

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

8x21 - "Lesser Evil."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novel

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine
Mission Gamma Book 4 - Lesser Evil

by Robert Simpson

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

A dead body lies flat, cold and stark on a biobed, covered and obscured by a pale blue sheet.

2 INT. DS9 - ASAREM'S QUARTERS

An ancient Bajoran book sits on a desk, somewhat rushed and dishevelled. A MAGISTRATE speaks with a shaking voice.

MAGISTRATE (o.s.)
Place both hands on the tome, and
speak as I do: I, Asarem Wadeen...

Shaking hands rest on the book, flecked with blood spots...

3 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

ASAREM crouches near the floor, SHUL covering her body with his own. From her perspective she can only hear the other SCREAMS, and the transporter beam that takes the assassin.

4 INT. DS9 - ASAREM'S QUARTERS

The shaking hands still rest delicately on the book...

MAGISTRATE (o.s.)
...to uphold the laws of Bajor and
to act honourably as custodian of
the Bajoran people...

5 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

Asarem finds herself grabbed by the arm and dragged to her feet, Bajoran security suddenly all around her and blocking her view of the bedlam. RO urgently slaps her combadge...

RO
Ro to Ops! Code black emergency!
Block all transporter signals!

6 INT. DS9 - ASAREM'S QUARTERS

Moving up the shaking arms towards a shuddering body...

 ASAREM (o.s.)
 ...that I will protect and defend
 the Bajoran people from all foes,
 within and without...

7 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

The dead body lies in the b.g. Somewhere, instruments beep.
In the f.g, a hand SNAPS a surgical glove into place.

8 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

Bajoran security, including Sergeant ETANA, forcibly usher
Asarem out of the room. She just manages to catch sight of
KIRA hovering over Shakaar's dismembered corpse...

 KIRA
 Kira to infirmary! I need an
 emergency medical transport for
 two, right now! Energise!

The transporter beam takes Kira and Shakaar, and then the
doors CLOSE on Asarem's view.

9 INT. DS9 - ASAREM'S QUARTERS

Further up the shaking body, as we see the Magistrate
reading from an official-looking book in his hands.

 ASAREM (o.s.)
 ...that I will face the future
 fearlessly...

10 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

A phalanx of Bajoran security walks with determined purpose
and watchful eye, pushing Minister Asarem along, almost
manhandling her in their urgency to get her to safety.

They shove her to the side as yet more security, both
Bajoran and Starfleet, pelt down the corridor in the
direction of the wardroom. Asarem is plainly terrified.

11 **INT. DS9 - ASAREM'S QUARTERS**

Finally rising up to Asarem's face, as she recites the words of the Magistrate by rote, too shocked to think clearly, just saying the words...

ASAREM
...and that I will conduct myself
with truth and honour, and with
faith in the guidance of the
Prophets...

As she continues, the actual depth of the words she is saying begins to get through to her.

ASAREM (cont)
...pledging my life and my *pagh* to
the service of Bajor.

MAGISTRATE
Walk with the Prophets, First
Minister Asarem.

The Magistrate closes the book he had been reading from,
and on the SLAM of the pages, we

CUT TO:

12 **INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY**

The covered dead body on the biobed, with blood beginning to seep through from the head and throat area, blooming red flowers across the pale blue sheet.

BLACK OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

13 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

Chaos as Ro's security tries to clear the room of panicking dignitaries. Akaar and VRETHA corner Ambassador GANDRES, talking animatedly. Ro grabs Shul...

RO

Get the rest of these people out of here. I want the room sealed, and I want to start interviewing witnesses immediately. Have you heard from Etana yet?

SHUL

She checked in a minute ago. Asarem is secure in her quarters.

RO

The hell she is. Keep the habitat ring locked down but evacuate the sector with Asarem's quarters, I don't care who's living there. I want guards inside and outside her quarters at all times. Move.

As Shul moves off, TARAN'ATAR is suddenly by her side...

TARAN'ATAR

The assassin may still be aboard the station.

RO

(nods)

Go.

With a single nod, he moves off, SHROUDing as he goes. Ro looks around, and Akaar is approaching with a growl...

AKAAR

Ro. How did this happen? You were supposed to have -

RO

I was supposed to be securing this ceremony from outside forces, not from one of the Federation's own security representatives! You want to blame me for this disaster, Admiral? Fine. But maybe you need to ask why Gard would want to kill the First Minister of Bajor.

Off Akaar's growl of frustration...

14 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

Kira stands numbly towards the back of the operating suite as Doctor GIRANI (last seen 8x18) leaves the bloody body of Shakaar on the biobed and walks over to her...

GIRANI

Shakaar died instantly. The weapon was... absurdly redundant. If the impact damage and the serrated blades hadn't been enough, there was actually a small phaser charge that activated on contact. It disintegrated the back of his lower skull and the first few vertebrae. There would have been no chance of resuscitation.

Kira cannot respond - she is in shock. She stares at the shrouded dead form across the room; this is her ex-lover.

GIRANI

I need to do a full autopsy. But I'll leave you alone for a few minutes first.

Girani leaves. Kira grimaces as she begins to get angry...

15 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

Councillor VRETHA speaks via the wardroom viewscreen with Trill President MAZ (8x10 "Divided We Fall"), as security agents scan the room with tricorders behind her...

MAZ (screen)
The Bajorans can't possibly
believe this despicable act was
sanctioned by my government.

VRETHA
They don't know what to believe,
Madam President. Ambassador
Gandres is conducting himself
admirably. To his credit, he has
chosen not to invoke diplomatic
immunity. It might also help if
Trill were to issue a statement
condemning the murder, and a
pledge of whatever cooperation
Bajor may require.

MAZ (screen)
Yes, of course. We'll cooperate
fully. I assure you, Councillor,
an official statement will be
released within the day.

(shakes her head)
In five lifetimes, I never faced
anything like this. Does the
Federation Council --

VRETHA
They are aware of the situation. I
am acting on their behalf to try
to keep the political situation
from unravelling any further.

MAZ (screen)
I don't envy you the task.

Vretha knows exactly what Maz means...

16 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE

AKAAR stands behind the desk, closely watching the wall
screens. They show Ambassador GANDRES sat at the central
table, upset and shaken, as Ro questions him MOS...

The security door opens, and from a Promenade under martial
law, General LENARIS enters. Akaar turns to him...

AKAAR

How bad is it?

LENARIS

Bad. The entire station saw it on the cameras, of course. We managed to implement an information blackout beyond the station, but once this gets out, shock will set in, and accusations will start.

AKAAR

None of us wanted this, General.

