

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

9x09 - "Paradigm."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novella

"Paradigm"
by Heather Jarman

appearing in

Star Trek: Worlds of Deep Space Nine
Book 1 - Cardassia / Andor

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. THELASA-VEI MARKET - NIGHT

A big open air free-for-all PARTY. Andorians and other aliens, all dressed in elaborate Spring Water Festival outfits, carouse and celebrate all over the place.

Loud MUSIC plays, coloured STREAMERS fly in the wind, FIREWORKS explode in bright colours in the sky. The adverse weather has not dulled the party spirit at all.

SHAR and TENMEI trot into the throng, still wearing their plain *ceara* outfits. Both are excited by the spectacle, and by the fact that they have basically run away from home...

TENMEI

This place is amazing, Shar! Why would you ever want to be away from here? Well... I mean, apart from your mom and all that...

(beat)

Never mind.

SHAR

It is unfortunate circumstances have to be so complicated.

TENMEI

Especially when it means giving up all this!

(changing subject)

So... now that we're fugitives from the law, what do you think of our career options? Me, I'd like to be a pirate. Establish a base in the Badlands.

Shar isn't sure for a moment whether she is kidding. But he figures it out, and plays along with a smirk...

SHAR

The Orion Syndicate is always looking for good pilots.

TENMEI

Why bother with them? They're
yesterday's bad guys. We should
go into business for ourselves.

SHAR

But how could a scientist help a
pirate?

TENMEI

Are you kidding me? Ensuring the
purity of whatever we smuggle.
Devising clever new products to
sell on the black market.

SHAR

We would make a contribution to
civilisation, in other words.

TENMEI

(grin)

That sarcasm thing's coming on
great, Shar.

(pulls at clothes)

You know what, I'm getting kinda
hot in this crowd. Wait there.

Tenmei dodges sideways into an alley. A few moments later
she emerges with her clothes rearranged - the pants ripped
off into short shorts, and the shirt tied up into a halter-
top that reveals her stomach and shoulders.

She shakes her hair out and comes back to Shar, spinning to
show him every angle. He is transfixed, gazing at her...

TENMEI

So is some Andorian purist going
to assault me for wearing the
ceara wrong, or is this okay?

(no answer)

Shar? Is it okay? ...I can change
it back if you want.

SHAR

You are... lovely.

TENMEI

(blushes)

I wasn't fishing for compliments,
but I'll take it.

She reaches for his hand, pulls him back into the crowd and the party, towards a booth selling drinks.

The VENDOR gives hands over a cup each in exchange for some currency - it is the same vendor as in 9x08, but they don't notice that for now. They begin to sip at the drinks, and Tenmei looks out at the people in the crowd...

TENMEI

So tell me. What do all these
different costumes mean?

SHAR

They are the traditional clothing
of the four sexes.

He points to a male wearing the same kind of armour as the door guards at the Keep, if more party-appropriate. He is holding hands with another male in a loose chainmail shirt and leather kilt...

SHAR

That one, in warrior's attire, is
chan. My kind. Those ones in the
chainmail, they are *thaan*.

TENMEI

Like Anichent.

Shar then points to a female dressed like Thia in 9x08...

SHAR

The embroidered *ceara* and face-
paint indicates that she is *zhen*.

TENMEI

You mean like...
(don't mention
Thriss)
...Thia.

SHAR

Yes. And the *shen* would wear a similar outfit, except with her entire back bared to reveal her fertility to the Water Guardian.

Becoming bolder and bolder, Tenmei turns seductively again, making sure to reveal her own naked back to Shar. Getting the message, Shar openly admires her. Heightened by the party atmosphere, their inhibitions are loosening...

TENMEI

Let's dance.

Tenmei knocks the remainder of her drink back, grabs Shar's hand again, and pulls him deeper into the gyrating crowd. He finishes his own drink and follows her readily...

Once in the middle, they move rhythmically to the music. It isn't long before they get a little closer, closer still, flashing flirtatious eye contact and body movements. Tenmei shakes her head a bit, as if clearing a fuzzy brain...

TENMEI'S POV

Shar, excited by the dance, looking amorous and sweaty and alluring. But the edges are blurring, the colours blending together, sounds becoming muddy, losing focus. Shar is also affected, confused and unfocused. She reaches out to him...

TENMEI

Shar... something's wrong...

BACK TO SCENE

Both stumble even as they continue to dance. Heartbeats rush, breath heaves, movements more explicit all the time.

Alarmed and confused, Tenmei holds on to Shar to steady herself. Still, through it all, the attraction to Shar and the lack of inhibitions grow stronger and harder to deny.

Tenmei turns her head and manages to focus on...

ANOTHER ANGLE

...showing the vendor at his stall, laughing while handing out more drinks to partiers...

FLASHBACK - 9x08 "NO PLACE LIKE HOME"

The vendor making his shady transaction with Matthias...

MATTHIAS
(v.o., from 9x08)
Saf is a powerful aphrodisiac...

FLASHBACK

As the vendor hands Shar and Tenmei their own drinks...

MATTHIAS
(v.o., from 9x08)
The overdose threshold is
alarmingly low...

BACK TO SCENE

As Tenmei realises what has happened...

TENMEI
Saf... he gave us *saf*...

Tenmei's movements are getting rougher and more unbalanced, and Shar is not far behind.

TENMEI'S POV

As she starts to tumble to the ground... Shar's blurred and worried face looms over her... and the last thing she sees is Shar trying to reach out to her as he begins to fall too, and then --

BLACK OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

2 INT. KEEP - SLEEPING AREA

Tenmei lies unconscious on her bedroll. She comes to very gradually, testing her eyelids and instantly regretting it. Every movement is agony, so it's best to just stay still...

MATTHIAS (o.s.)

Prynn?

MATTHIAS crouches gently by her bedside, worried but relieved to have Tenmei back safe...

TENMEI

(croaking)

Yeah. I think so. But considering that I feel like my skin has been turned inside out and my organs are hanging on the outside, I can't be sure about that.

MATTHIAS

(soft chuckle)

I've had other patients tell me same thing after a *saf* overdose. Consider yourself lucky.

TENMEI

Yeah... sure feel lucky.

MATTHIAS

I'm serious. Luckily, Andorians have learned how to deal with accidental overdoses, especially for their off-world guests. But the treatments will take a few hours. Until your body rebalances itself, you'll feel --

TENMEI

Like I've been stampeded by a rampaging targ? Yeah, that about covers it. What about Shar?

MATTHIAS
(uncomfortable pause)
Shar's fine. A lot has happened.

