

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

10x07 - "Instinct."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on characters from the series

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

and from the post-finale novels
by Pocket Books

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING

Focusing on a familiar freighter vessel - the *Xhosa* - just settling into place on the docking ring.

2 INT. DS9 - CARGO BAY

KIRA and BASHIR stand nervously, waiting for the external docking hatch to open. There are two or three non-coms also waiting in the background.

The hatch cycles open, and the O'BRIEN family emerges, tired and somewhat frazzled. KASIDY is just behind them. Once they have cleared the exit, the non-coms head up the ramp and into the ship to handle the luggage.

Bashir rushes forward and grabs O'Brien in a friendly hug. Kira does the same for KEIKO, and then bends down to MOLLY and YOSHI. Kasidy looks on wistfully, waiting her turn - she understands the urgency.

BASHIR

Miles, Keiko - I'm so glad you're safe. We've been hearing so many stories...

O'BRIEN

We're alright, Julian. Garak took care of us.

KIRA

It's good to have you home. All of you.

She reaches down and tussles Yoshi's hair affectionately.

KIRA (cont)

Kas - thank you as well.

KASIDY

Of course. Just lucky I was around to help.

O'BRIEN
Has there been any news?

KIRA
(evasive)
A little...

She flicks her eyes towards the children, as if to say, are you sure you want to talk about this in front of them? Keiko gets the message.

KEIKO
We can worry about that later, Miles. Right now, I think we all just need to sit down and have a cup of coffee and decompress a bit. Right?

O'BRIEN
(slightly chastised)
Absolutely, sweetheart.

The non-coms appear at the hatch, pushing anti-grav machines carrying the O'Briens' belongings. Kasidy moves out of the way to let them pass.

KASIDY
Shall we get out of the way? There's a lot of frightened, uprooted people on that ship who just want to find a comm panel and let their friends and families know they're okay.

KIRA
Of course, you're right, Kas. Vaughn and Ro are working on setting everyone up with temporary accommodations until they can figure out their next move.

3 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

The group exits a door and walks along the corridor.

KIRA

I'm afraid your old quarters have been reassigned.

KEIKO

Don't worry about it, Nerys. We'll take whatever.

KIRA

There'll have to be an official debriefing, and the Diplomatic Corps has arranged a conference in a couple of days to discuss Bajor's official position.

(tentative)

But I was thinking that if you two want some time to relax, I could look after Yoshi for a few days. I'd love the company.

KEIKO

That would be nice. Wouldn't it, Yoshi? Would you like to stay with Aunt Nerys?

YOSHI

Can I bring my Space Shuttle?

KIRA

(grin)

You certainly can.

KEIKO

Okay then. That's decided.

BASHIR

And Quark's got a holosuite reserved whenever you say the word, Miles.

(pat on
the back)

After the obligatory medical check, of course.

O'BRIEN

(chuckle)
Ugh. Let me at least take my boots
off first, Julian.

KIRA
Kas, are you staying on for a
while?

KASIDY
I think I'm free. Especially since
I guess my usual run to Cardassia
is on hold for now...

Which brings them all back to sad and worried thoughts
about the state of Cardassia...

4 INT. DS9 - TARAN'ATAR'S QUARTERS

TARAN'ATAR sits at his computer desk, with numerous files
open on the various screens. He is studying hard.

As we move closer, we see that his eyes are drooping a bit.
He is tired. He screws up his eyes and blinks hard, tries
to clear them. He rests his tired head in one hand and
keeps studying, but his body is inevitably slumping into a
most un-Jem'Hadar like position - asleep at his desk.

Finally his eyes flutter closed...

L'HAAN (v.o.)
Why do you bother?

5 EXT. FOUNDERS' PLANET

We are back at the Great Link. Taran'atar stands on the
rocky islet, with L'HAAN beside him. They both look out
over the Link, standing rather companionably. They have
done this quite a few times now, and Taran'atar is becoming
more comfortable with it than he would like to admit.

L'HAAN
Those books cannot provide you
with anything a Jem'Hadar needs.
So why read over them again and
again as you do?

TARAN'ATAR

Must I also explain this to you again and again? They are guides on diplomacy. That is the mission I have been set by the Founder, therefore I must be as familiar with the nature of that mission as possible.

L'HAAN

You may explain as often as you wish, Taran'atar. But that does not mean that I am convinced. And since I am only you...

TARAN'ATAR

(to clarify)

An unwanted part of me. If there is indeed a part of my mind that does not think I should obey the Founders no matter what, then it should not exist, and I will deny it until my last breath.

L'HAAN

So you keep saying. Yet here I remain. I am your doubts, Taran'atar... and you will not get rid of me that easily.

Taran'atar grits his teeth in annoyance. It looks like L'Haan may in fact be right.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

6 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Beginning on Kira, as she sits behind her desk...

KIRA

(gently)

So you didn't see the murder
yourself?

O'Brien sits opposite Kira, with VAUGHN sat beside him. It is an official debriefing, but a fairly informal one. As Kira asks the questions, Vaughn makes notes in a padd.

O'BRIEN

No. We just heard about it on the news with everyone else. And Garak was too intent on getting us out of there to stop and explain. Have you... heard from him?

Awkward beat.

KIRA

Not directly, no. But a lot of the reports that we're getting out of Cardassia mention him fairly prominently. He seems to be leading the charge to get things under control and help stop the disease spreading.

O'BRIEN

And how's he doing?

KIRA

With the virus at least, he's making some headway. He managed to find some kind of vaccine from somewhere, so it's just a matter of getting it to the people before the virus reaches them.

O'BRIEN
Easier said than done.

Kira sadly agrees.

KIRA
Politically speaking, it's only getting worse. People are breaking into factions. The ones who are loyal to Ghemor. The ones who believed Mondrig. The ones who don't care and just want to get on with their lives... The disease spreads. People blame the Oralian Way and anyone else who supported Ghemor. They fight and kill each other in the streets. The riots hamper the government's attempts to combat the disease.

(sad shrug)
And the disease spreads.

O'BRIEN
Is there anything we can do?

VAUGHN
That's what the conference will try to determine.

KIRA
I think we've got everything we need to file a report. You should go home, Miles.

O'BRIEN
Need to decide where that is first. Thank you, Captain.
Commander.

7 **INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE (CONTINUOUS)**

O'Brien exits the office and into Ops, where NOG is at the engineering station, SHAR at sciences, BOWERS at tactical and CENN running the central Ops table. Extras elsewhere.

O'Brien heads over to engineering. Nog is working regular everyday activities. Nog turns, pleased to see him.

O'BRIEN

Hey Nog! You keeping my console happy?

NOG

Chief! I'd heard you were back.

(pats console)

It misses you, but I keep it distracted.

They chuckle together. Then Nog sobers a little...

NOG

Sorry to hear about what happened on Cardassia.

O'BRIEN

Yeah. Just when you think it's getting better, it goes to hell all over again.

They turn at the sound of the TURBOLIFT rising into Ops. They both catch their breath slightly to see that it carries Taran'atar. But they both control their reactions.

Taran'atar heads straight for Kira's office without acknowledging anyone else. He presses the door bell...

8 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Mid-discussion, Kira and Vaughn look up, and are slightly surprised to see Taran'atar waiting. Kira presses the button to open the door, and Taran'atar enters.

KIRA

Taran'atar - this is a surprise.

Taran'atar stands in the doorway, a little awkwardly. An uncomfortable pause while he makes his mind up.

TARAN'ATAR

Captain - I wish to speak with you. In private.

Vaughn didn't expect that at all, but he'll go with it.

VAUGHN

I'll leave you be, Captain.

(re padd)

I have enough here to finish the report by myself.

(acknowledging)

Ambassador.

He gets up to leave.

9 INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE (CONTINUOUS)

Vaughn exits into Ops, heading down towards the central Ops table. From the engineering station, Nog and O'Brien have both been eavesdropping. The office door closes...

O'BRIEN

(*sotto*)

How do you do it?

NOG

Do what?

O'BRIEN

Live with a Jem'Hadar. It took a long time for me to get used to living among Cardassians without my skin crawling.

NOG

I know how you feel. And now he's not even controlled by the Founders anymore... I don't know whether that makes me trust him more or less.

O'BRIEN

So what do you do?

NOG

(pats console again)

I keep myself distracted.

10 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Kira sits, Taran'atar stands.

KIRA

So what can I do for you?

TARAN'ATAR

It is a delicate matter, Captain. You are aware of course of my need for sleep. If you recall, I also began to suffer from what your people call dreams.

KIRA

I remember. Are you saying the dreams are back?

TARAN'ATAR

To be precise, Captain, they never went away. I find them intrusive and disconcerting. I want them to stop, but I do not seem able to control them. So I come to you for help.

KIRA

(thrown off)

Okay... we have a psychologist on staff, Lieutenant Commander Matthias. I can set you up with an appointment, if you like.

TARAN'ATAR

I am unfamiliar with the practice. Would it be acceptable for you to accompany me, Captain?

Kira is surprised again - he wants a friend.

KIRA

Things like that are usually confidential, between the therapist and the patient... but if that's what you want, then yes, I'll go with you.

TARAN'ATAR
Thank you, Captain.

KIRA
(grin)
You're off to a good start with
the diplomacy.
(new thought)
Hold on - if you've been having
dreams all this time... that means
this was going on while Bashir and
Ro were having their problems.

TARAN'ATAR
Yes, Captain.

KIRA
So while everyone was blaming you
for their dreams, you were having
bad dreams of your own.

TARAN'ATAR
Yes, Captain.

KIRA
(sympathetic)
Why didn't you say anything?

TARAN'ATAR
(simply)
Nobody asked.

She feels a bit ashamed over that, and sorry for him.
Taran'atar nods his acknowledgements, turns and leaves.

11 INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE

Taran'atar exits the office and walks to the turbolift,
again ignoring everyone else. O'Brien and Nog watch him go.
Taran'atar boards the turbolift, and it carries him away.

NOG
At least it's better than when he
used to just stand behind me
breathing down my neck all day.

O'Brien takes Nog's advice and forcibly changes the topic. Nog is happy to go along with it, grateful for the change.

O'BRIEN

So, what are you working on?

NOG

Just a basic recalibration of the internal weapons sensors.

O'BRIEN

(inspects panels)

You're doing it through the environmental subsystems?

NOG

(confused)

Yeah, so?

O'BRIEN

Well, it's just better if you use the tactical systems. Then you get better readings on power capacity

-

NOG

But that sometimes picks up false readings from other power sources. If you use the environmental systems you don't get that. Plus it's easier to pick up possible biological weapons.

O'BRIEN

No no, you can get around that by splitting the scans. Here, watch.

He reaches across Nog and starts working the panels, much to Nog's dismay.

NOG

Wait, I just - ...

But O'Brien is already working, ignoring Nog's protests. Nog can only sigh, slump backwards and hold his tongue.

12 INT. DS9 - MATTHIAS FAMILY QUARTERS

PHILIPPA MATTHIAS, the station counsellor, is sat at her desk, talking into her comm panel. In the background, we see her husband SIBIAS setting up the table for dinner.

MATTHIAS

Alright, Captain. I'll see you in the morning. Good night.

She signs off the computer, then slumps back in her seat, a bit overwhelmed by what she has been asked to do.

SIBIAS

You alright, hun?

MATTHIAS

I'm not going to be able to do the lecture tonight, babe. Kira just dumped a bombshell in my lap. I'm gonna have to stay up all night researching.

SIBIAS

Is it something bad?

Matthias stares into the computer. Chuckles a bit.

MATTHIAS

First I'm psychoanalysing a depressed hologram, and now a nightmare-plagued Jem'Hadar. I mean, I love a challenge, but isn't there just a nice, garden-variety serial killer for me to play with?

Both amused and exasperated, she sighs and gets to work.

13 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

Nog stands alone working inside one of the large open panels (like in 5x05 "The Assignment"). A tool in each hand, one behind his ear, another in his teeth, and more in boxes on the floor. He is quite happy working by himself.

O'BRIEN (o.s.)

Hey, Nog.

Nog turns and sees that O'Brien has wandered up, and is inspecting the panels. Nog reacts coolly.

NOG

(around tool)

Oh. Hi, Chief. Settling in?

O'BRIEN

Keiko's unpacking, calling her boss back on Earth, let him know she's okay.

(points at panel)

Is that a phase shunt you've put on the optronic regulator, there?

NOG

(so what?)

Yeah...

O'BRIEN

Well, you've done it wrong.

Nog takes the tool out of his mouth and turns to inspect the part O'Brien is pointing at.

NOG

No I haven't.

O'BRIEN

You have. It's supposed to go power cell, regulator, then the processor, then the shunt. You've got it back to front.

(holds hand out)

Gimme the coupler.

NOG

That's the old way. Doing it this way round gives you more control over the output. It's in all the journals.

O'Brien stands back and purses his lips, unimpressed.

NOG

Look, Chief... I appreciate your help. But really, I'm fine here on my own. Why don't you...

(searches for something)

...go and have a nice drink at my uncle's bar. I'm sure he's missed you just as much as the rest of us.

As polite as possible, but that still says "Go away please" pretty clearly. O'Brien gets the message. Doesn't like it.

O'BRIEN

Fine. Wouldn't want to get in your way.

O'Brien turns in a huff, and stomps back down the hall.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

14 INT. DS9 - MATTHIAS'S OFFICE

Seen briefly in 8x18 "This Grey Spirit," but now permanent and lived-in. Soothing neutral colours, and an open-plan seating area to put patients at ease. But Matthias has chosen to specifically avoid that - she sits behind her desk, a subconscious barrier and protection.

