

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

10x14 - "Against the Odds."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on characters from the series

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

and from the post-finale novels
by Pocket Books

incorporating elements from

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: Rising Son
by SD Perry

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. WADI STREETS - EARLY EVENING

We pick up exactly where we left it last time. JAKE, NOG and RENA have run into crew from the *Even Odds* - captain DEZ, first officer FACITY, and a human-looking teenage girl of about 14, named MEERA (who we haven't seen before).

All are very surprised to see each other. But before they can explain, they are all surrounded by Wadi police, armed and ready to use it. Inspector MUNAD is in charge, pointing his weapon right at Dez.

MUNAD

Zin Dezovrim, Facity Sleedow...
You're under arrest.

Dez and Facity grit their teeth - caught.

JAKE

Wait - Inspector, this must be a
mistake. Dez isn't -

MUNAD

Do you know each other?

JAKE

Yes.

DEZ

No.

They stare at each other. Jake is offended - why would Dez deny knowing him? Dez's eyes are pleading with Jake to stay out of it.

MUNAD

Do you want to try that again?

No-one knows what to say. Nog and Rena are on edge, not sure what's going on. Dez and Facity are tense, ready to move at a moment's notice.

MUNAD

I find this very interesting. You
kids say you're from the

Federation, a supposedly good and just society. You fight so hard to get your ship back. You act so innocent and righteous. And then it turns out you're such close friends with the most notorious criminal gang in the sector that you'll try to defend them to me.

FACITY

"Notorious"? I like the sound of that.

Dez shoots her a look. But Jake has figured this out now.

JAKE

It was you? You're the ones who were going to buy our ship from Lebikow?

FACITY

Your ship?

MUNAD

Don't bother acting surprised, Mz Sledow. You provided your old friend and colleague Mister Lebikow with the codes to break into the ship, after all.

DEZ

Jake, you have to believe me, I had no idea you had anything to do with this. What are you even doing here?

NOG

(breaking in)

We were on a road trip.

FACITY

A road trip?

RENA

What does it matter what we're doing here? We're not the ones being arrested.

MUNAD

That's still to be determined, young lady.

Under all of this, the young girl Meera is gazing at Nog, curiously, as if trying to place his face. Meanwhile, all the Wadi police keep their eyes peeled, their weapons drawn. It's a very tense situation.

DEZ

Leave them out of it. They're innocent.

MUNAD

A heart, Dez? Maybe you're not as tough as the stories would paint you.

DEZ

You don't know anything about me, Munad.

MUNAD

Well, now I'll have plenty of time to learn. Boys...?

Dez and Jake both tense. Dez looks to the girl at his side.

DEZ

Meera...

The girl smiles smugly, and MORPHS. Her entire shape shifts into a ball of golden goo, shooting out arms of protoplasm lightning fast. She whips the guns from the police's hands and knocks them all in the heads. In seconds, they're all unconscious on the ground. Then she reforms into the girl.

Jake, Nog and Rena all gasp in surprise.

NOG

A changeling...

Dez looks at Jake, a bit embarrassed and guilty about all this. But Jake is only glaring at him accusingly.

Dez speaks into a wrist-comm...

DEZ

Dez to *Even Odds*. Get us out of here, now.

FACITY

Good to see you again, Jake. Take care of yourself.

And then the transporter signal takes them. They're gone.

Jake slaps his own combadge.

JAKE

Sisko to *Rio Grande*. Prynn, beam us up, and get ready to leave.

PRYNN (comm)

What's going on?

JAKE

Look for a freighter breaking orbit - we're following them.

Jake is pissed. Nog and Rena are mostly just confused. And then the transporter takes them too.

Ending on the unconscious bodies of Munad and his men...

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

2 EXT. SPACE - WADI HOMEWORLD

In orbit of the Wadi homeworld, with all its freighters and tourist ships waiting in queues.

One ship zooms out of the melee at right angles - the patch work freighter *Even Odds*, last seen 10x01 "Emancipation."

As it breaks through the lines and bolts out of the area, we see another ship chasing after it - the *Rio Grande*.

3 INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE

The turbolift doors open and Dez strides onto the bridge, Facity close behind. PREES, the Karemma chief engineer, is running the bridge, with the Dosi security chief BRAD and the Cardassian medic GLESSIN covering other stations.

They're all tense, confused as to the change of plans.

PREES

What's going on?

FACITY

The usual. The job's dead. Just get us out of here.

BRAD

(off panels)

Dez... there's another ship following us.

DEZ

(small, tight)

Ignore it.

GLESSIN

(off panels;
amazed)

Is that... Starfleet?

BRAD

They're hailing.

DEZ
I said ignore it!

FACITY
(sotto)
Dez... come on. This is Jake.

BRAD
(gasp)
Jake?

Dez grits his teeth. He doesn't want to deal with this. But under pressure from everyone else, he eventually caves. He nods to Brad, who works her panels.

The main viewscreen changes to show the cockpit of the *Rio Grande*. PRYNN is piloting, with Jake hovering over her shoulder, grim and determined. Nog and Rena stay back.

JAKE (screen)
Don't run away from me, Dez.

DEZ
Leave me alone, Jake.

JAKE (screen)
Dez, I swear if you don't pull
over now, I will open fire.

On screen, the others look at him askance. What is going on here? On the *Even Odds* bridge, the crew is looking at Dez likewise confused. After more grinding of teeth...

DEZ
Fine. Rendezvous at the tenth
planet in the system.

And then he stabs a panel at his side, cutting the signal. He nods reluctantly at Prees, who speaks out loud...

PREES
Srral, you heard the man.

At the otherwise unoccupied helm console, a silver liquid flows out of an open panel and across the surface, seeming to manipulate the controls. We feel the ship change course.

4 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Shar emerges from the rear cabin, holding onto the wall against the runabout's movements. He spots Nog and Rena...

SHAR

What has happened?

NOG

All those stories Jake told us about his adventures with a pirate ship in the Gamma Quadrant - apparently they were true.

(unsure)

And now we're chasing them.

Shar looks forward to Prynn, wanting to speak to her... but she's busy piloting the ship.

5 **EXT. SPACE**

A small and rocky dwarf planet on the far edges of the Wadi system. The *Even Odds* sits in orbit, its large rear shuttle hatch open to space, revealing the hangar deck inside. The *Rio Grande* is carefully manoeuvring to slip inside.

6 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

The view from inside the ship as we move into the *Even Odds* cargo bay. Prynn is at the helm, Shar by her side.

SHAR

Prynn... I'm not sure what the protocol is after nearly being sick on a person.

PRYNN

No no, that's fine. What girl doesn't dream of making a man vomit just by kissing him?

Shar looks at her, confused - was that a joke?

PRYNN

That was a joke, Shar. Seriously,
it's fine. Don't worry about it.
In fact, up to that point I'd say
things were going pretty well.

She glances at him with a mischievous grin. He smiles back,
relieved. Then she returns her attention to her helm, and
gently settles the ship to the deck.

Jake, Nog and Rena emerge from the rear cabin, having taken
the chance to freshen up.

NOG

Alright then, let's meet these
legendary soldiers of fortune.