TENMEI
I know. We stole the shuttle --

MATTHIAS
The shuttle's recovered. All that
will be dealt with in due time.

TENMEI
Then what?

MATTHIAS
Vretha is missing. She's been
kidnapped.

Tenmei JERKS upright - and immediately assaulted by nausea
and dizziness. Matthias gently pushes her back down...

MATTHIAS
You can't do anything about it. As
soon as I have more information...

TENMEI
But I have to --

MATTHIAS
No. You have to rest, and sleep
off the effects a bit longer.
You're both extremely lucky, you
know. If it weren't for Anichent,
you, at least, would be dead.

TENMEI
Anichent...?

MATTHIAS
He followed you when you ran away.
And he saved your life.

Emotions whirling again - worry, guilt, gratitude - Tenmei
drifts off back into drugged unconsciousness...

3 INT. CAVES

Lying on the rough stone floor, VRETHA gradually comes back to consciousness, in much the same state as Tenmei. The edges of the cave are in darkness, but two Andorian FIGURES crouch in the shadow - a *thaan* and a *chan*...

THAAN
Welcome back, Councillor.

Vretha spits on the ground at their feet...

THAAN
Temper. Such theatrics might work in the council chamber, but here it's just the three of us.

VRETHA
Are you going to kill me?

In response to her dry, croaky voice, the *chan* approaches and pushes a water bottle to her lips. She hesitates...

CHAN
It's not poisoned.

To prove it, he drinks from the bottle himself, then hands it back to Vretha. She takes a few hearty gulps...

THAAN
The important question is, would killing you best serve our cause? The answer to that, Councillor, has yet to be determined.

Vretha refuses to give anything away...

4 INT. KEEP - THANTIS'S WORKSHOP

Shar SLAMS Thia hard against the wall, disturbing the tapestries hanging there. The scream dies in her throat as he grips her hard with one hand, while the other is pulled back ready to drive it right through her eyes.

Behind them, keep guard CH'SHAL pulls his ceremonial blade, fully prepared to use it. THANTIS holds the guard back...

THANTIS
Guard, stand down!

MATTHIAS
Shar! It's not what you think!

SHAR
It was you. You used *saf* on Chari-
vretha. That's how you got her.
And you were behind what happened
to Prynn and me, weren't you? You
nearly killed her!

Thantis comes close, takes his face between her hands,
forces him to look at her and see her own sadness...

THANTIS
Thirishar, please. You must
listen. Do not do this thing.

But it's only the unexpected sound of a small baby CRYING
that finally breaks Shar's deadly stare. He looks down --

-- and sees that Thia's BABY is inside her pouch. He lets
her go with a shock, stumbling backwards. Thia drops, and
Matthias rushes to support her.

Shar retreats to a couch across the room, ashamed. Guard
ch'Shal subtly places a hand on his shoulder, simultaneous
comfort and warning. As Thia recovers, Shar stares...

SHAR
Is Charivretha dead?

THANTIS
We have every reason to believe
she still lives. But you must
listen. Will you?
(Shar nods)
Arenthialeh did not take the *saf* -

THIA
No. I ask your forgiveness, *zha*,
but I will speak for myself.
(to Shar)

THIA (cont)

My bondmates stole *zha* Matthias's *saf*. But it was only because of me that they learned she had it. She told me of her plans to acquire it during our conversation aboard the shuttle. And I told them, as bondmates do. I meant nothing by it. But my *th'se* and my *ch'te*...

THANTIS

They are strong believers in the Visionist party's doctrine.

SHAR

(to Thantis)

Were you part of this?

THANTIS

No, Thirishar. Whatever else you believe about me, believe that. I knew nothing. But I know the two in question. Arenthialeh's *ch'te* even works on my sentinel detail.

FLASHBACK - 9x08 "NO PLACE LIKE HOME"

As *ch'Shal* escorts Tenmei and Shar to the Enclave, we see that the second guard is the same *chan* now holding Vretha.

BACK TO SCENE

THIA

They saw your visit here as too great an opportunity to miss. We all knew you were coming to Andor. Your detour to Cheen-Thitar gave them unexpected access. But then when Vretha appeared...

MATTHIAS

I don't understand. What do they have against Shar?

THIA

The Yrythny eggs, of course.

MATTHIAS

What about them?

THANTIS

They are the focus of my party's protests against Charivretha. Her *chei* brought home the eggs, and now his friends in the Science Institute are using them in their experiments into our biology. Some say the experiments are immoral, an abomination. But these two took it further than I ever expected.

CH'SHAL

(holds up an
isolinear chip)

They left this in your belongings, Thirishar. It explains their goals. Presumably they hoped to exploit the emotional effects.

THIA

I don't like what the Science Institute is doing, but I tried convincing my bondmates that this was not the way to address their concerns. I truly believed it was just talk. Clearly, I was wrong. Now I must pay for that mistake.

CH'SHAL

Your cooperation will make a considerable difference in the consequences you'll face, *zha*.

THIA

It is not the consequences meted out by the parliament or the judiciary that concern me, *cha*. It is what my bondmates will do when they learn I betrayed them.

(tearful pause)

I believe I may know where they may have taken her.

CH'SHAL

How?

THIA

I have extensive records of a botanical expedition I made into the Cheshras Reserve three years ago. Those records were recently accessed using my *ch'te's* ident.

CH'SHAL

I'll need your data.

THIA

It won't be easy to find anyone in the Reserve. The minerals in the terrain confuse sensors. That's why we still perform scientific surveys the old-fashioned way.

CH'SHAL

An attack from the air will not go unnoticed, and will likely cost Charivretha her life. If there's to be a rescue mission, the Guard will have to go in on foot.

MATTHIAS

When are they expected to be here?

CH'SHAL

Three hours.

SHAR

(suddenly standing)

Too long. I'm leaving, right now.

CH'SHAL

Consider what you're saying, Thirishar.

SHAR

I am an experienced Starfleet officer, and I will not entrust my *zhavey's* life to another while I wait idly by.

MATTHIAS
I'm coming with you too.

SHAR
Philippa...

MATTHIAS
(stern)
I'm the ranking Starfleet officer
here, Ensign. And I say this isn't
open to discussion.

A small smile softens her tone - Shar smiles gratefully...

TENMEI (o.s.)
Count me in too.

They all turn to see Tenmei standing in the doorway, still
looking distinctly rough and holding onto the wall...

TENMEI
(croaky)
You were right about those
treatments, Commander. I feel like
a new woman. My compliments to
your physician, *zha* Sessethantis.

SHAR
Prynn, I think we can --

TENMEI
Use my help? Good, I knew you'd
see it my way.