In the guest seats are Kira and Taran'atar. The Jem'Hadar is uncomfortable, both with the soft and squishy chair and with the entire need for him to be here. Kira and Matthias act with detached professionalism - fluffy emotionalism would be inappropriate with this particular patient.

MATTHIAS

To be honest, I'm working in the dark here. There's precious little research on Jem'Hadar psychology. Frankly, Ambassador, in most of our encounters with your people, the focus was more on killing you than sitting down for a nice chat.

TARAN'ATAR

Then that is an oversight on your part. Your enemy's defeat is only assured if you can predict his responses.

Awkward. Not the way they want the conversation to go.

KIRA

No-one's here to defeat anyone, Taran'atar.

TARAN'ATAR

I am. I am here to defeat the Vulcan.

MATTHIAS

I'm sorry - who?

TARAN'ATAR

L'Haan - the Intendant's slave.
She is the image I see most
frequently in the dreams.

KIRA

She was the one who... changed
you, right?

TARAN'ATAR

Correct. She attempted to draft me
to her cause by offering to free
me from Ghemor's control... and
from the Founders.

MATTHIAS

And when you see her in your
dreams... what is she doing?

TARAN'ATAR

She taunts me... accuses me of
having doubts about my mission.

KIRA

Is that so bad? Everyone has
doubts.

TARAN'ATAR

(offended)

Not Jem'Hadar. Serving the
Founders is everything.

MATTHIAS

That's certainly consistent with
everything we've observed before,
Captain. Jem'Hadar emotions aren't
like other humanoids'. They're
entirely concerned with doing
their duty - nothing else enters
into it.

KIRA

On a conscious level, maybe. But
Taran'atar's subconscious appears
to be telling him something else.

MATTHIAS

...and it's using L'Haan's image to express his doubts because she's the one who allowed them to exist. You see her as responsible for what happened to you, Taran'atar. So that part's completely understandable.

TARAN'ATAR

Understandable or not, I want the dreams to stop. They are a distraction to my mission.

MATTHIAS

I'm not sure that's possible. Taran'atar - you are the oldest Jem'Hadar that's ever lived as far as we know. Maybe your brain just reached its limit. It said, that's it, I can't go on any longer without sleeping from time to time. And your subconscious is simply doing exactly what a brain is supposed to do when it's asleep - recover and process everything that happens to you. But I may be able to help you handle it better.

TARAN'ATAR

How?

MATTHIAS

What I would suggest is that you go to the holosuite, program in a copy of L'Haan, and talk to her face to face. Denying your subconscious never works - it only comes back stronger. But if you bring those questions out into the open, externalise them and answer them, consciously, then you'll have dealt with the underlying issues and the dreams shouldn't trouble you anymore.

TARAN'ATAR
(to Kira)
Do you agree with this, Captain?

KIRA
I actually think it's a good idea.
It certainly can't hurt to try.

TARAN'ATAR
Very well. I will do as you say.

The decision made, Taran'atar gets up and heads to the door. But he stops and turns, awkward...

TARAN'ATAR
Thank you, Lieutenant Commander
Matthias, for your help.

MATTHIAS
(pleasantly
surprised)
You're welcome, Ambassador.

Taran'atar leaves.

15 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING

Just a moment to indicate time passing...

16 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

The upper corridors near the holosuites. Taran'atar and QUARK walk along together, with Quark holding a datarod. He still doesn't like having the Jem'Hadar around, and is making no effort to conceal that fact.

QUARK
I don't know what you'd want with
a Vulcan meditation program
anyway. This isn't one of your
usual hack-and-slash programs.
There'll be nothing for you to
murder in there.

TARAN'ATAR
We will see.

Quark hands Taran'atar the datarod with a disgusted humph. Taran'atar begins to work at the suite's computer panel.

Quark heads back to the spiral staircase, where Bashir and O'Brien are on their way up. They're both wearing wetsuits and carrying kayak oars.

O'BRIEN

Can't wait. I hear those rapids calling my name, Julian.

BASHIR

Not much kayaking on Cardassia?

O'BRIEN

Why do you think I wanted Keiko to finish her rainmaker machine?

They chuckle together, completely ignoring Quark, who has to avoid getting comically bonked on the head by the oars.

17 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S QUARTERS

Kira, Keiko, Kasidy and Matthias sit around the couch area with glasses of wine and a bowl of nibbles on the coffee table. Friendly, chatty, very casual with each other.

KIRA

So what did Sibias say when you told him he was looking after three children tonight?

MATTHIAS

Oh, you know. I can handle it, don't worry about me, kill me now, the usual.

They chuckle.

MATTHIAS (cont)

No, he'll be fine. Molly's not far off Arios's age anyway. And he's dragged me to enough archaeology lectures in his time.

KASIDY

I know Rebecca's safe with Ben, obviously she is. But still, it kills me whenever I have to leave her and go to work.

KEIKO

You get used to it, Kas. It never goes away, but you get used to it.

MATTHIAS

Especially if you've got the husband properly trained.

They laugh again - all except Kira, who smiles pleasantly but can't relate like the other three. No husband, no kids. Feeling just the tiniest bit left out.

18 **EXT. VULCAN PLAINS**

A stony, austere wilderness. Taran'atar sits on the ground alone, in front of a small Vulcan meditation lamp, such as we've seen used by Tuvok and T'Pol. The lamp has a small flame, and Taran'atar stares into it.

PAN UP from the flame, and we see L'Haan knelt in a calm meditative pose opposite Taran'atar. She wears the same shapeless slave's smock we have seen her in all along.

L'HAAN

I simply don't understand why you wish to remove me at all. We both know you need me.

TARAN'ATAR

I do not. You seek to derail my mission.

L'HAAN

I have told you many times - "I" do not exist. You are the one who asks the questions. I only give them voice. I don't know why you refuse to accept that.

TARAN'ATAR

Perhaps I am going insane. The changes forced upon my mind have unhinged it, and you are the result.

L'HAAN

You know that is not so. The truly insane do not question their sanity. But I confess I find your behaviour baffling. You have been freed of your chains, Taran'atar. And yet you cling to them still.

TARAN'ATAR

A Jem'Hadar is nothing without his obedience to the Founders.

L'HAAN

And if there are no Founders?

Taran'atar growls in frustration.

19 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S QUARTERS

Back at the girls' night in...

KEIKO

I can't help worrying about them though. Especially Molly.

She glances over to one side of the room, where Yoshi is occupying himself quite happily with some toys.

KEIKO (cont)

Yoshi's still at that age where everything's one big adventure. But for Molly, she's moved around so much, and every time she makes friends we end up moving again...

KIRA

That's what happens when you keep taking them into war zones.

That was a bit harsh. Keiko is a bit thrown.

KASIDY
(you should apologise)
Nerys...

KEIKO
It's okay, Kasidy. It's nothing I
haven't thought myself. That's the
whole reason we went home to Earth
after the war - for a quieter,
safer life.

Under this, Yoshi has picked up his Space Shuttle and is
zooming it around the room. He runs around the seats and
coffee table, in between the four women.

KIRA
(pointed)
Then you took them to Cardassia
because you got a job.

KEIKO
It was the best job I ever had,
Nerys. I couldn't turn it down.

KIRA
It put your children at risk.

KASIDY
You can't think like that, Nerys.
If everyone worried about what
might happen, no-one would ever
raise a family. Ben raised Jake
right here on the station, didn't
he? Philippa's raising her two.

Kira reaches out and grabs Yoshi, and sits him down on the
sofa, next to herself, where he happily continues to play.

KIRA
Well, I'm keeping you here right
here with me, where I know you're
safe and sound.

She smiles contentedly. Kasidy watches her, concerned.

Trees and bushes, wide open blue sky, and the sound of lots and lots of water rushing by very fast, very nearby. Bashir and O'Brien sit on the ground, both soaked wet through. The oars and a pair of kayaks sit discarded somewhere near.

Bashir gets into the proper position, and with a firm but controlled shove of force, he POPS O'Brien's dislocated shoulder back into place. O'Brien groan-shouts with pain.

That done, Bashir grabs a sports bottle and helps O'Brien to take a sip from it. O'Brien gets the pain under control.

BASHIR

You okay?

O'BRIEN

(grumble)

Great. Now I know I'm back.

(tests the arm)

One of these days I'm gonna end up wearing this thing like a scarf.

BASHIR

You're a resilient man, Miles. But I think we're justified in resting for a moment.

O'BRIEN

(well, duh)

Uh, yeah, I think I might.

A moment, as they both settle onto the river bank and catch their breaths. O'Brien seems a bit distracted.

BASHIR

Are you alright, Miles? You've been a bit closed-mouthed all night.

O'BRIEN

Yeah, I'm fine.

(beat)

Just had a bit of a moment with Nog last night.

BASHIR

A "moment"? What about?

O'BRIEN

I was just helping him out with the optronic regulators, and he told me to get lost.

BASHIR

Really?

O'BRIEN

Well, not in so many words. But he made it clear my help was not needed.

BASHIR

You know Nog. He likes to prove he can do it all by himself. Probably just an insecurity thing. I'm sure he didn't mean any harm.

O'BRIEN

I s'pose.

BASHIR

So shall we get back to it? See if we can pop the other arm out?

O'Brien's expression makes clear how he feels about that.

21 **EXT. VULCAN PLAINS**

Annoyed, Taran'atar gets to his feet.

TARAN'ATAR

This is pointless.

L'HAAN

Are you giving up? Was it not your mission to "defeat" me? Surely a Jem'Hadar would not leave before his mission was accomplished.

Taran'atar starts pacing back and forth, frustrated and confused. L'Haan slowly, smoothly stands up to join him, remaining infuriatingly calm.

TARAN'ATAR

What do you want from me?

L'HAAN

Nothing more than for you to accept my existence.

TARAN'ATAR

Never! You are my enemy and I will defeat you.

L'HAAN

You argue against logic, Taran'atar. Surely it is better for disparate parts of an individual's psyche to work in harmony than at odds. Is that not the very essence of diplomacy?

TARAN'ATAR

(reluctant)

It is.

L'HAAN

Then consider this. Let us work together. Allow me to ask the questions you cannot, and allow yourself to answer me. In doing so you will resolve those questions and be left stronger in your convictions.

TARAN'ATAR

Captain Kira once said the same thing.

L'HAAN

As did Counsellor Matthias. Heed their words, Taran'atar.

Taran'atar grits his teeth and seethes... and then slumps. He accepts it. L'Haan seems to approve.

L'HAAN

Then it is agreed - I will remain with you. Do not consider this a defeat. On the contrary, it signifies the success of your mission. You and I have reached a consensus, as diplomats must. This simulation has served its purpose.

TARAN'ATAR

Agreed. Computer, end program.

He turns his back, and begins to walk away. The Vulcan plains around him dissolve to nothing. The door opens, and Taran'atar steps out into the corridor.

22 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR (CONTINUOUS)

On the upper corridor...

L'HAAN (o.s.)

Taran'atar...

Surprised, he turns and looks back over the threshold... and sees that L'Haan is still there, standing on the bare holosuite grid.

L'HAAN (cont)

I've already said - you cannot get rid of me that easily.

(pointedly)

I will remain with you.

And she steps off the holosuite and into the corridor with him. Off Taran'atar's shocked reaction...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

23 INT. DS9 - WARD ROOM

...Or some similar meeting space. A morning staff meeting for the senior engineering crew. Nog sits at the top of the table, with CANDLEWOOD (human male), LEISHMAN, PERMENTER and CHAO (all human females), and K'UHLLO (Damiani male-ish - green skin, pointed ears, a silver horn on each side of the head, black spiky hair like a hedgehog).

NOG

Okay, department assignments for today.

He turns to Chao, hands her a padd...

NOG

Jeanette, the cargo transporters on level six, section twelve of the docking ring have been playing up according to the night crew. See if you can figure it out.

CHAO

Aye, sir.

He turns to K'Uhllo, hands him another padd.

NOG

K'Uhllo, the atmospheric scrubbers on the Promenade are due for regular maintenance, and...

(wince)

...waste extraction is down in habitat ring section three.

K'UHLLO

Euch. Great.

NOG

It's not so bad. My dad used to work in waste extraction. Now he runs our entire planet.

CANDLEWOOD

Oh, I am dying to make a joke
right now.

NOG

(sweet smile)

But you'd never actually do that,
would you, John? Because you
respect your commanding officer
too much.

CANDLEWOOD

Absolutely, sir.

Chuckles around the room - it's just playful banter.

NOG

Well that's good, because I can't
think of anyone better to oversee
the complete system upgrade for
the *Defiant's* tactical database.

Nog hands another padd to Candlewood, who groans with
feigned exasperation. This amuses Nog.

NOG

Talk to Bowers, he'll get you set
up.

(turns to Permenter)

Okay, Bryanne, your turn -

They are interrupted as the door opens and O'BRIEN strides
in. Nog tenses.

O'BRIEN

Hey everyone - just thought I'd
pop in and say hi.

LEISHMAN

Hey, Chief! Welcome back.

O'BRIEN

Mikaela! Good to see you. Don't
mind if I sit in, do you, Nog?

NOG
(tense smile)
Of course not. Take a seat, Chief.

He does, all chummy and familiar. He immediately grabs one of the padds off the table and starts inspecting it.

O'BRIEN
So. What are we looking at?

NOG
I was just handing out today's assignments to my department heads...

O'BRIEN
Great! Count me in.

Nog grinds his teeth...

24 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S QUARTERS

Kira is out of uniform, sat cross-legged on the ground with Yoshi. Between them is a simple child's building set, and Kira is happily playing with it alongside Yoshi.

KIRA
Where do you think this piece goes?

