

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

13x13 - "Dog Eat Dog"

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on characters from the series

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

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

TNG 18x13 - "THE SPLIT INFINITE"

The lost NX-07 *Intrepid* has been stolen by Daimon Bok (TNG "The Battle") and Berlinghoff Rasmussen (TNG "A Matter of Time"). On board, LaForge follows Bok's orders to continue research into *Intrepid*, while hoping to find a way to contact his fellow engineers on *Challenger*. Nog uses his family connections to get information out of Bok's pirate crew. Bok is taking *Intrepid* to the Split Infinite, a unique anomaly that allows time travel. LaForge figures out the same thing. Rasmussen wants to return to his own time, and Bok wants to save his son, whom Picard killed in battle years ago. In the act of preventing Bok from using the anomaly, *Challenger* is forced to destroy *Intrepid*. But Scotty is injured and unable to remain in command, so he promotes LaForge to captain in his place. LaForge also realises that readings from *Intrepid* match closely with readings from his mother's missing ship *Hera* (TNG "Interface"). Meanwhile, the Tal Shiar have been keeping an eye on events from nearby...

TTN 2x13 - "UPTIME GIRL"

Titan is assigned to another artefact-hunting mission by the DTI. Riker is indignant - his crew is meant to be on an open exploration mission, not at the DTI's beck and call. But an "Obelisk" in the Eridian Vault has activated, reacting to its partner still out there in space, and *Titan* needs to find the second artefact quick before the vault is destroyed. DTI agents Ranjea and Garcia find the Obelisk fairly easily, but someone else is looking for it as well - 31st-century time agent Jena Noi, a contemporary of Daniels (from *Enterprise*). Noi knows all about the DTI but considers them too primitive and "downtime" to safely handle the device, and demands that they give it to her. In the struggle they are all accidentally whisked "uptime" to the 31st Century along with the Obelisk. But on arrival in 3051 London, the three agents are confronted by Assistant Supervisor Jena Noi of the Temporal Intervention Agency. They have somehow accidentally landed in an alternate universe...

VOY 11x13 - "GUILTY CONSCIENCE"

In her role as Fleet Chief Engineer, B'Elanna visits *Achilles*. Cmdr Tillum Drafar seems indignant at the inspection, implying

B'Elanna should pay more attention to her daughter. Eden has realised that *Quirinal*, *Planck* and *Demeter* are overdue for a rendezvous. *Voyager* investigates alone, but Chakotay first off-boards all telepaths except Betazoid ops officer Kenth Lasren. Meanwhile *Demeter* has been dragged into the Children of the Storm's home system. *Demeter*'s captain, Cmdr Liam O'Donnell, is a quirky botanical geneticist with little interest in command. He locks himself away in his lab, perusing all the data on the Children and talking with the ghost of his wife, which XO Lt Cmdr Atlee Fife perceives as abandoning the bridge in a crisis. *Voyager* locates *Quirinal* crashed on a planet, with Captain Farkas critically injured. Eden calls in *Achilles* and *Galen* to help fix the ship and its crew. *Quirinal* has also captured some of the Children, and Lt Lasren can hear their voices...

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. SPACE

The Gamma exit of the wormhole BURSTS open...

...and the *Defiant* flies out, coming to a stop.

2 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

A DISPLAY on acting chief engineer CHAO's console shows a pattern of objects in space - a wide circle of about a dozen of them. Chao turns to the command chair...

CHAO

The last buoy is in position...

(grin)

..."Captain".

Sitting in the captain's chair, TENMEI mock-glows at her.

TENMEI

Thank you, Lieutenant. Mister
Candlewood, are the neutrino
sensors calibrated?

From sciences, CANDLEWOOD replies far too enthusiastically. Tenmei's friends are having some fun with her "promotion".

CANDLEWOOD

Aye aye, sir!

TENMEI

Defiant to Ops - ready to proceed
on your command.

3 INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE

Standing around the central table, RO and CENN share amused looks at the junior officers' horseplay. EXTRAS elsewhere.

RO

You may proceed, *Defiant*.

4 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Tenmei settles comfortably into the command chair.

TENMEI

Alright, you heard the lady. Chao,
activate the cloak. Aleco, course
one-eighty. Let's do it...

CANDLEWOOD

(chuckle)

"Let's do it". So professional.

ALECO works the helm console...

5 **EXT. SPACE**

The *Defiant* loops around, heading straight back for the wormhole, image RIPPLING as the cloak activates. By the time it enters the wormhole, it is already invisible...

6 **INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE**

Cenn interprets the readings on the central table...

CENN

Neutrino levels rising, something
is definitely coming through...

(beat;

w/ victory)

And the grid is activating.

Ro smiles...

7 **EXT. SPACE**

A small round BUOY sends out multiple BEAMS OF ENERGY, connecting it to a dozen other buoys laid out in a circle, creating a complex GRID of criss-crossing energy beams.

In the middle of the circle, the WORMHOLE blooms open. At first nothing seems to emerge...

...but then the energy lines of the grid CATCH on something trying to slip through, leaving a negative image of a small cloaked starship - the *Defiant*.

8 **INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE**

RED ALERT lights flash around Ops, but Ro is not worried...

CENN

Test is successful. Tachyon buoys activated automatically on sensing elevated neutrino levels from the wormhole, tachyon beams detected a cloaked vessel trying to exit the wormhole into Bajoran space...

RO

And that automatically triggered a red alert here on the station. It all worked! Ops to *Defiant*...

9 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Where the young crew are already celebrating (with the lights low, indicating BLUE ALERT for cloak)...

RO (comm)

Congratulations, everyone. The Bajoran system's new tachyon detection grid is online. And congrats on your first command, Lieutenant Tenmei.

TENMEI

Aye, sir. Thank you, sir.

RO (comm)

Return to base, and we'll all meet in the wardroom for debriefing in thirty minutes. Ops out.

TENMEI

Aleco, back to the station. Chao, drop cloak. Candlewood, collate telemetry for the debrief. And good work, everyone.

The crew follow their orders. The lights come back up and we get under way...

10 **INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE**

Ro turns to the EXTRA at tactical...

RO

Stand down red alert.

The extra makes the flashing red lights stop. To Cenn...

RO

So now, with luck, we shouldn't get any more unpleasant surprises through the wormhole. Have you heard from Minister Ledahn yet?

CENN

Yes, the relocation of the last refugees from the station down to Bajor can begin whenever we're ready. I just have to break the news to the refugees themselves.

RO

Off you go, then.

Cenn nods acknowledgement, and heads for the turbolift.

Ro takes over the central table, gazing at the viewscreen and happy with how the day is going so far...

11 **INT. DS9 - CORRIDOR / STI'ACH QUARTERS**

Cenn stands in the corridor, taps the door chime. A moment, and then the door slides OPEN...

And there is nobody there. Cenn looks down...

...and sees the leader of the Sti'ach refugees who came on board in 13x09. This is HULPESH, and like all Sti'ach he is less than a metre tall, blue-furred and teddy bear-like, except for the six limbs and the mouth full of sharp teeth.

HULPESH

Major Cenn. How can I help you?

CENN

Hello, Mister Hulpesh. I hope I
can help you. Can I come in?

HULPESH

Of course.

Hulpesh turns and pitter-patters back into the quarters,
revealing his dorsal spines and short thick tail.

Cenn follows, and finds a room filled with a dozen other
Sti'ach, male and female. They swing from the bulkheads,
clamber on the furniture, and look for all the world like a
room full of children's plushie toys.

Hulpesh flattens his big ears, bares his fangs and HISSES
at another Sti'ach who is sitting on top of the dining
table. That one tumbles backwards off the table, lands on
the deck on all sixes, and scampers away.

Hulpesh LEAPS up onto one seat and sits upon it normally.
Cenn takes the seat opposite, and tries not to smile at the
fact that only Hulpesh's head is visible over the tabletop.

CENN

I've been told that the Bajoran
authorities can now accommodate
you all on the surface. We can
shuttle you all off the station
whenever you're ready to leave.

HULPESH

That's good to hear, Major. We're
glad of the space you've offered
us, of course, but we are much
more comfortable with trees and
sky and water than with metal.

CENN

I completely understand. I'll send
you all the details immediately,
then - we can place half of you at
the Ha'dara temple in Hathon, and
the rest in Wyntara Mas.

The room grows quiet as they all overhear...

HULPESH
You want to split us up?

Suddenly wary, Cenn looks around the room...

...and sees a dozen pairs of big black eyes, a dozen sets of flattened ears, and a dozen sets of big sharp teeth.

Cenn begins to realise he has done something wrong...

FADE OUT

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

12 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

The *Defiant* is back in its usual place on the docking ring, and several of the familiar shuttles and transports are occupying other docking ports around the station.

13 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

Outside the shrine, Lt Cmdr EVIK is conversing MOS with the regular local priest, Vedek CAPRIL. Evik also keeps his eye on the lines of refugees being gently herded by Starfleet security EXTRAS through the airlocks onto the transports.

Eventually we find one of the other Sti'ach, a young female named KUMI, slumped on the deck on the upper level, gazing down at the people coming and going through the airlocks like Jake and Nog used to do. She is sad, withdrawn.

FETT (o.s.)

Hey!

Kumi turns her little blue head, and sees one of Pif's puppies, the girl troublemaker FETT, standing a few feet away and snarling her own array of sharp little teeth.

FETT

This is my place to sit. Find your own place.

Kumi looks away again with an exhausted sigh.

KUMI

Go away, you mindless animal. I'm not in the mood for bullies.

FETT

What did you call me?

KUMI

You see a sentient creature in pain, your first instinct is to attack. What would you call it?

FETT

I'll show you what pain is if you
don't find your own place.

Fett stalks closer, dorsal spines tense, hackles raised, growl in her throat. The Sti'ach seems harmless enough, ripe for the picking. But as Fett readies to attack...

Kumi suddenly pops out her own CLAWS, bares her own fangs, and attacks first with a vicious SWIPE of her forearm against Fett's green-furred flank, drawing blood.

Fett YELPS, more in surprise than pain, and goes on the offensive with snapping jaws. Kumi jumps back out of the way, but not before suffering a SLASH of the puppy's claws.

Teddy bear LEAPS upon puppy, and soon it is a full-on fur-fight, quite literally. Teeth and claws and fur everywhere.

Finally Fett makes an aggressive PUSH forwards, Kumi ROLLS backwards on herself to avoid it...

...and goes tumbling over the edge of the bridge!

Kumi CLINGS to the edge of the bridge with her fore-claws, her four little feet dangling high over the lower deck of the Promenade, eyes wide in terror.

KUMI

Help! Help!

LOWER LEVEL

EVIK hears the cry, turns urgently to see the young Sti'ach dangling precariously, ready to drop at any moment, and the Aarruri puppy BARKING in alarm, unable to help.

He is already on the move as he points to two EXTRAS...

EVIK

You - stand underneath, catch her
if she falls!

Evik runs at top speed up the spiral staircase to...

UPPER LEVEL

...and quickly dives to the deck, laying himself flat and reaching over the edge to grasp Kumi's furry little body.

As crowds, security extras and Vedek Capril gather below, Evik successfully hauls Kumi to safety on the upper deck. He spots the wounds on both of the young creatures...

EVIK

You're hurt. What happened?

KUMI

(furious, scared)

She attacked me!

FETT

(sulky, defensive)

She started it.

Evik gets to his feet, brushing his uniform off...

EVIK

Well, ladies, it may interest you to know that I allow no brawling on the Promenade. Perhaps you can decide who started it from inside a holding cell. Both of you, move.

He points the way back to the stairs, and they go - Kumi still angry, Fett still sulky. As they walk...

EVIK

(taps badge)

Evik to Bashir - please report to security. I have patients for you.

BASHIR (comm)

On my way.

They reach the staircase and start to descend...

14 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Aarruri patriarch PIF angrily prowls down the corridor, jaws locked around the scruff of another of his puppies.

15 INT. DS9 - PIF'S FAMILY QUARTERS

Raucous noise from off-screen, something that might pass as MUSIC to alien ears. The door opens, and Pif practically SPITS his son onto the deck, clearly not happy.

TIFF splats onto his belly, before trying to pull himself upright on unsteady legs, eyes bleary and tongue lolling. Pif's wife SETT approaches, amazed...

SETT

Is he drunk?

Tiff HICCUPS to prove the point.

PIF

He worked his shift at Quark's as normal, and the next thing I know he's as merry as a Merdosian, and then he lifts his leg against the bar. Public urination, Tiffo! What do you have to say for yourself?

TIFF

Heh. S'funny.

PIF

It certainly is not funny, young man. Puppies - in a line please!

Tiff blows a puppy RASPBERRY at his father, then slumps across the floor. Three other puppies reluctantly drag themselves to join him, creating a line of four.

PIF

Where's everyone else?

SETT

I just had a call from Commander Evik - Fettra has been arrested for fighting on the Promenade.

PIF

Arrested?! And what about Wettla?

SETT

She's that noise you hear. Hasn't come out of her room all day, just plays that damned music and won't even talk to her mother.

PIF

What is going on in this family? It's like you've all been taken over by alien imposters.

SETT

Oh, it's worse than that, Pif.
(w/ gravity)
They've become teenagers.

The horror...

16 INT. DS9 - COMMANDER'S OFFICE

The door opens, and EVIK enters. Ro sees the shell-shocked look on his face, and chuckles...

RO

I remember that face from when I had your job...

EVIK

It's been an... interesting day.

RO

That sounds like it calls for a *raktajino*. Come on...

Ro leads Evik over to the couch area, and he sits while she runs the replicator, eventually bringing two steaming mugs.

RO

What did you want to see me for?

EVIK

I'm afraid it's a delicate matter. Vedek Capril asked to talk to me - he's been hearing some concerns from the faithful on the station.

RO
What about?

EVIK
About the tachyon detection grid.

RO
What's that got to do with them?

EVIK
Well... some have expressed the idea that building a supposedly impenetrable barrier across the opening of the Celestial Temple could be perceived as a rather anti-religious move, especially from a known non-believer.

Ro hangs her head and sighs...

RO
Kosst it.

EVIK
I'm sorry, Commander. I know this is a sensitive subject -

RO
No, it's not that. It's just, that never even occurred to me. I was only thinking in tactical terms, trying to protect the Bajoran system, make sure we didn't get any more invaders from beyond.

EVIK
An honourable goal, to be sure.

RO
It's just annoying because I've been trying really hard to not be so anti-religious, and to consider how the Bajorans who are faithful might see things. Obviously I'm not trying hard enough.

Evik gets up from his couch, comes and sits beside Ro, comforting and encouraging.

EVIK

I'm thrilled to hear you're trying to broaden your perspective. It's an admirable thing for anyone to attempt... but it's never easy. So don't beat yourself up if you didn't get it right first time.

RO

What should I do? I don't want to take down the detection grid, that would just leave Bajor vulnerable.

EVIK

I suggest you speak to Capril yourself, explain to him what you've explained to me. He's a reasonable man, and it should help to head off any potential issues if he hears from you directly.

Ro nods, sips her coffee...

17 INT. DS9 - SECURITY CELLS

In one of the cells, behind a force-field, FETT sits at one end of the bed and KUMI sits at the other. Both are licking their wounds, as far away from each other as they can get.

Silence hangs as they sulkily avoid even looking at each other, the force-field buzzing away. At long last...

FETT

Why were you sad?

KUMI

What?

FETT

Earlier, you said you were sad. I was just wondering... why?

Grudgingly, Kumi turns to address Fett more directly...

KUMI

The Bajorans want to send us down to the surface.

FETT

Isn't that a good thing?

KUMI

Not when it means splitting up the pack. We always stay together.

FETT

Hmmph. There are times I'd love to be able to get away from my family. I'm Fett, by the way.

KUMI

Kumi. I just feel so... powerless. And I know Hulpesh feels the same. But it's not easy asking for help.

FETT

(a step closer)

Why not?

KUMI

On our world, we're the undisputed top of the food chain, the most feared predators of all. We hunt in packs, we take what we want...

FETT

Sounds like fun.

KUMI

It was... until the invasion. Now we're just getting shuffled around the galaxy, at the mercy of aliens for beds and food... and we don't even get to all stay together.

FETT

Is there nothing you can do about it? Talk to someone?

KUMI

Like who? Everyone's got their own problems, nobody's going to listen to us. All these humans, Bajorans, they treat us like pets, tell us we're cute and cuddly. I hate it.

FETT

I know how you feel. Tickling our bellies, giving us the scraps off their plates. It's... humiliating. And my father goes along with it, even gets paid to take the abuse.

(beat)

Sorry I picked on you.

KUMI

Sorry I bit you.

FETT

Sorry I threw you off a bridge.

That makes Kumi LAUGH, and the two teenage girls are now friends. They shuffle towards each other on the cell bed.

FETT

You know what? I'm gonna help you.

KUMI

How?

FETT

I don't know. But I promise... I won't let them split up your pack.

The puppy and the teddy bear smile conspiratorially...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

18 INT. DS9 - BAJORAN SHRINE

Quiet, empty between services. RO and CAPRIL talk warmly...

RO

I hope you know I never intended
any offence, Vedek.

CAPRIL

I do know that, Commander. Please
don't worry - I never intended any
criticism.

RO

No, you were right to bring it up.
It's something I should be aware
of, as commander of the station.

CAPRIL

I would have come to you directly,
but I thought it was safer for all
concerned if I allowed Commander
Evik to act as an intermediary -

RO

(smile)

- given that I have a history of
biting the heads off any unlucky
vedek who tries to criticise me.

The sound of RAISED VOICES filters in from the Promenade.
Ro frowns, but it doesn't sound like trouble... yet.

CAPRIL

I'll be sure to explain to anyone
who asks that this is about the
safety of Bajor, nothing more.

RO

Thanks, Vedek. Would it be alright
if I came to you again in future?
Just for another perspective...

CAPRIL

Of course. Or you might continue to confide in Commander Evik if you prefer, since you seem to be comfortable with him already. I support any advice he would give.

More SHOUTS from outside, a consistent repeating chant...

RO

What is going on out there?

CAPRIL

Prophets know it could be anything on this station.

RO

I should go check. Thanks for the talk, Vedek.

CAPRIL

The ears of the Prophets are open to all, Commander.

RO

(heading for
the door)

Pretty sure that's a Rule of Acquisition, actually...

Capril watches her go, chuckling...

19 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

Ro emerges onto the Promenade, but stops in amazement...

...at the sight of a PUBLIC PROTEST in front of the bar. A cluster of aliens, Aarruri and Sti'ach and NAUSICAANS and KLAESTRON and others, standing together and CHANTING.

PROTESTERS

Keep the pack together! Keep the pack together! Keep the pack together! Keep the pack together!

At the front of the group is FETT the puppy, teetering on her hind legs and grasping a handmade PLACARD bearing their slogan in big block letters - "Keep the Pack Together!" Her voice is foremost in the chant - she is the protest leader.

FETT

Keep the pack together! Keep the pack together!

SEBRIGAR the lead Nausicaan balances TIFF on his shoulders, the tiny puppy HOWLING along as the Nausicaan ROARS. The chanting continues as the station's citizens walk by...

Ro spots Evik watching from afar, with a posse of security guards to make sure the peace is kept, so she heads over.

RO

Commander...? What in fire...?

EVIK

Young miss Fettra, fresh from fighting with a Sti'ach on the Promenade, has now decided to take up their cause. They're protesting the plan to split up the Sti'ach refugees across two locations.

RO

And she got all these other folks to join in?

EVIK

Apparently it's an issue that has aroused people's civic spirit.

Ro gazes at the protesters, all chanting and banging their placards on the deck... and she can't help feel guilty.

RO

Have they been feeling this way all along? Are we that blind?

Evik cannot respond - he is equally as surprised by the clear depth of feeling involved.

QUARK pushes past the protesters in dudgeon, and spots Ro.

QUARK

Laren! There you are!

As Quark heads over, Ro sighs - just what she needs. But she pulls on her professional face...

RO

Quark. What can I do for you?

QUARK

You know very well what you can do for me - I want these people off the Promenade. They're blocking the entrance to my bar.

RO

It's not that simple, Quark. The Federation protects the right to peaceful protest, you know that.

QUARK

They're costing me money.

EVIK

Have some compassion, Quark. These people have been cast adrift, and they may well have a good point. They deserve to be heard.

QUARK

(re ears)

I can hear them fine. I've heard it all, believe me - I've been their bartender for months, and I do sympathise. But I also have a right to free and safe access to my business.

(flaps hand)

Get them to stand outside the Replimat - nobody even pays for anything there.

RO

I'll consider it.

QUARK
(exaggerated)
Thank you.
(beat)
Have you been fighting with the
vedeks again?

Quark nods towards the shrine, and Ro turns to see Vedek
Capril standing on the threshold, also watching the crowd.

RO
No - I was just following up on
something that slipped past me.
(back to the
protesters)
...and apparently it wasn't the
first time.

Quark considers her for a moment, wonders what that's all
about. But he lets it go and heads back to his bar. He
shoves his way past the CHANTing protesters again...

QUARK
Will you get out of my way...

Sebrigar ROARS right into Quark's face out of deliberate
defiance, Tiff HOWLING along from his shoulder... Quark
cringes back, shuddering at the noise.

He spots PIF, his *maitre d'*, sat at the bar's threshold and
watching everything with drooping ears...

QUARK
This is all your fault, you know.

...and Quark stomps on. Pif sags further, watching his own
children engage in civil disobedience... and he worries
that Quark might be right.

20 INT. DS9 - WARD ROOM

The door opens, and PIF the Aarruri patriarch strides in,
with HULPESH the Sti'ach leader right on his tail. Ro and
Cenn stand from the conference table and gesture towards
spare seats on the opposite side...

RO

Pif, Hulpesh - thank you both for coming. Please take a seat.

The Aarruri and the Sti'ach both clamber awkwardly up onto the seats, as best as they can. Once they are settled...

RO

You'll obviously both be aware of the protests taking place on the Promenade, since both of your children are involved.

HULPESH

I hope you're not planning to use us to quash the protests on your behalf. I'm very proud of Kumi for standing up for herself.

Pif looks curiously at Hulpesh. But Ro carries on...

RO

Oh Prophets no, that's not why I asked you here at all. I want to listen to your concerns, fully, and then address them.

CENN

I also want to apologise, Hulpesh, for not taking your cultural norms into account earlier. I had no idea it would be an issue for you to be separated out like that. I was just trying to be sure everyone had a roof over their heads.

HULPESH

Please don't think I'm ungrateful for everything you've done for us, Major, Commander. I understand you have a lot of factors to consider, and we were far from the only ones dropped unceremoniously into your hands. But after a while it can be... wearing... to have our basic needs continually disregarded.

RO
Basic needs like what?

HULPESH
First of all, like these chairs
you've given us to sit in. They're
designed for your bodies, and that
is understandable. But it doesn't
make it any easier for me to climb
up from the deck, then sit with my
chin hitting the table top.

Cenn tries to cover his shame - he nearly laughed at that
earlier. Pif hangs his own head, and Ro notices all this...

HULPESH
And what about my daughter? It
shouldn't have even been possible
for her to fall off that bridge -
there should have been safety
barriers to protect those of us
who can fit through the gaps.

Now Ro hangs her own head...

RO
Hulpesh... I am so sorry. You're
absolutely right, of course. I
don't know what's wrong with me
lately, missing all these things
I should have been on top of...

Pif pipes in, trying to be helpful, covering himself...

PIF
You've had a lot to deal with,
Commander, we know that...

RO
That's no excuse. Pif, your own
people are...
(word?)
...comparable in stature to the
Sti'ach. You lived here for years.
Haven't you had the same problems?

Pif gulps, looks aside. Ro realises...

RO

You have! Why didn't you ever say anything?

PIF

I didn't want to be a bother. You know me, Commander - I like to get along with everyone. You weren't obligated to look after us, we're not even from your Federation...

(glance at Hulpesh)

Perhaps I should have said more. Perhaps Fett is only making up for my failure as a father.

HULPESH

(sympathetic)

As parents, we are often forced to make compromises. Our children can afford a more focused perspective.

Into the commiserating silence, Cenn speaks up...

CENN

Okay, so how do we solve this?

PIF

I was thinking about that before you even called us in here, and I think I know what we need to do.

RO

What's that?

PIF

I know one of the reasons you're so eager to get all the refugees off the station is because you're tight on resources...

CENN

That shouldn't be your problem -

PIF

But I know it's true. My puppies have all been acting out lately - they're looking for a direction, a cause. But what jumped out at me was the specific cause they chose - being with your own kind.

HULPESH

Finding a pack of their own.

PIF

(nods)

I don't know if you have a home to go back to, Hulpesh. But I know we do. And if we did that, my family could be with other Aarruri...

(to Cenn)

...and you, Major, would have the resources you need, so that the Sti'ach don't have to leave here and be split up. Plus the protest would be over, which would make Quark happy.

RO

Pif, you don't mean -

PIF

Yes, Commander. I think it's time for my family to leave Deep Space Nine, and go home to Aarru.

Off everyone's reactions to that...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

21 INT. DS9 - PIF'S FAMILY QUARTERS

The six puppies - Tiff, Bif, Nif, Fett, Kett, Wett - sit in a line, all at various levels of sulk and petulance. Their parents Pif and Sett sit on their haunches before them.

FETT

Leave?! This is just you trying to stop our protests, isn't it?

(chants)

Keep the pack together!

(Tiff and Wett

join in)

Keep the pack together!

Pif BARKS loudly, more loudly than the puppies were expecting, and they quiet down in surprise.

PIF

I am trying to stop the protests, Fett, but not for the reasons you think. The truth is, I've heard what you're saying, and you've convinced me.

TIFF

I don't get it...

SETT

Your father believes - and I have to say I agree with him - that we would all benefit from going back to our roots, as the humans say. Reconnecting with our homeworld.

BIF

But we live here. We've only ever lived here.

PIF

Yes... and I'm starting to think that's a bad thing.

TIFF

I don't get it...

PIF

I know you've all been struggling with your identities, rebelling and disobeying rules. And that's fine, I support that, it's what adolescents are supposed to do -

FETT

(rolls eyes)

Eeuch, daaad...

PIF

But I don't think it helps that you've never known any Aarruri who weren't your family. You need to find friends of your own, and see what life is like when you're not the only Aarruri around.

TIFF

(tongue twister)

Only Aarruri around, only Aarruri around, only Aarruri around...

SETT

(stern)

Tiffles...

Pif steps forward, lies down flat with his nose close to Fett's - he's trying to connect with his stropo daughter.

PIF

Fett, my little troublemaker... you spoke, and I listened. For once. I actually like getting my belly tickled... but it's okay if you don't. I want you - all of you - to be able to learn from and live with all kinds of people. But I think you need to know who you are first. And for that... we really need to go home.

FETT
But... Kumi, and her family...

PIF
Ah, well - if we leave, that means
your Sti'ach friends don't have
to, you see? They can all stay
together here. You've won!

FETT
But only if I leave instead...

PIF
Sorry. Just think of it as one
more thing you can resent me for,
as all normal teenagers should.

FETT
(rolls eyes)
Eeuch, daaad...

Pif and Sett both chuckle...

22 **EXT. PUBLIC FIELD - DAY**

One of the puppies comes CRASHING out of the bushes and
into the clearing, a Sti'ach on his tail as they playfully
chase and fight each other.

Sett watches this and smiles, while she sits on the grass
under a bright sunny sky, with Fett at her side. The mother
Aarruri is sensitive to her daughter's sad mood.

SETT
Why don't you go and play with
your brothers and sisters?

Fett doesn't respond, just sighs.

SETT
I know - you're too grown up for
that now. Wasn't so long ago I
couldn't stop you from climbing
those trees, diving in the pool.

Sett looks around - Ro, Cenn, Quark, Tenmei, Candlewood, plus Pif and Hulpesh, and both of their extended broods. All in small groups - the kids playing, the adults watching while snacking from yummy pick-a-nick baskets. It's a nice sunny day out in the holo-park for everyone to say goodbye.

SETT

I know you're sad, sweetheart. But I don't think that should stop you from enjoying yourself. It's your last chance to play with your new Sti'ach friends... and I think that would be a nice memory to take home with you.

Just then, Kumi trundles up on all sixes...

KUMI

Hey Fett - you wanna go swimming?

FETT

(glance at Sett)
Yeah... I'd like that.

The two girls go off to play, and Sett smiles.

Pif and Hulpesh...

HULPESH

Is this how your planet looks?

PIF

Mostly. Near enough. It's been a great way for the kids to get some fresh air and wear themselves out.

HULPESH

My world is much... wetter. Big oceans, small islands... that's why all the life stayed small too.

PIF

Quark found this programme for me, I'm sure he'd be able to find one for you too, if you ask him. He's very resourceful that way.

Hulpesh gulps, his ears drooping and his spines sagging. He is having emotional thoughts of his homeworld.

HULPESH

I might just do that. Thank you,
Mister Gaber.

PIF

Oh, call me Pif. Everybody does!

Over to Quark and Ro, sat on the grass and picnicking...

QUARK

So are you ever going to tell me
what's going on with you?

RO

Nothing's going on... not really.

QUARK

So convincing.

RO

(mock glare)

I told you I wasn't ready to talk
about it yet.

QUARK

That was months ago. Look - you
take off your protest earring, you
spend hours talking with Cenn and
Evik, you even wave a cheery hello
to Vedek Capril when you walk by
the shrine. I'm starting to wonder
if I'm witnessing some kind of big
religious awakening.

RO

That's not it, Quark. You're not
going to see me joining services
or preaching alongside Kira.

QUARK

Good. One of those is enough.

RO

I'm just trying to be a better commander. If I'm going to be in charge of this place for a while - which it looks like I am - then I need to be a commander for every one here, and that includes the religious community. Especially them. We are in the Bajor system.

QUARK

You never used to give a damn what religious people thought, Bajoran system be *frinxed*.

RO

And maybe I was wrong about that. I'm not converting - I'm just trying to listen to them without dismissing them out of hand.

QUARK

Okay. And how's that going?

RO

It doesn't come naturally. I'm not sure I'll ever really understand. But... I'll keep trying.

Quark nods. It's interesting to see Ro be so introspective.

Puppy Tiff jumps right into Quark's lap, making him JUMP.

TIFF

Hi!

QUARK

Bah!

Tiff looks up with a big toothy grin, tail wagging... While Quark covers his grimace, Ro tickles Tiff behind the ear - then realises that's exactly the kind of thing Pif and Hulpesh were talking about, and pulls her hand back.

RO

Hi yourself, Tiff. How are you?

TIFF
I'm hungry. But other than that
I'm okay.
(big puppy eyes)
Uncle Quark...?

QUARK
...Yes?

TIFF
Before we go, I just wanted to
say... thank you.

Shocked out of his reflexive revulsion, Quark gapes...

QUARK
What for?

TIFF
For letting me follow you around,
letting me learn from you. You
were my favourite part of living
here, and I won't forget you.

QUARK
I won't forget you either, Tiff.

Fighting back tears, Quark strokes Tiff's furry little
puppy head. Ro is happy - clearly, Quark has changed too.

RO
You'd better make sure to fit in
as much playing as you can, Tiff.
Your runabout is scheduled to
leave at fifteen-hundred.

QUARK
Are you driving?

RO
I am. And I've asked Doctor Bashir
to come along too.

TIFF
Okay! See you there!

Quite happy, Tiff gambols off into the bushes. Quark watches him go... Ro reaches out to hold his hand.

23 **INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE**

The main VIEWSCREEN shows Ro sat in a runabout, BASHIR next to her. They are going through the pre-flight checks...

RO (screen)
We should be back in a couple of days. You've got command of the station, Major.

At the central Ops table, Major Cenn nods acknowledgement.

CENN
Understood, Commander.

Ro next looks to Tenmei, stood beside Cenn...

RO (screen)
Lieutenant Tenmei, I'm leaving the *Defiant* in your hands. I don't think anything will happen, but if it does, follow Cenn's lead, and trust your crew. You'll do fine.

TENMEI
(gulp)
Aye, sir.

On screen, Pif trots up behind Ro and Bashir, having just emerged from the rear cabin. He stretches up to rest his fore-paws on the console, talking to everyone in Ops.

PIF (screen)
Bye again, everyone. It's been lovely living and working with you all, and I hope we get to see each other again some day. Oh, and say goodbye to Nog if you see him.

In Ops, all the senior staff watch the screen with emotion - Candlewood at sciences, Chao at engineering, Aleco at tactical, and Evik, Tenmei and Cenn around the Ops table.

CENN
We will, Pif. Best of luck to you.

RO (screen)
See you soon. And don't forget to
turn the detection grid back on
once we're gone. *Brahmaputra* out.

Ro cuts the comm line, and Tenmei sighs...

TENMEI
Seems like everyone's leaving the
station these days.

CENN
(off panels)
Activating runabout pad B...

24 **EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE**

The launch pad rises up and locks into place, and the
runabout launches off...

...heads out towards the ring of tachyon buoys, which do
not react for the moment...

...the WORMHOLE blooms open...

And the runabout dives into its maw, and is gone.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

25 EXT. SPACE - RUNABOUT

The runabout flies at warp, zooming past us on its way into the depths of the Gamma Quadrant...

26 INT. RUNABOUT - REAR CABIN

The puppies all stand on the couches beneath the rear and side windows, paws up on the windowsills and eyes glued to the star-streaked view. The lights are darkened, the better to see the stars warping by outside.

BIF

(gasp)

Look at that...

WETT

This side's even prettier...

A wide shaft of LIGHT falls over the darkened room, as the door opens and Bashir enters. The puppies react...

TIFF

Hey, put that light out!

BASHIR

(oops)

Sorry...

He quickly steps inside so that the door can close behind him and return the room to darkness. The curtains covering one of the bunk beds by the door ruffle open, Pif's nose poking through. He looks up...

PIF

Oh, hi Doctor. Sorry about that,
they're just excited by the stars.

BASHIR

It's fine - your first warp flight
is something you never forget.

PIF

Well, it's not really their first
- just the first one they're old
enough to remember.

BASHIR

I was hoping to give them a last
check-up, make sure there are no
little passengers that could cause
havoc on an unsuspecting planet.

PIF

Probably a good idea - kids can
pick up a bug anywhere.

Pif clambers out of the bunk-bed, leaving Sett curled up
asleep, and down to the deck.

PIF

Puppies - in a line, please!

Still exasperated with their indescribably lame father, the
puppies grudgingly line up on couch under the rear windows.

PIF

Thank you. Doctor Bashir wants to
give you all a medical check-up
before we get home. Doctor - how
do you want to proceed?

BASHIR

The table doubles as a bio-scanner
- that should do nicely.

PIF

Okay, one at a time. Up you go!

Fett is as ever the bravest - she tenses her little legs
and LEAPS the distance, landing on the conference table
with a skittering of tiny claws and a proud grin.

BASHIR

Nicely done.

Bashir presses controls on the conference table, and it
LIGHTS UP with scanning beams and readouts. Meanwhile...

BASHIR
Your scratches are healing well.
Anything else I should know about?

FETT
My stomach hurts...

BASHIR
(off scanners)
I'm not seeing any infections or
gastric problems. You know what -
I think it's probably just nerves.

PIF
Nerves...?

BASHIR
I just mean that you're worried
about all the changes going on,
and those emotions are having a
physical effect. I imagine you're
all feeling that way...?

He looks to the other puppies - they look at each other,
no-one willing to be the first to admit the obvious.

BASHIR
Don't worry, it's normal. I'd be
surprised if you weren't nervous.
But maybe it will help to think
about this - where you're going,
everything is designed for you.

FETT
What do you mean?

PIF
No more struggling to fit into a
human or Bajoran world. No more
stretching to reach the chair or
the table - or even the bar.

TIFF
(sad pout)
No more belly tickles?

PIF
I'm sure you'll find someone to
tickle your belly for you.
(clears throat)
But, ah... we can have that
conversation another time.

Bashir covers a smirk. Then the engine sounds and the sight
out of the windows change, as the ship drops out of warp.

RO (comm)
Ro to Bashir and Pif - we're
entering the Aarru system, if
you'd like to join me up front?

BASHIR
With you in a moment, Commander.
(taps badge
to close)
Well... here we are. I can finish
the scans later, but I think this
is something you should all see.

Off the puppies' intrigued excitement...

27 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Bashir leads Pif, Sett and all six puppies into the front
cabin. The adult Aarruri can stretch up to look through the
windows, but Bashir places three puppies onto his own seat,
holds two in his arms, and the last jumps into Ro's lap.

And they all look out of the window, gasping to see...

Their own homeworld of AARRU, green-blue-white and quite
beautiful against the black of space. A gentle ALERT on
Ro's console - she checks it...

PIF
What's that?

RO
Just a little surprise I arranged.

Ro works the console. A crackle of static, and then...

DEZ (comm)
Even Odds to *Brahmaputra*. Good to
see you again, Commander.

Pif and Sett's jaws drop...

28 **EXT. SPACE - AARRU ORBIT**

As the runabout slips into orbit over the planet, another ship is moving slowly to meet it - the freighter *Even Odds*. It is less patchwork than it was after its repair in 11x04 "Separation Manoeuvres Complete", but still recognisable.

RO (comm, v.o.)
Good to see you too, *Even Odds*.
Glad you got my message.
Permission to come aboard?

DEZ (comm, v.o.)
Permission granted, *Brahmaputra*.

29 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

At the sound of their old captain's friendly voice, Pif and Sett BARK happily. The puppies YIP along, unsure why...

SETT
It's the *Even Odds*! Puppies, this
is where your father and I met, on
board this ship. It's where you
were born. You're named after it!

Ro brings the two ships closer together...

30 **EXT. SPACE - AARRU ORBIT**

Even Odds' rear shuttle bay hatch opens to space, and the runabout carefully manoeuvres inside the larger ship...

31 **INT. EVEN ODDS - HANGAR**

The runabout settles to the deck next to the *Even Odds'* own dropship, and the large space hatch closes behind it. After a few moments, the runabout's own door HISSES open...

...and the puppies are the first ones to PELT out of the door at top speed. Pif and Sett follow out more steadily.

The familiar faces are there to greet them - Captain DEZ, buxom Wadi first officer FACITY, reserved Cardassian medic GLESSIN, hulking Dosi gem specialist BRAD, and the twin Ferengi accountants FEG and TRIV.

They all hug the adult Aarruri in welcome and let the excited puppies jump all over them - all except for the Ferengi, who stand back with a grimace of horror. Ro and Bashir emerge from the runabout and wait their turn.

Eventually Dez and Facity come over to greet Ro, while in the background, Bashir moves to shake hands and exchange medical officer talk with Glessin, re checking the Aarruri.

RO

Thanks for meeting up with us,
Dez. I wasn't sure we'd be
welcome, considering...

FACITY

Don't worry about it. Dez likes to
pretend he's a tough guy, but he's
a big softy underneath.

(elbow in
the ribs)

Aren't you?

Dez faux-glares at Facity - Ro recognises the look of two people who love each other really, despite all the barbs. Then Dez turns back to Ro, grows more sombre...

DEZ

Commander... I heard about your
invasion. I'm glad to see you all
came through it in one piece.

RO

Well... not all of us.

DEZ

I did notice Jake wasn't with you.
Or Nog, or any of their friends.
They're not...?

RO

Oh no, they're fine. They just all moved on somewhere else. Been a lot of that lately, all over the Federation. Nog, Shar, Jake, Kira, Sisko, now even Pif. All moved on.

FACITY

It happens, I'm afraid. We've got a few new faces around here too, since we last saw you.

Glessin and Bashir lead the Aarruri out of the hangar bay and into the rest of the ship, the Ferengi still cringing back. Ro watches them go, sighs, then rallies...

RO

Better get that cargo unloaded. I had no idea people who never wear clothes could pack so much stuff.

BRAD

Let me help you with that...

Ro smiles her thanks, and the two women head back into the runabout. Dez and Facity look to each other nervously...

32 INT. EVEN ODDS - MEDICAL BAY

One of the puppies sits on Glessin's bio-bed, tail thumping happily while the scanning LIGHTS do their work.

While Glessin works the controls and reads the results, the other puppies wait their turn, Bashir stroking one's head.

BASHIR

And you've had no trouble from the Dominion?

Glessin seems oddly nervous as he responds evasively...

GLESSIN

Oh, no. They closed their borders, and we're perfectly happy to give them a wide berth.

(changes subject)
What about Cardassia? I heard they
came through the invasion intact.

BASHIR
Largely, yes. They still lost some
ships, but the planet wasn't hit.
In fact they're in negotiations to
join the Khitomer Accords with us
and the Klingons.

GLESSIN
(shakes head)
Remarkable... I abandon my home
world for one measly decade, and
everything changes.

The medical bay doors OPEN, and Ro pokes her head in...

RO
Hey - everything okay in here?

BASHIR
I think so, yes, Commander. We're
just finishing the last of these
medical scans, and then I'll meet
you back at the runabout.

RO
Sounds good. Nice to see you,
Glessin.

GLESSIN
Commander.

Ro heads out, and the doctors return to their work...

33 INT. EVEN ODDS - TURBOLIFT

Ro steps aboard the turbolift.

RO
Hangar deck.

The computer BEEPS, the door closes and the turbolift goes
on its way. As it does, Ro stands alone, thinking.

Then the turbolift stops again, the door OPENS and Ro walks out thoughtlessly, into a BLINDING WHITE LIGHT...

34 RO

throws her hands up, protecting her eyes from the glare, the unexpected and overwhelming WHITENESS. Gradually her eyes become accustomed, and she looks around, wincing at...

35 THE WA

The formless WHITE SPACE at the centre of the *Even Odds*, as seen in previous episodes. But Ro never saw that, and she is not sure what she is seeing now...

She walks forward a few steps, searching, the dimensionless void making it seem as if she has moved no distance at all.

RO
Hello? Is anybody here?

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)
I am here...

Ro's face drops - against all reason, she recognises that voice. She turns slowly, and sees him standing there...

RO
Taran'atar...

Off Ro's stunned, uncomprehending reaction...

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

36 THE WA

Ro stands in the formless white space, facing somebody who cannot possibly be there - her Jem'Hadar friend TARAN'ATAR. He seems calm, at peace. She backs away, uncomprehending...

TARAN'ATAR

Ro Laren. Please don't be afraid.
I will not hurt you.

RO

But... you're dead. Kira told me
you were dead. She saw it happen.

TARAN'ATAR

Yes... Kira Nerys was there.

RO

Then how can you be standing here?
Kira wouldn't lie to me, not about
that. Where is here, anyway?

Taran'atar chooses his words carefully...

TARAN'ATAR

What Kira told you was true... as
far as she understood it. As for
where we are, this is... a place.
Between places. A place that does
not exist, yet... here we are.

RO

(wary)

You're talking gibberish. You're
deliberately trying to throw me
off from whatever's going on here.

TARAN'ATAR

Ro Laren, forever the sceptic. But
I am Taran'atar. And it is good to
see you again, my friend.

Ro gazes up at him, and despite all sense, she somehow knows he is telling the truth. She smiles through tears...

RO

It's good to see you again too,
Taran'atar. And I'm so sorry...
I never got to say goodbye.

TARAN'ATAR

Do not be sad. I am happy where I
am, doing what I am doing...

(beat)

Are you happy, Ro?

Ro flinches at the question, turns away to avoid answering it. She falls back on her tactical instincts...

RO

I don't understand any of this. It
makes no sense. You can't be here.

TARAN'ATAR

I know how you feel. I struggled
for so long to understand what my
gods wanted of me -

RO

(spins back to him)

Gods? What do you mean? That's got
nothing to do with it...

But the look on her face suggests she's not so sure.

TARAN'ATAR

I can't explain it easily. Let us
simply enjoy this time.

RO

I... don't know if I can do that.

TARAN'ATAR

(smile)

You were always so... aggressive.
Adversarial. Peace is possible,
I promise you.

RO
Looks like you've found it... I
wouldn't mind knowing how.

TARAN'ATAR
That answer is inside you, Ro. But
you shouldn't even be here. It is
too soon. Go, I will be... fine.

RO
(frustrated)
But I still don't understand...

Taran'atar turns away himself now, trying to find the best
way to explain without revealing too much...

TARAN'ATAR
Maybe this is one of those moments
we are not meant to understand. We
must simply accept it on... faith.

RO
How do I do that?

TARAN'ATAR
Start by closing your eyes... and
trusting me.

Ro hesitates, unsure, but finally does as he asks, and
closes her eyes.

37 **RO**

Eyes closed against the white light.

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)
Now walk forwards. Trust me.

RO
I do trust you.

So she takes a few steps forwards...

...and the white light WOOSHES away. Feeling the change, Ro
opens her eyes again...

38 **INT. EVEN ODDS - TURBOLIFT**

...and sees she is back in the turbolift, as if nothing has happened. She looks around herself in confusion, breathing heavy from the emotional impact of her experience. But she eventually pulls herself under control, and carries on.

RO
Hangar deck.

The turbolift continues on its way.

39 **INT. EVEN ODDS - HANGAR**

Dez, Facity, Pif and Bashir stand near the parked runabout. RO enters from the corridor, distracted and ponderous.

BASHIR
Ah, here she comes now.
(Ro looks up)
Commander. How did I manage to get back here before you, when you left the medical bay first?

RO
I, ah... I think I got lost.

They all look confused at that - it's a small ship. But Bashir pushes past it...

BASHIR
The puppies are all healthy as... well, as a horse. And I've done the pre-flight for the runabout. So whenever you're ready...

RO
Thanks, Doctor. Probably time we were on our way. Dez, Facity, great to see you again. Pif... good luck. And tickle Tiff's belly for me, would you?

PIF
He'll love that.

Ro crouches down to Pif's level, gives his nose a NUZZLE. Then she stands, waves to Dez and Facity, and heads back into the runabout with Bashir. The hatch HISSES shut.

Pif turns to leave the hangar. At the door he stops, and SNIFFS the air, but then decides it's nothing, and EXITS.

As the hangar bay door slowly opens, the air kept in with force-fields, Dez and Facity watch and talk quietly...

FACITY

Do you think they know?

DEZ

No reason they should. As far as Starfleet is aware, the Wa was destroyed, and Taran'atar was killed on a Founder's order.

FACITY

And what about Pif? I don't like keeping things from a friend, even if he is a motormouth.

DEZ

Not yet. We might have work for him later, but for now, he doesn't need to know the Wa grew back, or that we use it to hide Taran'atar.

FACITY

And to hide other people, when the need arises.

DEZ

Exactly. The Dominion can't find out. It's safer for Pif and his family to stay ignorant for now.

The runabout finally lifts up, slips out through the force-field, and into space. Dez and Facity turn to leave the room, but as they pass the door...

...we can just make out a humanoid SHAPE, cloaked and barely visible but enough to know that it is Taran'atar, hiding in his shroud and watching his friend leave.

40 **INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE**

TENMEI is at the central ops table, with Chao, Candlewood and Aleco at their places, plus extras.

Suddenly the station goes to RED ALERT, alarm sounding and lights flashing. The office door opens, Cenn rushes out.

CENN
What is it?

ALECO
Checking... the tachyon detection grid activated. Something's coming through the wormhole.

CENN
On screen...

They all turn to watch the main VIEWSCREEN...

...which shows the WORMHOLE blooming open, the beams of the TACHYON GRID glittering across it...

...and the RUNABOUT flies out. Everyone relaxes.

CENN
Cancel red alert. Lieutenant, send a welcome message, and give them clearance to the docking platform.

TENMEI
Aye, Major.

Tenmei works the central ops table...

41 **EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - RUNABOUT PLATFORM**

The runabout lands gently on the platform, which begins to lower into the station.

42 **INT. DS9 - DOCKING CORRIDOR**

Cenn waits as the airlock cycles open, and Ro and Bashir walk out. Ro remains thoughtful, distant.

CENN
Welcome back Commander, Doctor.
Everything went okay?

RO
Fine. Is Nath around?

CENN
In his office, as far as I know.

RO
Thanks.

Ro walks off, clearly distracted. Cenn turns to Bashir...

CENN
What was that about?

BASHIR
She won't say.

43 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE

Ro and Evik sit in the two guest chairs, talking quietly.

EVIK
Describe it again...

RO
Warm white light. No dimensions.
And somebody I know for a fact is
dead, talking to me like the old
friends we were.

EVIK
Well, it certainly sounds like
every Orb experience I've ever
read about in the sacred texts.

RO
But there was no Orb anywhere near
me. And why there, of all places -
in the turbolift of a pirate ship
in the Gamma Quadrant?

EVIK

Maybe you were simply in the right frame of mind for the Prophets to reach you. You had been thinking about religious matters recently.

RO

Do you really think that's what it was - a vision from the Prophets?

EVIK

The question is, what do you think it was?

Ro takes a moment to ponder the question.

RO

I really don't know. I don't believe in gods or prophets. I've never had a religious experience in my life, and I never expected to. But... I honestly don't have any other explanation for it.

EVIK

This is something you'll have to work through for yourself, Laren. I can guide you, but the answers must come from within. What I can tell you is that "I have no other explanation for it"... that's as good a definition of a religious experience as any I've ever heard.

Ro continues to sit there, thinking it all over...

44 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

The doors from the security office open, and Ro and Evik emerge, strolling amiably towards the bar.

EVIK

As you can see, most refugees have now left the station and taken up more permanent residences on Valo Two, Prophets Landing or Bajor.

RO
Most? Not all?

EVIK
A small handful chose to stay.

RO
(smile)
No pun intended...

Because as they approach the doorway of the bar, they spot a proper *maitre d'*s LECTERN set just inside, and HULPESH the Sti'ach perched behind it, at humanoid chest level. The diminutive creature is not the fawning fun-lover that Pif was, but a professional who demands to be taken seriously.

HULPESH
Good afternoon, Commanders.

RO
Mister Hulpesh - you're the bar's
new *maitre d'*?

HULPESH
I am indeed.

EVIK
Ambassador Quark was eventually
convinced that the bar's patrons
had become accustomed to someone
greeting them at the door.

RO
As long as it's not a pity hire.

HULPESH
Absolutely not. I take this job
very seriously - that's why I
insisted on a proper lectern so
that I can look my customers in
the eye instead of the ankle.

EVIK
On that subject, is there a table
for the Commander and myself?

HULPESH

In fact, I have a standing reservation for the station's commander and her guests.

RO

I like it. This place is looking better already.

HULPESH

I only have one house rule...

EVIK

And what's that?

HULPESH

Do not pet me.

Hulpesh bears his fangs in a faux-threatening smile to make his point. Ro nods formally.

RO

I accept your terms, Hulpesh.

With that, Hulpesh clammers down the step-ladder built into his high chair, and leads Ro and Evik further into the bar.

Pull back as the Promenade goes about its business...

FADE OUT

END OF SHOW