LENARIS

I don't doubt it. But it happened nevertheless. And if some Bajorans had doubts about the Federation before, then more will very soon.

Before Akaar can reply, Ro enters the room from the cell area, leaving Gandres alone as seen on the screens...

RO

Gandres claims to know nothing substantive about Gard or the assassination, other than what we all saw in the wardroom. I believe him. But that doesn't necessarily mean it was the rogue action he seems to think it was.

LENARIS

What do you mean?

RO

Gandres didn't select Gard to be on his staff. According to him, Gard was assigned to him out of the blue, specifically for the Bajor assignment.

AKAAR

That proves nothing, Lieutenant.

RO

Not by itself, no. But Gard was joined. From my understanding, the screening process ensures that joined Trills are always a stable personality. Unless Gard is a rare mismatch, then this murder could not have been the rogue action of a madman. It had to have purpose.

AKAAR

Have sensors revealed anything about the transporter beam?

RO

Gard somehow managed to scramble the sensors before he beamed out.

AKAAR

I've apprised Captain Mello of the situation. *Gryphon* is conducting its own sensor sweep of the Bajoran system as we speak.

With a sour nod to Lenaris, Akaar heads out of the office.

RO

Wait, where are you going?

AKAAR

To face the music, Lieutenant. And you're invited.

Ro exchanges a look with Lenaris, then follows Akaar out...

17 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

The usual table is back in the centre, with Kira, Akaar, Ro, Vretha and Lenaris sat around it.

Asarem ENTERS under heavy guard. The new First Minister takes her place at the head of the table. She sits, and she takes a moment to look each one of them in the eye.

She is establishing her authority, being the strong leader.

ASAREM

In forty minutes, I am departing Deep Space Nine for Bajor for an emergency session of the Chamber of Ministers. Thereafter I will address the Bajoran people.

KIRA

What will you say, First Minister?

ASAREM

That after the assassination of First Minister Shakaar by a member of the Federation diplomatic delegation, Bajor cannot in good conscience accept membership at this time. I will order a full investigation into the murder... and I will ask the Chamber to re-evaluate the need for Starfleet's continued presence in the system.

Silence descends. Is this really going to be the end?

VRETHA

First Minister... please. Don't do this.

ASAREM

What would you have me do instead, Councillor? Is it really the Federation Council's position that the Bajoran people can just accept the bloody assassination of their leader as a minor inconvenience?

VRETHA

The Federation is Bajor's friend, First Minister. It is a friendship that has endured one crisis after another, and has always emerged stronger. Shakaar was murdered in the act of affirming that union. Will you now render his last work - and the work of Captain Sisko - meaningless?

Mentioning Sisko was a smart move - Asarem stops to think.

She shares a glance with Kira - they know something more...

RO
(mostly to self)
It's all wrong.

KIRA
Ro?

RO
Forgive me, Colonel, but the more I think about it, the less certain I am. We had our shields up during the ceremony. The *Gryphon* was the only active ship in the system. And yet Gard beamed away. Maybe he could mask his weapon to the sensors, but beam through the shields? I don't buy it.

AKAAR
Superior transporter technology is not unheard of, Lieutenant.

KIRA
But assuming you're right, Ro, your conclusion would be...?

RO
He's still here. Biding his time, waiting for a chance to escape.

AKAAR
What steps have you taken to test this hypothesis?

RO
Internal sensors are sweeping the station section by section. My deputies are conducting on-site inspections. And Taran'atar is making his own enquiries. But on a station this size --

VOICE (comm)
Selzner to Admiral Akaar. I have
Captain Mello calling from the
Gryphon, sir.

AKAAR
Put it through, Ensign.

The face of Captain MELLO (human female, last seen in 8x10
"Gateways") appears on the wardroom screen...

AKAAR
Report, Captain.

MELLO (screen)
We've completed our sweep of the
system, Admiral. The sensors
picked up a faint energy trail,
consistent with a cloaking device.

Ro sags, frustrated to have been proven wrong.

AKAAR
Can you tell where it leads?

MELLO (screen)
Assuming it flies straight, right
to the Trill system.

AKAAR
Are you certain?

MELLO (screen)
My first officer reported the
readings himself, Admiral. But
they are dissipating. If we want
to follow them, it has to be now.

AKAAR
First Minister?

ASAREM
Very well, but I want Bajoran
representation on that ship.
General Lenaris, prepare to beam
aboard the *Gryphon*.

AKAAR

Respectfully, First Minister, I must disagree.

ASAREM

I beg your pardon, Admiral? Are you refusing my request?

AKAAR

Not at all. But with all respect to the general, Colonel Kira is more experienced with starship operations. She is better equipped to participate in the mission, not just observe. In addition, she is still recognised by Starfleet as an active-duty commander, with all the authority thereof.

What? this is the first Kira has heard of this. She passes a subtle, surprised look at Akaar - he almost lets out the tiniest smile for her benefit. Asarem considers his advice.

LENARIS

I'm forced to agree with the Admiral, First Minister. I will remain as senior Militia officer aboard the station, but Colonel Kira is the best choice.

Pause. Asarem makes her decision...

ASAREM

Captain Mello, prepare to receive Colonel Kira and ready the *Gryphon* to set out in fifteen minutes.

Asarem closes the link, and Mello's face disappears.

ASAREM

General, Admiral, head to Ops and work out whatever strategy of mutual cooperation you feel is necessary. Lieutenant Ro, coordinate with Doctor Girani.

ASAREM (cont)

I want your incident report and the autopsy results within twenty-six hours. Councillor zh'Thane, I want you to come with me to Bajor.

VRETHA

It is my honour, First Minister.

ASAREM

Don't jump to conclusions. I'm still not certain anything will reverse my decision. But like you, I am not quite ready to give up on Shakaar's - or the Emissary's - dream just yet. That will be all. Colonel Kira, stay a moment.

Everyone gets up to leave and head to their assignments. Kira hovers until only she and Asarem are left...

ASAREM

We share a heavy secret, Colonel.

KIRA

Yes, we do.

ASAREM

Shakaar was up to something. We both know that. He was rushing us into Federation membership. And yet he felt threatened by the Cardassian peace initiative, which could only have helped his cause. But now he's dead, with the result that Bajor and the Federation may never come together.

(beat)

So I find myself wondering... which is the lesser evil? To complete what Shakaar started, when I know he acted dishonestly in his pursuit of it? Or to reject it, even though I know a different evil may be attempting to pit Bajor and the Federation against each other?

KIRA

Put that way, you're right, it is a difficult choice. But then I remember that whatever plot Shakaar was hatching, he didn't start the process of Bajor joining the Federation. He only used it. It was the Emissary who started us on this path.

ASAREM

Yes, that was quite clever of Councillor zh'Thane, wasn't it? Her reputation is well earned.

KIRA

But she did have a point.

ASAREM

Yes, she did. Unfortunately, neither Shakaar nor the Emissary will be taking responsibility for what comes next.

(beat)

Report to the *Gryphon*, Colonel.
This conversation never took place.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

18 INT. DS9 - RO'S QUARTERS

Ro STORMS into her still-undecorated quarters and THROWS a padd in frustration, pacing furiously around the room...

RO
They're wrong, all of them. I know
they are!

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)
Ro.

Caught unawares, she spins instantly to throw a PUNCH.
Taran'atar effortlessly catches her fist in his hand...

TARAN'ATAR
I followed you from the Promenade.
I need to speak with you alone.

RO
I don't give a damn what you need!
I'm getting a little tired of you
unshrouding right next to me when-
ever you feel like it. Get out.

TARAN'ATAR
No. I was monitoring communications
from the *Gryphon* --

RO
You were spying?

TARAN'ATAR
Call it what you will, but I grow
weary of everyone questioning my
actions. Do you want to hear what
I've learned, or are you too
offended by my methods to listen?

An angry pause as Ro realises she has no choice...

RO
Report.

TARAN'ATAR
During my search, I stopped to
monitor communications from a
back-up subspace transceiver.

RO
You shouldn't have been able to
access that.

TARAN'ATAR
And yet I did. I learned nothing
new, until Captain Mello contacted
Admiral Akaar from the *Gryphon*.
Then I detected a brief anomaly in
the transmission. An echo.

RO
Meaning what?

TARAN'ATAR
Meaning someone else aboard the
station was also listening in.

RO
It's Gard. It has to be. I knew
it! He's still on the station.

TARAN'ATAR
I agree. He appears to have gone
offline now. I was not able to
determine where he was, but there
are a finite number of places from
which such a thing is possible.

Ro quickly turns to her computer station and brings up a
schematic of the entire station. Then she gets an idea...

RO
Computer, display detail on
section oh-oh-one mark oh-two-oh.

Stay on her - we hear the computer BLEEP but do not see
where she is zooming in on. Taran'atar leans over to see.

RO
Enhance.
(computer sound)
Again.
(computer sound)
Again.
(whispers)
Got you.

19 INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE

Akaar stands over the master Ops table, looking over their options with frustration. Kira's office door opens and General Lenaris walks out, descending the stairs to him...

LENARIS
The news is officially out.

AKAAR
The public reaction?

LENARIS
A lot of angry voices talking over each other. The First Minister has called for calm. zh'Thane's appearance before the Chamber of Ministers, and her interviews on the planetary news feeds, have gone over well. Marches are being organised, both for and against.

AKAAR
After all my years living in the Federation, I still marvel that democratic systems work at all.

LENARIS
Not something I ever thought I'd hear a Starfleet officer say.

AKAAR
Most Starfleet officers didn't grow up on Capella Four, General. There, conflicting ideologies are resolved on the edge of a sword.

LENARIS

It can't have escaped your notice
that a schism has developed among
our faithful these past months.
Doesn't such disharmony work
against Federation membership?

AKAAR

On the contrary. No world is a
monolithic entity in all things,
especially metaphysics. Besides,
Federation science has yet to
discover anything about the Orbs,
the wormhole, or the entities
within it, that is inconsistent
with the Bajoran religious
interpretation. So who are we to
judge your internal debates on
the nature of the Prophets?

Suddenly, the lights throughout Ops go out, plunging the
room into DARKNESS. Ensign SELZNER speaks up...

SELZNER

We've lost primary power in Ops.
Auxiliary systems have kicked in,
but most of our systems are down.

LENARIS

Can you get the primaries back?

SELZNER

Trying, sir... It looks like an
override from somewhere...

(presses buttons)

I'm locked out. We no longer have
control of the station.

AKAAR

Then who does?

Then the Ops transporter stage hums to life --

-- and Ro BEAMS IN, sternly pointing a PHASER right at
Akaar. She surveys the room, urgently taps her combadge.

RO
Taran'atar. I'm in. Raise shields.

TARAN'ATAR (comm)
Acknowledged.

LENARIS
Lieutenant, you'd better have a
damn good explanation for this.

She ignores him and steps cautiously down to the centre,
looking closely at the arced ceiling over the Ops table...

RO
I'm trying to capture Minister
Shakaar's assassin. He's right
above your heads. For your own
safety, clear the room. Now.

AKAAR
Lieutenant Costello! Place
Lieutenant Ro under arrest!

LENARIS
Belay that order. All personnel,
evacuate the operations centre.

AKAAR
General, what are you doing?

LENARIS
I'm giving the station's chief of
security a little latitude. Unless
you plan to challenge my authority
as acting commander of DS-Nine?

Akaar grinds his teeth, but reluctantly has to give in...

AKAAR
You heard him. Clear the room.

All the other crew hurry out of whatever door is nearby.

Akaar and Lenaris both stay, staring Ro down, making it
clear she should not push her luck. She shrugs...

RO
Suit yourselves. Taran'atar, I'm
in position. Can you verify?

TARAN'ATAR (comm)
Negative. Security sensors still
do not register the presence of
any life form beneath the array.

RO
I'm talking about blowing a hole
in Ops here! I need verification!

TARAN'ATAR (comm)
I have none to give.

Ro grits her teeth, checks her phaser and takes position...

RO
Gentlemen, if I were you, I'd find
someplace else to stand.

Akaar and Lenaris step away to the upper level. Ro aims --
-- and FIRES her phaser at the ceiling over Ops. A conduit
BLOWS, and pieces of bulkhead and components shower down.

But there is no body. Ro steps closer, looks up, horrified
that she really was wrong after all...

TARAN'ATAR (comm)
Lieutenant. What happened?

AKAAR
Akaar to security! Send a team to
Ops immediately.

CRUNCH - a large DENT appears in the central Ops table, as
if something heavy fell on it - but there's nothing there.

Then something gradually FLICKERS into view as its power
source dies - a FIGURE wearing a sealed orange spacesuit.

Ro creeps closer to the inert body, looks in through the
clear face panel and sees that it is GARD, unconscious.

RO

Well, this just got a little more complicated, didn't it, Admiral?

LENARIS

Why? What is it? Is it Gard?

RO

Oh, it's him. But what's really interesting is his choice in attire. This, General, is an isolation suit. It provides limited life support and a very localised cloaking field, small enough to hide a man. The problem is... Gard could only get such a suit from the manufacturer.

LENARIS

And who is that?

AKAAR

The Federation.

Off Akaar's frustrated glower...

20 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

Akaar, Lenaris, Ro and Ambassador Gandres sit around the table, talking to Minister Asarem on the wall screen...

ASAREM (screen)

But if you have the assassin there aboard the station... then what is the *Gryphon* chasing?

AKAAR

We do not yet know. Perhaps an accomplice. If so, then *Gryphon's* mission is essentially unchanged.

ASAREM (screen)

And can you explain this isolation suit, Admiral? Or you, Ambassador?

AKAAR

Not conclusively. Starfleet uses those suits for conducting covert cultural observations of pre-warp societies only. I have contacted my colleagues at Starfleet Command to see what they can learn.

ASAREM (screen)

This is beginning to look more and more like a conspiracy from within the Federation, gentlemen.

AKAAR

I agree that it looks that way, First Minister. But I am not yet convinced that it actually is.

The doors open and Doctor GIRANI walks in, looking like she has just had a fairly big shock...

GIRANI

Pardon me, sirs, First Minister, but I've completed the autopsy report on Minister Shakaar.

ASAREM (screen)

And?

GIRANI

And, I've discovered two anomalies that I cannot explain. Shakaar's brain and nervous system contained an alien biochemical, which I've now conclusively identified... as isoboramine.

Gandres GASPS - the others are not sure what that means...

GIRANI

I ran the tests four times, Ambassador. There's no mistake.

ASAREM (screen)

Doctor, what is isoboramine?

GIRANI

It's the unique neurotransmitter
that integrates host and symbiont
in a joined Trill.

ASAREM (screen)

Doctor, are you... are you saying
Shakaar was joined?

GANDRES

He couldn't have been. Only Trill
can be joined to symbionts.

AKAAR

Not entirely true, Ambassador.
Starfleet is aware of at least two
incidents in which Terrans served
as a host, at least temporarily.
Was a symbiont present, Doctor?

GIRANI

No, sir. And no indication there
ever was, despite the isoboramine.
But that's the other anomaly - a
microcellular scan of the wound
did reveal traces of symbiont DNA.
Or something very much like it.

GANDRES

But the wound was to his neck.

Akaar - who has been listening intently, trying to figure
it out, knowing there is something he can't put his finger
on - suddenly gets it. This is a DOLLY ZOOM moment.

He sits up straight, the blood draining, and looks around
at all the others, realising the whole situation has just
changed. Asarem sees his reaction.

ASAREM (screen)

Admiral, what is it? You know what
this is, don't you?

AKAAR

First Minister, I fear that I do.

21 **INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY**

Akaar looms over Gard, lying on his biobed. Security are visible in the background...

AKAAR

I know why Shakaar was killed. He was host to a parasite, one of the creatures who infiltrated Starfleet twelve years ago, attempted to take over the Federation. Wasn't he?

Gard says nothing, just stares at the ceiling...

AKAAR

What are you protecting? Why continue this subterfuge? If these creatures have indeed returned, then they threaten all of us. This is about more than just Trill!

GARD

(finally looks at him)
You're wrong, Akaar. This is all about Trill, from beginning to end.

AKAAR

Tell me how.

GARD

Why ask me? You seem to already have all the answers. You've seen the DNA matches. Despite outward appearances, the symbionts of Trill and these parasites... are essentially the same species.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

22 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

Where we were, as Akaar absorbs Gard's revelation...

AKAAR

How long has this been going on?

GARD

Months. Unlike the symbionts, the parasites dominate their hosts. They don't even bother to access long-term memory. That's how your people detected them last time. There are also subtle indications in behaviour and body language, but you need to know what you're looking for. That's why I was brought in. I was sent to DS-Nine specifically to evaluate Shakaar, and if our suspicions were correct, deal with the problem.

AKAAR

What did the creature want with Shakaar? What was it trying to do?

GARD

Bring Bajor into the Federation. Isn't that obvious?

AKAAR

And why would it want that?

GARD

(shrug)

A new angle of attack? Infiltrate the Federation through a single species? It doesn't matter. I had to stop Shakaar from signing the agreement, and do it in such a public way that it ruined any chances of the plan going ahead.

AKAAR

But why did you need to kill him?
Couldn't the creature be removed?

GARD

He'd been infected too long. There
was no way to free him. To all
intents and purposes, Shakaar Edon
was already dead. That thing was
just wearing his body.

Gard has been dismissive and indifferent all this time.
Akaar finally snaps and grabs him by his clothes...

AKAAR

Do you think this is a game?

GARD

I'm bored with you, Akaar. You
think you're old? I've died more
times than I can remember. Next to
me, you're a newborn. So don't
think you can intimidate me.

AKAAR

Gryphon is on its way to Trill.

GARD

...What? Why?

AKAAR

Captain Mello detected a cloaked
vessel heading towards Trill. We
assumed it was you, so she set out
in pursuit.

GARD

Admiral, no - you've been duped.
Captain Mello is being misled by
the same kind of creature that was
inside Shakaar. The *Gryphon* is
going to Trill for one reason and
one reason only - to retaliate.
You have to stop that ship, Akaar.
You can't allow it to reach Trill.

23 **EXT. SPACE - GRYPHON**

The aggressive, well-armed Akira-class USS *Gryphon* zooms through space at high warp, on its unwitting mission...

24 **INT. GRYPHON - READY ROOM**

KIRA stands apart, tense, inspecting the room decor as a distraction. Cpt MELLO sits behind her desk, watching...

MELLO

Colonel... what can we do to help?

KIRA

You're doing all you can, Captain.
The Bajoran people are grateful
for Starfleet's help in resolving
this matter. And I am personally
glad you're involved.

That's the stiff, official party line, and Mello knows it.

MELLO

Colonel, I know the crime that's
been committed can't be minimised.
Tensions are high. But right now
I'm only interested in one thing -
bringing this assassin to justice.
We're on this hunt together. We're
on the same side, Nerys. I hope
you believe that.

KIRA

(softening)

I do, Elaine. But no matter what
happens, my people will never be
the same after this. I'll never be
the same. This could be the last
joint mission between Starfleet
and Bajor... and I can't figure
out whether to be sad or relieved.

MELLO

(taps combadge)

Montenegro to the ready room.

Gryphon's first officer MONTENEGRO (African male) appears in the doorway...

MELLO

The commander will escort you to your quarters. And I'll alert you immediately if anything new comes up. Now go and get some rest.

Kira smiles, and Montenegro leads her out on the bridge...

25 **INT. GRYPHON - TURBOLIFT**

...and straight into the turbolift that was waiting.

MONTENEGRO

Deck five.

The turbolift whirs into life. Montenegro is young and innocent, too young to be doing this job really. He passes nervous glances at Kira, which she notices...

KIRA

Something wrong, Commander?

MONTENEGRO

Uh, no, sir. I just wanted to say - I'm sorry about First Minister Shakaar. I liked him.

KIRA

What did you like about him?

MONTENEGRO

His enthusiasm, mostly. When he visited the ship, and he talked about Bajor joining us, his face would just light up.

KIRA

What else did he say?

MONTENEGRO

To be honest, I didn't get to speak with him much. He spent most of his time with Captain Mello.

Montenegro considers whether he should say more, and finally decides to go for it...

MONTENEGRO

Halt.

(turbolift stops)

Colonel, may I speak with you?

KIRA

What's on your mind?

MONTENEGRO

I realise we don't know each other well, and I probably shouldn't be discussing this at all. But it would be even less appropriate to bring it up with another member of the crew, and I could really use an outsider's perspective.

KIRA

(intrigued now)

What is it?

MONTENEGRO

It's about Captain Mello. She's become... I guess the word I'm looking for is... distant lately. I don't know how else to describe it. And not just the occasional bad mood. I'm talking about a change in personality.

KIRA

Have you mentioned your concerns to Doctor Xiang?

MONTENEGRO

I'm afraid to. I haven't been the *Gryphon's* XO very long. And it's not that I think she's become a bad captain. It's just that... when I first came aboard, she took me under her wing. Now I feel like I don't know her anymore.

Kira can certainly empathise with that...

KIRA

It's a difficult thing when a person close to you changes.

MONTENEGRO

You understand what I mean.

KIRA

I think I do. But unless you plan to bring this up to Captain Mello directly, this is something you'll have to work out for yourself.

MONTENEGRO

(nodding)

I guess so. Thanks anyway. Resume.

The turbolift starts moving again. Kira falls into silent thought while Montenegro seems slightly more settled...

26 EXT. SPACE - GRYPHON

Gryphon is still at warp, rushing headlong...

27 INT. GRYPHON - KIRA'S QUARTERS

Some standard guest quarters, without any personal effects. Kira lies asleep in the simple bed as the stars streak by. The comm system BEEPs loudly - she forces herself awake...

SPILLANE (comm)

Bridge to Colonel Kira.

KIRA

Kira. Go ahead.

SPILLANE (comm)

Sorry to wake you, Colonel, but you have a priority message from DS-Nine. For your eyes only.

KIRA

Please put it through.

Kira drags herself over to the comm screen and taps the panel. A LASER BEAM scans her retina pattern, then the computer unlocks the message, which shows Admiral AKAAR...

AKAAR (screen)

Colonel, I hope this message has not reached you too late. We have captured Mister Gard here aboard the station, and we have verified that Shakaar was under the control of an alien parasite, an extremely dangerous species known to Trill and Starfleet. There should be a classified security file in the *Gryphon's* computer, xeno-oh-two-eight-eight-four-slash-one, that will tell you everything Starfleet knows. Colonel, we believe another parasite has infiltrated *Gryphon*. There is no cloaked ship. The creature is using you to attack Trill in retaliation for Gard foiling its plans. You must stop the *Gryphon* from reaching Trill, Colonel. No matter the cost.

The message ends and Akaar's face disappears. Kira sits dumbstruck. Then she begins tapping away at the computer. Soon various Starfleet files appear on the screen.

One features the face of Captain Picard, another Admiral Quinn (TNG "Conspiracy"), another Christopher Pike (TOS "The Cage") and another Audrid Dax (8x19 "Cathedral").

There is also a picture of the back of someone's neck, with a small bluish barb sticking out.

As Kira reads the files with growing astonishment, she remembers...

FLASHBACK - THE TURBOLIFT

MONTENEGRO

She's become... distant lately.
I'm talking about a change in
personality.

FLASHBACK - 8x18 "THIS GREY SPIRIT"

KIRA

I hope you enjoyed your tour on
the *Gryphon*.

FLASHBACK - THE TURBOLIFT

MONTENEGRO

He spent most of his time with
Captain Mello.

BACK TO SCENE

Kira's face falls as she realises - *it's Captain Mello*.

KIRA

Computer, locate Commander
Montenegro.

28 INT. GRYPHON - CORRIDOR

Kira, Montenegro and Doctor XIANG (Chinese female, medical)
pace down the corridor, all armed with phasers. Xiang is
also carrying a tricorder...

XIANG

What should we expect?

KIRA

Enhanced physical strength and
extreme resistance to pain and
injury. If you have to fire, set
your weapon to kill.

XIANG

You said we wouldn't need to --

KIRA

I said we have to be prepared to
fight for control of the ship.

They reach Captain Mello's quarters. Kira taps the panel...

MELLO (muffled)

Come in.

The door opens. Montenegro stays out in the corridor while Kira and Xiang step into...

29 INT. GRYPHON - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

...where the captain looks up from the dinner table...

MELLO
Colonel, this is unex-

KIRA
(raising phaser)
Get up. Slowly.

MELLO
If this is a joke, it's in the
poorest possible taste.

KIRA
I said get up! We know what you
are, but it's all over. And I'm
warning you, after what you did to
Shakaar, I'm not looking far for
an excuse.

Mello stands up, slow and dignified, places her hands
behind her head.

At Kira's gesture, Xiang walks up to the captain, lifts up
the hair at the back of her neck, checks the skin...

XIANG
It's not here.

KIRA
Look again.

XIANG
I'm telling you, she's clean.
I... Alex, what are you - ?

Surprised, Kira turns to see --

-- Montenegro out in the corridor, smiling, before the
doors close between them.

Kira realises - *it was him all along*. Runs to the door --
-- but a forcefield pops into place and knocks her back.

THUMP - the sound of a body crumpling to the floor. Kira spins back, raising her phaser, and sees --

-- Xiang unconscious on the floor. Mello holds the doctor's phaser... and points it right back into Kira's face.

As the two commanders face off...

30 INT. GRYPHON - CORRIDOR

Montenegro struts down the corridor, smiling evilly...

MONTENEGRO

Computer, initiate program Montenegro One, thirty second delay.

COMPUTER VOICE

(affirmative bleep)

Program will initiate in thirty seconds.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

31 INT. GRYPHON - MAIN ENGINEERING

RED ALERT alarms are sounding. Large pulsing warp core at one end, large main ship operations display table at the other. Chief engineer Lt Cmdr BHATNAGAR (Indian female) stands over the table, inspecting readings...

BHATNAGAR

What the - ?

COMPUTER VOICE

Warning. Antimatter containment
failing. Ejection system offline.
Warp core breach in two minutes.

She urgently checks her instruments; there's nothing wrong.

MONTENEGRO (comm)

Montenegro to crew. Report to the
escape pods. All hands abandon
ship. I repeat, abandon ship.

Bhatnagar is still working; Ensign BENITEZ grabs her...

BENITEZ

Commander, we have to go now!

BHATNAGAR

This doesn't make any sense...

32 INT. GRYPHON - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Mello and Kira are pointing phasers at each other. Without taking her eyes off Kira, Mello taps her combadge...

KIRA

Captain, listen to me --

MELLO

Shut up. Mello to bridge. Bridge,
this is the captain. Respond.

KIRA

They can't hear you. Montenegro's put your quarters under security quarantine. Forcefields, signals jammed, phasers neutralised.

Mello fires at a spot just past Kira's head. Nothing.

MELLO

Dammit. Alright, Colonel. Start explaining to me what the hell is going on on my ship.

KIRA

He set me up, Captain, to get both of us out of the way and take over. Once the crew's gone, he can do the whole thing by autopilot.

COMPUTER VOICE

Warning. Antimatter containment now at thirteen percent. Warp core breach in fifteen seconds.

Mello stares at Kira - *is it real?* Kira stares back - *no*.

MELLO

If you're wrong, we're dead.

The ship ROCKS slightly - out of the window, they can see dozens of ESCAPE PODS being launched away from the ship. Kira and Mello continue staring, not sure what to do...

33 EXT. SPACE - GRYPHON

Gryphon continues at warp, escape pods streaming behind...

34 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

QUARK eyes the constant security presence as he walks. They eye him right back. He reaches a door and taps the panel...

QUARK

Treir, it's Quark. Let me in, I need to talk to you.

TREIR (muffled)
Go away. It's my night off.
Besides, I've got company.

QUARK
Come on, Treir. Five minutes.
That's all I'm asking.

TREIR (muffled)
Sorry about this.

The doors open, and to Quark's big surprise, MORN walks out with a wink. TREIR stands in the doorway, looking totally un-dabo. Loose ponytail, dull grey sweatpants, flip-flops. a stretched old t-shirt that says KISS ME I'M IRISH. Quark gapes at the frumpy look. Treir's glare could kill.

QUARK
I'm sorry, it's just I've never
seen you so... relaxed.

TREIR
(dangerous)
Look closer. Do I seem relaxed?

QUARK
Umm... no. I just need to talk for
a minute. About Ro.

TREIR
Oh please, not this. Why me?

She turns and schleps back into...

35 INT. DS9 - TREIR'S QUARTERS (CONTINUOUS)

...she slumps onto the sofa in her untidy, disorganized room. Quark follows and perches, unusually subdued...

QUARK
Because I need some objectivity.
You've seen me and Laren interact
more than anyone else. And I need
someone to talk to.
(pause)
I'm giving up the bar.

TREIR

You're not the first male to disappear into a midlife crisis.

QUARK

But Ro's supposed to come with me. She resigned her commission. Told Kira and everything.

TREIR

Huh. I got the impression Ro was starting to like it here. I'm surprised she'd want to leave.

QUARK

That's just it! I'm not convinced she does. We've been talking for weeks about what we'd do when the Federation came. When I suggested going into business together, she seemed all for it. Then Shakaar gets himself killed, and suddenly she's more driven than ever. It's like I don't exist!

TREIR

Quark, what did you expect? That she'd turn her back on her home world during what might be its worst crisis since the Occupation?

QUARK

(small)

I expected her to be honest.

TREIR

Quark, I don't pretend to know what's going on between you two. On the surface you seem as preposterous a couple as I've ever met. Yet against all the laws of probability you have actually made a connection. If you love her, then let her be who she really is. Whoever that turns out to be.

QUARK
I have to be who I am too.

TREIR
And who is that, exactly?

QUARK
I'm not even sure I know anymore.
Maybe the only way she and I will
ever get together is if one of us
becomes something we're not. And
that would kill it anyway, right?

TREIR
(gently, genuinely)
Have you ever considered that the
person you think you're turning
into is the person you've been all
along, and just never realised it?

THUMP - they turn with a start. That came from outside in
the corridor. Treir gets up, goes to the door, opens it...

36 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

... to find Gul MACET leaning heavily against the wall, in
great distress, trouble breathing, jerking awkwardly. He
claws at his own face with his fingers. Treir approaches...

TREIR
Are you alright?

MACET
(hissing)
Hhheeeeelllllp mmmmmmmmmmm...

Macet collapses to his knees, looks up at Treir, tries to
focus on her. A thin wisp of SMOKE comes from his mouth...

TREIR
Goddess, what's happening to him?

Quark runs to him, and sees the back of Macet's neck --

-- where a small BLUE BARB is sticking out, and wiggling in
the air...

37 **INT. GRYPHON - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS**

Kira and Mello are both pacing, trying to figure out what to do. Xiang is now awake again, sitting and worrying. The forcefield blocking the door FRITZES out. Warily, the three women take aim with their probably useless phasers.

Multiple hands claw at the door. It slowly opens to reveal Bhatnagar, CROTH (Tellarite male, science) and SPILLANE (Scandinavian female, tactical). Mello relaxes...

SPILLANE

Captain, are you alright?

MELLO

Nothing kicking my first officer's ass wouldn't fix. Why didn't you evacuate with the others?

CROTH

Blame Commander Bhatnagar. She convinced us the ship was not about to blow up anytime soon.

SPILLANE

I had my suspicions. Montenegro turned up on the bridge just in time to order the evac. Thirty seconds to core breach, and it occurred to us to ask the computer where you were. Then the internal sensors went down.

BHATNAGAR

My tricorder detected bio-signs here in your quarters. So here we are. Sir, why is Commander Montenegro doing this?

MELLO

Colonel Kira will explain on the way. First the armoury, then the bridge. I'm taking back my ship.

Grabbing her phaser, in no mood to be trifled with, Mello leads the senior staff and Kira out into the corridor...

38 **INT. GRYPHON - MAIN BRIDGE**

Dark, but PHASER FIRE lights up the seam in the turbolift door. Hands PRY it open, and the six officers clamber out of the empty lift shaft, cautious, phaser rifles raised --

-- but find the bridge deserted. Spillane, Bhatnagar and Croth rush to their respective consoles, check readings...

SPILLANE

We're still on course for Trill.
Speed is constant at warp nine-point-five, and flight control is locked off.

MELLO

Computer, take the warp engines off-line. Authorisation Mello pi-four-six-two.

COMPUTER (comm)

Unable to comply. Warp power control only possible from main engineering.

MELLO

Can we send out a distress call?

CROTH

Communications are offline or disabled, I can't tell which.

BHATNAGAR

Transporters, turbolifts, internal sensors, they're all offline.

MELLO

But the ship still recognises my codes.

SPILLANE

Yep, he didn't bother to cancel them. Just took what he needed and disabled the rest.

MELLO
So he's in engineering.

CROTH
That's our best guess.

Kira hefts her rifle determinedly, checking its settings...

KIRA
I'm going after him.

MELLO
Not alone, you're not. Spillane,
you have the bridge. The colonel
and I are going hunting.

Mello and Kira head back to the still-open turbolift shaft.
Spillane watches them go with trepidation...

39 INT. GRYPHON - JEFFERIES TUBE

Kira and Mello crawl on hands and knees through the cramped
access tube, both holding phaser rifles, Kira taking point.
Mello is taking readings on a tricorder...

MELLO
I've found his combadge signal.
Starboard and down, close to the
navigational deflector.

KIRA
It's a ruse. He dumped it there so
we'd waste time going after it.

MELLO
I agree. Engineering is the only
place that makes sense.

They clamber on a bit further, reach a junction point, head
down the ladder...

KIRA
Captain, I want to apologise for
what happened in your quarters.
I really made a mess of things.

MELLO

Don't worry about it, Colonel.
This thing inside Montenegro tried
to pit us against each other, to
divide and conquer. But it failed
then, and it'll fail now.

(pause)

I have my own confession, though.
When you were first put in command
of DS-Nine, Colonel, I had doubts.
I didn't think it was right for
Starfleet personnel to take orders
from a non-Starfleet officer. You
didn't wear the uniform, and your
loyalties would always be to Bajor
first. But then... I saw you in
action... and I knew I was wrong.

They reach the bottom of the ladder, open the hatch onto
another section of access tube. As soon as it's open --

-- PHASER FIRE screeches from the far end of the tube
towards them. Mello pushes Kira aside --

MELLO

Colonel, get down!

Kira does - but the instant the phaser fire stops, she
pulls her own phaser rifle, spins back to the tube --

-- and FIRES back. But there's no thud of a body, just the
SCHKUMP of another hatch closing. He got away.

Then a MOAN... with horrible certainty, Kira turns to Mello
- and the captain has a large PHASER BURN in her chest.

KIRA

Kira to bridge! Mello's been hit!
Send down Doctor Xiang, now!

MELLO

Belay that, Spillane! You'll only
expose Xiang to danger.

KIRA

Stop talking, save your strength.

MELLO

Bridge, bear witness... Computer,
this is Captain Elaine Mello...
commanding officer, USS *Gryphon*...
transfer all command codes... to
Commander Kira Nerys -

KIRA

Elaine, no...

MELLO

Authorisation Mello... seven-two-
nine... execute.

COMPUTER VOICE

Transfer executed. USS *Gryphon* now
under command of Kira Nerys.

Fading fast, Mello grabs her combadge and thrusts it
resolutely into a tearful Kira's hand...

MELLO

Stop him, Nerys. And take care of
my ship.

Kira looks down at the combadge in her hand. When she looks
back up at Mello, the captain is already dead. She hardens.

KIRA

Kira to bridge. Captain Mello is
dead. I'm resuming pursuit.

Kira hefts her phaser rifle, and forges on...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

40 INT. GRYPHON - MAIN ENGINEERING

A panel OPENS in a discreet corner of the upper level, and Kira quietly crawls out. She keeps an eye out for movement.

Eventually she spots Montenegro working near the warp core assembly, on the lower level. Raises rifle, takes aim --

-- but the instant before she FIRES, Montenegro is gone in a blur of motion. Kira curses.

MONTENEGRO (o.s.)

Careful, Colonel, you might shoot something important. Still, I'm not surprised. Humanoids think too much with their glands. That's why you're all so easy to conquer.

KIRA

My people have been conquered before. It didn't last.

MONTENEGRO (o.s.)

Please, the Cardassians? That only proves my point. A more useless species of humanoids we've yet to encounter. But you Bajorans, you're the biggest joke of all. There you are at the threshold of all of time and space, and you just squat on your mudball waiting for something to happen. One of many things we plan to correct.

That alarms Kira - they have plans for the wormhole? She keeps creeping, peering down over the railing...

KIRA

With such big plans, seems like you're wasting a lot of effort going after Trill.

MONTENEGRO (o.s.)
You still don't get it, Colonel.
You think the symbionts are
benign, friendly little creatures.
You have no idea what they did to
us. Believe me, they're far more
dangerous to you than we are.

Now Kira feels a breath in her ear...

MONTENEGRO
Boo.

Kira swings the rifle butt around, hits Montenegro in the
ribs. CRUNCH. He doesn't even flinch.

He grabs Kira by the neck, TOSSES her over the railing -
she plummets to the lower deck with a YELP and an OOF.

Montenegro SMASHES her rifle against the rail, then LEAPS
over the railing and lands effortlessly on the lower level.

Kira struggles up to face him - and PUMMELS him with her
fists. She's winded, tired. He just smiles back at her...

MONTENEGRO
My turn.

He spins a KICK at her stomach -- she goes FLYING back
against the warp core assembly, crumpling to the floor.

He walks to her, GRABS her by the hair, YANKS her up to his
level. Unseen, her hand slips quietly towards her boot...

MONTENEGRO
Tell me something, Colonel. Now
that you have some small indication
of what you're up against, do you
really think any Bajoran has the
slightest chance against my kind?

KIRA
Why don't you ask Shakaar?

...and she FIRES a small palm-phaser point-blank.

The beam BURNS most of his face off. He collapses to the floor dead, and Kira grabs the wall to support herself.

After a second to catch her breath, she approaches the body -- but JUMPS as Montenegro's jaw starts moving.

The small, insectile, blue-purple parasite emerges from the corpse's mouth, hesitates, then SCUTTLES right for her.

She waits until it's close... then SLAMS down her heel. The parasite smashes with a CRUNCH and a SPLAT.

No time to rest. She turns back to the engineering panels, hitting buttons -- but still having no success.

KIRA

Kira to bridge. Montenegro is dead, but whatever he's done to the engines - I can't stop it. Warp power is unchanged.

SPILLANE (comm)

We see it, Commander. But there's a new problem. We've got three Federation starships on attack vectors. They're ordering us to lower shields and power down, or be destroyed.

On Kira's dismayed reaction...

41 EXT. SPACE - GRYPHON

Gryphon zooms away from us at high warp...

...soon pursued by two small, manoeuvrable Norway-class ships giving urgent chase. The Norways fire PHASERS --

42 INT. GRYPHON - MAIN BRIDGE

-- and the ship ROCKS from the impact. The senior crew are at their stations...

SPILLANE

They're targeting our aft shields.

BHATNAGAR
Outgoing communications are still
dead. We'll have to think of
something else.

Kira clambers out of the turbolift, and settles into the
command chair naturally, without thinking about it...

CROTH
Can we get helm control at least?

KIRA
Computer, this is Commander Kira.
Transfer flight control to bridge.

COMPUTER VOICE
Transfer executed.

KIRA
Croth, take evasive action!

The Tellarite runs to the helm, starts pushing buttons...

43 EXT. GRYPHON - THE BATTLE

Gryphon swerves at high warp --
-- just missing another PHASER BARRAGE from the Norways.
But ahead of them is a new ship - a heavy Nebula-class.

44 INT. GRYPHON - MAIN BRIDGE

Kira sits in the centre chair, tense and on edge...

KIRA
Show me a tactical display.

Spillane hits buttons, and the warp starfield on the main
viewscreen changes to a tactical representation.

One icon is tagged USS GRYPHON NCC-65328 AKIRA CLASS. It is
chased by two others, tagged USS SAGITTARIUS NCC-65227
NORWAY CLASS and USS POLARIS NCC-69801 NORWAY CLASS.

Approaching to intercept from the other direction is another icon tagged USS T'KUMBRA NCC-62100 NEBULA CLASS. Kira absorbs the information, knowing this is not good.

SPILLANE
Incoming fire! Hang on!

The display shows the *T'Kumbra* firing on the *Gryphon* - the ship SHUDDERS again in response. Kira grabs her armrests...

KIRA
T'Kumbra... Captain Solok still commands the *T'Kumbra*, doesn't he?

XIANG
I believe so, yes.

KIRA
We need to send Solok a message. Something he'll know immediately is from me. I need an alternative to conventional communications.

CROTH
We could tap out a message using the running lights on the hull.

KIRA
Too slow, assuming they notice it at all. We need something now. What about phasers?

SPILLANE
Sir, if we break out the phasers, they won't hesitate to use deadly force against us.

The ship ROCKS again, and a couple of panels BLOW...

KIRA
I don't think they've been holding back so far, Ann. Reconfigure the aft phasers to one one-hundredth power and fire short bursts away from the ships. Tap out a message in Starfleet's most basic code.

SPILLANE

I can do that, but it better be
damn short. Sir.

KIRA

Just two words. "Manufactured
triumph."

The other officers glance at each other, clearly having no
idea what that means, but they don't have time to argue...

SPILLANE

Firing phasers...

45 EXT. SPACE - GRYPHON

Still running, *Gryphon* sends out small phaser bursts. They
aim nowhere near the pursuing ships, flashing harmlessly.

Unfortunately, the *Polaris* reacts reflexively -- and fires
phasers at the *Gryphon* again. The Akira-class SHUDDERS...

46 INT. GRYPHON - MAIN BRIDGE

As the ship ROCKS hard under the assault, more panels BLOW.
Bhatnagar dodges some sparks then rushes back to her panel.

BHATNAGAR

Shields are gone.

Kira sags, thinking this is it after all.

CROTH

Sir, the *T'Kumbra* is matching
course and velocity alongside us.
Sagittarius and *Polaris* are doing
likewise above and below.

Kira stands. Will they figure it out? Seconds go by...

Five TRANSPORTER signals form, depositing Captain SOLOK and
four more Vulcan officers in Starfleet uniforms, all armed.

Solok recognises Kira and raises an eyebrow...

SOLOK

Colonel Kira. Permission to come aboard.

KIRA

Granted, Captain. Thanks for dropping in. We could use some help getting the *Gryphon* back under control.

Solok nods to his crew members, who holster their phasers and head up to talk to the *Gryphon's* senior staff. Solok holsters his own and approaches Kira...

SOLOK

Captain Mello?

KIRA

Dead. Killed by her first officer, who engineered this mess to begin with, and who is also dead.

SOLOK

You took quite a risk, gambling that I would grasp the meaning of your phaser barrage.

KIRA

I had nothing to lose.

SOLOK

What would you have done if you had faced a different captain?

KIRA

I guess we'll never know.

SOLOK

Indeed. I am beginning to believe I may have much to learn from further study of... manufactured triumphs.

KIRA

Good luck with that.

47 **EXT. SPACE - GRYPHON**

The crisis is over for now. *Gryphon* sits at rest in space, *T'Kumbra* alongside. A few escape pods manoeuvre themselves with tiny thrusters back inside the body of their mother.

Further away, the *Sagittarius* and *Polaris* can both be seen dragging back more pods home with their tractor beams...

48 **INT. GRYPHON - MAIN BRIDGE**

Kira sits back in the command chair, with the senior staff back at their positions and the occasional Vulcan officer from the *T'Kumbra* helping out, plus various other extras shuttling about conducting repairs...

SPILLANE

Message coming in, Commander. It's
from a Trill military transport,
approaching us on an intercept
course.

This could be very good or very bad, Kira isn't sure which.

KIRA

On screen.

At Spillane's command, the viewscreen fills --

-- with the lined, white-haired face of General TAULIN CYL, the Trill Security agent who worked with the *Defiant* crew (and killed Verad) in 8x10 "Divided We Fall."

CYL (screen)

Colonel Kira. I'm General Taulin
Cyl of Trill Defence. I request
permission to come aboard.

Kira is not ready to give in just yet. Her eyes narrow...

KIRA

May I assume this is about the
assassination of First Minister
Shakaar?

CYL (screen)
It's about much more than that,
Colonel. I'm aware of what you've
been through during the past few
days. And you deserve to know the
truth. You need to know the truth,
so we can work together to face
what's coming.

KIRA
Which is what, precisely?

CYL (screen)
The parasites are waging a war,
Colonel. It's a long way from
over. And regardless of what you
may think, it isn't a war for
power. It's a war of revenge.

KIRA
Against what?

CYL (screen)
Against the symbionts. Humanoids are
not the target of the parasites'
war, and we never were... We're
simply the battlefield.

Off Kira's consternation at that...

49 EXT. SPACE - GRYPHON

The four Starfleet ships have now been joined by another
vessel, reminiscent of the deadly Trill defence drones from
8x10. Is this a good thing or bad?

BLACK OUT:

THE END