

What've we got?

TARSES

Still no definite cause of death.

KEDAIR

We've ruled out friendly fire, and my team has kept the *Columbia* secure since the bodies were found. No-one else has been down there.

TARSES

My preliminary autopsy found evidence of neuro-electric damage in both subjects' brain tissues, and their bodies exhibit molecular dissociation at all levels, from the epidermis to the marrow.

DAX

What can kill like that?

KEDAIR

The caustic effects are similar to the damage caused by the Horta.

TARSES

Except that the caustic injuries were highly localised. And instead of fusing synthetic and organic on the corpses, it dissolved them without mixing them.

KEDAIR

Which is what made me think of a Denebian predator called a *teblor*.

TARSES

Interesting. But a *teblor* doesn't possess anything like a neuro-electric attack, and if memory serves it lives in environments of no higher temperature than two degrees Celsius.

KEDAIR

(crosses arms, annoyed)

Yes, I admit, it's a bit warm for a *teblor* on this desert rock with no name. Of course, an Alteiran cave-fisher -

TARSESES

- would leave a trail of easily followed slime back to its watery lair. Neither of which seems to exist within a thousand kilometres of the *Columbia*.

There seems to be a competition brewing between the doctor and the security chief. Dax decides to break through it.

DAX

Doctor, instead of telling me what the killer isn't, can you offer any insight about what it is?

TARSESES

(reluctant)

Not at the moment, Captain.

DAX

We're running out of time here. Starfleet Command wants us back in the Alpha Quadrant a-s-a-p. I've asked for an extension because of what happened to Komer and Yott, but I wouldn't count on it.

(to Kedair)

Get your security team to run a hard target search of every compartment, locker, crawlspace, nook and cranny on the *Columbia*. If whatever killed our people is still there, I want it found.

KEDAIR

We could use some extra sensor capability.

DAX

I'll have Leishman and Mirren free
up whatever you need.

(to Tarses)

Do you have everything you need?

TARSESES

Enough to start. But I'd like to
visit the site and collect -

DAX

Denied. I need you on the ship
working on what we have. Darrow
has forensic experience, right?

KEDAIR

Aye, sir.

DAX

Then order her to collect samples
from the site and beam them back
at quantum resolution. Time is
short, Doctor. Make do with what
we've got - and do it fast.

Dax turns and strides out of sickbay...

5 EST. BAJOR - DAY

The usual establishing shot of Bajor's capital city, with
golden stone buildings, peaceful green spaces and water
features glittering in the sun.

BELLIS (v.o.)

The death count grows by the day.

6 INT. VEDEK ASSEMBLY CHAMBER

The large stone chamber as seen in [11x14 "No Confidence"](#).
Kai PRALON (female, 50s, last seen [11x21 "Inferno"](#)) sits in
her place in the Apex Chair, but Vedek BELLIS (male, 60s,
last seen [11x15 "Never See It Coming"](#)) is on his feet with
hands placed on table - he has the floor.

BELLIS

These attacks by the demons known as the Borg have the potential to be worse than any of the horrors attributed to the Cardassians, the Klingons or the Jem'Hadar. And Starfleet appears to have little defence against them.

PRALON

We are all painfully aware of what Starfleet is facing, Vedek Bellis, and the things of which the Borg are capable.

BELLIS

Were you aware of who is to blame for these events?

Pralon looks around the assembly chamber, at the faces of the other vedeks. They are equally as confused as she is.

PRALON

The Borg are to blame. Surely.

BELLIS

The Borg may be the instrument of our destruction. But another's hand wields that instrument.

Vedek YEVIR sits further along the table, his hands folded patiently before him.

YEVIR

Less poetry, if you please, Bellis. Do you have a point?

BELLIS

The vedek from Janir wishes to know if I have a point. I wonder if he does - why is he here? Why does he even carry the title of 'vedek'? He no longer follows the path of the Prophets.

Voices clamour over each other in anger at Bellis's smug pronouncement. Yevir himself remains patient and quiet, not rising to the bait. Pralon bangs the GONG beside her chair.

PRALON

We will not go over this again, Vedek Bellis. You have been censured for your insults to other members of this assembly before, and I will happily do so again. If you have a point to make, make it. Your only other options are to sit silently... or leave.

Bellis absorbs the fact that the room is clearly against him. But it does not daunt him. He knows he is right.

BELLIS

Very well, Kai Pralon. I intend to leave this assembly this very day.

Bellis enjoys the susurrus of surprise that flits around the room. They weren't expecting him to say that.

BELLIS (cont)

And when I return... I will be solely responsible for saving Bajor from the Borg.

Bellis stands smugly as the assembly dissolves into anarchy around him...

7 INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE

A mostly normal business day. Major CENN runs the central Ops table, with NOG at engineering, CANDLEWOOD at sciences, and Ensign ALECO replacing the departed Bowers at tactical.

At an upper level replicator, Commander RO retrieves a mug of tea, and carefully carries it around the stations. She checks in with Nog and Candlewood, smiling encouragingly.

Eventually she reaches Aleco at the tactical console. He is a little nervous - he did only just get promoted - and has his head down working hard. Ro smiles sympathetically.

RO

You need anything, Ensign?

ALECO

No Commander, thank you. I have everything under control.

It is clear Aleco is overcompensating, trying to be perfect to impress. Ro leans nonchalantly against the console, sips her tea. She speaks low, so as not to be overheard.

RO

Relax, Ensign. You've got this.
I wouldn't have assigned you this job if I didn't think so.

He looks up at her, surprised. For a moment he is worried. But he sees the gentle, encouraging smile, and relaxes.

ALECO

Aye, sir. Thank you, sir.

Ro nods and leaves him be. She heads down the steps towards Cenn at the central table, sipping her tea gingerly.

As she arrives, her encouraging smile drops. In truth she is just as worried as Aleco. She just has more experience with hiding it. Cenn sniffs the air...

CENN

Tea? Not coffee?

RO

Vaughn always used to drink tea.
He said it's soothing.

CENN

Yes, but coffee is invigorating.

RO

And I feel the need to be soothed right now. I'm tense enough.

CENN

Then maybe you don't want to hear the latest reports from Starfleet?

Ro pauses, takes a sip of her tea, steadies her nerves. She steps closer so that she and Cenn can speak quietly.

RO

Hit me.

CENN

The Borg launched simultaneous attacks on Starbases 157, 234 and 343. Destroyed with all hands. The Klingon colonies at Khitomer and Korvat have... some survivors.

RO

Five targets. Three all at once last time, five all at once this time. It's getting worse.

CENN

Yes, sir. But did you notice the pattern?

RO

Two Klingon colonies... but ones that still have a lot of history with the Federation.

CENN

And Barolia, a neutral world that we only just persuaded to break their trade agreements with the Romulans and come over to us.

RO

It's not just Federation targets. They're going after anyone we've ever had anything to do with.

CENN

So, the entire Alpha Quadrant, then. There is some good news.

RO

Hard to believe. But go on.

CENN

Starfleet vessels sacrificed themselves to defend Khitomer and Korvat. Chancellor Martok was very honoured... so he has dedicated the entire Klingon Defence Force to fight the Borg alongside us.

RO

Then maybe we do have a prayer after all.

BEEP BEEP BEEP. An alert on Cenn's console. The tension in Ops immediately spikes, especially Aleco at the tactical console. Cenn checks his readouts...

CENN

It's not a tactical alert. It's a comm signal from Bajor.

They relax again. Cenn reads the message, and sags in frustration. He knows this will not to be popular news.

CENN

Vedek Bellis Nemani is honouring us with a personal visit. He's onboard the Assembly's dedicated shuttle as we speak. And he has made an official request to speak to you, Commander... at your earliest convenience.

Ro looks down into her mug, hoping the answers lie within.

RO

I'm gonna need more tea.

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

8 EXT. DESERT

The half-buried *Columbia*. Kedair stands on its back, near the top of the saucer section, looking out across the sand. Runabouts and shuttles dot the area around the ship itself. *Aventine* crew carry or anti-grav equipment and machinery away from *Columbia*, packing it inside the shuttles.

Sand swirls around in the howling wind, almost a full-blown SANDSTORM partially blocking this view and getting in Kedair's eyes. She taps her combadge.

KEDAIR

Kedair to Riordan. How much longer till you're ready to leave?

RIORDAN (comm)

A few more minutes. We're rounding up the last of the small stuff.

KEDAIR

Quickly, Ensign. We're scheduled to leave in less than an hour. It'd be a shame to have to leave you here.

RIORDAN (comm)

Just a few minutes. I promise.

KEDAIR

Notify me the moment you're ready. Kedair out.

The line drops, and Kedair goes back to gazing out across the constantly shifting desert.

After a few moments, boots CLANG on the metal surface again. Kedair turns to see Captain Dax approaching. They have to shout to hear each other over the sandstorm.

DAX

This sand is getting into every-
thing. My eyes, my mouth, my
boots, my uniform...

KEDAIR

It feels like a million insects
attacking me from every direction.

DAX

Still better than going back in
there, though. How's the
evacuation going?

KEDAIR

A few minutes. The investigation?

DAX

Tarses says they must have scoured
the deck-plates down there, the
number of samples. He's subjecting
them all to every test known to
sentient life. Still no clues.

KEDAIR

(haunted)

If only they weren't all so
fragile.

DAX

What do you mean?

Kedair takes a moment to ponder her response.

KEDAIR

Sixteen years ago, when I reached
adulthood and made the decision to
emigrate to the Federation and
apply to Starfleet Academy, there
was a lot of culture shock.

DAX

(where is
this going?)

I can imagine.

KEDAIR

But the biggest surprise was discovering how all my classmates, every other person of almost every species I would ever meet, were so absurdly delicate as compared to Takarans. Growing up I'd simply assumed that everyone was like us. But humans, Boliars, Trill... you all have specialised internal organs, limited disease and toxin resistance, no cellular stasis abilities... It astounded me. I was living in a galaxy of hopelessly vulnerable people.

(beat)

That's when I made the decision to train in security. Defending these people - defending you - was going to be my purpose from now on.

(beat)

And I failed in that purpose. I failed to defend Komer and Yott.

DAX

Blaming yourself is a self-fulfilling prophecy, Lonnoc. You must know that. And this can't be the first time you've lost people.

KEDAIR

Of course not. But every time, it reminds me of that vow I made to myself sixteen years ago.

RIORDAN (comm)

Riordan to Kedair.

KEDAIR

(taps combadge)

Go head, Ensign.

RIORDAN (comm)

Everything's packed and ready to go. Launching in twenty seconds.

KEDAIR

Carry on, Ensign. Kedair out.

(back to Dax)

I hate to leave without knowing what killed our people. It feels like dereliction of duty.

DAX

Believe me, I feel the same. But we have to go.

(taps combadge)

Dax to *Aventine* - two to beam up.

Dax and Kedair watch the various shuttles and runabouts below LIFT OFF and struggle through the buffeting winds to leave the planet.

DAX

I just wonder... did we find anything here that was worth two people's lives? Or was it all for nothing?

Transporter beams take Dax and Kedair away, leaving the *Columbia* alone once again.

9 **INT. AVENTINE - CONFERENCE ROOM**

Dax rubs her temples in frustration.

DAX

That doesn't answer my question, Lieutenant Commander.

Science officer HELKARA sits to Dax's left at the meeting table. Hovering over the table between them is a 3-D wire-frame hologram of a SUBSPACE TUNNEL. Helkara is a little taken aback by Dax's stressed and impatient tone.

HELKARA

I'm sorry, Captain. Which question didn't it answer?

DAX

Any of them! We've suspected since day one that a subspace phenomenon carried *Columbia* here from the

Beta Quadrant. I want to know how it entered the phenomenon, as well as where and when.

Helkara looks at the others arrayed around the conference table - Dax at the head, plus engineer LEISHMAN, first officer BOWERS and computer specialist RIORDAN.

HELKARA

(ashamed to admit)

I don't have the data to answer that question right now, Captain.

DAX

(exasperated)

Why not? I thought we recovered all of *Columbia's* logs and databases.

RIORDAN

We did. That's the one upside of what happened to Komer and Yott. It gave us more time. But as I was saying before you -

Bowers sends a warning glance at Riordan's inappropriate tone. The young ensign has gone too far to stop now, but he does at least moderate his tone.

RIORDAN

(continuing)

- before you cut me off, there was a gap in their logs.

(Dax backs down)

Eight whole months separate the last data on the Romulan ambush and the start of their sensor logs about this subspace phenomenon.

DAX

Could it have been a malfunction, or a result of the crash?

RIORDAN

No, sir. There's no sign of damage or erasure. It's as if the sensors

just got turned off for eight months, then back on again.

DAX

What are the last regular entries in the *Columbia's* log?

HELKARA

The Romulan ambush. It looks like the Romulans were testing out the telepresence device before their war with Earth. The chief engineer tricked the Romulans into thinking *Columbia* was destroyed, but it was left without communications or warp drive near Romulan space.

DAX

Any indication what their next plan of action was after that?

HELKARA

None at all. The last entry in Captain Hernandez's log is that their engines and subspace antennae were irreparable.

LEISHMAN

And that damage hadn't been fixed by the time they crashed here.

HELKARA

For what it's worth, Captain, the data from their journey through the subspace tunnel is completely intact, and as detailed as sensors of that era could be.

DAX

(re hologram)

Alright, so what do we know about this subspace tunnel?

BOWERS

Columbia was inside the phenomenon for just over forty-five seconds.

There were thirty-one human life signs aboard at the start of its journey, and one Denobulan. That leaves ten crew unaccounted for.

DAX

Could they have been killed during the Romulan ambush?

HELKARA

The logs identified fifty-three ambush casualties and forty-two survivors.

BOWERS

Once the ship was inside the subspace phenomenon, it got kicked around pretty bad. The subspatial stresses were more volatile than a wormhole or a warp bubble.

DAX

(re display)

I see the difference between this and a warp bubble. But how is it different from a wormhole?

HELKARA

Essentially, only in how and where it exists.

(brings up
new hologram)

This is the Bajoran wormhole, with which I believe you're already familiar, Captain.

DAX

Yes - that wormhole's relatively stable structure is made possible by a twelve-dimensional helical verteron membrane.

HELKARA

Exactly. But the subspace tunnel *Columbia* encountered doesn't exist in normal space-time, only in

subspace. Plus, the data suggests it was powered by dark energy drawn from normal space-time.

DAX

Is that what killed everyone? The dark energy?

HELKARA

Not directly. It was the byproduct - hyperphasic radiation. I'd estimate every organic particle on the *Columbia* was disintegrated within the first twenty seconds.

DAX

Mirren said the ship's autopilot was engaged. When did that happen?

LEISHMAN

About fifteen seconds after the ship exited the subspace tunnel.

DAX

In other words, forty seconds after every living thing on that ship was dead.

BOWERS

Give or take, yes.

DAX

And there's no record of who or what triggered that autopilot?
(Bowers shakes head)
Maybe it's some kind of subspace life-form. Could it be the same thing that killed Komer and Yott?

BOWERS

We just don't know yet.

HELKARA

Captain, there's one more thing. The energy field that supported the subspace tunnel was very

stable, much more than a wormhole would be. I think there's a very good chance it's still there.

BOWERS

If it leads back to the Romulan border, we could be back in the Federation within the hour.

DAX

Let's not get ahead of ourselves. We still need to find it, and even if we do, it's probably flooded with hyperphasic radiation.

LEISHMAN

I can work around that. A properly tuned metaphasic shield should be able to cancel out the effects. So what's the word, Captain?

DAX

The word is go. Leishman, get to work on that shield. Helkara, find us a subspace tunnel. Bowers, think up some excuse I can give the admirals for why we haven't left yet. If there's -

KEDAIR (comm)

Kedair to Captain Dax.

DAX

Go ahead.

KEDAIR (com)

Captain, I need to see you and Commander Bowers in shuttlebay one right away.

They all worry what that could mean...

10 **INT. AVENTINE - CORRIDOR**

Dax and Bowers stride together out of a turbolift and into a corridor. As they turn a corner, they are surprised to

see four security officers blocking a doorway, all armed with phaser rifles.

As Dax approaches warily, the four officers surround her and Bowers, and escort them through the door...

11 **INT. AVENTINE - SHUTTLEBAY**

Still wary and wondering what is going on, Dax and Bowers stride together into the shuttlebay. Ahead of them is a RUNABOUT parked on the deck, its side hatch open. But Lt Kedair and more armed security stand blocking their way.

As Dax and Bowers approach, that same distinctive SMELL makes them wince and put their hands to their noses.

KEDAIR

Captain, I think we have an intruder.

At Kedair's gesture, the security officers stand aside so that Dax can see into the runabout. And there...

...is another CORPSE, in the same state as Komer and Yott.

Off Dax's reaction...

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

12 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

The gruesome sight of the third dead body. Uniform melted into skin, innards showing, pools of liquefied matter. Dax, Bowers and Kedair stand nearby, all wincing in horror.

BOWERS

Have you identified the victim?

KEDAIR

Crewman Ylacam. Flight technician, first class. He was logged in for routine maintenance on the *Seine*.

DAX

How much do we know about what happened?

KEDAIR

Not much more than we know about Komer and Yott. Mirren's pulling the internal sensor logs and starting a forensic review.

BOWERS

Are we sure it's the same cause of death as we saw on the *Columbia*?

KEDAIR

Almost certain. I'm just waiting on final confirmation.

(looks up)

And here it comes now.

As Dax and Bowers turn around to look, Dr Tarses enters, wearing the same wince of horror at the sight and smell.

TARSES

Not again.

Looking around in resignation at the other officers, Tarses pulls out his medical tricorder and begins to scan.

TARSES
(off tricorder)
Molecular disruption. Acute
thermal effects. Major breakdown
in all organic material.

Tarses puts away his tricorder again with a sigh. The conclusion seems perfectly obvious.

BOWERS
Is the damage consistent with
hyperphasic radiation?

TARSES
No, it's not. That would desiccate
organic matter and disperse it
into subspace. Basically, it turns
people into gas and dust. Whatever
did this turns people into soup.

DAX
Was this done by the same thing
that killed our people on the
Columbia?

TARSES
Unquestionably.

DAX
Bowers, tell Starfleet we're not
going anywhere, not till I know
what we're dealing with. Kedair,
sound a ship-wide intruder alert.
All non-essential personnel are
restricted to quarters. Have your
people sweep the ship. Something
followed us up from the surface,
and I want it found. Now.

Dax strides out of the runabout, angry and determined.

13 EST. DEEP SPACE NINE

Returning us back to the familiar environs of the space station, with *Defiant* and several other vessels docked.

14 INT. DS9 - COMMANDER'S OFFICE

CLOSE UP on a padd screen, which shows CASUALTY REPORTS from more Borg attacks.

WIDEN to reveal that Ro is reading this padd, sat at her desk. Obviously she is not happy at what she is reading.

She hears the CLANG of boots outside, and looks up. Major Cenn is just approaching the door with Vedek Bellis right behind him. Cenn presses the door CHIME.

Ro hits a button to open the door, then stands to greet them politely as Cenn and Bellis enter.

CENN
(introductions)
Commander Ro, Vedek Bellis.

RO
Welcome to DS-Nine, Vedek. You honour us with your visit.

BELLIS
Thank you for seeing me, Commander. I appreciate it was short notice.

They both turn to look expectantly at Cenn, waiting for him to excuse himself. He gets the message.

CENN
Well, if you'll excuse me, I'm needed in Ops.

RO
Thank you, Major.

Cenn leaves the room, walking back down the stairs to the central Ops table as the doors close.

Ro gestures Bellis towards the guest seat as she retakes her own, doing her absolute best to remain diplomatic.

RO

So what can I do for you, Vedek?

BELLIS

My colleagues in the Assembly are aware of recent events, and they trouble us greatly. Bajor itself may soon be in grave danger.

RO

I'm afraid that's very likely correct. But Starfleet is doing everything it can to investigate the Borg attacks and stop them before they get any worse.

BELLIS

That is good to hear, Commander. Sadly, it is not entirely true.

RO

I... don't understand.

Bellis brings up a padd of his own that he had stashed in his robes. He activates it and begins flicking through.

BELLIS

You see, before coming here I made some investigations of my own, and they left me with one inescapable conclusion.

RO

What conclusion is that?

BELLIS

The conclusion as to who is ultimately responsible for the horror that is engulfing us all.

RO

Really? Please, enlighten me. Who is responsible for this invasion?

BELLIS

You are.

Ro looks at him with bemusement. Blinks repeatedly. It takes a moment to process such a ludicrous statement.

RO

Oh, this should be good.

BELLIS

I don't mean you personally, of course, Commander. I mean Starfleet in general. After all...

(makes show of checking notes)

...according to this, at the time of Starfleet's first encounter with the Borg, you were in prison. As a traitor to Starfleet.

Ro's face hardens into ice, but she does not respond. Bellis returns to his notes, quite proud of them.

BELLIS

According to my research, fifteen years ago, Starfleet angered the entity known as Q. He responded by hurling a Starfleet vessel into the path of the Borg, leading them to become interested in us.

(flick to next page)

Less than three years ago, another Starfleet vessel angered the Borg again, by destroying an important piece of their infrastructure in the Delta Quadrant, I believe.

RO

How do you know these things? Starfleet reports are not for just any old civilian to read.

BELLIS

Do not concern yourself. The point is, I have mentioned only two data points, and yet the connection is not hard to see. Starfleet goes out of its way to annoy the Borg

in their own territory, and the
Borg retaliate in blood.

(puts down notes,
case made)

You, and those like you, are
entirely to blame for bringing
this catastrophe down upon Bajor.
But it is not too late.

RO

Oh, you have a plan to save Bajor
from the Borg. This just gets
better by the minute. Do go on.

BELLIS

I have come here to demand that
Starfleet leave Bajor at once.
That you take your ships, and your
soldiers, and your godless
Federation, and leave.

RO

You have got to be kidding.

BELLIS

I have never been more serious. We
never wanted to be a part of your
Federation in the first place. Now
that we are, we are as damned as
the rest of you. But if you leave,
now, while there's time, then the
Borg will not come for us. Bajor
will be safe from the destruction.

RO

You'd be completely defenceless.

BELLIS

The Prophets will protect us.

RO

(scoffs, rolls eyes)

You people are really ridiculous,
you know that? Get out, you're
done.

She picks up a padd from the desk, turns in her seat and begins to read, dismissing Bellis, ignoring him. Bellis is amazed, indignant.

BELLIS

Commander Ro, you can't simply -

Ro turns back, SLAMS the padd back down on the desk, and looms over Bellis, instantly ABLAZE with fury. It's all going to come out now, every bit of bile she has held in.

RO

No, I said you're done. You're finished. You think you can come in here, disrespecting the people who are laying down their lives right now to protect you, and I'll just take it with a smile?

(shakes head)

No, you can get the hell out of here, Vedek. You can get the hell off my station, back to your big special room for stupid people, and pray. And you can see how much that helps you when the Borg come to destroy everything.

(begins to pace)

You people amaze me, you know? You want to throw away the one thing that's actually protecting you, and trust in your precious little sky-fairies to look after you instead. But you know who's really standing between you and the Borg? We are. Not the Prophets, not the Vedek Assembly - us. We're the ones picking up a phaser and going out to actually do something, while you sit and you pray.

She practically spits that last word, it's the worst insult she can think of. Bellis is just stunned at the outburst.

BELLIS

This is the only way to ensure Bajor's safety!

RO

And what's worse, you're willing to make a deal with the devil to let the rest of the galaxy burn as long as you can stay safe. And you think you have the moral high ground because you "believe".

Ro slaps a control on her desk, opening the doors. Major Cenn can be seen at the central Ops table.

RO

Major Cenn!

He looks up in surprise, and quickly jogs up the steps.

RO

Please escort Vedek Bellis back to the docking ring and see that he boards the shuttle safely. He is no longer welcome on this station.

The shock and indignation on Bellis's face. The cold fury on Ro's. And the awkward resignation on Cenn's.

CENN

Understood, sir.

The major takes the vedek gently by the arm and guides him out of the commander's office. The doors close behind them.

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

15 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

Major Cenn escorts Vedek Bellis down the corridor. The vedek is fuming quietly under his breath, conscious of not making a scene. He is ranting mostly to himself - Cenn just happens to be there to hear it.

BELLIS

Who does she think she is? How dare she speak to a vedek in such a manner? I should have her... I don't know what. Something. The sheer gall. It will not stand. I won't allow it.

CENN

Vedek, please. Calm yourself.

Bellis stops and turns to Cenn, as if noticing him for the first time.

BELLIS

Are you defending her, Major? You work for Bajor, not for Starfleet.

CENN

With respect, Vedek, isn't that the point? You and I are on her ground here, not our own. This is a Starfleet facility, and she is a Starfleet officer.

BELLIS

Exactly! She doesn't even follow the Prophets!

CENN

No, she doesn't. Which means that you have no authority over her.

That might be the part that annoys Bellis the most, but he will not admit it out loud. He stews, pouts petulantly.

BELLIS

She still owes me my due respect
as a member of the Vedek Assembly.

CENN

Why should she show you the
respect you did not show her?

Bellis reacts with surprise. He had been so sure of his
righteousness that he never even considered that.

CENN (cont)

Don't misunderstand me, Vedek. My
loyalty will always be to Bajor,
not to Starfleet. But imagine if
Commander Ro had come down to
Bajor, strode into the Assembly
and started trying to tell you
your business, like you came up
here and tried to tell her hers.
How would you have reacted?

BELLIS

(slightly chagrined)
Not well, no doubt.

CENN

No. I've had my conflicts with
Commander Ro, believe me. There
are several things we still don't
agree on - faith in the Prophets
for one. But you're wrong to blame
Starfleet for the Borg attacks.

BELLIS

Are you so sure of that?

CENN

Would you blame the walls of your
house for protecting you from an
oncoming storm? The walls hardly
invited the storm to come simply
by existing, did they? But they
might be the only thing that can
stop it from sweeping us all away.

BELLIS
(back on familiar
ground now)
You should pray to the Prophets to
protect you, child.

CENN
Oh, I do. I have been, every
moment of every day since this all
started. But the way I see it...
it can't hurt to have others on
our side as well. And just because
they don't believe in the Prophets
is no reason for us not to believe
in them.

Cenn is starting to get through to Bellis, just a little.
The vedek is too pompous to back down entirely, of course.
Cenn clears his throat into the silence.

CENN
Shall we continue, Vedek?

Bellis reluctantly nods his acquiescence. As they turn and
continue down the corridor, it is clear that Cenn has given
him some food for thought.

16 INT. AVENTINE - BRIDGE

The door from the ready room opens and Dax emerges, looking
dog tired. Gazing around the bridge, she sees that the rest
of them look much the same. Kedair, Leishman, Helkara, and
a new helm, MAVROIDIS ([Ullian](#) female, TNG "Violations").
They have all been working long hours with no rest.

Bowers is in the captain's chair, a coffee cup in one hand
and a padd in the other, but his head is drooping and he is
half asleep. Dax smirks at the sight, and stands patiently
waiting for him to notice her.

Finally he does, and blurts out almost reflexively -

BOWERS
Captain on the bridge!

In jerking to his feet, he spills the coffee all over his hand and arm. Muttering oaths, he drops the padd, swaps the coffee cup to the other hand and shakes the first one dry.

DAX
(to the bridge)
As you were.

They turn away, covering their amusement. Dax calmly takes her seat with a straight face as Bowers steps aside.

DAX
Guess how much I want to make a
joke at your expense right now.

BOWERS
I can only imagine.
(back to business)
I'm required by regulations to
remind you that we are ten hours
overdue for departure, as per our
last orders from Starfleet.

DAX
I'll note your reminder in my log,
thank you Commander.
(to Kedair)
Update on the manhunt, Lieutenant.

KEDAIR
We've completed two full sweeps of
the ship, Captain. So far, no
intruder. No new leads on cause of
death either, and no progress on
devising a defence against it -
whatever it turns out to be.

DAX
That's not very encouraging.

KEDAIR
No sir, it's not. But I'd still
like to complete a third sweep.
We've switched to some fairly
exotic detection methods.

DAX

Absolutely. Let's hope the third time's the charm.

(turns to Helkara
and Leishman)

What about you two?

HELKARA

We haven't found the subspace tunnel, not for lack of trying. We've gone through the full range of likely triggers, and now we're trying the unlikely ones.

DAX

What about the hyperphasic radiation?

LEISHMAN

That we solved. If we ever find this thing, we'll be ready to try it out.

DAX

Finally, some good news. Keep at it, and let me know when we get a fix on the tunnel.

HELKARA

Aye, sir.

MIRREN

Captain -

(Dax turns to her)

I've been going over *Columbia's* transporter logs. It looks like twelve people beamed down from the ship to somewhere - the timestamp places it sixty-three days after the Romulan ambush. But only three people beamed back up again - six months after that, and less than ten minutes before the ship entered the subspace tunnel.

DAX

So that accounts for nine of the missing people.

MIRREN

Maybe for all ten, if we assume one of those three wasn't a *Columbia* crew member.

Dax stands suddenly, the realisation alarming her.

DAX

You're saying two of *Columbia's* crew beamed up with someone - something else. Could it have survived hyperphasic radiation? Could it have killed our people?

MIRREN

Two hundred years later? I -

BOOM. The ship suddenly ROCKS, a huge explosion thundering somewhere in the lower decks and resonating throughout the ship. Dax is knocked off her feet, TUMBLING to the deck and down into the 'pit' in the middle of the bridge.

Bowers jumps to help her. As the ship settles around them, people reorient themselves and Dax gets back to her seat...

DAX

Report!

KEDAIR

Explosion in shuttlebay one! Hull breach, explosive decompression.

BOWERS

That bay was sealed after Ylacam's body was found. Mirren, what the hell happened?

MIRREN

It was the runabout. The *Seine* fired on the bay doors with its micro-torpedoes. It's leaving the bay now.

BOWERS

On screen.

The main viewscreen changes to a rear view of the ship, watching a runabout fly away between the warp nacelles, while wisps of gas escaping from the shuttle bay can be seen at the bottom of the screen.

DAX

I want to know who's in that ship
- now.

KEDAIR

No life signs in the runabout. But
I am picking up some wild energy
readings.

MIRREN

It's accelerating to full impulse
and breaking orbit, bearing three
eight mark seven.

BOWERS

Pursuit course, full impulse!

MAVROIDIS

Aye, sir.

Mavroidis starts the ship moving after the runabout. On screen, the curve of the desert planet below slides away...

HELKARA

(off panels)

Captain! There's a massive energy
build-up in the runabout's sensor
array. I think it's reconfiguring
to emit a soliton pulse.

KEDAIR

Arming phasers.

DAX

Hold fire!

Dax gets up from her chair again, approaches the massive viewscreen, which shows the runabout flying away while *Aventine* chases.

A BEAM OF ENERGY shoots out from the front of the runabout and cuts a SLASH through space-time. The jagged wound opens wider, a blue maelstrom of energy inside it...

BOWERS

Captain, we can catch the runabout with a tractor beam before it crosses the aperture.

DAX

No, Sam. Whatever's on that ship, I think it's what came here on the *Columbia*. And it's what killed our people. And now... I think it's trying to go home. I wanna see where it leads.

(beat)

Lieutenant Leishman - activate that metaphasic shield of yours. Mavroidis - take us into the subspace tunnel. Full impulse.

Off Dax, firmly in command of her ship...

17 **EXT. SPACE**

The runabout dives into the subspace tunnel...

And *Aventine* dives in after it.

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

18 INT. SUBSPACE TUNNEL

Inside the subspace tunnel, a blue vortex of coruscating energy that is definitely NOT the same special effect as the Bajoran wormhole or a slipstream corridor.

The tiny runabout *Seine* flies through it, and the giant *Aventine* chases after it.

19 INT. AVENTINE - BRIDGE

The ship shakes as it travels through the passage. Bowers holds onto the edge of the helm console. Dax holds onto the arms of her captain's chair. Dax looks to Kedair...

KEDAIR

Metaphasic shield is holding.

Dax nods in gratitude. They go back to simply holding on for dear life as the *Aventine* rides these rapids.

20 EXT. SPACE

Normal space, but featuring a deep blue swirl of gases and ephemera - the AZURE NEBULA (as seen in VOY "Flashback").

Space splits open in a jagged knife-cut of energy, the wound opens wider...

...and the *Seine* shoots out of it, followed a few moments later by the *Aventine*. They both coast along a moment...

21 INT. AVENTINE - BRIDGE

Now that they are back in normal space, and the ship is not shaking anymore, Dax gets up from her chair and approaches the viewscreen again.

The enormous, wall-filling screen shows the tiny runabout ahead of them, against a wash of gorgeous blue colour. It seems to surround them as they all gaze at it in wonder.

DAX
Position report.

MAVROIDIS
Beta Quadrant. We're inside the
Azure Nebula, a supernova remnant
on the triple border of Klingon,
Romulan and Federation space.

KEDAIR
Captain, the runabout is reducing
speed. Its power levels are
dropping fast.

DAX
Helm, hold station at ten thousand
kilometres. Kedair, put a tractor
beam on it.

On screen, a golden beam shoots out from the *Aventine* and
snags the runabout, which makes no effort to evade.

KEDAIR
Tractor beam locked, captain.

HELKARA
Radiation levels inside the
runabout are dissipating rapidly.

BOWERS
(suspicious)
It didn't even put up a fight.
After all that, it's just giving
up?

DAX
I don't know, Commander. That's
what I'm beaming over there to
find out.

BOWERS
(straightens)
With all respect, you should let a
boarding party secure the target
before you beam over.

DAX
And miss all the fun?
(heads to turbolift)
Lieutenant Kedair, with me.

Kedair reaches the turbolift first, the door opens, and she steps aboard. Dax enters it too, and turns to face Bowers.

DAX
Well? Are you coming or not?

BOWERS
Do I have a choice?

DAX
Not really, no.

Bowers harrumphs and heads towards the turbolift, snapping out orders on the way.

BOWERS
Mirren, watch the runabout and make sure the transporter room keeps a lock on us. Leishman, lowers shields only for transport. Helkara, you have the bridge.

HELKARA
Aye, Commander.

Bowers steps into the turbolift with Dax and Kedair.

22 INT. AVENTINE - TURBOLIFT

DAX
Deck four.

As the door closes and the turbolift begins to move, Bowers keeps his eyes on the wall and his voice low.

BOWERS
What happened to letting me keep protocol on the bridge?

DAX

Says the guy with coffee all over his shirt.

BOWERS

Nevertheless, I am required by regulations to remind you, Captain, that this is a really stupid thing to do.

DAX

Sam, what's the point in being captain if you don't get to do something stupid once in a while?

Looking at Dax's grin, Bowers is not happy. But he knows he is not going to win this argument.

23 EXT. SPACE

Focusing on the tiny runabout *Seine*, sitting in space and held by the tractor beam from the *Aventine*.

24 INT. RUNABOUT - REAR CABIN

Three transporter beams deposit Dax, Bowers and Kedair. All are armed, but only Kedair is brandishing her phaser rifle openly. Bowers raises a tricorder and scans towards the front of the ship. He reads the results in a hushed voice.

BOWERS

No life signs, but energy readings and motion sensors suggest one body in there.

Kedair steps forward with her rifle at the ready. Bowers taps the control, and the hatch slides OPEN. With Bowers holding Dax back, Kedair steps through, and walks gingerly along the corridor outside.

Once at the far end of the corridor safely, Kedair gestures with her spare hand that Bowers and Dax are safe to follow.

25 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

The hatch to the cockpit opens, and Kedair leads the way, rifle at the ready, into the darkened room, lit only by the

lights of the stars and the nebula. She seems to be satisfied, allowing Dax and Bowers to enter after her.

As they move further in, they see a shape half-slumped over the front console. Kedair keeps her phaser trained upon it. This is the creature who killed three crewmen she was sworn to protect.

The figure is roughly humanoid, a mottled purplish colour with fleshy protuberances that drape over its head and connect to its shoulders, and which breath shallowly. Its long dangling arms droop towards the deck, where its feet have two forward-facing claws and one rear-facing.

This is a CAELIAR, and its name is ARITHON. As it senses the others approaching, it gathers enough energy to turn and look at them, but does not otherwise react. Dax walks towards the creature warily.

DAX

Kedair, lower your weapon.

Kedair does not want to do so, but orders are orders.

DAX

I'm Captain Ezri Dax, commanding the starship *Aventine*.

ARITHON

(weak whisper)

I am Arithon, of the Caeliar.

Dax approaches closer, squats down to Arithon's level.

DAX

Were you on the *Columbia*?

ARITHON

Yes. Taken as prisoner. Before entering the passage.

DAX

Was it you who set the auto-pilot after all the crew died?

ARITHON

Yes... Hoped to control it. Use it
to return home. Too much damage.
Couldn't stop the crash.

The reedy arms holding the Caeliar up on the console lose their strength, and he slumps further towards the deck in an undignified tangle. Dax reaches out to gently help him. It is clear this creature is very weak and fading fast.

DAX

That's why you stole the runabout.
You were trying to get home. But
what happened to my people? Are
you to blame for that?

Kedair half-raises her rifle again, her trigger finger sorely tempted to use it. Dax sees this, but chooses not to comment. She understands how her security chief feels.

ARITHON

(getting weaker)

Forgive me. Did not mean to kill.
Caeliar are peaceful, always. But
weak without the gestalt. Alone
for centuries. So hungry, so cold.
Saw heat and fuel. Had to feed.
Was nothing but the hunger. Did
not remember myself until this
vessel's power restored me. Made
me tangible again.

DAX

I don't understand. Tangible?

ARITHON

Needed form for the return. To
come home to the gestalt.

Arithon uses the last of his energy to twist his head just enough to look out of the windows, at the blue swirling nebula. His voice seems distant, echoey.

ARITHON

All for nothing. My home is gone.
Voices silenced. Gestalt is lost.

DAX

What does that mean? What is the gestalt?

But Arithon does not answer. With his energy expended, he seems to dissolve, becoming a shape of FLICKERING LIGHTS, the blue shining fireflies that we saw on *Columbia*. Those lights dissipate, dim, die out. His last words...

ARITHON

(ghostly)

I'm sorry.

He is gone. Dax lingers for a moment, torn between relief that her mystery is solved and sadness for the creature.

BOWERS

You live to make my life difficult, don't you?

DAX

(standing)

Yes, Sam, it's all been about inconveniencing you.

(looks out
of window)

I feel like we're on the verge of a major breakthrough here. I wish we could see where it all leads.

BOWERS

I get the feeling Starfleet has other plans for us. Since we're back in Federation space now, we should probably check in.

DAX

We will. But this is something big, Sam. One more ship defending Trill won't make much difference against the Borg. But this might.

HELKARA (comm)

Aventine to Captain Dax!

DAX

(taps combadge)
Go ahead, *Aventine*.

HELKARA (comm)
Captain, we've just received a
priority one distress call. We're
reeling in the runabout and
beaming you back in ten seconds.
Stand by for transport.

DAX
Who's the distress call from?

HELKARA (comm)
It's from the *Enterprise*, Captain.
They've engaged the Borg.

As the transporter beams take Dax, Bowers, Kedair and their
suddenly worried faces away...

BLACK OUT

END OF SHOW