Shar smiles, touched by Tenmei's determination to stand by
him, even while she is swaying in the doorway...

CH'SHAL
(exasperated)
This is unwise and dangerous. I
don't doubt your skills, but none
of you has any experience in the
Reserve, not even Thirishar.

THIA
But I do. I'll guide them.

THANTIS

Thia. You must think of your *thei*.

THIA

My *sh'za* will take him. She was not part of their plans either. I must do this. My *th'se* and my *ch'te* may listen to me when they will listen to no other. I might be their best hope, as well as Charivretha's. I doubt if any member of the Guard would hesitate if forced to choose between our Federation Councillor and them. Perhaps I can assure that such a choice won't be necessary.

Shar looks closely at Thia. After hating her moments ago, he doesn't know how to feel about her now. She looks at him too, and he approaches her. He holds his hand out, and she does likewise, touching her palm to his...

SHAR

Whatever happens, I wish to thank you for helping us. And to tell you I'm sorry.

THIA

As am I.

Shar and Thia seem to have come to some *détente*. From the doorway, Tenmei looks on, just the tiniest bit jealous...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

5 EXT. CHESHRAS RESERVE - RIVERBED - DAY

A sweeping wilderness of Andorian jungle. Not particularly dense or difficult, but remote enough that people rarely come here. It's a bright day with hot sun now.

An old river bed has dried into sand - here SHAR, TENMEI, THIA and MATTHIAS walk. They wear Surface Operation Blacks (as in 5x04 "Nor the Battle...") and carry heavy backpacks.

Shar strides ahead, eager to reach their destination. Thia is close behind, her hair tied up in a plain turban. Tenmei is further back, smarting that Shar is not paying her much attention. Matthias is beside her, enjoying the scenery...

MATTHIAS

Thia, I was wondering... why did you change your hair? I quite liked how you had it last night.

THIA

The Reserve is sacred ground, counsellor. I would not offend the Guardians by appearing vain or disrespectful.

Tenmei stifles a groan and rolls her eyes. Matthias throws a withering glare at her, warning her. Thia points...

THIA

We scale that rock formation, on a path parallel to the waterfall. The canyon where I believe they've taken Vretha is a few kilometres past there. Are we ready?

TENMEI

(snort)

Of course.

Tenmei hitches her backpack, adjusting the straps...

THIA

There will be a resting place a kilometre from here. Otherwise, I can assume part of your load. I assure you it would be no burden.

TENMEI

I'm perfectly capable of carrying twenty kilos more than this.

THIA

But after a *saf* overdose?

Tenmei bites her tongue. Aware of the tension, Matthias positions herself between Tenmei and Thia...

MATTHIAS

Let's be on our way, shall we?

The group moves towards the direction where Thia pointed. But Matthias turns back to Tenmei and mutters...

MATTHIAS

Don't make me regret allowing you to join this mission, Ensign Tenmei. You might technically be on leave, but as far as I'm concerned you're a Starfleet officer under my direct command. Conduct yourself accordingly.

TENMEI

I don't trust her. She could still be working with her bondmates.

MATTHIAS

I realise that. So keep an eye on her and keep your phaser within easy reach. But don't make things worse than they are. Am I clear?

TENMEI

(deep breath)

Yes, sir.

And they return to their path...

6 **EXT. CHESHRAS RESERVE - ROCKFACE - DAY**

Using rock-climbing equipment, the team scale the rockface. Shar and Thia are already at the top; Tenmei is about to reach it. Thia holds out a hand to help her over the edge; Tenmei hesitates out of pure spite, but at last takes it.

Safe at the top, Tenmei looks back and beckons Matthias to begin her own ascent. Things go fine for Matthias until about halfway up the rockface --

-- then her grip on the rope SLIPS, and she DROPS a few feet, swinging hard against the surface of the rock and scrabbling to regain her hold.

SHAR
Counsellor! Are you safe?

MATTHIAS
I think so. Just... give me a
minute here...

Matthias steadily rights herself, begins her climb again, taking a bit more care. When she finally gets to the top, all three help her over the edge. She rubs her arm where it hit the wall, absently scratches at her face...

THIA
Can you continue?

MATTHIAS
Yes, yes, I'll be fine. Don't let
me stop you. Ow...

7 **EXT. CHESHRAS RESERVE - WOODS - DAY**

Starting to walk through the wilderness again, Tenmei takes the opportunity to be at Shar's side. And we're walking...

TENMEI
Shar? Are you okay? You haven't
said much.

SHAR
Forgive me, Prynn. I am distracted
by thoughts of my zhavey.

TENMEI

Of course, I'm sorry. I can't believe these people would go to such lengths just over a few silly experiments.

SHAR

The media and the Visionist party have done excellent work whipping the public into hysterics. They claim my zhavey is involved in a conspiracy with my colleagues at the Science Institute to pervert Andorian nature. That the Yrythny experiments will lead to the elimination of the four-gender paradigm and its replacement with two new compatible genders.

TENMEI

That's ridiculous, surely.

SHAR

Perhaps it is not so difficult to believe. You see, Prynn, the four-gendered paradigm of the Andorian species is not only unique in the Federation. It is unique on our own planet. No other life-form, plant or animal, has such a complex reproductive system.

TENMEI

How can that be?

SHAR

It is a question that has puzzled our scientists throughout our entire history. Some have wondered if we didn't evolve on this world, but rather were transplanted here by some ancient race, such as the Preservers.

(beat)

Others... have wondered if we were ever really meant to exist at all.

TENMEI

Shar... surely you don't think the entire Andorian species is just a mistake of nature.

SHAR

What I think... is that everyone always talks about how evolution is a matter of survival of the fittest. But what they neglect to remember is that not everyone is among the fittest. And not everyone gets to survive.

Tenmei is shaken by his defeated tone. But Thia has heard every word anyway, and speaks up. Meanwhile, unnoticed in the background, Matthias is still scratching her face...

THIA

Where is your faith, Thirishar? You believe that science will save our people, but you aren't so foolish as to claim to understand all its mysteries. That is faith, isn't it?

SHAR

Let me anticipate. You believe the Infinite will save us.

THIA

I believe that when we, as bonds and as a people, become Whole, then we will find our answers.

TENMEI

(can't stop herself)

Well, from a purely outsider point of view, all this forcing together of bonds to be "whole" doesn't appear to be working out too well.

THIA

I would have thought a Starfleet officer would be more inclined to withhold judgement of a culture she clearly does not understand.

THIA (cont)

The policy of forming bonds by design evolved only in response to our current circumstances, and in the absence of a more permanent solution. It is a responsibility we embrace joyfully.

TENMEI

Most of you, maybe. But that kind of cultural mindset doesn't leave much room to manoeuvre, does it? A single health crisis or fatality before children can be conceived, and four lives are ruined. One break in the chain, for any reason, and it all comes apart.

MATTHIAS

That's enough, Ensign.

Thia stops and turns on Tenmei, who does not back down. The discussion is getting hotter and tenser all the time...

THIA

How dare you. How dare you presume to judge us, you whose kind has never had to face such choices. By what right do you condemn us?

TENMEI

I don't condemn you. And maybe you are buying the time your species needs. But from what I've seen since getting to know Shar, since coming here, I think you're all fighting for the future by giving up the present. All the pressure you put on yourselves, all the self-inflicted stress, it's a miracle you aren't all suicidal.

Tenmei regrets the words the moment they are out of her mouth. She turns to Shar, horrified at herself...

TENMEI

Oh God, I'm sorry, Shar, I...

SHAR

(calm, intrigued)

Is that what you really think?

TENMEI

Yeah... yeah, it is.

SHAR

Then don't be sorry.

THIA

(incensed)

Is that all you have to say?

SHAR

I could remark on the irony of hearing my own arguments with my zhavey repeated by two other individuals, but otherwise...

THIA

But how can you allow an off-worlder to speak of Shathrissia in such a manner?

MATTHIAS

(taking charge)

That's enough, all of you. This is not the time or the place. It's counterproductive to our mission, and it's going to stop.

They turn to look at Matthias, who is still SCRATCHING at her face and arm, getting more irritated by the itch. Thia looks closer at Matthias, alarmed - small black LUMPS are erupting on Matthias's skin, a rash creeping down her neck.

THIA

We have more immediate problems.

Pulling her hand away, Matthias sees BLOOD mixed with black smudges. She is starting to feel a little woozy, dizzy...

SHAR

I see them.

MATTHIAS

See what?

THIA

Shax. You must have disturbed them when you crashed into the rock face. *Shax* are poisonous. They lay their eggs just inside your skin.

Thia comes forward, helps Matthias take off her backpack. Matthias pulls down the edge of her uniform -- and sees that the nests are on her upper chest and arms too. Thia is rummaging in Matthias's backpack...

MATTHIAS

Is this something I need to... worry about?

THIA

Only if we didn't have a medical kit. One dose of the serum will -

She pauses, deflated. Pulls out a smashed medical kit. They all look suitably worried, then Thia snaps into action...

THIA

Shar, I need you to find a plant for me. Look underneath rocky outcroppings for small clusters. It's furry, mosslike, with little yellow and white flowers.

SHAR

Is it Shanchen's Mantle?

THIA

Yes, good. Gather as much as you can. Prynn, we're going to need hot water, at least two litres. And several sharp, narrow pieces of metal. The points will need to be made quite hot.

Nodding, they rush off into the woods to their tasks. Thia turns back to Matthias, helps her down to the ground...

MATTHIAS

Be honest. What's going to happen?

THIA

Very shortly, you're going to feel pain throughout your body. As if someone were skinning you.

MATTHIAS

And then?

THIA

If I can't devise a poultice for you, you'll develop a high fever, the poison will break down the clotting factor in your blood, and you'll haemorrhage.

As Matthias collapses worried and dizzy to the ground...

8 MONTAGE

-- Shar rummaging in the underbrush for the plant

-- Tenmei scooping up water from a nearby stream into the canteen from her backpack

-- Thia unwinds her turban and uses it to mop Matthias's feverish brow

-- Thia adds pieces of Shar's plants into the water in a bowl, which is placed on some nearby rocks. Tenmei uses her phaser to heat the rocks and boil the water

-- Tenmei uses her phaser to cut up the canteen into slivers of metal

-- Thia touches the hot metal to Matthias's skin, singeing out the *shax* nests

-- Matthias shudders in semi-consciousness from the pain

-- Tenmei covers her mouth at the smell of burning flesh

Matthias lies unconscious on a Starfleet blanket, stripped and covered in Thia's turban material. Thia reaches behind herself, scratches her lower back. Shar is alarmed...

THIA

It is not *shax*. Since I began weaning my *thei*, the pouch is drying up more quickly than is comfortable. The sensation is... itchy. But I will be fine.

SHAR

If you will allow me, I can help.

THIA

I would greatly appreciate that, Thirishar. But I am uncertain as to the propriety of the situation. It forces intimacy that should not be shared outside the bond.

SHAR

It is no worry. I suspect you would not be comfortable asking Prynn to help you in this way.

Thia lies face down on the ground. Shar reaches into her backpack, finds a bottle of moisturising oil.

He gently lifts up the edge of her shirt, where the birth pouch wraps all around her lower abdomen, looking dry and inflamed. Drizzling the oil into his hands, Shar hesitantly begins to massage Thia's skin with it...

It is intimate, rather awkward but also distinctly sensual. Thia relaxes under Shar's ministrations, and he too is getting into the rhythm...

THIA

I do not regret letting you ease my discomfort, Shar, but... I feel as if I am robbing you of the chance to share this first within a bond of your own.

SHAR

I have relinquished my place in my
bondgroup to another.

THIA

I know you have lost Shathrissia,
but why separate yourself from
those you love?

Shar continues rubbing her back, trying not to think about
the emotions she is bringing up for him...

THIA

I know we see things differently,
Shar. But do not punish yourself
for Shathrissia's choice. Do not
deny yourself your birthright -
the *shelthreth*. There is no
greater joy you can experience
than when the four become Whole.

Shar's hands stop moving as his emotional shields begin to
crumble...

Sensing his distress, she sits back up and turns to him.
She reaches out to him compassionately...

...and he crumples forward into her arms, crying.

PAN AROUND to the woods, and we see that Tenmei has stopped
just outside the area where Thia and Shar lie. Partially
hidden by the bushes and trees, they have not noticed her.
But she has seen them - the intimacy, the tenderness.

Her heart pounding, tears threatening, Tenmei turns and
rushes away into the depths of the woods...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

10 EXT. CHESHRAS RESERVE - WOODS - DUSK

Shar and Tenmei trudge through the woods, trying to be as quiet and subtle as the undergrowth allows. It is edging towards DUSK now. The awkwardness is still between them...

SHAR

Prynn?

TENMEI

Hmmm?

SHAR

We have little time left, and I've been wrong to avoid speaking with you before now. I've been unfair.

TENMEI

What do you mean, exactly?

SHAR

I am sorry for what happened at the Spring Water Festival. I was angry at my zhavey... and those things I do in anger are rarely good. I compromised your safety. You could have been killed.

TENMEI

Damn straight I could. I get that this is a difficult time for you. More than difficult - impossible. But I've been plenty supportive, while you've been pretty clueless.

SHAR

What can I say? Without you...

TENMEI

(spins, angry)

Why were you massaging Thia?

SHAR

She needed help. It's what's done.
It's what *chan* does for *zhen*.

TENMEI

Since when does Thirishar ch'Thane
do what *chan* does for *zhen*?

SHAR

(sigh)

I am a part of the Whole, whether
I like it or not. This trip, these
events... I have reconnected with
a part of myself that I thought I
had given up forever.

TENMEI

So what does that mean, Shar? I
would do anything for you. But is
there a place for me - for us -
in the "whole" ?

Shar is caught between the two - his need for his culture,
and his growing feelings for Tenmei. He comes close...

SHAR

There will always be a place for
you in my life.

TENMEI

I want to believe that...

She's very aware of his proximity... she looks up to sky in
an attempt to escape the tension...

TENMEI

We need to get moving before we
lose the light.

Shar nods awkwardly, steps away, back on the trail...

11 INT. CAVES

Vretha sits huddled against a wall with wrists and ankles
tied. She has been sitting like this for hours, and she is
tired and hungry and uncomfortable and scared.

The *thaan* is nearby, crouching in the low headroom. The *chan* is nowhere to be seen. A small portable LIGHT makes little difference to the encroaching darkness...

VRETHA

How long is this ridiculous
charade going to take?

THAAN

(official speech)

Those of us in the Visionist party
have struggled to draw attention
to the egregious mistakes being
made by the Science Institute --

VRETHA

(dismissing him)

These kinds of accusations are
cyclical. Over the course of my
political career, I've seen and
heard all sorts of --

THAAN

You don't understand. I've seen
the documentation with my own
eyes. I know that I speak the
truth. See for yourself...

He shoves a PADD up to her face, with rapidly scrolling
pages of technical information and DNA diagrams.

Vretha blinks at the information in the half-light - she
doesn't understand a word...

VRETHA

This could mean anything, I am no
scientist. But if you give me a
copy and let me go, I promise to
look into it.

THAAN

Promise? The way that you promised
to take our crisis to the greatest
minds in the Federation? The way
you assured us, repeatedly, that
we would not be forgotten?

VRETHA

Federation scientists are as baffled by our dilemma as we are. To say nothing of the fact that the war has stretched resources to the limit. There are many worlds in far worse --

THAAN

Politics!

VRETHA

Isn't kidnapping a high-ranking official a political act? If you are so sure of your accusations, why have you not gone to the media? Why go to this extreme?

THAAN

I tried. The media wouldn't touch it because I could not verify my data. And of course the Science Institute denied everything.

(sneer)

And it was your *chei* who provided the Yrythny eggs to the Institute for their research.

VRETHA

Ridiculous. My *chei* has no part in any such research.

THAAN

Let's say you're right. That your Thirishar is innocent. The fact remains that without his gift, the evil would not be possible.

VRETHA

You keep calling this alleged research evil. But what of our plight? Our people are dying! If it is a choice between continued existence as two sexes and total extinction, where is the choice?

THAAN

In remaining Andorians! Our four identities as *chan*, *zhen*, *shen* and *thaan* are the very foundation of our existence. Altering that will destroy who we are!

BOOM - an explosion sounds in the depths of the cave, but only the sound, no falling rocks...

The portable light flickers and dies...

Suddenly plunged into darkness, the *thaan* jerks, calls out to the mouth of the cave...

THAAN

Wemeth! Are you alright?
(no answer;
to Vretha)
Don't move.

Worried for his partner, the *thaan* half-stands, begins to move off, pulling out a DAGGER...

As he creeps forward, something GLINTS on the ground in the dim light. He crouches down to it, wary...

...it's a small DEVICE - the dummy that made the sound of an explosion plus an E-M pulse. He growls with anger --

-- and two fists SLAM the *thaan* on the back of the neck, and he crumples to the ground, his dagger clattering...

...revealing SHAR standing over him, wearing his black surface suit. He hisses with satisfaction, then turns to look deeper into the cave. Close-up on his antennae:

SHAR'S ANTENNAE POV

Night-vision, showing the cold, jagged shapes of the cave, and a warmer humanoid figure sat huddled in the distance...

TENMEI (o.s.)

Shar. Go. I'll keep watch.

BACK TO SCENE

Shar dashes forward into the cave... carefully picks his way over the rocks... he reaches the huddled and scared Vretha, brings out his own knife to slit her bonds...

SHAR
(whisper)
Zhavey. It is Thirishar. You are
safe now. Stay silent.

Vretha nods gratefully, struggles to her feet on unreliable legs. Shar supports her back to the mouth of the cave...

...where TENMEI waits, also in SOBs and with night-vision goggles, standing watch with her phaser drawn...

TENMEI
(whisper)
The other one's still out there
somewhere. The *chan*.

SHAR
Does your tricorder work?

Tenmei pulls her tricorder from her backpack, tries it...

TENMEI
Nothing. Too much interference.

SHAR
We'll have to risk it.

They edge forward again. After a few steps, Shar stops...

SHAR
Wait...

SHAR'S ANTENNAE POV

The shape of the mouth of the cave is clear in the night-vision image... as is the SHAPE of another humanoid standing in its opening against the night-time outside...

SHAR (o.s.)
He's there.

BACK TO SCENE

TENMEI

He's got the perfect advantage.
There's only one way out of here,
and he's got it covered.

SHAR

And he can see us as well as I can
see him.

As the three of them consider what to do...

12 **EXT. CHESHRAS RESERVE - OUTSIDE THE CAVE - NIGHT**

...from the forest, looking through the opening into the
depths of the cave. The *chan* stands tense, phaser raised.

He hears Tenmei's voice echoing out from the darkness...

TENMEI (o.s.)

I know you're out there.

(pause)

Councillor zh'Thane is wounded. We
can't go any further.

The *chan* hesitates, certain this must be a trap...

TENMEI (o.s.)

I'll pass over my weapon if you
will help her. Please help me!
I'll negotiate for our safety!

Just barely visible in the darkness, he can make out two
FIGURES leaning against the cave wall - Tenmei and Vretha.

But no sign of Shar. The *chan* warily scans the darkness for
him as he edges forward, phaser out before him...

CHAN

You're a fool, human.

TENMEI

I don't really give a damn what
you think of me. But we don't
stand a chance of escaping, and
I'd like to avoid being a corpse.

CHAN

What makes you think we'll help you after the inconvenience you've caused us?

TENMEI

Because you already know that if we're here, somebody else knows you're here. If we don't reach our contact point at the designated time, the Andorian Guard will come looking for us. And if they find us dead, you can kiss any chance of advancing your cause goodbye.

Forced to accept her logic, the *chan* edges further forward, his weapon still trained on Tenmei and Vretha...

CHAN

Drop your weapon.

Tenmei takes her phaser out of its hip holster and drops it onto the stony ground. Kicks it away...

TENMEI

There. Now will you help? Please?

Edging closer, the *chan* keeps his phaser trained while reaching to pick up Tenmei's. As he is distracted...

...Shar appears from behind a wall, FIRES his phaser.

But the shot only wings the *chan*, not enough to put him down. The *chan* turns towards Shar, phaser rising...

...so Tenmei reaches out, GRABS him by the antennae, YANKS his head down towards her raised knee, SMASHES his nose.

The *chan* stumbles to the ground, bleeding. Tenmei grabs him, drags him to his feet with her arm around his neck...

TENMEI

Shar, help Vretha. She really has sprained her ankle. You'll have to carry her. We'll bring this one as a hostage.

Shar rushes up to Vretha, assesses her injuries, elated at her rescue...

SHAR
You're fine, you're fine...

VRETHA
Thirishar... his data... you must
look at it...

SHAR
We will, *zhavey*. I promise. But
now we must move.

TENMEI (o.s.)
(strained)
Shar...

Vretha *squeaks* in fear... Shar turns --

-- and sees that the *thaan* is awake again... and is holding
Tenmei hostage with his DAGGER at her throat.

She lets the *chan* go - he crawls away into the darkness,
cradling his blue-bloody nose...

THAAN
I'll kill her.

As he presses the knife into her skin... and blood trickles
from the shallow cut...

...Shar sees red - *they're hurting Prynn*...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

13 EXT. CHESHRAS RESERVE - OUTSIDE THE CAVE - NIGHT

As Shar barely holds himself back from rushing the *thaan* and murdering him on the spot for hurting Prynn...

SHAR

Kill any of us, and you've handed victory to the Progressives.

THAAN

You think in too small terms, *chei* of zh'Thane. Our cause is greater than politics. This is about morality! About the barbarity of science. And about what you have done to help them!

SHAR

What I have done?

THAAN

Show him, Councillor. If it means nothing to you, perhaps it will mean something to him.

VRETHA

I told you, my *chei* has nothing to do with any such nonsense.

The *thaan* presses his knife deeper into Tenmei's throat... she HISSES in pain but refuses to cry out...

Vretha BARKS in frustration - and hands the *thaan's* PADD to Shar... he reads it for a few moments...

...and the padd drops from his hand, CLATTERS to the ground as he gazes in amazement and horror...

SHAR

If this is true... I'll help you.
But not like this. We'll get back,
and then I'll find out.

THAAN

You expect me to trust you?

SHAR

You have my word as a Starfleet officer. And something else...

He reaches into a pocket, brings out Thia's *shapla*... holds it out to the *thaan*... the *thaan* recognises it...

...and the knife falls Tenmei's throat with a clatter. He lunges at Shar in a fury, rips the *shapla* from his hand...

THAAN

You took it from her! You killed her and took this from her!

SHAR

No. She told us where to find you, and gave this to us to prove it to you. She waits out in the Reserve, looking after another member of our team. Send your companion while we wait here, if you wish. Thia will affirm my claims.

Released now, Tenmei goes to Shar and Vretha... together they watch the *thaan* crumple to the ground, cradling the *shapla*... They have been betrayed by their bondmate...

14 EXT. ANDOR CAPITAL CITY - ESTABLISHING

The establishing shot of Zhevra city from ep 9x08, with storm clouds looming ominously over the mountains...

15 INT. SCIENCE INSTITUTE - CLASSROOM

Shar stands, back in his standard uniform, in a classroom filled with advanced scientific equipment. He is happy here - this is where he feels comfortable. His mentor, an older *shen* named SH'VEILETH, greets him warmly...

SH'VEILETH

Thirishar! My star student returns to the fold. So what did you bring for me this time?

Shar holds out a canister to sh'Veileth - she takes it, unscrews the top with an interested look and sniff...

SHAR

When I was out in the Cheshras Reserve recently, I had cause to gather some samples of Shanchen's Mantle. The botanist I was with told me that these are a different strain from what is normally found elsewhere on Andor. I wondered if perhaps you could run an analysis.

SH'VEILETH

(sniffs, grimaces)

Certainly is pungent. But how did you manage to get to the Reserve? I've been trying to get them to fund my own trip for years.

SHAR

A long story. I'm sure it will be released to the media soon.

SH'VEILETH

Well, I'll take a look and let you know whatever I find.

SHAR

Thank you, Doctor sh'Veileth.

(tensing)

I do have another reason for my visit. I was hoping for an update on your work with the Yrythny ova.

SH'VEILETH

Oh, of course! Follow me. I think you'll be very pleased...

sh'Veileth leads him over to a computer screen. She taps various entries, brings up a chromosomal diagram...

SH'VEILETH

Chromosome seventeen - where most Andorian geneticists believe our fertility problems stem from...

She taps some more instructions, and the diagram changes. Blinking yellow dots appear at half a dozen places...

SH'VEILETH

Inserting specific segments from the Yrythny DNA here, here and here, changes the expression of the Andorian genes.

SHAR

And?

SH'VEILETH

While it doesn't resolve all our problems, this is a very promising start. Gene therapy developed from the Yrythny DNA has the potential to increase the window of Andorian fertility by two cycles or more.

SHAR

More cycles, more opportunities to conceive. That's wonderful!

SH'VEILETH

Now for the best part. A slight modification to the therapy has the potential to increase the numbers of viable gametes produced by the four partners.

SHAR

You mean more than one infant at a time? We haven't had multiple births on Andor since...

SH'VEILETH

More than a century, I know. This could dramatically shift the population dynamics in a relatively short time.

SHAR

(almost overcome)

Oh, Doctor... You've opened up a window of hope for our people.

SH'VEILETH

I am honoured to be the vessel of
your faith. But it could never
have been done without you.

SHAR

I regret that I must bring up an
unpleasant subject. Are the ova
being used in any other research
here, besides your own?

SH'VEILETH

Ah... clearly you've heard the
Visionist propaganda. Other teams
are using the ova, but I do not
know the nature of their research.

Shar hands her the padd that Vretha's captor gave him. She
reads through it, the excitement fading from her face...

SH'VEILETH

Let me see what I can learn.

16 **INT. VRETHA'S OFFICE**

Vretha sits staring out of the window at the view of the
capital city, at the world she represents. Physically she
is recovered, but her heart is broken.

Behind her, the door to her office opens and Shar enters,
head held high, excited to tell her his news...

SHAR

Zhavey, I have an incredible
report from Doctor sh'Veileth at
the Science Institute. She's made
some remarkable breakthroughs with
the Yrythny ova...

(notices her state)

Zhavey? What is it?

Vretha turns in her chair, pushes a padd across the table
towards him. She is barely able to face it...

VRETHA

See for yourself.

SHAR
(takes the padd)
This is also from sh'Veileth...

VRETHA
Yes. She was able to find the
answers to your questions. She
thought I should know at once.

He sits opposite her, reading through the padd...

SHAR
So it's true.

VRETHA
Yes. Our own scientists decided to
engineer our species out of all
recognition. I was so sure we were
better than that. That we were not
capable of such a thing.

SHAR
And there is no chance that --

VRETHA
No. The research was authorised in
secret, as "an attempt to pursue
any and all options to prevent
Andorian extinction." That's how
Doctor th'Saarash rationalised it
when I confronted him moments ago.

SHAR
This is my fault. I provided the
Yrythny sample.

VRETHA
No, my *chei*, do not claim this for
yourself. There were many errors
in judgement, mine not the least
among them. But you have only ever
been guilty of seeking answers.

SHAR
So, what now?

VRETHA

Now... accountability. I will join the enclave at Deepening, and I will request that the Parliament nominate another to be Andor's representative to the Federation.

SHAR

Zhavey... are you certain? This was your dream...

VRETHA

I have grown far from those I love - including you, my precious *chei*. I need to rediscover my people. If you choose not to stand with me... I will understand.

Shar stands from his seat, crouches down by her... leans forward until their antennae touch...

SHAR

I will face them with you, *zhavey*. It is not the way of our people to be alone.

...and mother and son embrace each other...

17 **EXT. CHEEN-THITAR KEEP - DAY**

Outside the castle on the hill. It is day now, and the wind has died down a fair bit...

18 **INT. KEEP - CRECHE**

THIA sits on the ground beside a baby-changing mat - only the mat is empty. She wears a long-sleeved *ceara*, staring blankly at the empty baby-less space.

TENMEI enters quietly, sensitively...

TENMEI

Thia...?

Thia is embarrassed, tries to rouse herself...

THIA

Ensign Tenmei... Prynn. It is good
that you are safe. I have been
less than gracious to you, and...

She tries to stand - but stumbles, falling forward. Tenmei
rushes up to catch her, helping her sit against the wall...

Thia is dizzy, unfocused. Tenmei reaches down to hold her
wrist, testing for her pulse...

...and finds a trickle of blue BLOOD running down her arm.
Gasping in shock, Tenmei pushes up Thia's sleeve and sees
angry, deep slashes in her flesh...

TENMEI

Oh god no, not again... Thia, what
happened? You've been hurt.

Tenmei quickly checks the rest of Thia's body, and the arm
slashes seem to be the worst of it...

TENMEI

Are you still dizzy? Have you
eaten anything?

(Thia shakes
her head)

Anything at all? Have you slept?

THIA

It... has been a difficult time
for me since we returned from the
Reserve. I have been occupied with
many concerns.

TENMEI

(exasperated)

You Andorians, could you make it
any harder on yourselves? I'm
getting a doctor.

THIA

(grabs her)

No. Don't. I can take care of it.
Please leave me.

TENMEI

They're self-inflicted, aren't
they? Those wounds on your arms.
You did this.

Hugging herself on the floor, Thia sniffles, trying to stop
herself from breaking into tears...

THIA

They left me...

TENMEI

Who did?
(realises)
Your bondmates...

THIA

Because I helped you, helped *zha*
Matthias... the Guard has exempted
me from prosecution. But my *th'se*
and my *ch'te*... they say I have
betrayed them...

(crying)

My *sh'za*, she sided with them. She
took my child. They have invoked
the Whole Vessel Law and removed
me from the bond...

(crumbling)

They left me... I am alone... I am
alone...

Thia is devastated, hugging herself tight, rocking back and
forth, whispering over and over again to herself.

Tenmei can only hold her and comfort her as best she can...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

19 INT. BETAZED HALL - POV SHOT

Fast panicked breaths and heartbeats. From the ground, we look up in fear and confusion at --

-- a destroyed room, walls and columns collapsed, plaster tumbling from the ceiling. FIRES burn and electrics SPARK.

Turn to the left - and we see a woman's arm, Andorian, blue skin bruised. She stretches her fingers, testing them.

Turn to the right - but we cannot see her other arm, it's buried under the rubble.

Then running, shuffling feet and urgent voices...

THRISS (o.s.)

Zhavey! Zhavey!

...and we see THRISS, alive and well, crouch down into POV. She looks into camera, upset and scared but determined...

THRISS

We heard the Art Academy was hit
in the last Jem'Hadar assault. I
ordered this team together. We'll
get you out of here.

(to the side)

Reshus! Leilo! Get over here!

A BETAZOID man and a BOLIAN woman enter, try to lift the rubble off of us. We try to move, Thriss pushes us down...

THRISS

Oh no you don't. Not until we can
free your other arm.

Worried, we turn to the right --

-- and see a pool of blue blood run from under the rubble.

Thriss brings out a tricorder, scans... sighs tearfully.

She reaches out to hold our left hand...

THRISS

Zhavey... your arm, I... I cannot save it. Perhaps if I were a physician, if those who came with me were more than orderlies...

Our heartbeat and breathing increase - she's talking about amputation. The younger woman leans in close, upset but forcibly keeping herself focused and in control...

THRISS

I'm so sorry, *zhavey*. I will talk you through the procedure. You will feel no pain, I promise...

Thriss prepares a hypospray, leans in, injects it into our neck with a *hiss*. Our POV begins to fade to black...

CUT TO:

20 **INT. KEEP - THANTIS'S WORKSHOP**

SHAR jerks back to the real world, hands cupped before him, Thantis's around his. Between them they hold a crystal-and-metal DEVICE. Small wires lead from it to Shar's temples.

THANTIS gently disconnects these wires, then gently takes the device from Shar...

SHAR

(whisper)

She was so strong... I knew she had a powerful will, of course, but the commanding, confident *zhen* I saw in your memory...

With the memory device put away safely in a cushioned box, we now see Thantis in her traditional *zhen* mourning robes, revealing her arms - left real, right biosynthetic.

Bloody scabs cover the left arm, where she has been clawing at herself. Her completed grief mask lies on the desk.

SHAR

But *Zhadi*... I thought you had
invited Counsellor Matthias --

THANTIS

I did. But that was wrong. I am
punishing my *zhei* for the sake of
my own pride. To send her to the
next life without you - you of all,
Thirishar - is a most selfish act.

SHAR

I don't understand...

THANTIS

I allowed everyone to believe I
had excluded you from the Sending
because I blamed you for Thriss's
death. But that is a lie. The
truth is...I knew how to save
Thriss... and chose not to.

(beat)

Her medical colleagues respected
her, trusted her. Among them she
flowered, became stronger. Had she
remained with them, she would have
been safe. She would've continued
to be the Thriss you saw. But I
wanted her here with me...

(beat)

You, Thirishar - you are strong
enough to stand up to the pressure
we put on ourselves. But that
pressure... it crushed her.

(tearful)

I plead for your forgiveness...

Thantis breaks down into tears... Shar stands stunned...

21 INT. KEEP - COFFIN ROOM

Close-up on THRISS, lying in repose in her clear-lidded
coffin, swathed in gentle blue light.

A hand - Shar's - reaches in to touch the glass, as if
stroking her face... A CREAK of a door, Shar turns...

...Tenmei steps quietly through, gasps at the sight before her - Shar in his traditional *chan* mourning clothes. Breast plate and greaves and dagger, all in glittering white.

TENMEI

I almost didn't recognise you. You look... magnificent.

SHAR

I had one last task to complete...

He opens his gripped fist - it holds his *shapla* locket. He looks down at it, as if he has no idea what to do with it.

Tenmei walks quietly to him, looks down at the coffin...

TENMEI

She looks peaceful...

SHAR

Peace has been hard to come by.

TENMEI

What was your good news?

He gives a sad chuckle. He relates the news blankly, as if it no longer matters to him...

SHAR

I almost forgot. My old teacher, Doctor sh'Veileth, has had great success with her experiments on the Yrythny ova. She has devised a way of both extending our window of fertility and of producing more children within that window.

TENMEI

Oh Shar... that's wonderful. I'm so happy for you.

SHAR

Also, the unusual strain of Shanchen's Mantle we discovered, the plant that healed Counsellor Matthias's wounds...

TENMEI

What about it?

SHAR

Thia said it was different. What makes it different... is the existence of a four-gamete fertilisation process.

TENMEI

Shar, this is incredible!

SHAR

I suppose so...

TENMEI

(baffled)

Shar... you've just rescued your entire race from extinction. And you've proved that nature does support a four-gender paradigm. It's everything you ever wanted. So why aren't you happier?

SHAR

Look at everything it has cost me, Prynn. My zhavey lost her position on the Federation Council, Thriss lost her life... my bond is gone. Once again my decisions have hurt the people I love.

With his look, he clearly includes her in this...

SHAR

When this is done, we will go away. You and I. Perhaps we will even become pirates.

TENMEI

No, Shar. Anichent and Dizhei need you. And Thia... needs you too.

SHAR

Prynn, no. That part of my life is over. You are the one...

TENMEI

No. I understand. Truly I do. And
I'm prepared to be very selfless
and let you go to them. But if I
stay here much longer, I might
never be able to leave.

The door CREAKS again, and they both turn to see --

-- Anichent, Dizhei and Thantis, all dressed in pure white
versions of the traditional clothing, grief masks in hand.

TENMEI

(whisper)

Go to them, Shar. Go now.

Shar stands nervously for a moment, unsure what to do...
until Anichent steps forward, draws him into an emotional
embrace. Dizhei joins them.

Tenmei backs away, giving them their space. At the doorway,
Thantis offers a polite nod... before the ensign slips out.

22 EXT. CHEEN-THITAR KEEP - NIGHT

A CROWD of mourners have gathered in two parallel lines,
creating a passage from the main entrance arch and down
over the hill. Deep, mournful BELLS sound rhythmically.

THIA, VRETHA and MATTHIAS are in line, wearing traditional
zhen robes and grief masks. TENMEI exits the building in
shen clothes, quickly jogging up next to Matthias...

MATTHIAS

Where have you been?

TENMEI

I came as soon I heard the bells.

Just in time - as the funeral party exits the building.

Four GUARDS carry Thriss's coffin out of the Keep and down
the passage created by the crowd.

Behind the coffin come SHAR, ANICHENT and DIZHEI, walking
three abreast, wearing their grief masks.

Behind them, THANTIS and three others - Thriss's other parents, also masked.

As the group walks on, the crowd turns and follows them. Everyone's clothes and hair ripple in the wind...

TENMEI

(*sotto*)

We'll be travelling back to Deep Space Nine alone, Counsellor. Just you and me.

MATTHIAS

Are you sure? Shar didn't say anything to me.

TENMEI

That's because he hasn't worked it out for himself yet. But he will.

MATTHIAS

(*gently*)

Andorians are used to loving more than one person at once, Prynn...

TENMEI

Counsellor, don't. Please...

The procession reach a raised, square ROCK on the hillside. The guards place the coffin onto it, then back away.

As the funeral party come to a stop, Shar stumbles, almost unable to go on in his grief. Anichent and Dizhei support him. A PRIEST steps forward, calls out...

PRIEST

Who comes, seeking safe passage for Shathrissia?

SHAR / ANICHENT / DIZHEI

We do - her Whole.

PRIEST

From you, the Infinite, came the substance of her life. To you, the Infinite, we return her.

PRIEST (cont)
Who will send Shathrissia home?

Thantis holds the memory device out to Shar, Anichent and Dizhei. They fasten their own *shapla* lockets into notches on its sides. The fourth is taken with Thriss's own *shapla*.

...but Thantis stands, staring at the object in her hands, unable to go on. She looks up at Shar, tearful, silently begging him to go in her place. He takes the device in his cupped palms, turns slowly and steps forward...

SHAR
I, Thirishar, hold the Cipher, and
I will send Shathrissia.

The priest steps aside. With a last breathless look at Thriss's peaceful face, he fixes the Cipher into a large notch in the foot of the coffin, then steps back.

A low rumbling begins in the hillside...

Suddenly, the square stone BURSTS into a tower of blazing BLUE FIRE, surrounding the coffin. It is almost too bright to look at, but no-one turns away.

A single VOICE joins the mournful bells, singing out loud in native Andorian. Tenmei turns --

-- and sees that it is THIA. The crying *zhen* steps forward, letting the mourners hear her song.

Shar, Anichent and Dizhei turn towards her. They open their arms, and all four embrace as they cry together.

Tenmei looks on, trying to be strong as the fire burns...

FADE OUT:

THE END