Jake is not looking especially friendly; Rena has noticed.
Prynn locks out the ship, gets up and joins them. Nog
presses the control to open the hatch...

7

INT. EVEN ODDS - HANGAR

The runabout's passenger hatch opens... and Jake, Nog,
Shar, Prynn and Rena step out, a little nervously. Dez is
there waiting for them, still a bit tense. But with him are
PIF the green dog-like Aarruri alien, Brad the Dosi female,
and two Ferengi males, FEG and TRIV. (Meanwhile in the
background, *Even Odds'* cargo hatch closes.)

The moment Jake appears, Pif launches upon him, a big ball
of furry excitement and joy. Pif's tail wags furiously, as
he hugs him with his front paws. Jake laughs in surprise.

PIF

Jake!

NOG

(flinch back)

Eeeee! Another flurble thing!

JAKE

Don't worry, Nog. This one's
perfectly safe. This is Pif. And

he's the fastest Aarruri in the
Gamma Quadrant!

Pif steps back, a little saddened. He indicates his front
paw, which Jake now notices is slightly thinner and weaker.

PIF

Not anymore. My leg got broken
about half a cycle ago. Glessin
did his best, but it never really
healed right. So I'm out of the
running, as they say.

JAKE

Oh Pif, I'm so sorry. I know how
much it meant to you.

Jake recovers, and tenses a bit for the introductions.

JAKE

Everyone, this is Dez, the captain
of the *Even Odds*.

DEZ

A pleasure to meet you all. Jake
told me quite a bit about you.
Some of you, anyway.

Brad, the hulking Dosi, grabs Jake in an enormous bear hug.
Everyone gives the situation the side-eye...

JAKE

(trouble breathing)

Hi... Brad...

BRAD

Oh Jake, it's so good to see you,
I've been so worried...

Brad lets go, and Jake recovers with a deep breath.

JAKE

This is Bradahk'la - Brad for
short - the ship's jewel expert
and part-time security chief. And
that's Feg and Triv, the

accountants, not surprisingly.
Guys, these are my friends.

Everyone crowds round, eager to meet Jake's friends...
except for Dez, who is still a bit standoffish.

JAKE

Prynn, pilot extraordinaire. Shar,
chief science officer. This is my
best friend Nog, son of Rom...

Feg and Triv instantly launch towards Nog, cower before
him, simpering obsequiously and chattering over each other.

FEG

You're the Grand Nagus's son?

TRIV

Oh, welcome, sir, welcome welcome
welcome...

FEG

If there's anything we can do for
you, anything at all...

TRIV

I'm a big fan of your father, big
big fan...

DEZ

Alright, guys, that's enough. Give
the man some air.

FEG

(backing away)

Of course, of course, whatever you
need...

Jake is amused at his friend's expense. Then with a love-
struck smile he reaches for Rena...

JAKE

And last, but not least, this is
Azeni Korena... my wife.

BRAD

Your... wife?

Cheers and congratulations all around. Pif trots up to Rena, gives her a playful sniff, and nods wryly.

PIF

She'll do.

The others chuckle. Brad smiles - a tense smile that hides her true feelings.

BRAD

Well, I hope you're very happy together. Congratulations.

Prynn sees the look on Brad's face, and knows what it means - Brad is sweet on Jake. Prynn glances over to Shar, and then quickly looks away again, concealing her own feelings.

PIF

Can you stay? There's so many things to catch you up on...

Jake looks at Dez, his gaze challenging him. There's still tension between them, despite the friendly cover.

DEZ

Fine. Just don't get in the way. We have a schedule to keep to.

PIF

Yes! Come on, there's someone I want you to meet.

And Pif is off, his tail wagging. Jake follows with a grin, and the others trail behind, a little bemused. But as Jake passes Dez in the doorway, there's still a bit of a glare.

8 INT. EVEN ODDS - CORRIDOR

Pif trots happily along the corridor. Jake follows, and Rena catches up to him, whispers sotto to him.

RENA

What's going on with you?
(no response)

You told me these guys were your friends. So why are you treating Dez that way? Prynn said you actually threatened to fire on him?

Jake doesn't want to answer. He glances behind him, where all the others are following. Dez hangs to the back.

The walls are as patchwork as everywhere else on this ship, with different designs and materials. Nog observes...

NOG

Why does everything look so mismatched?

PIF

That's the *Even Odds* for you. It's a really old ship, maybe hundreds of years old. And it's been rebuilt and patched over constantly with whatever the owners could find at the time.

There's an open panel of circuits in one wall. As the group passes it, there's a flash of activity inside the panel. A streak of silver liquid shoots past across the circuits. A second streak of golden liquid chases it. There's even the oddly disembodied sound of girlish giggling somewhere.

PRYNN

What was that?

PIF

Oh, that's just Srral and Meera. They like to chase each other through the ship. It's the first time Srral's had anyone to play with since he left home.

JAKE

Yeah, about that - how in the hell do you have a changeling on board?

DEZ

She's part of my crew.

NOG

I thought all the changelings had
vanished into the galaxy.

PIF

Dez has a thing for taking in
strays. Like Jake! And that
Jem'Hadar, whatever his name
was... Tarana-something.

NOG

What?!

PRYNN

Taran'atar was on this ship? When
was this?

PIF

About half a cycle ago. Saved us
from some other Jem'Hadar. He was
actually kind of a good guy. For a
Jem'Hadar anyway. I wonder what
happened to him?

PRYNN

He's back on the station.

NOG

(scoff)

He's an "ambassador" now.

PIF

Here we are!

They stop at a door. Pif stretches up to tap the control.

9 INT. EVEN ODDS - QUARTERS

Inside is Pif's room, with cushions and toys and things to
climb on. And another Aarruri alien, a female, a slightly
different shade of green. Her spines shoot up to see Pif,
and she trots over to him with a grin. Her name is SETT,
and she greets Pif with an intimate nuzzling of snouts.

PIF

Sett, this is Jake Sisko, the human I told you about. These are his friends, and his wife, Korena. Jake, this is Settka Ganni... my wife.

JAKE

Pif, that's wonderful! I'm very pleased to meet you, Sett.

SETT

You too, Jake. Pif talks about you all the time.

PIF

You wanna meet the rest of the family?

NOG

(cringe)

There's more?

Our gang files closer into the room. Pif leads them over to a padded basket in the corner. Prynn and Rena peek in... and it's filled with half a dozen tiny, wriggling green baby Aarruri. Prynn and Rena explode from the cuteness.

RENA

Oh, Prophets, they're adorable!

PRYNN

Look at the tiny little noses! Can I take one home with me?

JAKE

Pif, I can't believe you're a father!

PIF

Well, after I hurt my leg, I realised it was time to stop gallivanting around, and settle down and raise a family. I am almost eight, you know!

(beat)

But it's good to see you, Jake.
And it's perfect timing that
you're here. It's an exciting time
to be on the *Even Odds*.

JAKE

How so?

SETT

Because of the Wa.

PRYNN

What's the Wa?

PIF

When I said the ship's really old?
Well, nobody really knows exactly
how old it is. But the Wa is the
only original part of the ship
left.

SETT

It's what helps all the new
patches and repairs take hold.