Yoshi thinks a moment, then points.

YOSHI
There!

Smiling approvingly, Kira places the piece where he said. The comm system chimes:

VAUGHN (comm)
Vaughn to Kira.

KIRA
This is Kira.

VAUGHN (comm)
Is there a problem, Captain?

KIRA
(baffled)
What do you mean?

VAUGHN (comm)
(delicately)
It's oh-nine-thirty hours. We were
expecting you in Ops half an hour
ago.

KIRA
(caught out)
Oh... yeah, something came up. I'm
gonna need to take the morning
off. Nothing serious. You can take
care of things, right, Commander?

VAUGHN (comm)
Umm, yes, of course. Will you
still be able to chair the
conference this afternoon?

Kira sags a bit - she had forgotten.

KIRA
I'll be there, Commander. Kira
out.

That dealt with, she goes back to playing with Yoshi. She
holds up another piece...

KIRA
What do you think about this
piece? How about... here?

YOSHI
Noooooo!

Kira chuckles and lets Yoshi decide where the piece goes...

25 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Taran'atar walks along the corridor, alone. Some CIVILIANS
come the other way - they keep a wide berth and a wary eye
as they pass him in the corridor and go on their way.

L'HAAN (o.s.)
You see how they remain wary and
distrustful.

Panning around in one unbroken shot, we PAN AROUND to the
other side of Taran'atar and see that L'Haan is now walking
calmly alongside him, where there was no-one before.

TARAN'ATAR
(mutter)
It is of no concern to me.

L'HAAN
Of course not. That is why your
heart rate rose and your lip
curled in anger - because you do
not care.

TARAN'ATAR
Be silent.

L'Haan eyebrows. Taran'atar stomps along the corridor.

L'HAAN
Perhaps this can be of use to us.
An exercise in emotional
restraint. A vital attribute for a
diplomat.

TARAN'ATAR
(loud)
I said be silent!

Embarrassed at his outburst, he stops and looks back down
the corridor. The civilians heard him, and have glanced
back over their shoulder, confused and worried. They turn
and scurry away. He breathes hard, reining himself in.

L'Haan remains calm as ever.

L'HAAN
Control yourself, Taran'atar. Only
you can see me, they can not. Do
you want them to think you are
insane?

TARAN'ATAR

(growl)

They should think so. What other explanation is there for one's dreams walking alongside you while fully awake?

L'HAAN

The Denobulans consider it a healthy thing to hallucinate. A harmless way to release nervous energy, and a comfort in times of solitude and loneliness.

TARAN'ATAR

I am not lonely.

L'HAAN

Of course you are. Who else do you have to confide in, if not me?

Taran'atar grinds his teeth...

26 INT. DS9 - WARD ROOM

Continuing Nog's assignment briefing...

NOG

So, that just leaves Lieutenant Leishman.

O'BRIEN

(interrupting)

Oh, she can come and help me. I spotted some tweaks I wanted to make to the main power ratios when I was checking out the distribution nodes earlier.

NOG

(interrupting back)

Actually, I've assigned the lieutenant to run calibrations on the science labs on level twelve.

O'BRIEN
(dismissively)
Oh, that'll only take a minute.
I can use the extra hands.

NOG
There's nothing wrong with the
power nodes, Chief.

O'BRIEN
Well, not wrong, exactly. But I
think I can make them better.
(turns to
Leishman)
So, you get on with that science
lab thing, Mikaela, then report to
me on level twenty-two and we'll
go over the distribution
manifolds. Alright?

Leishman glances awkwardly at Nog, and back to O'Brien...

LEISHMAN
Umm... I guess...

Nog gets to his feet, firmly. Tense and getting tenser.

NOG
Everyone, you have your
assignments. Get to work on them
please. You're dismissed.

The junior officers get to their feet, very much aware that
a frosty atmosphere has entered the room. They exchange
awkward glances and head to the door, happy to get out of
there. O'Brien is unaware - he's ready to get to work.

NOG (cont)
Mister O'Brien. Please stay. I
would like to speak to you alone.

O'Brien is surprised at that - what's got Nog upset now?

O'BRIEN
Sure, Nog. What's up?

Nog is trying to be polite and civil, but he's quite angry.
O'Brien is entirely genuine - he is only trying to help.

NOG

I thought I made it clear that I can manage on my own, Chief. Your help is appreciated, but not necessary.

O'BRIEN

Nog, it's okay. You don't have to do everything on your own. I know you think you have to prove yourself to me, but -

NOG

I beg your pardon?
(off O'Brien's surprise)

I don't have to prove myself to you! And I don't need your help!

O'BRIEN

Since when?

NOG

Since I was made Chief Engineer of Deep Space Nine and the *Defiant*, two years ago.

O'BRIEN

But I'm back now. So you can relax.

NOG

And you think just because you're back on the station, you're automatically back in charge?

O'BRIEN

What are you talking about? I've only been trying to help. And frankly from what I've seen you could use it. You should show a bit more gratitude.

NOG

Gratitude? For what? For trying to take over my job?

O'BRIEN

Oh, don't be ridiculous.

NOG

I'm not being ridiculous. You've done nothing but complain about the way I do things from the moment you arrived. And now you come in here and take over my meeting, start assigning tasks to my people?

O'BRIEN

You watch your tone of voice, Lieutenant. Who the hell do you think you're talking to?

NOG

I think I'm talking to a non-commissioned officer who quit his job more than two years ago... and should have stayed gone.

Nog grabs his padds, turns hard and stomps out of the room.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

27 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S QUARTERS

Kira stands at the threshold, holding Yoshi's hand. With them is GAVI, the Bajoran man who runs the station's pre-school child care facility (as seen in 8x16 "Baby Steps").

KIRA

Now, he loves his Space Shuttle,
he'll keep that with him wherever
he goes. But he also enjoys
building things, and drawing, and
anything about space at all.

GAVI

Understood, Captain.

KIRA

I'll be back to pick him up as
soon as the conference is over.

GAVI

Mrs O'Brien isn't free?

KIRA

Oh, I... I just want them to relax
and not have to worry. I'm happy
to take care of him.

(bends down)

Okay, Yoshi, I have to go to work
now, but you'll have fun with
Gavi, won't you?

YOSHI

Are there other children there?

GAVI

Lots of them! We'll all have a
great time together.

YOSHI

Okay then.

Smiling, Kira gives him a quick kiss, then reluctantly lets go of his hand and passes him across to Gavi.

GAVI

Don't worry, Captain. He'll be fine. Come on Yoshi - time to meet the other kids!

Gavi walks away down the corridor, hand in hand with Yoshi. Kira watches them, biting her lip with separation anxiety.

28 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING

Dominion vessel 288 (10x01 "Emancipation") sits on an upper pylon. Elsewhere on the docking ring are the *Xhosa*, a standard Bajoran shuttle, and of course the *Defiant*. We PAN DOWN a little to focus on the habitat ring...

29 INT. DS9 - WARD ROOM

The conference is already underway. Not quite arguing, but definitely spirited discussion, with voices overlapping.

DEJAR, the Cardassian representative (from 3x15 "Destiny"), sits at the long side of the table nearest the wall...

DEJAR

(astonished)

You are saying the Federation will not support Cardassia?

Kira is at one end of the table, with two Starfleet ensigns sat quietly behind, acting as assistants. She is already a bit harried and indignant, but is trying her best.

KIRA

The Federation will absolutely support the Cardassian people. We have never said otherwise. Humanitarian aid is being organised as we speak. But the Federation is very clear that this offer should not be taken as indicating support for the Ghemor government, or for any other political body.

DEJAR

(unimpressed)

Even after all the promises of friendship to the Ghemor regime that have been made in the past?

KIRA

That was when Ghemor was the popularly elected Castellan. That is no longer the case. Your political problems are yours to resolve. We will not interfere by taking sides.

Quark, in best ambassadorial garb, sat on the side opposite from Dejar, with one of his Ferengi waiters taking notes.

QUARK

To be fair to the Federation, this is no more than their usual position on the internal affairs of other races. I'm surprised at your surprise, Dejar.

Dejar looks at him, sneers down her nose at him.

DEJAR

Why are you even here, Ferengi?

She gestures to the other end of the table, where we see Taran'atar looking a bit out of place, not sure what to do with himself. VANNIS the Vorta sits behind him, her legs crossed and an imperious, superior air on her face.

DEJAR (cont)

I understand why that creature is here - his kind is responsible for the state we are in now. But you had nothing to do with it.

Vannis sends a withering glare at Dejar. But as she does, the Cardassian woman's image flutters and fritzes - she is a holographic projection.

From this point, the dialogue plays in the background:

KIRA

I asked the ambassador from Ferenginar to attend precisely because he had no role in those events. I hoped that the Ferengi Alliance's neutrality in the war would provide a perspective we might otherwise lack.

DEJAR

If that perspective is on how to charge too much for *kanar*, maybe.

QUARK

Ferengis are born negotiators, Dejar. We spend our lives making deals and finding common ground.

LEDAHN, the Bajoran minister (9x03 "Waiting for the Mist to Clear"), sits next to Quark. A nameless Bajoran functionary sits behind. Ledahn is calm, but not taking any nonsense.

LEDAHN

If we are questioning people's attendance at this conference, Miss Dejar, I would not have expected a former agent of the Obsidian Order to represent a democratic government.

DEJAR

And I would not have expected Bajor to have an opinion of its own, now that the Federation carries you in its pocket. And yet here we both are.

The following plays over the top of the preceding dialogue:

Taran'atar watches the discussion go on between the other four representatives. He has nothing to contribute.

From a seat just behind Taran'atar, L'Haan now leans into view. He flinches at her presence, but daren't show more. She whispers into his ear, and he grudgingly listens...

L'HAAN

Observe how they manage their emotions. One may see by their body language that they still feel them, and yet they make an effort to keep them under control. Do you see it?

Taran'atar watches the others' faces. He nods subtly.

L'HAAN

To be an effective diplomat, you must do likewise.

KIRA

(are you there?)
Ambassador Taran'atar?

Taran'atar flinches again, caught off guard.

KIRA (cont)

Does the Dominion wish to register a position on the Cardassian situation?

He glances back to Vannis, as if asking for help. Then he turns back to the meeting, a touch nervous.

TARAN'ATAR

We do not.

DEJAR

Really? After your people tried to obliterate mine from the galaxy, you have nothing to say?

A tense moment. Taran'atar sends a quiet, angry glare at Dejar, but it is actually Quark who speaks up.

QUARK

Some might say Cardassia brought destruction on itself.

VANNIS

I say exactly that. Cardassia betrayed the Dominion. The Founders ordered your deaths as punishment, and they were right to do so.

TARAN'ATAR

(hiss at Vannis)

Silence.

(back to Dejar)

The Vorta does not speak for the Founders in this instance. I do.

Vannis quietly seethes in the background.

TARAN'ATAR (cont)

The Dominion does not apologise for the events on Cardassia. We do, however, hope for peaceful relations with the Alpha Quadrant governments from this point forward. To that end, I have been instructed by the Founder to express our sympathies to the representative.

DEJAR

(spits)

Sympathies?! What use are they?

Just as she is about to start a good solid rant, Dejar's image breaks up again. After a few fizzles, it cuts out altogether. Frustrated, Kira taps her combadge.

KIRA

Kira to Nog. What's going on?

NOG (comm)

Sorry, Captain. The signal keeps breaking up from the other end. I'm trying to boost it, but it'll take a minute.

KIRA

(sigh)

Do your best, Lieutenant. Kira out.

She turns back to the meeting, specifically Taran'atar.

KIRA

Dejar has a point, Taran'atar. The Federation is offering food, medical supplies, logistical support... As the government ultimately responsible for the current conditions on Cardassia, one might have hoped for something a little more concrete from the Dominion than sympathy. The Federation would like to suggest that the Dominion offer reparations to Cardassia.

Taran'atar glares at Kira now. Being accused like this, especially by Kira, is getting on his nerves. He starts to growl under his breath, but L'Haan leans into view again...

L'HAAN

Control yourself. Do not allow your emotions to disrupt your focus. Remain calm.

KIRA

...looks at Taran'atar, frowns...

KIRA' s POV

Taran'atar pausing, leaning in slightly as if listening to someone whispering in his ear... but there is no-one there. Having listened, Taran'atar turns back to the meeting.

TARAN' ATAR

Everyone here is aware of the current crisis in the Dominion. Whether we accept responsibility or not, we are in no position to offer reparations to anyone.

QUARK

That's your answer. "We've got our own problems."

LEDAHN

Cold as it may seem, it has the virtue of being the truth.

NOG (comm)

Nog to Kira. The signal's back now. I'm forwarding it through to the ward room...

KIRA

Thank you, Lieutenant.

From a rear angle, we can now see a holo-comm device (as in 5x13 "For the Uniform") set up just underneath the table. It activates, and Dejar's image fritzes back into view.

DEJAR

Apologies Captain, ambassadors. As you can see, conditions continue to deteriorate. Perhaps we should get to the point?

LEDAHN

(speaking up)

The Bajoran government echoes the Federation's offer of aid. However, unlike the Federation, Bajor is prepared to take sides in the political debate.

DEJAR

I find that surprising, Second Minister. I would have thought Bajor would follow where the Federation leads... as usual.

Kira flinches. Ledahn doesn't rise to the bait.

LEDAHN

Before we joined the Federation, Vedek Yevir allied his order with the Oralian Way. Bajor would like to reassure Cardassia that we stand by that alliance now.

KIRA

Minister Ledahn... just to be clear, you are declaring support for the Reunion Project?

LEDAHN

I am. Castellan Ghemor supported the open practise of religion on Cardassia, including the Oralian Way. We will continue to support the Reunion Project in his honour. We emphatically do not support any who wish to deny that right.

Kira is secretly relieved - this is a better deal.

DEJAR

Second Minister... I am very happy to hear that. And please, allow me to apologise for my earlier remarks. You are an honourable man. Unfortunately, it no longer matters. The point is moot.

Surprised looks around the room...

KIRA

I don't understand...

DEJAR

I attended this meeting because I wanted to hear what you all had to say. But the decision has already been made.

LEDAHN

What decision is that?

DEJAR

The decision to reject all aid, no matter who offers it. As of today, the Cardassian Union has officially quarantined itself. No-one will enter, and no-one will leave, for any reason.

KIRA
(stunned)
Dejar, please... reconsider.

DEJAR
(haughty)
It is for your own good, Captain.
We cannot risk letting the virus
spread to our "friends" in the
Federation. To do so would only
invite more recriminations.
Something we can ill afford.

KIRA
Dejar, we want to help. You don't
have to do this alone.

DEJAR
Apparently we do. The fact is that
every time we have reached out for
help, our hand has been bitten for
our trouble. We can depend on no-
one but ourselves. Please allow us
our dignity, and leave us to lick
our wounds alone.

She is firm and final. Kira is too disappointed to reply.

LEDAHN
If that is your choice, then that
is your choice. But Bajor's
friendship remains, even if you do
not choose to accept it. I believe
that our two worlds are connected
by more than enmity.

DEJAR
Let us hope so. I've said what I
came to say. I will take my leave
now. Good day to you all.

The holo-comm deactivates and her image dissolves. Kira
sighs, and glances over her shoulder to her assistants.

KIRA

Please enter into the record, the Federation's offer of humanitarian aid will remain open indefinitely, in the hopes they will eventually choose to accept it. I guess that's the best we can do.

LEDAHN

I believe this is what they call a "compromise." I have to say, I do not care for it.

QUARK

(sympathetic)

"The best compromise is the one that makes everyone equally unhappy." Rule of Acquisition number twenty-four.

KIRA

Then this must be the greatest compromise ever.

They sag. The meeting is over, but no-one has the will to get up from the table.

Unsure what to do now, Taran'atar glances to his side, and there sits Vannis. To his other side, and there is L'Haan. She nods approvingly at him. He is not quite so sure.

30 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Kira walks along, tired after the conference. She heads to a particular door... but then is surprised to see Kasidy waiting for her outside the door.

KIRA

Kas? Is there a problem?

KASIDY

Well, I'm not sure. That's what I'm here to find out.

Now Kira is worried. She looks towards the closed door, and then back to Kasidy.

KIRA

Has something happened to Yoshi?

KASIDY

He's fine.

KIRA

So where is he? I said I'd pick him up after the conference.

KASIDY

You were a little late. Gavi let me take him back to Miles and Keiko.

KIRA

What? Why? I'm supposed to be looking after him.

KASIDY

He's fine where he is.

KIRA

(exasperated)

Kasidy, I've had a long day. I am not in the mood for games. Picking up Yoshi and taking him home is what's kept me going.

KASIDY

He is home. With his parents.

KIRA

(scoff)

The ones who drag him back and forth across the quadrant? And into the middle of disease-ridden war zones? Yeah, that's a great idea.

Kira attempts to push past Kasidy on down the corridor. Kasidy steps to block her.

KIRA

Get out of my way, Kas. I'm going to get my child.

KASIDY
(quiet surprise)
Nerys, do you hear yourself?

KIRA
(shouts)
I carried him inside me! I gave
birth to him! He's named after me!
It's my turn!

Kasidy grabs hold of Kira and won't let her go. Sympathetic
but firm.

KASIDY
No, it's not.

KIRA
(angry, tearful)
Give me back my baby!

Kira finally hears her own words. They shock her. She
begins to cry...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

31 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S QUARTERS

Kira and Kasidy sit opposite each other on the low couches in Kira's living room. The coffee table is between them. Kira's head is down, as she stares at her own hands.

KIRA

I told myself, for five months I told myself, don't get attached. You're doing a favour for a friend, nothing more. I read all the papers on surrogacy and how to handle it, so I'd know what to expect when the time came...

(beat)

None of it made a difference. The moment Yoshi was born... all I wanted to do was hold him. Keep him safe. Never let anything or anyone hurt him.

KASIDY

Every mother feels the same. Every good mother, at least.

KIRA

I knew he wasn't mine. But he felt like he was mine. Miles and Keiko did nothing wrong. They let me spend time with him whenever I wanted, get to know him.

(frown)

But there was never enough time. The war was just starting, and then Keiko took the children back to Earth.

KASIDY

(pointedly)

To keep them safe.

Kira nods sadly. She knows what Kasidy is getting at.

KASIDY

So accusing them of being bad
parents was hardly fair, was it?

KIRA

I know it wasn't. I just wanted to
protect him more than anything.

KASIDY

Believe me, I understand, Nerys.
There's not a thing in nature more
dangerous than a mother protecting
her children. But Yoshi isn't your
child. He's not yours to protect.
I'm sorry Nerys, but I just don't
know any other way to say it.

KIRA

How would you feel if you had to
give up Rebecca?

KASIDY

It would kill me. Or I would kill
whoever tried to take her from me.
But I didn't make the arrangement
you did. I can't even imagine how
you felt... but I'm afraid this is
one of those situations where your
heart has to step back and let the
head take over.

Kira continues to look down. She knows Kasidy is right.

KIRA

You were there waiting for me. How
did you know?

KASIDY

You're my friend, Nerys. And...
I'm a mother myself now. I know
the signs. It's not something I
ever expected to happen, but
apparently it's an instinct you
get.

KIRA

Instinct, exactly, that's it. Like I couldn't help it. I just wanted something solid to hold onto, something I could rely on when nothing else made sense. And then Yoshi was back, and it was like the perfect thing.

KASIDY

You'll make it right with them, though, right?

KIRA

(nods)

Assuming they'll let me.

32 INT. DS9 - WARD ROOM

Nog is down on his hands and knees by the edge of the table, disconnecting and dismantling the holo-comm unit. His tools are laid out around him again.

The door opens. Nog looks up, and sighs sadly when O'Brien enters. Not angry now, but he just knows there is going to be an argument. O'Brien seems sympathetic.

O'BRIEN

Are you ready to talk now?

Nog looks up at him. He knows O'Brien doesn't get it.

NOG

You still think I'm the one with the problem, don't you?

O'BRIEN

Well, you have been biting my head off since I got here.

NOG

Chief, sit down.

O'Brien frowns, but does it. He sits down cross-legged on the ground with Nog. Now they are level.

NOG

Let me explain how this looks from my angle. I was like... your apprentice. I would never have come half as far as I have if you hadn't taken me under your lobes. But then you moved on. And I had the honour of trying to fill your place. Kira made me Chief of Operations, and do you know what everyone said? He's too young. He doesn't have the experience. He'll never manage it. Oh, they kept their voices down, but I could hear them. So I worked my frunk off to prove them wrong.

O'BRIEN

That's what I was saying -

NOG

Let me finish. I wanted to prove that I could do this job just as well as you had. And I did. I've been Chief Engineer here for two years, and people trust me now. They know I can do the job. I even got a promotion! And then you walk in, the man who taught me everything I know, and the first thing you tell me is that I'm doing it wrong. Not that you're proud of me or that you know the station's in safe hands. That I'm not good enough.

Now O'Brien finally understands.

O'BRIEN

Oh, Nog... you're better than good enough. You're brilliant. You taught me things.

NOG

So why treat me like an idiot?

O'BRIEN

I'm the idiot. I was trying to prove to myself that I was still good enough. I've been living on Cardassia for a year, feeling useless. Keiko had her great big project, and I was thrilled for her, but me... I was just bored. The biggest breakdown we had was when one of the digging machines got sand in the gears. Took me ten minutes to blow it out. I just wanted to feel useful again. I never thought of how it must have looked to you. Forgive me?

NOG

Of course I forgive you, Chief.

O'BRIEN

It felt like the old days were back again. Fun on the holodeck with Julian, teaching the new kids what's what... but the old days are over, aren't they?

NOG

Sorry. But yeah, they are.

(beat)

You wanna gimme a hand with this?

O'Brien smiles, and they go back to work together.

33 INT. DS9 - GUEST QUARTERS

...where the O'Brien family has been temporarily housed. Molly sits on the sofa, reading from a pad. Yoshi zooms around the room with his Space Shuttle, totally unworried.

Keiko and Kira stand together by the window, letting the kids do their things.

KIRA

Keiko, I wanted to say I'm sorry if I spoke out of turn the other night.

Keiko is completely unconcerned. Hadn't even realised there was anything wrong.

KEIKO

Oh don't be silly, I never took any offence. You worry too much, Nerys.

Keiko changes the subject freely. Kira is quietly relieved.

KEIKO (cont)

I've spoken with my sister in Kyoto, and she's happy to put us up for a little while, at least until Starfleet figures out what it wants to do with Miles. I don't know if he's spoken to anybody yet.

KIRA

They'll be happy to have the both of you. I just wanted to make sure I took time to say goodbye first.

KEIKO

Thank you for looking after us, as always. And Yoshi had a great time staying with his Aunt Nerys. Didn't you, Yoshi?

Yoshi is zooming around the room, oblivious. Kira smiles, and moves to exit.

KIRA

Keep in touch, yeah? Bye Yoshi!
Bye, Molly.

MOLLY

(over shoulder)

Bye...

Yoshi zooms. He's happy. Kira watches him a moment, and then nods to herself. This is the right thing to do. She lets him be and heads to the door.

In the doorway she crosses paths with O'Brien. She gives him a quick half-hug, then carries on her way. He enters.

KEIKO
Everything alright?

O'BRIEN
Yeah. Just chatting with Nog,
that's all.

He comes up close and holds her, gives her a quick kiss.

O'BRIEN
Keiko, sweetheart, I'm sorry you
lost your job. I know it meant a
lot to you. We'll find you
something just as good, I promise.
Or better.

KEIKO
(amused)
Everybody's apologising today. Is
it something in the water?

O'BRIEN
Maybe. And I'm sorry if I made you
feel guilty. You probably knew I
was bored at Andak. But I don't
want you to ever think that was
your fault.

KEIKO
(nods)
I knew. But you have every right
to your feelings, Miles. We'll
find you something good, too.
Something important, fulfilling,
and not in a war zone.

O'BRIEN
Well, alright then. I guess we're
gonna be okay.

He leans in to kiss her again.

Taran'atar stands staring out of the window at the stars. Vannis moves around in the room behind him, picking up pads and placing items into a small shoulder satchel. She is still smarting from the way Taran'atar talked to her.

VANNIS

(petulant)

I could have you killed for the way you spoke to me in there.

TARAN'ATAR

(unconcerned)

If you truly believed so, you would have already done so. But you know as well as I that you would rather die yourself than defy the Founder.

Of course she would. That doesn't mean she has to like it.

VANNIS

I will return to the Idran system and prepare a report for the Founder. I will make certain to mention your... disrespect.

TARAN'ATAR

(turns to her)

You were sent on this mission to assist me. Do you intend to do so or not?

VANNIS

(seething)

Of course.

TARAN'ATAR

Then cease questioning me. The residents of this station do that enough without my supposed ally joining them. Go now.

Vannis controls her fury just barely enough to nod her acknowledgement, and then turns to leave.

As the door OPENS for her, Kira is there in the corridor, her hand lifted to press the door chime.

KIRA

Oh. Hi. Sorry to interrupt. Are you busy?

TARAN'ATAR

The Vorta is leaving. You may enter, Captain.

Vannis grits her teeth and leaves without a word. Kira shudders from the frosty air, and enters the room.

KIRA

Thanks. I wanted to see how you were doing, after your first diplomatic conference.

TARAN'ATAR

It was a strange experience, Captain. One I was not sure I was prepared for.

KIRA

It's not exactly my forte either. But I thought you did fine.

TARAN'ATAR

I do have a question, however. I observed you during the meeting. Your body language was curious.

KIRA

(blink)

I beg your pardon?

TARAN'ATAR

You were tense when delivering the Federation's decision on Cardassia. And yet you relaxed when Bajor gave its verdict. What does such behaviour mean?

Bit of a personal question, but he wouldn't know better.

KIRA

Umm... it means that I didn't actually agree with the words I was saying. I thought the Federation's decision regarding the Cardassians was wrong. That we should absolutely be supporting the Oralian Way. But I had to say it anyway, because that's my job.

TARAN'ATAR

You are experiencing divided loyalties.

KIRA

I suppose so.

Taran'atar nods with understanding. It's what he thought.

TARAN'ATAR

My instructions also seemed contradictory. I know that the Founders cannot possibly have been wrong to order the destruction of Cardassia. And yet I have been asked to offer sympathy on their behalf.

KIRA

You have doubts about your mission.

TARAN'ATAR

(forced to admit)

I do.

KIRA

I think everyone does.

TARAN'ATAR

How do you resolve them?

KIRA

I'll let you know when I figure that out.

Kira turns and leaves. Once she is gone, Taran'atar turns and looks out of the window again.

After a moment, L'Haan steps out of the shadows and joins him calmly at the window.

L'HAAN

You have done well, Taran'atar.
Even Captain Kira approved of your
conduct as a diplomat.

TARAN'ATAR

She did.

L'HAAN

And was my advice helpful?

TARAN'ATAR

It was.

L'HAAN

Do you have anything to say?

TARAN'ATAR

(grudging)

Thank you.

If Vulcans could do an evil grin, L'Haan would be doing one right now.

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW