

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

8x11 - "Gateways."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novel

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: Gateways Book 4

Demons of Air and Darkness
by Keith RA DeCandido

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. SPACE

A MALON TANKER vessel - one of the really humongous ones as seen in VOY 5x20 "Juggernaut" - thus establishing that we are in the DELTA QUADRANT. It cruises along with a planet visible some distance away.

Weapons fire comes from off screen and HITS the first tank, then the second. We don't see who is firing yet.

2 INT. MALON VESSEL - BRIDGE

Smoke, fires, sparking panels. A grizzled older male Malon, KRON, stands at a nearby panel, urgently shouting reports over the chaos. The female captain, MARSSI, clings onto her grubby-looking central console for dear life.

MARSSI

Return fire!

KRON

We have been! Our weapons have no effect.

MARSSI

I take it they aren't answering our hails?

KRON

Of course not. They don't want to talk, they want to destroy us, same as they do everyone else!

The ship shakes violently under more weapons fire. Kron staggers, then checks his grimy panels again and curses.

KRON

Shield four is down and shield five is critical. They're on a parabolic course - they'll be back in weapons range in two minutes.

A moment of respite. Marssi tries to get her bearings.

KRON

Damn it! The warp containment field is in trouble and the impulse drive is down. We can't even move now!

Another Malon, a young and nervous male named GRIL, speaks up from a rear console. Marssi goes to him.

GRIL

Who are these people, anyway?

3 EXT. SPACE - MALON VESSEL

And now we see - a HIROGEN ship is soaring threateningly into view. The Malon ship is bleeding wisps of noxious green gas from its leaking tanks - antimatter waste.

4 INT. MALON VESSEL - BRIDGE

MARSSI

The Hirogen are hunters. No-one knows where they come from, but supposedly, they'll hunt anything and everything.

GRIL

But why hunt us?

KRON

It's what they do.

GRIL

Yeah, but whatever they do to us will kill them too if the tanks rupture or the core breaches. What's the good of being a hunter if you don't survive yourself?

MARSSI

(thoughtfully)

That's a good point. Maybe he just doesn't know. Open a channel.

KRON

They haven't answered a hail yet.

MARSSI

They don't have to answer, they just have to listen.

KRON

(taps buttons)

Fine, channel's open.

MARSSI

Attention Hirogen ship. If you continue with your present course of action, this ship will be destroyed and our cargo will be exposed to space. We are currently carrying over half a trillion isotons of antimatter waste, and I doubt that even you could survive those levels of theta radiation. This entire star system will be irradiated and you, us and anyone else nearby will die. Please break off your attack, for your own sake if not for ours.

A pause - will they see sense? Kron's console bleeps.

KRON

(surprised)

They're replying!

The HIROGEN's mottled face appears on the main viewscreen with a sneering growl. His silver metal helmet is streaked with a stripe of white paint on each side, and a stripe of red on the left only. Clearly, this guy means business.

HIROGEN (screen)

Prey. You will surrender.

The screen goes blank. They are astonished - that's it?

KRON

They're firing again!

The ship lurches - more explosions.

KRON (cont)

That did it. Shields five and six are down and seven is buckling. One more shot, and we've got serious problems.

MARSSI

Yes Kron, our problems have been quite light-hearted until now.

Kron checks his console, and seems very confused...

KRON

Controller! I'm picking something up. It just appeared a hundred and fifty *hentas* off the nose. It's... a hole.

MARSSI

Can you be a little more specific, Kron?

KRON

(irritated)

No! It's an opening of some kind, and there are stars and planets on the other side, but they don't match anything on our star charts.

MARSSI

So it's a wormhole?

KRON

No, it has none of the properties of a wormhole. In fact, it doesn't have the properties of much of anything. It's just... a hole.

GRIL

What the *tuul* is it doing here?

MARSSI

Who the *tuul* cares? Kron, use manoeuvring thrusters. I want the

ship positioned so that the tank openings are facing that hole.

5 **EXT. SPACE - MALON VESSEL**

Slowly and painfully, the tanker begins to manoeuvre its enormous bulk. With the Hirogen ship in the distance, we see the "hole" - and it is just that.

There are no fancy effects, just a clearly defined and very clean-edged HOLE IN SPACE, showing a different star field through it. It is just hanging there in mid-space, large enough for a starship to go through.

6 **INT. MALON VESSEL - BRIDGE**

GRIL

Preparing to eject the tanks.

MARSSI

No! We're just ejecting the contents into the hole.

GRIL

But - but Controller, that'll expose the waste! The radiation -

MARSSI

We'll only be exposed for a short time, not enough to do any lasting damage. I'm not losing the tanks down that hole as well. Unless you want to replace them out of your earnings?

GRIL

N-no. Ejecting waste now.

7 **EXT. SPACE - MALON VESSEL**

The tanks open, and massive amounts of TOXIC GREEN MATTER tumble out and towards the hole.

As it does, the Hirogen ship SWOOPS down and right into the path of the waste. A big chunk of matter hits it square on, and the Hirogen ship EXPLODES in a big mess.

8 INT. MALON VESSEL - BRIDGE

The crew watches this on the screen, amazed. Gradually they realise they are saved, and they WHOOP with joy and relief.

KRON

Looks like you beat the odds again, Controller.

MARSSI

Did you ever doubt it?

KRON

(laughing)

Yes, every second. But like all the other times, I'm glad you proved me wrong.

GRIL

Controller, I must protest this! We don't know what's on the other side of that hole! What if -

MARSSI

Gril, what is the mission statement of this vessel?

GRIL

To - to dispose of antimatter waste in a way that is not harmful to the Malon community as a whole.

MARSSI

Exactly. And we've done that, and also kept this star system from being contaminated. We've saved millions of lives today, most notably our own. We eliminated one of the scourges of this sector, and made an astonishing discovery that will spell even more profit down the road. So what are you protesting, precisely, Gril?

GRIL

(confused)
Well, when you put it that way...
I guess nothing, Controller.

Gril turns back to his console, and Kron chuckles.

KRON
Were we ever that young?

MARSSI
I was. You were already a cranky
old man when you were born.

Relieved and elated at their narrow escape, they relax.

9 EXT. SPACE - MALON VESSEL

As more and more of the toxic green waste tumbles through
the hole to who knows where...

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

10 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR (UPPER CORRIDOR)

The station is at YELLOW ALERT - we are already mid-crisis here. KIRA and VAUGHN stride purposefully together down the holosuite corridor, where NOG is working on a panel.

KIRA

Report.

NOG

It's ready, sir. The connection to Starfleet Headquarters is functional. We just need them to activate it on their end.

KIRA

Any problems?

NOG

None, Colonel. My uncle is off-station, after all.

With a nod of thanks, Kira and Vaughn ENTER the holosuite, leaving Nog in the corridor.

11 INT. DS9 - HOLOSUITE (CONTINUOUS)

The doors close on the bar, inactive holosuite grid.

NOG (comm)

Signal coming in from Starfleet now, Colonel.

Suddenly more than a dozen people materialise into the room. Everyone here is in a red Command uniform, although ADMIRAL ROSS is the only flag officer.

Also of note is that Kira is the only non-Starfleet officer here. But she has nothing to prove - she is secure in her authority and her right to be here. Ross looks exhausted.

ROSS

Good afternoon, everyone. It's nice to know our relay systems are fine-tuned enough to allow holo-conferences like this to occur. As for why we're doing this, we have a new problem. A few days ago, the Federation Council was approached by a group who identified themselves... as Iconians.

Some kerfuffle as they react with awe, surprise, confusion.

ROSS

We're sending data-packets to you all that detail everything we know about the Iconians, mostly from encounters involving *Enterprise* and *Defiant* over the last decade. But in a nutshell, the Iconians were a hugely advanced race who existed in this quadrant some two-hundred millennia ago. They're most famous for their gateways, which provided instant transport between two points, whether they were metres or light-years apart.

(beat)

The Iconians have offered us this gateway technology - for a price. Similar offers have been made to governments across the quadrant, some of whom could obviously use it in devastating ways. And more urgently, the Iconians have chosen to demonstrate the technology by activating the entire network. It is causing chaos all over known space. People showing up where they're not supposed to be, power systems drained, hostiles in each others' territory. Unfortunately, the Iconians have not seen fit to either tell us how to control the gateways or give us a map. So it's up to us to maintain the peace.

He turns to Cpt SOLOK, the VULCAN captain of the *T'Kumbra* from 7x04 "Take Me Out to the Holosuite."

ROSS

Captain Solok, I want your crew to monitor all reports of gateways. If the Iconians won't give us a map, we'll make one ourselves.

(to Vaughn and Kira)

Colonel, Commander, based on the preliminary reports, we've found something interesting out your way. There is no gateway activity within ten light-years of Bajor.

VAUGHN

(intrigued)

The wormhole?

ROSS

We think so, yes.

KIRA

It could be the Prophets protecting this region.

ROSS

(indulging her)

That's certainly a possibility, but I'd like to find out for certain. Is it something natural? What properties are being displayed, and can they be harnessed beyond your sector?

VAUGHN

You're hoping to turn it into a practical counter-measure.

ROSS

Exactly.

KIRA

Admiral, we have another problem. We've had reports that the colony at Europa Nova is suffering a

planet-wide catastrophe, possibly as a result of this gateway thing. Some kind of antimatter waste is appearing in orbit, seemingly out of nowhere. We're the nearest starbase. We need to evacuate the settlement immediately, and we're going to need the *Defiant* and as many ships as possible to assist.

ROSS

Yes, we're aware of the situation on Europa Nova. In fact there's a Federation Councillor there right now. I've assigned *Gryphon* and *Intrepid* to be at your disposal.

To Cpt MELLO of the *Gryphon* (human, short, female, sturdy) and Cpt EMICK of the *Intrepid* (human, taller, male, older).

ROSS

Captains, your ETA's?

MELLO

Two and a half hours, Admiral.

EMICK

The *Intrepid* can rendezvous with the *Defiant* in two hours.

ROSS

Good. I only ask that you hold back one runabout to investigate the wormhole, Colonel.

KIRA

Of course, Admiral. The *Sungari* can handle it.

Kira nods to Vaughn, who steps to the back of the room, out of the way of the meeting, and taps his badge. Meanwhile, the meeting continues in the background as Ross details more specific mission assignments to the other Captains.

VAUGHN

Vaughn to Dax.

DAX (comm)

Go ahead.

VAUGHN

Lieutenant, add *Intrepid* and the *Gryphon* to our list and take the *Sungari* off it. Have the runabout prepped for Lieutenant Nog and Ensign ch'Thane to take it out to the wormhole. And assemble the senior staff in Ops. The colonel and I will meet you there shortly.

DAX (comm)

Yes, sir. Umm... Starfleet's only sending two ships? I take it more is going on than just Europa Nova?

VAUGHN

Quite a bit more, yes.

DAX (comm)

Well, I suppose it's been almost an hour since the galaxy was last in danger of destruction. By the way, the Bajoran Militia has detached the Lamnak fleet to us for the crisis. That's their ten biggest ships, under the command of Colonel Lenaris Holem. I've also signed up the *East Winds*.

VAUGHN

Who's that?

DAX (comm)

It's a ship from Risa. Cassandra, the captain, had some kind of deal going with Quark, but since he's not here, she's at loose ends.

VAUGHN

And she's agreed to help?

DAX (comm)

Yup. She's... ah... an old friend
of Curzon's.

VAUGHN
(don't tell me)
Very well. Carry on, Lieutenant.

DAX (comm)
Dax out.

Vaughn turns back to the meeting, just as Ross is tying up.

ROSS
These will be trying days ahead of
us all. I want to keep in constant
contact, so I'll be reachable any
time you need me. Good luck.

A few at a time, the figures all dematerialise until Kira
and Vaughn are left alone. Kira sags with disappointment.

KIRA
Two ships. It's a good thing we
heard the whole meeting, or I'd
accuse Starfleet of short-changing
us again. Now I'm not sure they
can even spare us that much.

12 INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE

Ops is busy with Starfleet and Bajoran personnel running
about. Kira, Vaughn, Nog, DAX, ch'THANE, BOWERS and BASHIR
are all gathered around the central table, with TARAN'ATAR
still as a statue in his usual spot on the upper level.

KIRA
So that leaves us twenty ships?

DAX
A lot of them are cargo ships,
plenty of space. I also talked
with Minister Lipin and Vedek Eran
about arranging emergency housing
for the majority of the refugees
on Bajor, and Ro's people are
setting up accommodations here.

KIRA

Good work. Let's hope it's enough ships to get three million people off Europa Nova within two days.

VAUGHN

Doctor, what's our medical status?

BASHIR

I've had the lab replicating arithrazine non-stop since we received the distress call. The *Defiant's* dispensary is already full, and I'll have enough for the *Intrepid* by the time they arrive.

SHAR

Colonel, I'm not familiar with Europa Nova. They're not a Federation world?

KIRA

No, but it's a human colony. They settled about a hundred years ago.

VAUGHN

I'm surprised you're not familiar, Ensign. Andor has several trade agreements with Europa Nova.

SHAR

I... haven't been home in some time, Commander.

VAUGHN

Well, Ensign, your and Lieutenant Nog's task is to investigate the lack of gateways around Bajor, not to worry about the evacuation.

NOG

(holds up rod)

Uh, Colonel? I have something that might help. A shield modulator I... "acquired" from the Sheliak.

BASHIR

(amazed)

Aren't the Sheliak among the most xenophobic species in the galaxy?

DAX

Xenophobic's the wrong word. More like xeno-disdainful.

BOWERS

How did you manage to make a deal with them, then?

NOG

(faux shocked)

A good Ferengi never reveals his tricks.

KIRA

(back on topic)

What does it do?

NOG

It strengthens shields against the effects of radiation.

DAX

That's handy.

NOG

It also weakens those shields' effectiveness against weapons.

BASHIR

That's less handy.

KIRA

Hopefully nobody's going to shoot at us on this mission, Doctor. Good work, Nog. Get to work on fitting it to all the Starfleet ships, then report to the *Sungari*.

NOG

Yes, sir.

(beat)

Colonel...? If we're committing all these ships, does that mean we've given up searching for Jake?

All faces drop - in the chaos they had forgotten him, and they are appalled by that. Kira tries to be reassuring.

KIRA

We're not giving up anything, Nog. But right now, we have to give priority to the three million people on Europa Nova.

(to Dax)

Lieutenant, you'll be in charge of the station while we're gone. Keep coordinating with Lipin and Eran.

(to Vaughn)

Commander, you'll take *Defiant*. I'll take Ling and the *Euphrates*. Bowers, you'll go in the *Rio Grande* with Roness. That's it.

Dismissed, everyone heads to their stations.

Vaughn follows Kira up to her office - they are intercepted on their way by Taran'atar.

TARAN'ATAR

Colonel, I request permission to join the mission.

KIRA

Any particular reason?

TARAN'ATAR

I may be of some use.

KIRA

How?

TARAN'ATAR

I don't know. Nor did I know how I might be of use on Doctor Bashir's mission to Sindorin, but you said that the mission would have failed

without me. For that matter, I've yet to comprehend how I may be of use on this station at all, but Odo said that I would be. It seems reasonable that I continue seeking ways to make myself useful. Your mission to Europa Nova seems like such an opportunity.

In other words, he's bored. Kira glances to Vaughn to see what he thinks - he subtly shrugs. Up to you.

KIRA

Fine, you'll come with me on the *Euphrates*. Commander, let Ensign Ling know she's staying on the station.

VAUGHN

Yes, sir.

Satisfied, Taran'atar straightens himself.

TARAN'ATAR

With your permission then, Colonel, I will report to runabout pad A and prepare the *Euphrates* for our journey.

He heads off, as Kira and Vaughn enter her office.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

13 EXT. SPACE - ESTABLISHING

A VULCAN starship holds position in space - somewhat like the ones from "Enterprise" but more beefed up. It actually belongs to the ORION SYNDICATE.

TAMRA (v.o.)
This is so exciting!

14 INT. ORION SHIP - CORRIDOR

TAMRA, a blonde, bubbly, sexy and utterly ditzy DABO GIRL, is excitedly bouncing down the corridor with QUARK. He is trying to maintain a smooth confidence, but he can't help but be intimidated by the two enormous, well-built ORION males who are escorting the pair. They only have eyes for Tamra's generous cleavage - the whole reason she's here.

QUARK
How'd we get here so fast, anyway?

ORION GUARD
You'll find out soon, Ferengi.

TAMRA
I can't wait to find out. This is so unbelievably amazing!

15 INT. ORION SHIP - MALIC'S ROOM

A large room lined with gaudy artwork - paintings, jewels in display cases, sculptures, holograms. In the centre is a large conference table, and at the end of it sits MALIC, a small but fancy-dressed Orion pirate, holding an elaborate data PADD. Quark ENTERS with Tamra and the guards.

MALIC
Ah, Quark. Glad to see you've arrived in one piece. We're almost ready to begin. I see you've brought company.

QUARK

This is Tamra, one of my finest dabo girls.

MALIC

You expect to be playing dabo?

QUARK

No, but you indicated this could be a protracted negotiation. If I'm away from home for a long time, I like... companionship.

He strokes his own lobe lewdly. The Orion guards chuckle. Tamra is oblivious, gawking at the lavish artwork.

QUARK

Of course, it would help if I knew what it is I'm negotiating. It's hard to prepare for business when I don't know what the business is.

Quark sits down opposite Malic - an equal position, thus a challenge to Malic. In return, Malic goes back to his padd and taps away, making Quark wait. Quark is not ruffled - he can handle this guy. Eventually, Malic looks back up.

MALIC

Have you ever heard of the Iconians, Quark?

QUARK

Sure. Ancient species, conquered most of the quadrant thousands of years ago. I've auctioned some of their relics over the years. They're extinct though.

MALIC

Not so extinct, it seems. The Iconians have returned, Quark. And they want to deal. And they've activated all their gateways.

QUARK

That's how we got here so fast.

MALIC

There are two types - the older ones that are located in planetary orbits, and the later, smaller ones on the surface. They're much more stable than your wormhole - you get to your destination faster and with much less risk.

QUARK

Where do I come in?

MALIC

The Iconians are auctioning the rights to the highest bidder.

QUARK

What are the terms?

Malic tosses a simpler padd to Quark - he inspects it.

MALIC

The first is the initial offer, followed by the secondary offer -

QUARK

And the third is the last-resort add-ons when the bidding gets fierce, I know. This isn't my first negotiation, Malic. If it was, you wouldn't have asked for me. And this list needs work.

MALIC

(menacing)

Have a care, Ferengi. Don't presume to overstep yourself.

QUARK

Just trying to do my job, Malic. To do that, I need to negotiate from the best possible position.

(beat)

Look, I freely admit that I owe you for not exposing my little

scheme back on the station. But I could just as easily turn around and walk out of here and take my chances on Deep Space Nine.

(glance at
the guards)

Metaphorically speaking. So are you going to take advantage of my skills - the whole reason you brought me here - or are you going to guarantee you lose the gateways before I even walk into the room?

MALIC

Fine. What changes would you like to make?

One of the Orion guards re-enters the room with a report.

ORION

The Iconians have arrived with their mediator. I've installed them in the conference room.

MALIC

Good. Do well for us, Quark. If there's one thing the Syndicate disapproves of... it's failure.

The implication is clear - get us the gateways, or you're dead. Quark stands, and the menacing guards lead him back out into the corridor, Tamra trailing blankly behind.

16 INT. ORION SHIP - MEETING ROOM

A simpler and more tasteful room. The conference table is smaller too, and at the other end of it stand two ICONIANS. They are not especially impressive as aliens go - yellow skin, uninteresting faces, shapeless green satin tunics.

But sat between them, at the opposite end of the table from Quark as he ENTERS with Tamra and the guards, is a face he knows very well, grinning malevolently.

It is Quark's cousin and recurring nemesis, GAILA. Quark's game face drops to the floor - oh crap.

QUARK

Gaila.

GAILA

Pleasure to see you, cousin.

17 **EXT. SPACE - DENORIOS BELT**

The runabout *Sungari* holds position in space, with the wispy colours of the DENORIOS BELT, the charged plasma field in the Bajoran system that hides the wormhole, drifting in the background.

18 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Nog and Shar sit in the front seats, working at sensors.

SHAR

Sensors are calibrated, beginning sweep. So far, I'm not detecting anything that would explain the lack of gateways in this sector.

NOG

So it's probably something natural to the wormhole?

SHAR

We don't even know for sure that the wormhole is connected. It's a vague hypothesis based on circumstantial evidence.

(returning to
conversation)

So women are allowed to wear clothes now?

NOG

Allowed, yes. Not all of them do though, particularly once you get out of the capital. If nothing else, it's cut down on illnesses, which has the doctors in a tizzy.

SHAR

I don't understand.

NOG

Ferenginar is a very damp climate. Women got all kinds of bronchial infections whenever they went out. Now they're wearing clothes, they don't get sick as often, so the doctors do less business.

SHAR

I would never have considered the economic implications of women wearing clothes on the medical profession.

NOG

Father has to. He's had to offer all kinds of concessions to the medical association. He was entrusted by former Grand Nagus Zek with making major reforms in Ferengi business practices.

SHAR

My zhavey was elected as Andorian Councillor with a mandate to improve our trading positions with non-Federation worlds. She was elected eight years ago, and it hasn't happened yet. May your father have better luck.

An amused smile from Nog.

19 EXT. SPACE - ORION SHIP

The Vulcan/Orion ship, now joined by the ICONIANS' ship. It is shaped like a round-edged hourglass on its side, grubby yellow, and as uninteresting as its inhabitants.

20 INT. ORION SHIP - MALIC'S ROOM

The first negotiation is over, and Quark is being debriefed by a suspicious and unhappy Malic, as Tamra hovers around aimlessly, checking her nails.

QUARK

Yes, Gaila's my cousin. We've known each other since we were kids. We've even done a few deals together in the past.

MALIC

Is it going to be a problem?

QUARK

I don't see why. It's possible it may slow the negotiations down a bit. After all, Gaila and I know each other's tricks. That just means we'll have to come up with new tricks. In fact -

MALIC

Quark, the more you try to assure me there's no problem, the more I think there will be. So kindly shut up, and take a look at this.

He hands Quark one of the lesser padds (the fancy one never leaves his possession). It is an intercepted Starfleet report, with the headline of USS T'KUMBRA and a headshot of Captain Solok. Quark reads down the text, and smiles.

MALIC

I think it's worth mentioning at the next session, don't you?

21 INT. ORION SHIP - MEETING ROOM

A performing Quark SLAMS the padd dramatically on the table before a confused but defiant and gaily improvising Gaila.

QUARK

You told us the gateways were in every sector of the galaxy.

GAILA

They are.

QUARK

Then why isn't there a single gateway within ten light-years of Bajor?

Gaila doesn't miss a beat, but the Iconians exchange a subtle look, as if they are as surprised by this as anyone.

GAILA

What need is there for one? You have the wormhole.

QUARK

Which was discovered less than a decade ago. Seems to me that this should have been mentioned at some point. Makes me wonder what else you've managed to leave out.

GAILA

We've left nothing out, Quark. And anyway, it should be pointed out the Klingons, the Romulans and the Breen don't much care if there are any gateways around Bajor.

QUARK

You forget, cousin, that I'm not here on my own behalf. I'm here as a representative of the Orion Syndicate, and they don't care about Bajor either. But they do care about being lied to in a good-faith negotiation.

GAILA

(oh please)

Quark, you're always working on your own behalf, one way or another.

Quark smiles to hide his nervousness - Gaila's right.

22 EXT. SPACE - DENORIOS BELT

Re-establishing the runabout...

23 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Nog gets a drink from the replicator and brings it back to the front. Shar gets a sudden moment of inspiration.

SHAR

The Denorios Belt. It's full of tachyon eddies, isn't it?

NOG

Yeah, so?

SHAR

The wormhole is a local phenomenon - at its worst, it has no impact on the space around it beyond the Denorios Belt. It couldn't affect a ten light-year radius of space.

NOG

(catching on)

But Captain Sisko proved that the tachyon eddies go all the way to Cardassia...

SHAR

And Cardassia is within ten light years of Bajor. Nog, I think we have a working theory.

NOG

Now we just need to test it.

Now they are both excited - they are on the right path. Shar turns to his console to start the tests.

NOG (cont)

It makes sense - the belt has always been a navigational hazard. That's why it took so long for anyone to discover the wormhole in the first place. Just don't tell Colonel Kira I said that.

SHAR

Why not?

NOG

As far as the Bajorans are all concerned, the Celestial Temple went undiscovered for so long because the Prophets were waiting for the Emissary.

SHAR

That's actually a perfectly valid interpretation of the facts. You could even argue the Prophets made the Denorios Belt such a hazard precisely to keep it hidden until the right time.

NOG

Do you believe that?

SHAR

Well, I wasn't raised in that religious tradition, so no. But it's an interesting hypothesis.

NOG

So I'm not going to convince you that you need to live a profitable life so that you'll go to the Divine Treasury when you die?

SHAR

(quite serious)

Probably not, no. The Andorian afterlife is more complicated than that, I'm afraid.

(checking panels)

I think I have something... Based on these readings, a compressed tachyon burst should disrupt the gateways, if combined with certain noble gases. All those gases are present in the Denorios Belt. We just need a way to harness them and combine it with the burst.

NOG

Oh, that's easy. Rig the Bussard collectors on the *Defiant* for those gases, modify an intermix chamber to infuse the burst with them, then run it through the deflector array.

SHAR
(blankly)
If you say so.

NOG
One question though - you said "disrupt". Disrupt how?

SHAR
Unknown. We still have no idea how the gateways actually work.

NOG
That's Kira and Vaughn's problem, not ours. Setting course for DS9.

As he hits the buttons, ALARMS go off all around the ship.

NOG
What is it this time?
(checks screens)
Oh no...

24 EXT. SPACE - THE DENORIOS BELT

The *Sungari* is just starting to turn, but as it does, a SHIP just like the Iconians' suddenly comes out of warp right on top of them and immediately starts FIRING on the small, vulnerable runabout.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

25 EXT. SPACE - DENORIOS BELT

The Iconian ship is FIRING on the *Sungari*, which is trying to manoeuvre out of the way. The runabout is HIT.

26 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Shuddering and RED ALERT alarms as the ship takes the hit. Nog and Shar struggle to get the shields up and fire back.

NOG
Damage report!

SHAR
Damage to starboard nacelle. Not
critical, but we can't go to warp.

NOG
Returning fire.

Out of the front window, we see the runabout's phasers HIT the attacking Iconian ship.

SHAR
Minor damage to their shields.
There's no match in the ship
database. Their weapons are some
kind of directed ladrion pulse.

NOG
Whatever that is.

The runabout takes another HIT and it swerves about.

SHAR
Shields sixty percent. Structural
integrity field weakened.

NOG
Send out a distress call.

27 EXT. SPACE - EUROPA NOVA

The USS *Gryphon* (Akira-class) and various freighters and cargo vessels are already in orbit of a small blue world.

Nearby, the *Defiant*, the *Intrepid* (Intrepid-class), two runabouts and a fleet of Bajoran ships come out of warp. Amorphous green material hangs in orbit over the planet.

28 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Kira in command, Taran'atar at her side. He checks panels.

TARAN'ATAR

I am reading an Akira-class
Starfleet ship already in orbit.
It registers as the USS *Gryphon*.
There is also an increasing amount
of theta radiation coming from the
antimatter waste field dead ahead.

KIRA

Euphrates to *Gryphon*.

Captain Mello appears on the small screen at her side.

MELLO (screen)

Glad to see you, Colonel. I've
been in touch with the Europani
authorities. They're implementing
an evac plan - wicked efficient
from what I've seen so far. They
already got most of their children
off-world using their own civilian
and military transports. We'll
only have to handle the adults.

KIRA

Good - that cuts our load by a
third.

MELLO (screen)

(looking past Kira)
Colonel, is that...

KIRA

A Jem'Hadar, yes. He's a cultural observer, here on my authority.

MELLO (screen)

If you say so. President Silverio said she wanted to talk to you as soon as you were in orbit.

KIRA

Thank you, Captain. I'll be in touch shortly. Kira out.

Kira taps more keys. Mello disappears, and a new connection is made. President SILVERIO appears - old, greying and grandmotherly. It has clearly been a bad day for her.

SILVERIO (screen)

You're Colonel Nerys?

KIRA

Colonel Kira, actually. Bajoran tradition places the family name first.

SILVERIO (screen)

I'm sorry, Colonel. I'm afraid things are a bit hectic right now.

KIRA

Understandable, ma'am.

SILVERIO (screen)

Blagh - enough of this "ma'am." Call me Grazia. You've seen the evacuation plan?

KIRA

We're receiving it from *Gryphon* right now. We also hope to figure out how to cut off the radiation.

SILVERIO (screen)

That'd be good. This is our home, and we don't abandon it easily. One other thing, Colonel - I'd like to get Councillor zh'Thane

out of here before the radiation gets much worse. She's our guest, and it's bad form to give your guests radiation poisoning.

KIRA

Understood. We'll beam her to the *Defiant* as soon as possible.
Euphrates out.

Silverio signs off. Kira takes a deep breath, and prepares to start again. She is in charge of a BIG operation here.

KIRA

Taran'atar, open a channel to all the ships in the convoy.

TARAN'ATAR

(presses buttons)
Channel open.

KIRA

This is Kira. Alright people, we've got five major cities and a lot of rural areas to cover.

(beat)

As the fleet's command vessel, I want *Defiant* to handle the capital city, L'Aquila. *Gryphon* will take Spilimbergo, *Xhosa* handles Chieti, *Intrepid* takes Padilla, and *East Winds* will take Libre Pista. *Rio Grande* and *Halloran* will take the smaller towns on the northern continent, and *Euphrates* and *Ng* will take the southern continent.

(deep breath)

Colonel Lenaris?

LENARIS (comm)

Yes?

KIRA

Divide the remaining land into nine areas and dispatch nine of

your ships to those areas. Your last ship can scan the islands.

LENARIS (comm)

Will do.

KIRA

You have your assignments. Let's get to work. Kira out.

Closing the link with a sigh, she starts the ship moving.

KIRA

Setting course for the southern continent.

TARAN'ATAR

Shields raised for atmospheric entry. There is no indication that the Ferengi's modifications will have any deleterious effect. Colonel, may I ask a question?

KIRA

Of course.

TARAN'ATAR

You and President Silverio implied that you intend to restore Europa Nova. There is no known way to dispose of theta radiation on this scale. The most efficient course of action would be to relocate its inhabitants to another planet.

KIRA

(shocked)

This is their home.

TARAN'ATAR

I don't understand. It's simply a planet. To try to restore it is a waste of resources.

KIRA

A people can be defined by where they come from. Who the Bajorans are is shaped by our world. It's part of what ties us the Prophets.

TARAN'ATAR

You believe caring for your home brings you closer to your gods?

KIRA

I suppose that's one way of looking at it.

TARAN'ATAR

Yet your gods cast you out.

Instinctively, her hand goes to her bare ear. A very touchy subject for her, but she knows he doesn't mean any insult.

KIRA

(quietly but firmly)

Not my gods. Just some people who claim to represent them.

Taran'atar takes that on board and considers it.

TARAN'ATAR

My gods cast me out.

Surprised and saddened, Kira has no answer for that.

29 EXT. ORBIT OF EUROPA NOVA

Elsewhere in orbit, the *Defiant* hangs over the planet.

30 INT. DEFIANT - TRANSPORTER ROOM

Vaughn stands at attention before an empty transporter stage, with Chief CHAO (female human) behind the console and Ens GORDIMER (security, male human) standing by. The platform fills with as many people as can fit.

Most are human - the politicians, well dressed but hassled and indignant. Vaughn disapproves that the politicians are the first to escape.

But among them is a tall, elegant and immaculately dressed Andorian female, CHARIVRETHA zh'THANE, Shar's mother (seen on screen in 8x04 "Cold Fusion").

VAUGHN

Greetings, and welcome aboard the Federation Starship *Defiant*. I am Commander Elias Vaughn, in charge of this vessel. If you will please follow Ensign Gordimer, he'll escort you to the mess hall. As soon as we're at capacity, you'll be taken to Deep Space Nine.

As they file off the platform and follow Gordimer out into the corridor, Charivretha smiles and approaches Vaughn.

CHARIVRETHA

Elias! Is that really you?

VAUGHN

(warmly)

Councillor zh'Thane.

CHARIVRETHA

Please, Elias, I'm in no mood for formality.

VAUGHN

Chief Chao, please prepare to beam the next wave up. Energise as soon as Ensign Gordimer returns.

CHAO

Aye sir.

Vaughn offers Charivretha his arm, and she gladly takes it. The old friends walk companionably out into the corridor.

31 INT. DEFIANT - CORRIDOR (CONTINUOUS)

CHARIVRETHA

Where are you taking me?

VAUGHN

The bridge.

CHARIVRETHA

Really?

VAUGHN

You're a Federation dignitary. It seems only appropriate.

CHARIVRETHA

The ironic thing is, I was going to make a side-trip to DS-Nine in any case. I wanted to see my *chei*.

VAUGHN

You'll be very proud. Ensign ch'Thane is a fine officer.

CHARIVRETHA

(tensing)

Yes, I'm certain he is. However, there are other...

VAUGHN

(gently)

Vretha, if there's a problem, you can tell me.

CHARIVRETHA

(with finality)

We'll talk later, Elias.

Vaughn recognises the face of a parent who has a troubled relationship with their child. They reach the bridge.

32 **INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE**

PRYNN TENMEI is in the centre chair. As Vaughn and zh'Thane enter, she vacates and returns to the helm, all without looking at Vaughn. The usual extras at the other positions.

TENMEI

Sir, we've detected something of interest on the surface.

She hits some keys, and an IMAGE appears on the main view screen. It shows a coastal area, rocky and windy. On an outcropping, there's a clear person-sized gateway.

TENMEI

This is near one of the small towns on the northern continent, a place called Costa Rocosa.

VAUGHN

Good work, Ensign. Contact the local authorities, tell them I'll be beaming down. And alert Colonel Kira to what you've found. You're in command until I return.

TENMEI

Yes sir.

VAUGHN

Councillor, I think it would be best if you waited in the mess hall with the others.

With a nod of understanding, she follows him out.

33 **EXT. COSTA ROCOSA**

Vaughn stands on the same rocky outcropping, examining the gateway with his tricorder, as waves crash nearby and the wind whips his hair. A large crowd of people stand some distance back, looking on with worried expressions but blocked by Starfleet security. Through the gateway, he can see a harsh, flat world filled with acres of red sand.

VAUGHN

I have good news and bad news, Colonel. The good news is that this is indeed a working gateway, and it appears to be programmed for a single destination.

KIRA (comm)

What's the bad news?

VAUGHN

As far as I can tell, the location in question is Torona Four - the homeworld of the Jarada.

KIRA (comm)
And they are...?

VAUGHN
A fussy, xenophobic people who insist on very specific protocols. They've always steadfastly refused to allow any aliens on their soil.

KIRA (comm)
Commander, we have to use that gateway. I just got a report from the *Gryphon* that the transporters will be useless in eight hours, which is sooner than we thought.

VAUGHN
I don't think we can risk sending people through the gateway without contacting the authorities first.

KIRA (comm)
Then make it fast, Commander. Do whatever you have to, to convince them to take the refugees.

VAUGHN
Aye sir. Vaughn out.

He taps at his tricorder, hunting for information about the Jarada. This will be a delicate bit of negotiating, and he has to get it right. Preparing with a deep breath, he taps his combadge, and speaks loudly and clearly.

VAUGHN
Attention Jaradan authorities.
This is Commander Elias Vaughn of Starfleet, representing the United Federation of Planets. Commanding officer of the USS *Defiant*.
(native greeting)

Ârd klaxon lís blajh-blon ârg níc
calníc ârd trasulâ rass tass
trasulâ.

Vaughn pauses to clear his throat. That was hard work.

VAUGHN

As you may be aware, there is an interspatial gateway linking your world with another, a human colony called Europa Nova. It is through this gateway that I am contacting you now. Europa Nova is suffering an ecological crisis and needs to be evacuated. We respectfully request permission to bring people through the gateway to your world.

A long, worrying pause. Will they even bother to answer? Eventually they do - a haughty, insectile voice that seems to condescend even over the comm line.

JARADA (comm)

You honour us with the proper greeting, Commander *Defiant*. For that reason, we will grant you the consideration of a proper warning. Do not set foot on our world, or you will be killed.

Off Vaughn's worried expression...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

34 EXT. COSTA ROCOSA

Where we were with Vaughn and the gateway on the coastline.

JARADA (comm)

You have been given your warning,
Commander *Defiant*.

VAUGHN

I ask that you rescind it. If you
agree to help us, we will share
intelligence about the gateways.
We have devoted considerable
resources to studying them.

Another pause, as they consider his offer.

JARADA (comm)

You will share this intelligence
before we allow any on our soil.

VAUGHN

We will share some of it. The rest
will come after the first refuges
have passed through unmolested.

And another pause. These people will not be rushed.

JARADA (comm)

Very well, Commander *Defiant*. A
forcefield has been erected. It
will accommodate five-hundred-
thousand members of your species.
You will send that precise number
through and no more. Any who step
outside the boundaries will die.

VAUGHN

(relieved)

Understood. My thanks to your
government. *Trasulâ riss blajh-*
blon ârd.

JARADA (comm)
Again, you honour us with an
appropriate salutation, Commander
Defiant. Continue to do us honour,
and we will not do you harm.

The Jarada have signed off. Vaughn sighs with relief.

VAUGHN
(to self)
Bill Ross is gonna have a seizure.

35 EXT. SPACE - THE DENORIOS BELT

The *Sungari* is still under attack by the Iconian ship. The runabout is making use of its greater manoeuvrability. The *Sungari* zigzags around the Iconian ship, firing at several points on their shields. The Iconian ship fires back.

36 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Nog's console EXPLODES, throwing him back, and then goes blank. Shar's is still working, barely. Alarms all over.

SHAR
Shields down! Impulse engines and
weapons offline, transporters
down. SIF at fourteen percent. One
bit of good news - their shields
are down. Your manoeuvre worked.

NOG
That might mean something if we
had any weapons. Ready thrusters.

SHAR
We can't evade their weapons with
thrusters!

NOG
It beats sitting still and waiting
for it! Transmit the specs for the
tachyon burst to the station in
case we don't make it.

SHAR
(hits buttons)
Done.

They look up, and see the Iconian ship bearing down on them through the front window. Nog closes his eyes, expecting to die. Shar's console beeps again. He checks it, then grins.

SHAR
Picking up another ship - it's the
Defiant!

Through the window, they see *Defiant* drop out of warp right on top of the Iconian ship. They almost cheer with relief.

VAUGHN (comm)
Unidentified ship. You have fired
on a Starfleet vessel. Surrender
or suffer the consequences.

37 EXT. SPACE - THE DENORIOS BELT

Obviously unimpressed, the alien ship fires on the *Defiant* and the *Sungari* at the same time.

38 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

More explosions, sparks, smoke.

SHAR
Out antimatter containment is
weakening! And *Defiant's* shields
are down to forty percent!

NOG
Frinx it, that's because of my
shield modulator. Eject the core.

SHAR
Ejection systems offline!

Of course they are. The whole ship goes dark.

SHAR (cont)
In fact, at this point I would say
that the entire ship is offline.

Through the window, they see the *Defiant* pummel the Iconian ship with its pulse phasers. Without shields, the weapons tear through the alien ship easily, and it EXPLODES. The light shines through onto Nog and Shar.

NOG

Nog to *Defiant*. Emergency beamout!

Nog and Shar both dissolve in a transporter beam...

39 **INT. DEFIANT - TRANSPORTER ROOM**

...And reappear on the transporter platform.

CHAO

Got them, sir.

VAUGHN (comm)

Are they injured?

NOG

We're fine, sir.

VAUGHN (comm)

Good. Report to the bridge.

With a nod of thanks to Chao, they head to the door.

40 **INT. DEFIANT - CORRIDOR**

Nog and Shar emerge to find the corridor filled with humans, tired and scared and all talking at once. Starfleet security are there too, with weapons just in case.

Nog grimaces and covers his ears at the noise. Shar also looks a bit green and sickly, itching at his antennae.

NOG

You okay?

SHAR

This many people, crowded together - it changes the atmosphere. It's usually more... sterile than this.

41 **INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE**

Nog and Shar enter the bridge. The screen shows the dead runabout, and a tractor beam from the *Defiant* pushing it away. They take their seats as Vaughn turns to them.

 VAUGHN
Did they identify themselves?

 NOG
No, sir. They attacked without any
kind of warning.

On the screen, the runabout EXPLODES. Another one gone.

 VAUGHN
Helm, set course back for DS-Nine.
We can examine the debris once
we've offloaded the refugees.

42 **EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE**

The *Defiant* settles into its place on the docking ring. All the other docking ports are busy with convoy ships.

43 **INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING AIRLOCK**

The refugees are being guided off the *Defiant* and onto the station by Starfleet and Bajoran security. Shar is helping.

 CHARIVRETHA (o.s.)
Thirishar, there you are.

He freezes, shocked to hear his mother's voice. He turns as she emerges with all the politicians and refugees. Shar is stiff, polite, deferent, but really not wanting to do this.

 SHAR
I wasn't expecting to see you
here, zhavey.

 CHARIVRETHA
I was on Europa Nova. I didn't
realise you were on board - I
thought you'd be on the bridge
when Elias took me there.

SHAR

I was on the *Sungari*. They beamed me over before it blew up.

CHARIVRETHA

Blew up?! Obviously I should have stayed on the bridge.

(beat)

We need to talk, Thirishar.

SHAR

I'm afraid I can't right now, *zhavey*. The crisis is not -

CHARIVRETHA

Of course not now, Thirishar. You have duties to perform, and I need to contact the Council. We'll talk when we both have time to do so.

(emphatically)

But we will talk. We have danced around this for far too long.

SHAR

Yes, *zhavey*.

CHARIVRETHA

You always say "Yes, *zhavey*" in that respectful tone, Thirishar, yet you never change. It is a stalling tactic I will no longer tolerate.

SHAR

I'm sorry, *zhavey*.

CHARIVRETHA

No, I don't think you are. But enough of this. We will speak later. Be whole, Thirishar.

She walks off, guided by the security personnel. Shar is almost shaking with buried anger at her. He would love to punch out a bulkhead here and now, but he is in public and has to control himself. It is not an easy job.

44 EXT. ORBIT OF EUROPA NOVA

The evacuation fleet hanging over the planet, focusing on the runabout *Euphrates*. *Gryphon* and *Defiant* have already gone. The atmosphere is thicker than ever with threatening green toxic waste matter and gasses.

45 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Kira and Taran'atar at the forward stations. Captain Emick of the *Intrepid* is on the screen at Kira's side.

KIRA

Take all transporters offline.
Implement plan B.

EMICK (screen)

We've found a landing site for the *Intrepid* just outside Padilla. I think we can take the city's remaining population on this run.

TARAN'ATAR

Colonel, I'm detecting a dense concentration of theta radiation in the upper atmosphere.

EMICK (screen)

(receiving report)

Confirmed. A solid mass of waste material has fallen out of orbit. On its present course, it'll land four kilometres due west of Spilimbergo.

Kira checks her plans - bad, bad news. She immediately starts the runabout moving towards the planet.

KIRA

The *Gryphon's* only got half the population out. Kira to Bashir.

BASHIR (comm)

(very tired)

Bashir here.

KIRA

Doctor, what would be the effects of a meteoric collision of a mass putting out -

(checks readings)

- a hundred thousand kilorads of theta radiation four kilometres from a population centre?

BASHIR (comm)

In a word, devastating. I could give you the numbers, but the population centre would be as good as dead.

KIRA

That's what I thought you'd say. How far away would the waste need to be to minimise the danger?

BASHIR (comm)

On another planet would be ideal.

KIRA

(exasperated)

Julian...

BASHIR (comm)

Sorry. I would estimate a minimum of a hundred kilometres.

TARAN'ATAR

(working panels)

I have reconfigured the tractor beam with additional power from the warp drive. I assume your intent is to divert the meteorite.

KIRA

That's the plan. Activate the beam on my mark.

BASHIR (comm)

Why not just destroy it?

EMICK (screen)
Doctor, if we could just destroy
the waste with phasers, we
wouldn't be in this mess in the
first place. Colonel, my crew has
found a lake about a hundred-
seventy-five kilometres north-west
of Spilimbergo. The only life-form
readings I'm getting are flora.

KIRA
(checking panels)
Got it. Thanks.

EMICK (screen)
Good luck, Colonel. I'll inform
President Silverio.

KIRA
Thank you, Captain. Kira out.

Emick's face disappears. Kira pilots the runabout down into
the cloud cover of the planet.

46 EXT. EUROPA NOVA ATMOSPHERE

The *Euphrates* breaks out from the cloud cover into the
atmosphere and angles off to the side.

In the distance, we can see a large chunk of noxious green
matter, three times the size of the runabout, trailing a
stream of green gas as it falls through the atmosphere.

47 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Kira is struggling to keep the runabout on course through
the high winds. She half-smiles - it's almost fun for her.

KIRA
Just like the good old days.
Piloting skimmers around Dakhur
Province in the dead of winter,
avoiding Cardassian patrols...
(beat)

Great, now I'm getting nostalgic
for the Occupation. What does that
say about my life?

TARAN'ATAR
Tractor beam ready.

Nodding acknowledgement, Kira keeps an eye on her console.
Through the window, they see the meteorite getting closer.
They have to be at precisely the right distance.

KIRA
Activate tractor beam.

Taran'atar presses buttons...

48 **EXT. EUROPA NOVA ATMOSPHERE**

A TRACTOR BEAM leaps out from the runabout and begins to
pull at the much larger meteorite. The runabout lurches.

49 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Kira watches a graphic on the screen, and holds on as the
ship strains to pull the meteorite into a new course.

TARAN'ATAR
We are exceeding tractor beam
tolerances.

KIRA
Just another six seconds...

The graphic finally shows that the meteorite is on course.

KIRA
Disengage tractor beam.

Taran'atar presses buttons again...

50 **EXT. EUROPA NOVA**

The tractor beam cuts out, and the meteorite continues to
fall to the planet's surface.

The lake - calm, peaceful, clear water surrounded by lush trees and beautiful countryside. Then we see the meteorite plummeting straight for it.

Impact - the meteorite HITS on one edge of the lake.

51 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

The shockwave through the atmosphere hits the runabout, rocking it roughly. After a few moments, it settles down.

TARAN'ATAR

Shields holding - no radiation has penetrated. We remain uncontaminated. But the tractor generator has burned out.

Kira smiles with relief - they did it. She hits keys and an image of the lake comes on the screen. Her face drops.

52 **EXT. EUROPA NOVA**

Through a bilious green mist we can just about see the wreckage of the lake area. The water has evaporated, the trees have either been vaporised or are rotting on the spot. The landscape has been totally ruined.

53 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Kira hangs her head. She did what she had to do, but she can't help but look at the ruins as her fault.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

54 EXT. EUROPA NOVA

A slightly different angle on the ruined lake area.

55 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Kira is upset over what she had to do. Taran'atar is carrying on as normal - none of this means much to him.

TARAN'ATAR

We are receiving a communication from L'Aquila, Colonel. It is President Silverio.

KIRA

On screen.

President Silverio's face appears, even more haggard than before. Kira tenses - she is expecting to be yelled at now.

SILVERIO (screen)

Colonel, Captain Emick tells me the town of Spilimbergo owes you a debt of gratitude.

KIRA

(surprised)

Uh...

SILVERIO (screen)

I understand you diverted the meteorite that was endangering the town, at considerable risk to yourself.

KIRA

Honestly, ma'am, the only risk was that I wouldn't be able to move it far enough. Starfleet makes its runabouts pretty sturdy.

SILVERIO (screen)

Blagh - don't give me false modesty. The point is, you took the risk, and saved lives. And you got us that gateway at Costa Rocosa. You have my gratitude.

KIRA

Thank you ma'am.

SILVERIO (screen)

Grazia, it's Grazia.

(looks off screen)

What? Oh, all right. I must go, Colonel, there is still much to do. But I just wanted to take the time to thank you personally. As long as you're in charge, I'm sure we'll get through this.

Silverio signs off. Kira leans back, relieved and glad to be appreciated. The console BEEPS again - she taps it and Commander Vaughn's face appears on the monitor.

KIRA

Go ahead, Commander.

58 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

Vaughn sits in the centre chair, talking to Kira on the main view screen. Apart from Tenmei at the helm, the bridge is crewed with all extras.

VAUGHN

Good news, Colonel. Lieutenant Nog and Ensign ch'Thane have devised a method of disrupting the gateways, possibly even shutting them down permanently. It's a modified tachyon burst than can easily be done from the *Defiant*.

KIRA (screen)

Glad to hear it, Commander. Would we have to do this on a case-by-case basis, or would it knock out the whole network?

VAUGHN

Ensign ch'Thane seems to think that activating it at one gateway will cripple the whole network at once. Of course, that might cause more problems than it solves.

She thinks about it. It's too big a decision for her alone.

KIRA (screen)

Run this by Admiral Ross, just in case there's something going on that we don't know about. Besides, we can't do anything until we've got everybody we can through your gateway at Costa Rocosa.

VAUGHN

Understood and agreed. I've got a message in to the admiral now.

INTERCUT W/ :

59 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

KIRA

In the meantime, I'm not going to sit here waiting for another meteorite to endanger the planet.

VAUGHN (screen)

I beg your pardon?

KIRA

So far we've been reacting. It's time we acted. The runabout won't be much help with the evacuation, but I can take it through the gateway to the other side and try to cut this off at the source. Somebody's using Europa Nova as their personal dumping ground, and it's going to stop now. Before something comes through that we can't stop from killing anyone.

VAUGHN (screen)
Very well, Colonel. Lieutenant Nog is modifying *Defiant's* deflector array right now. We'll be ready to emit the tachyon burst as soon as the evac is completed.

KIRA
Captain Emick will be in charge of the task force while I'm gone.

VAUGHN (screen)
Understood. Vaughn out.

Vaughn disappears, and Kira makes yet another connection.

KIRA
Kira to Emick.

EMICK (comm)
Emick here. I gather you intend to go through the gateway?

KIRA
Yep. You sent a probe into the gateway when we arrived, right?

EMICK (comm)
Certainly did. I'll have my second officer send you the probe's data. The star system on the other side is in the Delta Quadrant. Hang on a second, we might be able to get you some help. You familiar with the *USS Voyager*, Colonel?

KIRA
Yes of course - they left DS-Nine before they went missing.

EMICK (comm)
Right, and they wound up in the Delta Quadrant. I'm having my second officer look up the data from the Pathfinder Project...

(checks info)
Ah, damn. *Voyager's* last reported position is nowhere near.

KIRA
Let's hope she runs across another gateway that will get her home.

TARAN'ATAR
(get on with it)
Shields are holding against the radiation.

KIRA
Setting course for the gateway.

BOWERS (comm)
Rio Grande to Euphrates.

Oh for crying out loud - what now?

KIRA
Go ahead, Lieutenant.

BOWERS (comm)
I'm picking up a new ship entering the system. Colonel... it's Cardassian. Galor-class.

EMICK (comm)
What the hell's a Cardassian ship doing here?

KIRA
I haven't a clue, Captain, but I intend to find out. Don't worry, I know how to handle Cardassians.

EMICK (comm)
Of that I have no doubt, Colonel. Keep in touch. Emick out.

59 **EXT. ORBIT OF EUROPA NOVA**

The *Euphrates* pulls out of the atmosphere of the planet and heads out of orbit.

60 EXT. SPACE - ORION SHIP

Re-establishing - the yellow Iconian ship along side.

61 INT. ORION SHIP - CORRIDOR

Quark, Tamra and Malic are walking down the corridor. Malic is as unhappy as ever, Tamra is as clueless as ever, and Quark is still intimidated by the two enormous Orion guards who are escorting them. He is also trying to placate Malic.

MALIC

These negotiations have taken far too long. I was under the impression you were good at this.

QUARK

I am. So's Gaila. That's why it's taking so long.

MALIC

That had better be the only reason, Quark. I'm fast running out of patience.

QUARK

Don't worry. I'm confident this will be the final session and the gateways will be yours in an hour.

MALIC

You'd better hope that's the case, Quark. I still have the details of your little scheme on my padd -
(brandishes his
fancy padd)
- and all it takes -

QUARK

- is a simple command. I remember.

Quark nods, getting a little bored with Malic's tough act. And then they reach the conference room again.

62 INT. ORION SHIP - MEETING ROOM (CONTINUOUS)

The group enters the room, where Gaila is sat at the table, studying a padd, with the two Iconians standing silently behind him. Quark settles confidently into the seat opposite him. Tamra stands beside him, draping her arm round his shoulder. Malic and his guards hover ominously.

QUARK

So, shall we bring this negotiation to a close?

GAILA

Just a moment, Quark.

Gaila continues reading his padd, then settles back with his fingers steepled and a malevolent, satisfied smile.

GAILA

Tell me Quark, how long have you been working for Starfleet?

QUARK

(bark of laughter)

Working for Starfleet? Me? That's ridiculous!

GAILA

Really? Then why is your nephew, an officer in Starfleet, working to sabotage the gateways?

(to Malic)

Three years ago, Quark worked with Starfleet to bring down an arms dealer named Hagath. Two years ago, he bartered a prisoner exchange on Starfleet's behalf involving a Vorta named Keevan.

QUARK

Those are lies.

MALIC

Are they? I've been growing more and more suspicious of you, Quark. And I was unaware of all these connections to Starfleet.

Malic nods to his guards, who approach and aim a WEAPON at each side of Quark's head. Tamra SQUEAKS with fear, while Gaila is fairly beaming with happiness. Quark is growing increasingly panicked.

MALIC

Either you tell the truth, Quark,
or you'll die.

QUARK

Alright, alright. I'm working for
Starfleet security. They sent me
here to drag out the negotiations
as long as possible.

Malic shakes his head with disappointment and goes back to tapping at his fancy padd. Then he looks up at his guards.

MALIC

(dismissively)

Kill him anyway.

Quark panics even more.

63 EXT. SPACE - EUROPA NOVA SYSTEM

Further out in the system, a Cardassian GALOR-CLASS ship settles into orbit about one of the system's other planets. The *Euphrates* approaches the ship head on, holding position nearby, making its intentions clear.

64 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Taran'atar is checking readings as Kira battles between confusion, intrigue, and fear of yet another problem.

TARAN'ATAR

The ship is indeed Galor-class,
registers as the *Trager*. I am
reading substantial phaser
scarring and numerous hull
breaches, only two of which are
sealed by force fields. The
structural integrity field is at
sixty percent of capacity.

KIRA

Looks like it took a beating during the war. And Cardassia doesn't have the resources to do proper repairs, it would seem.

Steeling herself for what might happen, she hits the comm.

KIRA

Trager, this is Colonel Kira Nerys in command of a joint Federation-Bajoran task force. What business do you have in this system?

A Cardassian face appears on the screen, and from all appearances, it's the face of the man Kira hates more than anyone in the galaxy. The man who she blames for the deaths of millions of Bajorans, who she thought was dead himself.

It's GUL DUKAT.

DUKAT (screen)

Greetings, Colonel.

KIRA

(with a snarl)

Dukat.

(to Taran'atar)

Arm phasers, prepare to fire.

On Kira's furious, hateful snarl...

BLACK OUT:

THE END