JAKE

It also reacts to changes in the
local space-time. Pif - has
something changed in the Wa?

PIF

Kinda-sorta. You remember how I
told you to never ever touch
anything in there? 'Cause we
didn't know what would happen?

JAKE

Yeah...

PIF

...Somebody touched something.

On Jake's intrigued reaction...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

10 INT. EVEN ODDS - TURBOLIFT

The five Alphies, plus Prees and Pif are in the turbolift. It's a bit uncomfortable with so many crammed in tightly, but Pif is chattering away oblivious.

PIF

So he said that since the Jem'Hadar worked out so well, why not give a changeling a chance. Facity had plenty to say about that, believe me. Glessin wasn't best thrilled either. But it's Dez's ship, after all. And she seems nice enough. A-ha! Here we are.

The lift stops and the door opens...

11 THE WA

...onto a wide open white space, seemingly dimensionless. The turbolift door appears to open out of nowhere, into nowhere. Fascinated, our gang takes tentative steps into the fuzzy whiteness. Jake, of course, has seen it before.

PRYNN

What the... I... what?

JAKE

I know, right?

Prynn has noticed the irregular coloured smudges that seem to hang in mid-air at points. She reaches to touch one...

PRYNN

What are these?

PREES

Those are what you're not supposed to touch.

Prynn yanks her hand away.

SHAR

But you said someone did touch them.

PREES

Yes, me. Completely by accident. I... tripped and fell into one.

PRYNN

So what happened?

PIF

Try it and find out.

Prynn exchanges worried looks with Jake, Shar... do you trust them? Jake nods to go ahead. She reaches slowly out towards one of the splotches, a warm purplish colour.

Her fingers swim into the colour, and there's a big WASH of energy, taking us into...

12 INT. WA ENVIRONMENT ROOM

The gang suddenly find themselves in another room, dark and small. The Alphies gasp a bit with surprise, looking around. Floating in the air in front of them is a small fist-sized black ball, doing nothing, just hanging there.

PIF

Oh good, I like this one.

PRYNN

What is it?

PIF

No idea. Step closer.

Tentatively, she does. In response the ball expands, starts humming, vibrating. It swells more, begins to spin. Picking up pace, it spins faster and faster, humming louder and louder. Then it suddenly stops, and bursts into a ball of spikes, a tiny black symbolic sun. Prynn yelps and steps back, and the ball returns to its dormant state.

Meanwhile, Shar is looking around, his antennae reaching and sensing.

SHAR

This is fascinating. It seems to function like a holodeck, but I can't detect any transmitters or the usual energy signatures. Perhaps some kind of telepathic imprint? I wonder if we all even perceive the same thing.

PIF

Every colour takes you to a different place. Not always the same place. Some don't take you anywhere - they make other things happen.

RENA

Like what?

PIF

(spooky)

Press orange... and you hear voices.

PRYNN

(uncomfortable)

How do you get out?

PREES

You're the one who got us in. So you focus on the central object in the room - the ball in this case - and just back away from it.

Prynn concentrates on the ball... and takes three steps back. There's a big WASH of energy...

13 THE WA

And we're back in the white space of the Wa. Pif grins with pride at showing off his new toy.

SHAR

I would like to investigate more,
if that's acceptable.

PREES

Fine with me. But I don't know
what you'll find. I spend all my
free time down here and I haven't
figured it out yet.

SHAR

Thank you. I'll just get some
equipment from the runabout, and
begin immediately.

Pif leads them back to the still-open turbolift door,
hanging in the air. Jake: enjoying showing his friends
around. Rena: looking around, curious and intrigued. Shar:
ready to start analysing and investigating. Prynn: oddly
weirded out and uncomfortable. Nog: sniffs his armpits.

NOG

I'm gonna freshen up. I smell like
my uncle's store room.

They pile into the turbolift, and the door closes.

14 INT. EVEN ODDS - QUARTERS

One of the *Even Odds'* small and functional guest quarters.
Nog emerges from the off-screen bathroom area into the main
room, shirt off, patting his big bald head with a towel.

He jumps a bit as, in a lower corner of the room, Srral and
Meera (in liquid form) chase each other out of one air vent
and into another, the girlish giggling following them.

Then the golden liquid creeps back out of the vent into the
room again, as if curious about Nog. Slowly, the blob of
liquid MORPHS and reforms into the humanoid form of Meera -
the usual unformed changeling features and dress, but as a
teenage girl. She peers at Nog, intrigued with him.

MEERA

I know you. Starfleet Ferengi.

NOG

I thought I recognised you down on the planet. We rescued you from the crashed ship, right?

FLASHBACK - 8x22 "GREATER GOOD"

The teenaged Founder sits among the long-dead bodies of her Jem'Hadar crew in the canted, crashed Dominion ship. Nog and Bowers stand nearby, wary.

MEERA

I was taught to believe that solids can never be trusted. But I trusted my own kind to come for me, and here I have been for two years.

BACK TO SCENE

Meera talks to Nog...

MEERA

I was grateful to you for that.

NOG

But how did you end up here? Working on a pirate ship and taking orders from a "solid" isn't very Founderish of you.

MEERA

I haven't felt very Founderish for some time. I had barely had time to reconnect with my people in the Link before they began chattering about the Progenitor, some almighty being they said would save them from extinction. The older changelings, they took it as given. As you can see, I am still newly formed. I didn't understand. When they left, I went with them, just out of companionship. But they wanted isolation. I wanted experience.

NOG
(small smile)
So you found some new friends.

MEERA
(bitter)
The other changelings are hypocrites. They talk about wanting to learn, and then they hide away, refusing to risk anything for that knowledge. I will never go back to them.

NOG
(gently)
Not all the Founders left, you know. Odo stayed behind.

MEERA
(curious)
Odo...?

NOG
He's been trying to hold the Dominion together all by himself. From what I've heard, he could use some help.

Meera almost considers it for a moment...

MEERA
No. This is my home now. I have seen and done more in these few months than half my people have in aeons. Let the Dominion fall. I don't care anymore.

With that, she MORPHS into a liquid and slips back inside the vent, leaving Nog alone.

15 INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE

Dez is in the command chair, with Facity and Glessin (plus a couple of others unnamed) running other stations. The lift door opens and Jake steps in.

FACITY

Jake!

Facity gets up and gives him a welcoming hug. Glessin too, although it's a polite and reserved handshake for him.

GLESSIN

Mister Sisko. Welcome back.

JAKE

Thanks Facity, Glessin.

He glances towards Dez, who has not even looked at him.

Facity shrugs in apology - she has no idea what's going on between the two of them. She gestures for Jake to go over.

Jake approaches. Dez glances up, and straight back to his work, teeth gritted. Doesn't want to talk to him.

JAKE

Hey Dez... why did you run?

DEZ

Did you miss the part where we nearly got arrested? I realise this may be outside your realm of expertise, but in those circumstances it's generally accepted practise to run.

JAKE

I meant, run from me. Is it just because you were about to steal my ship?

DEZ

(defensive)

That was a misunderstanding. Look, there was no harm done.

He gets up and heads to the work stations at the back of the bridge, turning away from Jake.

DEZ (cont)

If you'll excuse me, I have to get ready for the next job. We're due at Drang tomorrow.

JAKE

Drang? Didn't we do that already?

DEZ

You think we only go anywhere once? We go where the work is.

And Dez buries his head in the work again, ignoring Jake. Facity can only silently apologise again. Clearly Jake isn't going to get anywhere with him. Jake turns to leave.

16 **THE WA**

Shar stands in the Wa, surrounded by pieces of Starfleet technology, all beeping and chirruping. He holds out a tricorder, taking readings, and compares the readings to the larger machines. He's quite content just working away.

In the middle of the flat white space, a hole opens up and reveals the turbolift, carrying Rena. She exits into the Wa and heads slowly towards Shar. He looks up, surprised.

SHAR

Mrs Sisko. Do you need anything?

RENA

Rena, Shar - it's Rena. Prynn's playing with the puppies again. Nog went to wash up. Jake went to talk to the captain... he's certainly not talking to me. So I just thought I'd come and see what you're up to.

SHAR

I am analysing the readings my equipment is taking of this environment. Prees gave me access to all her records - it makes for absorbing work.

Shar walks towards a coloured splotch of a fiery orange colour, points his tricorder at it.

RENA

Isn't that the one Pif said made you hear voices?

SHAR

It is. I thought perhaps to run it through our linguistic database. The work we did on the Cathedral artefact might help us translate the voices where Prees could not.

Tentatively, Shar reaches out and touches the splotch. His blue fingers swim into the amorphous orange colour...

The white formlessness around them dims slightly, subtly changing to a gentle orangey-yellow colour. And they can also hear distant VOICES, numerous different people talking over each other. The effect is of being in a large room with lots of other people, all talking over each other.

Rena is enchanted, listening to the voices. Shar is just concentrating on his readings.

SHAR

It will take a few minutes for the translation to take effect.

RENA

Actually, there was something I wanted to ask you. Shar... have I done something to offend you?

SHAR

Of course not. Why would you think that?

RENA

Well, for one thing, you won't even use my name. And this, right now - these are the first words you've said to me since we left Deep Space Nine. Do you just not like me?

Shar finally pulls himself away from his machines. He tries to figure out how to be honest with his feelings - it still doesn't come naturally to him.

SHAR

Forgive me, Rena. I meant no offence. I am simply not sure of my place in this company. You and Jake are married. Nog is Jake's best friend from childhood. Their relationship takes precedence over Nog's and mine. And Prynn and I...

He drifts off, not sure what more to say about that...

RENA

Shar, I'm more of an outsider here than you are. The rest of you all have so much in common already. I'm a baker's daughter from a small fishing village. But you never get anywhere if you don't try. As for Prynn... I can see it's complicated. I think I heard you're married...?

SHAR

(quibble)

Andorian bonding rituals do not correlate directly to those of other races...

RENA

I've been where you are. I've felt attracted to one person while I'd made a promise to another. I took a chance, and it worked out. But I wouldn't go so far as to say that you should always take the chance. There's more to worry about than just your feelings.

SHAR

(sadly)

I know.

He's grateful for Rena's support, but it doesn't really make things any better. Rena forcibly changes the subject.

RENA

So! Any theories on this place?

SHAR

Hundreds. None of them provable. Elements of organic technology help the ship's many divergent systems to work together. There must be sub-spatial sensitivity, as it responded to the folding of space that concealed the Eav'oq. And there is the question of its indeterminate age.

RENA

It reminds me of how the vedeks describe the Celestial Temple. Warm white light, no dimensions, whispering voices...

SHAR

With respect, Rena, I do not believe the *Even Odds* turbolift system opens onto the Bajoran afterlife.

She pouts, wryly amused at the joke. Then, amongst the many voices, one word comes through loud and clear in English.

VOICE

...proof...

Shar and Rena stop, listening closer...

RENA

Did you hear that?

SHAR

I did. It seems the translator has found enough repetition to begin its work.

Shar works his tricorder... Rena listens closely as more words begin to emerge out of the mass of sounds...

VOICES

...dare... do they?... must...
fools... destroy...

Shar and Rena look to each other, alarmed. More words...

VOICES

...assignment... signs...

Words are becoming clearer still, forming into phrases. With every one, Rena and Shar become more worried...

VOICES

..signs are clear... there can be
no question... what are they
called?... does it matter? ...they
are called the Drang. They worship
falsely... they must be
destroyed...

The clear words go silent for a moment, as if thinking or checking. The formless whispering voices swirling around them, the orangey light giving it all a fiery glow...

VOICES

...we are in agreement... you must
remember your vow, your promise to
her... interrogate them, follow
the signs... they are sinners,
abhorrent... you are a soldier of
the True, a Knight of the
Ascendants...

(beat)

...destroy the Drang.

On Rena and Shar's shocked, horrified reactions...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

17 INT. EVEN ODDS - MESS HALL

The large room where the *Even Odds* crew meet to eat, plan and hang out. Beginning on Dez, looking sceptical...

DEZ

The Ascendants.

WIDEN to see that all five Alphies are at the table, plus Dez, Facity and Prees. Shar is holding a padd.

NOG

Yes. They're -

JAKE

He's heard of them, Nog.

FACITY

They're just a legend though, aren't they?

JAKE

Tell that to the crew of the *Gryphon*.

SHAR

The voices clearly said that they were going to destroy a people called the Drang. Have you heard of them?

DEZ

(small, tight)

They're our next job.

NOG

You can't go, Captain. You have to get as far away as possible.

DEZ

It's too late for that. We're already there. We entered orbit ten minutes ago.

PRYNN

And is anything happening?

DEZ

No. Everything's fine.

FACITY

Dez...

DEZ

Shut up.

JAKE

Fac? Please... what is it?

FACITY

We haven't been able to get in touch with our contacts. All the comm lines are scrambled.

NOG

They're here.

DEZ

There could be any number of reasons. We don't give up on a job just because of a bad comm line.

JAKE

(sarcastic)

Of course. Money comes first.

PRYNN

Captain, please. We're trying to help. We've seen first-hand what the Ascendants are capable of.

DEZ

There's nobody else here but us and a few Drang ships. There are no Ascendants.

SHAR

Their ships are very small. They could be hiding.

DEZ

Why should I believe you? Because the voices in the Wa told you?

SHAR

Yes. I believe the voices are a comm system we inadvertently intercepted. During our first encounter with the Ascendants, all the Starfleet crews took extensive sensor readings.

(re padd)

Given my suspicions, I went back over Prees's readings of the Wa, compared them to ours with a fresh eye.

FACITY

And what did you find?

SHAR

I concluded that the *Even Odds* - or more specifically the Wa - is in fact Ascendant technology.

A moment for everyone to absorb. That's a pretty big claim.

DEZ

That's ridiculous.

JAKE

No, it's not. It makes perfect sense. You've told me from the beginning you've no idea how old this ship is, or where it came from. And that the Wa always helped the ship to repair itself after any damage or upgrades.

FACITY

Yes, it did. But so what?

JAKE

Opaka told me about meeting that Ascendant woman, Raiq, when she crashed her ship. She said the woman was wearing some kind of armour, separate from her skin or her clothes. The armour was damaged, but it gradually healed itself. Like it was alive. The same with her ship - it landed after a fight in orbit, but by the time the woman left, it was repaired.

PREES

Sounds like the Wa to me.

SHAR

Those coloured patches are the interface to activate various functions - communications, entertainment. Ascendants generally live and work alone - they would need amusement.

JAKE

Prees - you said the Wa reacted to the Iconians' gateways, and to the Eav'oq's space-folding trick. Maybe it's designed to be sensitive to things like that as a connection to the wormhole.

NOG

It might be what powers that space-jump thing they do too.

DEZ

This is all very fascinating, but I still don't see why I should care.

Rena has been quiet till now, but she finally speaks up.

RENA

Because this was all meant to
happen.

They all look at her, curious - even the other Alphies.

JAKE

Rena...? What do you mean?

RENA

It all adds up - everything. I
didn't realise it till now, but it
does. Do you think it's a
coincidence that all of this is
happening now? That two years ago,
Jake was rescued by you, of all
people? A ship based on Ascendant
technology? And that you'd
discover the lost kai of Bajor,
who had been rescued by an
Ascendant, and that together you'd
reawaken the Eav'oq?

DEZ

(deliberately contrary)

Yes. All a coincidence.

RENA

How about you making friends with
Deep Space Nine's resident
Jem'Hadar? Or that the first time
Jake is back in the Gamma Quadrant
again, you just happen to try to
steal our ship? At the same time
somebody finally figures out how
the Wa works? Or that you'd have a
date with the Drang at the exact
moment the Ascendants are here?
Still a coincidence?

DEZ

Yes!

FACITY

(gently)

Dez, come on...

DEZ

Facity, no! You can't possibly think this is all some great plan of the Bajoran gods.

RENA

How can you not? Look, I'm no crazy religious fundamentalist. But I believe in the Prophets. I believe they have a plan for everyone. And this is too many coincidences to deny. We're meant to be here. We're meant to save the Drang from the Ascendants... somehow.

DEZ

There are no Ascendants!

The comm system suddenly interrupts - SRRAL's metallic, artificial voice.

SRRAL (comm)

Dez, this is bridge.

DEZ

Go ahead, Srral.

SRRAL (comm)

Sensors have detected a large explosion on the surface of the Drang homeworld.

Quiet, worried looks around the room.

JAKE

It's starting.

18 INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE

The door opens and everyone enters - Dez, Facity, Prees, and the five Alphies. Brad and Glessin have been running the bridge in their absence. Meera and Pif are there too.

They all stop as they see the view on the main screen - the surface of the Drang planet, with the signs of a large

explosion, big enough to have destroyed an entire city. Dez is starting to believe there's a problem, despite himself.

FACITY

What happened?

BRAD

It's the government centre. As much as the Drang can be said to have a government, anyway. No idea how or why.

SHAR

You should scan again for ships, using these parameters.

Shar lifts his padd, pulls a chip out of it and holds it out to Facity. She nods, and plugs the chip into a console.

FACITY

Srral... do it.

SRRAL (comm)

Scanning, Facity.

A pause of a few moments...

SRRAL (comm)

Contact is confirmed. A small ship matching those parameters is holding position over the planet's northern magnetic pole.

DEZ

Alright, I believe you. Srral, get us out of here.

JAKE

(shocked)

No! We have to do something to stop it.

NOG

Jake...

DEZ

I'm not putting us in the middle
of this. Srral -

SRRAL (comm)
(interrupting)
The vessel is scanning us.

Uh-oh. They've been detected. Jake is almost smug.

JAKE
You're already in the middle of
it, Dez.

Nog suddenly takes firm command. Dez basically lets him,
because he still doesn't really get what's going on.

NOG
Jake - get out of here, now.

JAKE
(confused)
What?

NOG
Prynn - take them. All four of
you. Get back to the runabout and
power it down, completely dead.
And then hide inside.

PRYNN
Why?

SHAR
(realises)
He's right. The Ascendants have as
many sensor records of us as we do
of them. If they detect Starfleet
technology on board...

PRYNN
(gets it)
Oh, hell. Alright, let's go.

JAKE

What about Rena? They know
Bajorans now. If they detect
her... they'll kill us all.

BRAD

(doubtful)

They'd kill a whole ship over one
person?

NOG

They'd kill a whole planet over
one person. Okay, Shar... find
some way to mask your life signs.
All of you, not just Rena - Raiq
saw you and Prynn on the *Defiant*
bridge. We can't take the chance
she won't have told the rest of
them to look out for you.

SHAR

I'm not sure how to do that
without the runabout's power...

MEERA

(speaks up)

I can do it. I can cover the ship
and block the readings.

JAKE

Nog... what about you?

NOG

I wasn't on the bridge. Maybe they
won't recognise me. So I'm going
to talk to them... and try and get
all of us out of this alive. Stop
talking and go! We've got seconds
until they're on top of us.

MEERA

Come on - follow me.

Meera leads Jake, Rena, Prynn and Shar back into the
turbolift. As they go, Jake spares a worried look for his
friend. And then the door closes and they're gone.

Nog stands on the *Even Odds* bridge - a tiny little Ferengi amongst these huge events. He strips off his uniform jacket and hides it under a console. He removes his rank pips, puts them with it. But he keeps his combadge hidden in his hand. He's terrified... but determined.

NOG

Oh... this was a bad idea.

19 **INT. EVEN ODDS - CORRIDOR**

Jake, Rena, Prynn, Shar and Meera run down the corridor at top speed. No time for screams or jokes - this is for real.

20 **INT. EVEN ODDS - HANGAR**

They run into the hangar deck, where the *Rio Grande* sits. The runabout's hatch opens at their approach...

21 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

The four Alphies run into the cockpit - Prynn immediately heads to the consoles, begins hitting buttons.

PRYNN

Computer, initiate full systems shutdown. Power, drive systems, sensors - kill it all. Now.

COMPUTER

Acknowledged.

PRYNN

Shar - help me!

Shar runs to the rear consoles and starts working them too. Jake and Rena stay out of the way, nervous and hugging each other. One by one, all the systems go dark and silent.

22 **INT. EVEN ODDS - HANGAR**

As the runabout dies, Meera leaps gracefully into the air, MORPHing as she goes. She becomes a wide, flat sheet of changeling protoplasm, covering every square inch of the ship. It creeps from the cockpit backwards, past the hatch just as it closes, until it swallows the runabout whole.

23 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Silent now - all the machines are dead, and the lights are dark. The only light comes from the front window, filtered through Meera's golden body.

Jake and Rena hug each other. Pryn timer turns to Shar, stands, approaches him slowly, and reaches out to hug him too. He clings on to her with mixed relief and fear.

24 **INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE**

They're waiting... waiting...

DEZ

(quiet)

I hope to hell you know what
you're doing.

NOG

So do I.

Back to waiting. It makes the tension worse. Eventually...

SRRAL (comm)

Incoming -

Before the synthetic voice can finish, a ball of FLAME bursts into life at the front of the bridge. Everyone flinches back from the force of it. After a second, the fire burns out and reveals an Ascendant male.

His name is BLAS. He stands calmly on the deck, peering imperiously at the crew, the image of the burning Drang homeworld behind him. He spots Nog, and seems to intuit that he's the one in charge, at least for the moment.

And Nog looks back at him, trying not to shudder or shake with fear. As the two of them stare each other down...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

25 INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE

Where we left it. Nog and Blas measure each other up, while the *Even Odds* crew - Dez, Facity, Brad, Pif - wait on tenterhooks. Pif's hackles are raised, a low growl in his throat. Nog is extremely nervous, but he put himself in this position, and now he's going to see it through.

BLAS

I am Blas, Archquester of the Ascendancy.

NOG

Hi. My name's Nog.

BLAS

You are not Drang.

NOG

No...

BLAS

Fortunate for you. If you are not Drang, why are you here?

NOG

We're... couriers. Salesmen. We were here to meet a client.

BLAS

Your client is dead. If not now, then soon.

NOG

Why? I mean, it's not like I can do anything about it, but I was just wondering... why are you killing the Drang?

BLAS

They worship... falsely. They tell stories of gods who will reward them for prosperity.

NOG
Is that so bad?

BLAS
There are no gods but the True Gods. And only the Ascendants may worship the True.
(beat)
Tell me, Nog... do you worship?

26 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Jake and Rena cling to each other. He strokes her hair, tries to calm her fearful shaking. Shar and Prynn sit in the front seats, holding hands. All they can do is wait.

MEERA (o.s.)
Starfleet. Can you hear me?

PRYNN
Meera?

MEERA (o.s.)
Yes. There is a communications signal coming from the bridge. Shall I open a hole for it?

PRYNN
Will you still be able to block our life signs?

MEERA (o.s.)
I believe so.

PRYNN
Then do it. Thank you.

A moment, and then all four of their combadges come to life with processed voices - Nog and Blas. They listen, scared for their friend, for their lives.

NOG (comm)

My people believe in profit. In making money. We believe the more money you have, the better person you are.

27 **INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE**

Beginning on Nog's hand, gripping tight to his combadge...

BLAS

Material wealth. Pitiful. And not so very different from the Drang. But you have no gods?

NOG

That's right.

Blas holds his silver hand out flat. A ball of FLAME bursts into life in his palm - he doesn't flinch. The fire blows away and reveals an image standing in Blas's palm.

The image is of a DRANG - a reptiloid creature on its hind legs, as seen in 8x23 "Rising Son." Think of the *Spider-Man* villain the Lizard. The image of the Drang cowers back from some unseen threat, hands up to protect itself. Blas gazes down at the moving image in his palm, serenely.

BLAS

The Drang Emperor. He had gods. I questioned him - as deluded as he was, he may have held clues to the location of the Fortress of the True.

NOG

And did he tell you anything?

BLAS

In fact, he did. He mentioned something of great interest to me, about a people called... Bajoran.

28 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Rena jerks at Blas's words. She's shaking with fear. Jake holds her as tight as he can.

BLAS (comm)
He said they used to have a colony
near here, although it was
destroyed some years ago.

29 **INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE**

Continuing the conversation...

BLAS
You wouldn't know anything about
that, would you? Perhaps you did
business with them?

Nog lies with all the skill he can muster.

NOG
Never heard of them. We're not
from around here. So... what
happened to the Imperator?

BLAS
He told me what we needed to know.
And then...

Blas pointedly closes his fist, crushing the image of the
Drang, flames licking up between the fingers. Nog and
everyone else get the message loud and clear.

BLAS
He was first. His city followed.

Blas opens the hand again, and he's now holding a ball of
throbbing, pulsating energy. He looks back at Nog, a small
smug smile on his face.

BLAS
A device precisely this size was
all I needed to destroy the
Drang's main city. A much smaller
device would do the same to this
ship.

NOG

Now, hold on - there's no need for that. If you got what you needed out of the boss, why kill anybody else?

BLAS

They shame the True. The Drang, the Eav'oq, the Bajorans... It is my sacred duty as a Knight of the Ascendants to cleanse the stars of heresy. So says the Fire.

NOG

The "fire"? Is that a person?

BLAS

The Fire was sent to us by the True. She is their emissary to the Ascendants.

30 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Everyone reacts to the familiar word. Jake and Rena are especially curious...

BLAS (comm)

With our path illuminated by the Fire, we will find the Bajorans, and all heretics... and they will burn.

Rena tenses again...

31 **INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE**

Blas lowers his hand. The conversation is over.

BLAS

I suggest you leave now, if you do not wish to share their fate.

The Ascendant seems to burst into flames... and then he's gone. Nog still daren't breathe - it might all fall apart.

FACITY

(quiet)

Srral, keep your sensors on that ship.

After a second, Nog lifts his combadge and speaks into it.

NOG
Jake? Did you all hear that?

32 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Jake speaks into the air...

JAKE
We heard it.

NOG (comm)
Get up here. Fast.

Curious now, the four get ready to leave. The golden film of changeling matter retracts itself away from the windows.

33 EXT. SPACE - DRANG HOMEWORLD

The planet as seen from space. The *Even Odds* sits in orbit, and we see the city-sized fire blazing on the surface...

34 INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE

The turbolift door opens and Jake, Rena, Prynn, Shar and Meera all re-enter the bridge. Nog sags with relief to have his friends back - that was pretty scary.

PRYNN
Alright - what do we do?

DEZ
We get out of here.

JAKE
Dez, don't you dare. We have to do something. We have to help the Drang!

DEZ
Why, exactly? In what way is any of this my problem?

JAKE

You know, I just can't believe you, Dez. I can't believe I ever admired you or wanted to stay with you.

Dez throws his arms up in exasperation and annoyance.

DEZ

Oh, here it is! You want to know why I ran away from you, Jake? Because of this. This smug, self-righteous attitude I knew you'd throw at me. You think you're so morally superior to all of us.

JAKE

If you mean I won't stand by and let an entire race be massacred, then hell yeah, call me superior all you want. You? You only care about finding your next job.

DEZ

That's what we do! When are you going to get that through your skull? And when are you going to stop trying to make me the bad guy just because I like to get paid for the work I do?

JAKE

You can do business without being so cold and heartless.

DEZ

I don't live in your fabled moneyless economy, Jake. I don't have the luxury of doing good deeds just so I can feel good about myself. I have a crew to feed and clothe, and a ship to keep running. And you know what? I do feel good about it.

(re Nog)

I bet your friend Nog agrees with me.

Jake turns to Nog, clearly assuming his friend's support. But Nog hesitates.

NOG

Oh no. You're not putting me in the middle of this.

JAKE

(astonished)

Nog...!

RENA

Both of you shut up, right now. Every word you yell at each other is another Drang being killed. And we have been sent here to save them. So forget your petty little squabbles for a minute and think about what we're going to do.

DEZ

Fine! Let's have some practical suggestions, then. If you're so determined to save the Drang, tell me how. Go on.

Rena takes a breath, and tries to rise to the challenge.

RENA

Alright. It's only one guy in one ship, right? It'll take him a long time to kill a whole planet's worth of people all on his own. That gives us time to just attack his ship and destroy it, and save as many people as possible.

SHAR

(tentative)

Rena... I admire your desire to help, but even one Ascendant ship is a major threat. A single vessel just like that destroyed a

runabout in seconds and almost
killed Captain Kira.

JAKE

We have the runabout and the *Even
Odds*. And you have all your sensor
readings. We can find a way. We
have to.

DEZ

This is a freighter ship. We
barely have enough weapons to fend
off the average asteroid, never
mind apocalyptic aliens.

RENA

(pointed)

You have Ascendant technology.

They stop, considering that. They'd forgotten.

NOG

Maybe she's right. Maybe there's
some way we can turn their own
technology against them. Shar, go
over those readings again, look
for -

SRRAL (comm)

The vessel is breaking orbit. It
is powering weapons.

Oh crap. Is it coming for us?

35 **EXT. SPACE - DRANG HOMEWORLD**

The northern pole of the planet. A tiny, silver Ascendant
ship rises up from the surface, out of the orbital plane...

CLOSE-UP

on the Ascendant ship as a new device extrudes from its
external hull - a kind of smooth, sleek missile launcher.

And fires.

The missile goes nowhere near the planet or the *Even Odds* - instead it shoots straight off towards the Drang sun.

36 INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE

Everyone watches the screen, confused by this turn.

FACITY
What is he doing?

SRRAL (comm)
The missile is aiming directly for
the system's sun.

BRAD
What? Why?

NOG
(realising)
Oh no...

BRAD
What?

SRRAL (comm)
Sensors detect fluctuations in the
star's gravitational and magnetic
fields.

SHAR
Let me see.

Shar goes to the panels at the rear of the bridge, begins working them... After a few moments, he turns back to his friends, a stricken look on his face.

SHAR
Readings are consistent with an
isolytic subspace burst.

Nog and Prynn know what that means. Nog closes his eyes, hangs his head. Prynn covers her mouth in horror...

PRYNN
Oh, God...

RENA
(confused)
What does that mean?

Nobody really wants to say. Rena wants answers.

RENA
Guys! Come on, tell me!

Shar manages to explain in halting, horror-stricken tones.

SHAR
An isolytic weapon creates a subspace tear - a hole in the fabric of local space-time. If the weapon is detonated inside a star, it would destabilise the nuclear reactions, forcing the star to artificially nova. This means the star will eject a massive and catastrophic burst of radiation, which will scour the life from every world in the system. Every Drang, every life form, down to the smallest bacteria. All burning.

(beat)
And there is nothing we can do to stop it.

Rena is dumbfounded. She looks at Jake, Prynn, Shar, Nog... nothing any of them can do. She looks to the screen...

37 EXT. SPACE - DRANG HOMEWORLD

Its work done, the Ascendant ship JUMPS away in a flash.

The next second, the star EXPLODES. It bursts in blindingly bright light, a massive wave of radiation expanding out in a spherical shell, growing slowly but steadily...

38 INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE

On everyone's sad, beaten, defeated expressions, as they watch these events on the main viewscreen...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

39 EXT. SPACE - DRANG SYSTEM

The nova continues to grow, a shell of cast-off matter preceded by the wave of energy and power. It's moving at light speed, but at interstellar distances that still looks agonisingly slow. But it's coming inexorably, nevertheless.

40 INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE

This sight is also relayed via the *Even Odds'* screen.

SRRAL (comm)

Contact in four minutes at current rate and distance.

DEZ

(quiet but pointed)

Do I have your permission to leave now, Jake?

RENA

(tearful)

No! We can't just give up! Nog, Shar, there has to be something...

But they just sadly shake their heads. Jake reaches out to her, tries to comfort her. She won't have it.

SRRAL (comm)

Communications have cleared up. The Ascendant must have been blocking the signals before.

PRYNN

Put it on speakers.

FACITY

Why?

PRYNN

Because these are the last words
they'll ever say. They deserve to
have somebody hear them.

Facity nods to Shar, who is still at the rear console. He works the panels, and the speakers come to life with the sounds of chaos. Voices talking over each other, shouting and screaming, clearly in panic.

The *Even Odds* and *Alphie* crews stand and listen, solemnly.

SRRAL (comm)

Escape vessels are launching from
the surface.

PRYNN

They can't all escape in four
minutes. But at least some is
better than none.

DEZ

(new idea)

Srral - move us to behind the
planet, away from the sun. Then
drop shields and begin
transporting Drang on board. As
many as you can get.

SRRAL (comm)

Who shall I choose?

DEZ

Random. Totally random. Facity,
get on that helm and be ready.

FACITY

Hell yeah.

Newly energised, the crew get to work moving the ship.
Cradling the distraught *Rena*, Jake mouths silently to Dez.

JAKE

Thank you.

PRYNN

Two transporters are better than one. Shar, come on!

And she strides quickly to the turbolift, Shar behind her.

41 EXT. SPACE - DRANG SYSTEM

A pitiful few escape shuttles launch from the surface of the Drang planet, while in the background, the wave of nova energy approaches.

The *Even Odds* meanwhile manoeuvres into the shadow. At the same time, its rear cargo hatch opens and the *Rio Grande* emerges, quickly moving to a different position in orbit.

42 INT. EVEN ODDS - TRANSPORTER ROOM

Prees works the transporter console; Feg and Triv hover by the platform. The two Ferengi guide confused and terrified handfuls of Drang off the platform, just in time for the coils to power up again and save the next half-dozen.

Among the panicked chattering and grunting of the Drang, Feg and Triv try their best to explain what's going on, all MOS, and guide them out of the room into the corridor, where Pif is waiting to take them to other rooms.

43 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

More Drang appear in twos on the tiny runabout transporter stage. Shar receives them while Prynn works the helm.

SHAR

Please move to the rear cabin.
I'll explain everything soon, but first priority is to beam as many aboard as possible.

(next pair)

Please move to the rear cabin...

PRYNN

Shar...!

Shar turns at Prynn's worried tone, and sees the view out of the front window...

...the wave of energy is almost at the planet, silhouetting against the growing light, making the whole area eclipse.

PRYNN

We need to go, now! I can't risk taking any more. Get them secure.

44 EXT. SPACE - DRANG SYSTEM

And the wave HITS.

The radiation scours the world, just as Shar said it would. Progressing from the sun-ward side to the opposite, the concussive force of it kicks up the very surface. Ground is pulverised, buildings are vaporised, oceans are boiled.

At the last split second, the *Even Odds* and the *Rio Grande* jump to warp, escaping into space. The energy wave chases them, continuing on its way, until it HITS CAMERA, and we

WHITE OUT

Then **FADE IN** to:

45 EXT. SPACE

Some time later, the two small ships sit in the orbit of another planet, green and habitable. The few Drang shuttles that managed to escape are also in orbit.

46 INT. EVEN ODDS - HANGAR

The crew stand in the hangar, looking out at the surface of the world through the open cargo bay hatch (force field in place). From the *Even Odds* there's Dez, Facity, Pif, Meera, and Feg and Triv. All five from the *Rio Grande* are here.

FACITY

That's the last of them. All the refugee ships, everyone we were able to save...

PRYNN

The last of them. Literally.

PIF

I can't stop thinking about everyone we left behind. All those people who lost their families, their children... if I ever lost my family...

He doesn't need to finish the sentence. Prynn looks at him, thinking about something...

NOG

You think they'll be safe? The Ascendants won't come for them?

JAKE

We'll just have to hope, Nog.

NOG

But they've got nothing. No homes, no technology... how are they going to live?

MEERA

The Dominion will take care of them.

PRYNN

(amazed)

I beg your pardon?

MEERA

You said the Dominion was in chaos. And these Ascendants - from what you said, from what I heard in the Link, from what I've seen today... it was them who sent the Dominion into it.

NOG

Yes... yes it was.

MEERA

The other changelings abandoned the Dominion. I will not do the same. I will return to the Link, even if it only consists of Odo...

and I will command the Jem'Hadar
to help the Drang.

DEZ

Meera... are you sure?

MEERA

I am. Thank you for everything,
Dez. I have cherished my time
here. But now it is time to go.

Meera begins to stride towards the open hatch...

NOG

Meera, wait.

She turns back to him, curious...

NOG (cont)

Tell Odo... tell him that Kira
wants the Dominion's help with the
Ascendants. That she asked for an
alliance. But Taran'atar said no.
Will you do that?

MEERA

Happily, Nog. Goodbye.

Meera turns back to the hatch, leaps into the air, MORPHing
as she goes. She becomes a missile of changeling matter,
passes through the forcefield out into space, and is gone.

The rest of them turn, as if to go. Jake calls after them.

JAKE

Dez, hold on. There's something
else I want to talk about.

DEZ

Oh for crying out loud, Jake. If
you're going to complain about me
stealing your ship again -

JAKE

That's not it. I accept that you
did everything you could to save

as many Drang as possible. I'm grateful. I'd even say I'm proud, although I know that'll only piss you off. But there's something else I want to ask you. Something else you could do to help.

DEZ

And again I ask - why is it my job to help?

JAKE

This won't cost you anything. It could stop more things like what happened to the Drang. And if you have the ability to do that, do you honestly not feel any obligation to use it?

In fact he does, but it hurts to have to admit it to Jake.

DEZ

What's your idea?

JAKE

That you listen. That's all. Just listen. Nog and Rena were right - there is a way to use the Ascendant technology in this ship to our advantage, and we can do it by listening.

NOG

(gets it now)

To the Wa.

JAKE

Exactly. Shar, you could give them your translation program. Nog, you could give them a code to access the wormhole relay. And Dez... you could have one of your crew listen to whatever the Ascendants say through the Wa, and pass it on to us. And we can use it to stop them.

(beat)
So what do you say?

Nog, Shar, Rena and Prynn look on hopefully, happy with Jake's idea. Dez stands silently considering it, very aware that everyone is waiting for a decision.

47 **EXT. SPACE**

Focusing on the *Rio Grande*, sitting in orbit of the Drang's nameless new colony world...

48 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Prynn and Shar are moving around the cabin, getting ready to go. Shar is more relaxed and relieved, happy with the deal they've struck. Prynn still has something on her mind.

SHAR

I am glad we could convince Dez to help. The extinction of a species, for whatever reason, is an issue that's rather close to my heart, you understand.

Prynn nods absently. Shar comes up close to her, reaches out for her hand. She lets him take it, although awkwardly.

SHAR

I am also looking forward to returning to the station. And "picking up where we left off."

He leans in for a kiss... she pulls away from him.

PRYNN

Shar... don't.

SHAR

What's wrong? Did I upset you?

PRYNN

No. Well, yes, sort of. But no.
(sags)
Oh God... I can't do this.

SHAR

I don't understand. You said -

PRYNN

I know I did. And I meant it. But then I came here. I saw Brad... it's plain as day she had a thing for Jake. But when she heard he got married... she backed off in a second. Didn't say another word about it. Another woman's husband is off limits, end of discussion.

SHAR

But Prynn, you know Andorians -

PRYNN

And Pif, and his wife and his babies. If anything ever came between them, stopped him from watching his children grow up... he as near as said it would kill him. How can I do that to another family?

SHAR

Prynn, what are you saying?

PRYNN

That I can't do this. Us. I want to. I want to so much. You're beautiful and sensitive, and I know I'm hurting you. And it probably doesn't help to tell you I'm hurting myself too. But better that than get involved with a married man and break up a family. I let myself think I could do it for a minute, I wanted to think I could do it... but I can't. I'm sorry, Shar... I can't.

She turns and walks away, crying, leaving Shar confused.

Shar stands inside the white nothingness of the Wa, guiding Prees through his translation program using a padd. Prees reaches out and touches the orange splotch in front of her. The Wa dims, and the formless, whispering VOICES return.

After a moment, the turbolift opens in the middle of the space, again carrying Rena. She wanders out slowly, looking around. It no longer looks as enchanting to her as it did. She tentatively approaches Shar and Prees.

SHAR

Hello, Rena. Can I help you?

RENA

Prynn told me what happened. I wanted to see if you were okay.

PREES

(realises)

I'll leave you two alone.

Prees pulls away and heads to the turbolift. She enters, and the door closes behind her, leaving empty space.

RENA

How are you feeling?

SHAR

Confused. Continually pulled back and forth. I had thought Andorian relationships were among the most complex in the Federation. But I am learning that human relationships are just as perplexing.

RENA

Yep. That they are. But if you need somebody to talk to...

(smirk)

Somebody who has no romantic interest in you whatsoever... I'm willing.

SHAR

I appreciate that. Thank you.

RENA
(change subject)
So Prees is going to listen in to
the Ascendants for us?

SHAR
She is. She will submit weekly
reports through the relay... Rena?

He trails off, because Rena is looking very worried all of
a sudden. She's heard something, something in the voices.

RENA
Shar, have you been recording
this? Can you run it back?

SHAR
Uhh... yes, if you wish.

He works the padd. The sound of the voices rewinds by a few
seconds, and plays over again. We can't make any of it out
any clearer, but Rena apparently can, and it worries her.

RENA
Jake said there's a Cardassian on
board, right?

SHAR
The ship's medic, I believe.

RENA
Get him. Get him down here right
now. And everyone else.

CUT TO:

50 THE WA

The five Alphies, plus Dez and Glessin, are now gathered
around Shar's padd in the orange-hued Wa.

RENA
Shar - play it back again.

Shar taps buttons, and the voices replay. Glessin listens intently... and recognises the words with fascination.

DEZ

What does it say?

GLESSIN

It says... "I am the Fire."

PRYNN

"The Fire"... that's what the Ascendant guy said was their version of the Emissary, right? Sent to them from their gods?

JAKE

Right. So... why is that a surprise? They would talk about that, wouldn't they?

RENA

That's not the problem.

DEZ

Then what is?

RENA

She didn't just say, "I am the Fire." She said it...

(beat)

...in Cardassian.

Dez looks to Glessin, who nods in agreement. Nog's face slowly falls, dumbstruck, as the answer comes to him.

NOG

Blessed Exchequer...

PRYNN

What? What is it?

NOG

"I am the Fire." A Cardassian female, the Emissary to the Ascendants.

(w/ gravity)

This road trip is over. We need to
get home. Now.

On Nog's determination...

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW