

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

10x01 - "Emancipation."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on characters from the series

*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*

and from the post-finale novels  
by Pocket Books

## TEASER

FADE IN:

### **1 INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE**

Sparks, wreckage, small fires. The bridge is a total wreck. PANNING across the rubble, it seems like nothing could have survived this mess.

After a few moments, a hand reaches out from beneath a fallen wall panel and pushes it aside. A body struggles to pull itself out. Gradually it is revealed as DEZ, the captain of the *Even Odds*, injured and bloody.

On his knees, Dez looks around at the wreckage of his ship. He hauls himself up to his feet, but roars with pain as he discovers a broken ankle and topples back down again.

DEZ

Facity! Talk to me!

No answer. He crawls forward over the broken panels, avoiding sparking cables. He sees a green furry leg poking out from under another pile of wreckage, and rushes as best he can towards it.

He drags pieces of singed metal out of the way and uncovers the unconscious body of PIF, the dog-like Aarruri alien. Dez quickly feels for a pulse on Pif's furry neck, and sighs with relief when he finds it.

He looks up at the main view screen - it is cracked right down the middle, dark and useless. He calls out loud:

DEZ

Srral! Are you there?

A crackle of distortion issues from the speakers in response - electronic attempts to form words, but without success. There's another burst of sparks from a corner somewhere, and the sound dies out.

Panting from the pain, Dez crawls forward again, hunting for more survivors. Across the bridge, by the rear wall

filled with spluttering screens, we can hear muffled moans and grunts. Dez heads in that direction.

As he approaches, FACITY - the Wadi first officer - manages to drag herself up from the floor to a sitting position. She's woozy, disoriented, and carrying a big bruise and bloody gash on her head. She looks down and sees that her skimpy outfit is torn - she quickly covers herself up.

FACITY  
(slurred)  
Wha... what happened...?

DEZ  
Oh, Fac! You're alright!

FACITY  
I wouldn't go that far...

He reaches her, and grabs her in a strong hug of relief. She gasps in pain again.

DEZ  
Oh, sorry...

...and he lets her go.

FACITY  
Where's everybody else?

DEZ  
I only found Pif so far. He's down, but alive. I think my ankle's broken.

FACITY  
That's all? What about Neane?  
Coamis? Srral?

DEZ  
I'll keep looking.

He turns to begin crawling back across the bridge.

FACITY  
Not without me.

She begins to haul herself upwards, but Dez turns back.

DEZ

Stay where you are. You might have  
a concussion.

FACITY

Shut up.

Fighting dizziness and pain, she gets upright and begins to stagger slowly forwards.

FACITY

I see something...

She reaches another part of the bridge, and there's a body lying face down. It is badly burned. Facity grimaces and holds back vomit at the smell. It's obvious there's nothing to be done for this person, but of course she has to try.

Across the room, Dez is sitting on the deck, cradling his ankle. He looks at Facity, shares her look of dismay.

Facity crouches down, grabs a hold of the dead, limp arm and turns the body over. It's a female alien we haven't seen before, eyes staring glassily, only half of her face recognisable among the flash burns. Facity puts her hand to her mouth in sadness and horror.

FACITY

It's Neane...

DEZ

Dammit.

A crackling, distorted synthetic voice issues from a small speaker located somewhere in the room - the voice of SRRAL.

SRRAL (comm)

Captain Dez... Facity... are you  
there?

Facity beams with relief.

FACITY

Srral! Yes, we're here! Are you okay?

SRRAL (comm)  
Affirmative... mostly.

DEZ  
How bad is it, Srral?

SRRAL (comm)  
Much of the ship is heavily damaged. I was only able to find this one system that is intact enough for me to communicate with you.

FACITY  
Any sign of the rest of the crew?

SRRAL (comm)  
Negative. Internal sensors appear to be disabled.

DEZ  
Yeah, I'm not surprised.

BANG. A loud and sudden noise; Facity and Dez jump in shock, expecting the worst. A hatch has burst open in the deck, and BRAD, the giant female Dosi crew member appears. She squeezes through the tight space, hauling a cloth bag through the hatch after her.

DEZ  
Brad. You scared me to death.

BRAD  
Be glad I had the chance. Why are any of us still alive?

DEZ  
I have no idea.

BRAD  
You saw who was attacking us. They don't break off until the job's done.

SRRAL (comm)

I believe I may know why the attack was stopped. My access to the main computer is garbled at best. But in the last few moments before external sensors were lost, they registered more incoming ships. I assumed they were coming to join the attack on us, but instead they fired on our attackers. In the ensuing fight between them, we appear to have been forgotten.

DEZ

So you mean they might still be out there?

SRRAL (comm)

Affirmative.

Brad digs into her bag and pulls out a random collection of phasers. She hands one to Facity and another to Dez.

BRAD

I brought weapons, just in case somebody decides to try boarding us.

DEZ

Good idea. Can you find Glessin? Pif needs medical attention. We all do.

BRAD

Yeah, I found Glessin. I found him curled up in a ball and talking to himself. Poor guy's gone crazy.

FACITY

(defensive)

He's not crazy.

Srral's voice interrupts, the synthetic tone nevertheless conveying urgency and fear.

SRRAL (comm)  
Detecting incoming transporter  
signal.

DEZ  
Weapons! Take cover!

A whine in the air heralds a transporter signature forming in the middle of the bridge. Facity and Brad rush to hide behind pieces of equipment. But Dez can't move, and is basically left alone in the middle of the room.

We hear the transporter finish delivering its passenger, and we see Dez, Facity and Brad stare in horror. They raise their weapons, even knowing they've probably got no chance.

DEZ  
(shaky)  
Don't move. We've got you covered.  
What do you want from us?

**ANGLE - ON TARAN' ATAR**

The Jem'Hadar soldier stands in his black jumpsuit, unarmed. He looks at them curiously.

TARAN' ATAR  
I came to help.

BLACK OUT:

**END OF TEASER**

**ACT ONE**

FADE IN:

**2     EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING**

Standard establishing shot. All is well.

**3     INT. DS9 - PROMENADE**

A regular afternoon on the Promenade. We start on the UPPER LEVEL, watching Starfleet and aliens of all shapes and colours mill around, going about the business of their day.

We PAN around from the upper level, down to the LOWER LEVEL and watch the people mill similarly there. Quark's Bar is middling-busy with a lunch-time crowd.

Eventually we settle upon the Replimat, where KIRA and VAUGHN sit together at a table. Kira is eating, mid lunch break. Vaughn has no food - he only just sat down.

KIRA

Four admirals?

VAUGHN

That's what I was told.

KIRA

Since when do we warrant four admirals? We normally get along perfectly well on our own.

VAUGHN

Yes, well... apparently these are extraordinary circumstances.

Kira scoffs, clearly unconvinced. Returns to her lunch.

KIRA

"Extraordinary circumstances?" We had a whole damn interstellar war and the most we got was one admiral. What's got Starfleet's panties in a bunch now?

VAUGHN

I don't believe it's an actual crisis, as such. More of a review.

KIRA

A review? Of what?

VAUGHN

Well... you. Us. The station, Bajor, some of our recent missions and misadventures. The lieutenant I spoke with wasn't completely forthcoming, but based on experience, and knowing most of the admirals involved, I can make an educated guess.

KIRA

And what have you come up with?

Vaughn settles back in his seat, explaining.

VAUGHN

It's almost a year since Bajor joined the Federation. As you know, Admiral Akaar was closely involved in that decision.

KIRA

How could I forget? The guy made me feel like I was under interrogation just by saying hello. So he's one of the four?

VAUGHN

(nods)

And it's part of his job to follow up. To see how Bajoran society is handling the change, how your people are integrating into the larger whole of the Federation.

KIRA

So I can look forward to more of his charming interview technique. Ro will be thrilled. Who else?

VAUGHN

Bill Ross. These days, he's in charge of assignment of materiel. So I can only assume he's coming to assess Deep Space Nine itself. Matters of equipment requisition, maintenance issues, technology upgrades, that sort of thing.

Kira nods, a bit relieved. She has nothing against Ross.

KIRA

Next?

VAUGHN

My former boss, actually. The head of Starfleet Intelligence, Alynna Nechayev.

KIRA

(frowns, remembering)

Little blonde woman? Straight to the point? Smile like an icicle?

VAUGHN

That's the one. You know her?

KIRA

She came to the station once to advise Benjamin on the Maquis situation. Led to one of his more memorable rants.

Vaughn's expression cools at Sisko's name. Kira doesn't notice - she is smiling at an amusing memory.

VAUGHN

Well, I imagine she'll have some questions for us all about the whole Taran'atar-Iliana-Ghemor-alternate-universe business.

KIRA

She can ask away. I have nothing to hide.

VAUGHN

The only one who I don't know personally is Marta Batanides.

KIRA

And what does she do?

VAUGHN

According to the database, crew assignments. Who goes where, who gets what ship - or station. She's in Starfleet's humanoid resources department, you might say.

KIRA

I wouldn't say it in front of Lieutenant Kesh-u.

(sigh)

So what does she want with us?

VAUGHN

Well, much like Bajor, it's been almost a year since you put on the uniform. It's standard practise for all Starfleet captains to sit for a periodic review of their performance, especially when newly promoted such as yourself. Admiral Batanides will be looking into your reports, your decisions, even your command style.

Kira drops her fork to her plate with a clang.

KIRA

She what?

VAUGHN

Relax, Captain. It's no more than we do with our officers here. And you have nothing to worry about. You're an excellent captain, and I support every decision you've made in that time... well, except for the one about firing me.

Kira smiles, taking the joke how it was intended. She picks up her fork again and takes a last bite of her food.

KIRA  
So when do they get here?

VAUGHN  
Day after tomorrow.

KIRA  
Well, thanks for the heads up,  
Commander. It's good to know I  
have the inside track.

He smiles, accepting her confidence in him. She stands, takes her plate back to the replicator to be recycled, and comes back. Kira shakes her head, still bemused.

KIRA  
Four admirals. And here I was  
wondering what I would find to  
pull my hair out over today.

**4     EXT. SPACE - EVEN ODDS**

The patchwork freighter vessel lies half-dead in space, with running lights on barely half the ship and visible damage all over. Parked alongside is the small Bajoran shuttle Taran'atar used in 9x24 "Ha'mara."

**5     INT. EVEN ODDS - MEDICAL BAY**

COAMIS, the young Wadi man from 8x23 "Rising Son," is dead. Grey-skinned, badly scarred and trembling hands gently pull a sheet up over his face. Cardassian medic GLESSIN stares at the lump under the sheet, unblinking.

Sickbay is just as patchwork and damaged as the rest of the ship. Beside Coamis's biobed is another carrying Neane's body. Facity is also in the room, with a big bruise on her head, plus a different outfit. She is gentle and soothing.

FACITY  
I'm sorry, Glessin. Are you going  
to be okay?

Glessin is still shaking slightly, but refusing to let any more out than that. He doesn't want to talk about it.

GLESSIN

Thank you for your concern,  
Facity, but I'm fine.

FACITY

It's okay to not be fine. It's completely understandable that you'd have... well... flashbacks. Nothing to be ashamed of.

GLESSIN

(blank)

I'm not ashamed. I am a little worried about our new guest.

FACITY

You're not the only one. But Dez hasn't decided what to do about him yet.

GLESSIN

I'll tell you what to do. Kill it.

And he turns away, goes to a panel that is still half dead, and begins working on it. Facity sighs and turns to leave.

**6    INT. EVEN ODDS - CORRIDOR**

Facity emerges into the half-lit corridor, with sparking cables and smoking conduits. Dez and Pif are waiting for her. Dez leans on a walking stick to help his splinted ankle; Pif tries not to put weight on a bandaged front paw.

DEZ

Is he any better?

FACITY

Not really.

PIF

I could try talking to him.

FACITY

Thanks, Pif. But I think he just needs to keep busy, keep himself distracted. He'll get through it.

The three begin to walk down the corridor, all limping or otherwise favouring their injuries.

DEZ

How are repairs going?

FACITY

Prees is doing what she can. It's not going to be easy. A lot of the spares we were carrying are as ruined as the things they're meant to replace. She says some areas are still so damaged that Srral can't even get in to look around, never mind fix anything.

DEZ

(sigh)

All right.

They reach another door, where Brad stands outside carrying a rifle. Dez takes a deep breath.

DEZ

Are you ready for this?

FACITY

As I'll ever be.

DEZ

(to Brad)

Open the door.

Nervously, Brad pulls a lever (the normal controls are still broken). The door opens onto...

7

**INT. EVEN ODDS - QUARTERS (CONTINUOUS)**

One of the standard smaller quarters, as in 8x23 "Rising Son." Taran'atar sits on the basic, functional cot. Dez, Facity, Brad and Pif enter - he looks at them disdainfully.

TARAN'ATAR

Why do you keep me prisoner?

DEZ

I think it's understandable, under the circumstances.

FACITY

There's a theory that we should have just killed you outright.

Taran'atar STANDS up sharply. The others brace themselves for attack. Brad raises her rifle, Pif raises his hackles and growls under his breath. Taran'atar is only curious.

TARAN'ATAR

I am no threat to you. I received your distress call. I came to help.

DEZ

You're a Jem'Hadar. Why would you want to help us? Why should we trust you?

TARAN'ATAR

I have allowed you to confine me for almost a full day without argument. I have no weapons.

FACITY

A Jem'Hadar is a weapon.

TARAN'ATAR

True. But if I wanted to kill you, one door and one Dosi guard would not have stopped me.

BRAD

He's not lying. I haven't heard a peep since we put him in here. And look at him. He's not in uniform. He doesn't even have a tube for that drug they use. Maybe he's not with the rest of them somehow.

TARAN'ATAR

(sneering)

My body does not require the white. I was assigned outside the Dominion, as an observer of life on board the Federation outpost Deep Space Nine.

DEZ

(surprised,  
hopeful)

Jake... Do you know Jake?

TARAN'ATAR

Jake Sisko - I am aware of him.

DEZ

Is he... okay?

TARAN'ATAR

To my knowledge, yes. I have encountered him rarely.

Taran'atar has done all the defending himself he is going to. It is up to Dez now to do whatever he is going to do. Dez thinks for a moment... then takes a deep breath.

DEZ

All right. I'll let you out.

Facity begins to protest, but Dez has anticipated that and raises a hand to silence her - which only annoys her more.

DEZ (cont)

But you'll be under armed guard at all times. Any problems, and we don't ask any more questions. Is that clear?

Taran'atar nods. Dez turns to leave.

**8    INT. DS9 - OPS CENTRE**

Lieutenant NOG works at his engineering panel.

NOG

Incoming message from the USS *Sentinel*, Captain. They'll be arriving with Admirals Akaar, Batanides, Nechayev and Ross within thirty minutes.

Kira answers from her place at the central Ops table.

KIRA

Very well, Lieutenant. Make sure upper pylon two is ready for them.

NOG

Aye, sir.

Kira turns to Vaughn, beside her.

KIRA

Commander? Please prepare to greet the admirals.

VAUGHN

With respect, Captain, I don't think that's a good idea. They'll be expecting the station's commander. You don't want to start off on the wrong foot by sending a mere first officer.

Kira purses, sighs, gripes... but can't deny he is right. With a harrumph, she starts up the stairs to the turbolift.

KIRA

Oh... this is gonna be bad.

FADE OUT:

**END OF ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO**

FADE IN:

**9     EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING**

The Akira-class USS *Sentinel* has docked on an upper pylon.

**10    INT. DS9 - DOCKING CORRIDOR**

Kira stands in dress uniform, waiting at the airlock. RO is with her, wearing her armature supports and using a walking stick. A phalanx of Starfleet security wait with them.

As the door at the far end of the airlock opens and the admirals begin to exit, Kira takes a deep breath. She is going to make the best start of this that she can.

The airlock door rolls open, and Admiral ROSS is the first to emerge. Behind him are NECHAYEV, AKAAR and BATANIDES, plus their own posse of support staff.

KIRA

Admiral Ross - welcome back to  
Deep Space Nine.

ROSS

Captain Kira - wonderful to see  
you again. The uniform suits you.

KIRA

Well, thank you. If you'll join  
Lieutenant Ro, her staff will take  
you to the quarters we've secured  
for all of you.

ROSS

Thank you, Captain.  
(hands her a padd)  
The schedule my adjutant drew up  
for meetings with your staff.

KIRA

Certainly - I'll see to it that  
the arrangements are made.

Ross steps on through and to the side, leaving room for Nechayev to step forward. Ross remains with Ro's people.

KIRA

Admiral Nechayev - welcome back to Deep Space Nine.

Nechayev immediately hands her own padd to Kira.

NECHAYEV

Thank you, Captain. Here is my own schedule for meetings. We have much to discuss.

KIRA

Of course.

Kira is a bit thrown by the bluntness, but pushes through. Nechayev walks on through. Akaar unfolds himself from the small space and gazes down at Kira. Kira pulls herself up to her full height and stands proud and firm.

KIRA

Admiral Akaar. I welcome you with an open heart and an open hand.

She smoothly performs the traditional gesture, as seen in 8x14 "Twilight." Akaar is pleasantly surprised, and allows the tiniest smile. He performs the gesture back.

AKAAR

Captain Kira. I thank you for your welcome, and I return it in kind.

He hands her another padd, which she takes, forced to juggle the padds in her hands to fit them all. Akaar steps past, and as he does, he notices Ro. He subtly looks her up and down, taking note of her Starfleet uniform and her leg supports. It's clear he disapproves.

AKAAR

Lieutenant Ro.

RO

Admiral.

And that's all they have to say to each other. Kira turns back to see BATANIDES emerging from the airlock. This is the same woman who Picard knew, from TNG 6x15 "Tapestry."

She shuffles forwards, struggling to manage her own armful of padds, a bit scatter-brained and disorganized. But she smiles broadly at Kira, holding out her free hand to shake.

BATANIDES

Ah, Captain Kira. A pleasure to meet you at last. Just... bear with me a sec here, sorry...

She shuffles through her padds, peering at each in turn.

BATANIDES

Oh for crying out loud... where is the blasted thing...

Ross and Nechayev exchange looks - they have put up with this for the whole journey. Batanides' adjutant, a Bolian lieutenant, calmly hands her another padd.

BATANIDES

Oh, thank you, Tomil.  
(passes it to Kira)  
Here you go - sorry it's a bit muddled. Always on the last minute.

KIRA

Don't worry about it, Admiral.  
Welcome to DS-Nine. Lieutenant...?

Ro nods to her staff, who lead the contingent back down the corridor. Ro hangs back with Kira, taking the rear.

RO

(*sotto*)  
Ready to kill yourself yet?

KIRA

Don't give me ideas.

And they continue along the corridor...

11 **INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE**

Taran'atar lifts a large heavy item with no difficulty. Other crew members work on fixing various panels and devices. Brad is nearby keeping watch with a weapon.

Taran'atar takes the object to PREES, the female Karemma engineer, who works on the main viewscreen. She keeps a wary eye as he stops and waits in front of her. She points.

PREES

Put it there. Thank you.

He does. Nearby, the silver metallic liquid form of SRRAL slips out from an open panel, gathers into a pool on the deck, then reaches and slips into another piece of tech.

TARAN'ATAR

Interesting - a Himh Worker. I was not aware any such creatures had left the Himh homeworld.

PREES

Srral's a genius. I've never known a better engineer in my life.

TARAN'ATAR

He was designed to be so. Just as I was designed to be a soldier of the Dominion.

PREES

Then why are you here? Why are you helping us? How exactly does this "bring glory to the Founders"?

Taran'atar flinches at the mention of the Founders. He struggles to find an answer.

TARAN'ATAR

The Founders would wish me to aid you in this instance.

PREES

I find that difficult to believe, under the circumstances.

Taran'atar turns away, tries to distract himself with manual labour, still trying to come up with a good answer.

TARAN'ATAR

You are friends of Jake Sisko.  
Jake Sisko is important to Kira Nerys. Kira is important to Odo. Odo is a Founder. Therefore the Founders would wish me to help.

PREES

Okay, that's the weakest excuse I've ever heard. You didn't even know we knew Jake until you were already here. So you're gonna have to do better than that.

(no response)

The Founders would not want you to help us, and you know it. You shouldn't even be able to help us without a specific order to do it. So why isn't your head exploding for going against the Founders?

TARAN'ATAR

(sharp, defensive)

I am not against the Founders.  
I follow them in all things.

By now, the other crew have stopped working to listen in, interested in the answer to this question.

PREES

And another thing. If you really were assigned to Deep Space Nine by the Founders like you said, then what were you doing out here in our neighbourhood?

TARAN'ATAR

I... left that assignment.

PREES

You "left"?

TARAN'ATAR

I chose to leave.

PREES

Since when does a Jem'Hadar choose anything?

TARAN'ATAR

A recent experience left me with the ability to make decisions for myself. I chose to return to the Dominion, where I belong.

PREES

But then you chose to come and help us? Why? Why are you here?

And Taran'atar can't answer the question.

**12 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE**

Kira looks out through the closed door of her office onto Ops. She sees the turbolift rise into place, carrying Admiral Akaar. She takes another deep breath, steels herself, then taps the control to open the door.

KIRA

Admiral - right on time as always.

AKAAR

Of course. Shall we?

He walks on ahead of Kira into her office without being invited. She bites her tongue and follows him in. Kira sits behind her desk, Akaar takes the guest seat opposite.

AKAAR

I have numerous meetings scheduled with personnel on Bajor, Captain. An appointment with First Minister Asarem, another with General Lenaris, more with the staff of the Starfleet recruiting facility in Musilla. So I will get straight to the point.

KIRA

Okay...

AKAAR

Please detail for me the current relationship between Starfleet personnel and Bajoran Militia personnel aboard the station.

Kira sighs, preparing for a long and stressful meeting...

**13 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN ENGINEERING**

Some of the known engineering crew, such as PERMENTER or CANDLEWOOD, work at various locations doing various things.

The door opens and Nog leads Ross into the room. Nog is talking constantly, trying to impress as much as possible.

NOG

...So things were kind of a mess after our fight with the Klingons, but the old girl pulled us through like always.

He pats a wall console lovingly, as if to a pet.

NOG (cont)

Of course there were a lot of repairs to do, and I took the chance to try out some ideas.

ROSS

(indulging him)

Like what?

NOG

Oh! Well I was thinking about how the ablative armour took a hammering and then I remembered the nanobot defence we developed to fight the Cheka in the Gamma Quadrant. So I wondered if I combined the two, maybe I could get the nanobots to take some of the heat, so to speak -

ROSS

Lieutenant. Relax. You don't have to try so hard to impress me. I'm already impressed.

NOG

Thank you, sir.

ROSS

I realise you're probably used to a lot of people saying you're too young to be in such a position of responsibility...

NOG

It has come up from time to time.

ROSS

...Or that you've got big shoes to fill. But I wouldn't have approved Captain Sisko's request to give you a field commission during the war, or Captain Kira's request to promote you to Chief Engineer, if I hadn't already seen potential in you myself.

Nog is genuinely quite touched now. He is not used to getting such validation.

NOG

Thank you, sir.

Ross moves on to the next part of the tour, nonchalant.

ROSS

I just wish your magic touch extended as far as stopping every single runabout I give you from exploding.

NOG

(chuckle)

I don't think anyone's that much of a magician, sir.

14 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Where Kira is still holding her tongue and trying her hardest not to be offended by Akaar's blunt questions.

AKAAR

Have you observed any tension between those former Militia members who have transferred to Starfleet and those who chose to remain with the Militia? Is it possible there is resentment between the two factions?

KIRA

What factions? You're seeing divisions that don't exist.

AKAAR

I am seeing nothing, Captain. I've only just arrived. I'm simply asking if there might be an aspect to relations aboard the station you may be blind to, because of your own service history within both organisations.

KIRA

Admiral, my service history is not a problem. In fact, if anything I like to think it's an inspiration - proof that Starfleet and the Militia can work together.

AKAAR

An admirable goal, Captain. Are you certain the rest of your crew feels the same?

KIRA

Yes. I know for a fact that all of the crew on Deep Space Nine are happy to be here and happy to be working together.

15 **INT. DS9 - OFFICE**

A smaller office space, used for visiting dignitaries.  
Batanides sits on one side of a desk, opposite DAX.  
Batanides is inspecting a padd before her on the desk. Dax  
is perched rather nervously, awaiting Batanides' reaction.

After a moment, Batanides looks up at Dax.

BATANIDES

You're certain about this?

DAX

Yes, Admiral. I'd like you to  
consider my request for transfer.  
I'm ready to leave Deep Space  
Nine.

On Dax's resolute expression...

FADE OUT:

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

FADE IN:

**16 INT. DS9 - OFFICE**

Where we left it...

BATANIDES

Does Captain Kira know?

DAX

She does. I discussed it with her yesterday, once I heard you were coming. It's only fair.

BATANIDES

Okay. I'll look over your request and let you know when I can.

DAX

Thank you. In the meantime, I'd appreciate it if you didn't say anything to anyone else just yet. There are some people I'm going to have to work up to telling.

On Dax's thoughtful, worried face...

**17 INT. DS9 - WARD ROOM**

BASHIR sits in the middle of one of the long sides of the main table. He is trying not to be nervous. Opposite him, with an array of padds before him on the table, is Ross.

ROSS

...As to another matter, Doctor, I'd like to discuss a report I received regarding the incident on the Kornak homeworld.

Bashir swallows, steeling himself. Not a good memory.

BASHIR

What about it?

ROSS

It must have a very traumatic experience. You were, after all, clinically dead for a time. Were you able to have any sessions with Counsellor Matthias?

BASHIR

There wasn't time. I took a week off to recover, and then Taran'atar attacked Kira and Ro, and I had lives to save.

ROSS

Which you did with your usual skill, Doctor. But what I actually wanted to talk about was the loss of the *Missouri*.

BASHIR

The runabout was destroyed by a subspace shear. I can hardly be held responsible for that.

ROSS

No need to be defensive, Doctor. Sometimes ships are lost. Starfleet understands that. What you could conceivably be held accountable for is the fact that the remains of the *Missouri* were abandoned on the planet's surface when you were rescued.

BASHIR

The ship was crippled, Admiral. Broken in half. I never even saw it again after I fell out of it. In mid-air.

ROSS

Your own report states that this was a pre-warp culture, Doctor. Starfleet is not in the habit of leaving our technology just sitting around on such worlds.

BASHIR

Well, there wasn't much I could do about that, was there? I was, as you clearly state, dead at the time. And therefore not in a position to argue.

ROSS

Your report also claims this was an aggressive military culture that would take any advantage it could. And that the Kornaks were experimenting with cybernetic devices intended to connect all their soldiers into one easily controlled network.

Bashir sighs, exasperated. Knows what Ross is getting at.

BASHIR

I'll admit that there were some superficial similarities to the Borg. But the Kornaks are much less advanced. They're no threat to anyone but themselves.

ROSS

And yet in the aftermath of your contact, they now have access to advanced Starfleet technology that could allow them to leave their planet and survive in space.

BASHIR

Admiral, what do you expect me to do about it? The damage is done. The door is closed and it can't be reopened. If you're looking for someone to blame, perhaps you should speak to Commander Vaughn. I'm sure he'll tell you that there wasn't time to scan an entire planet for Starfleet tech. He had a limited window to work in, and he chose people over politics.

(pointedly)  
Something not all command-level officers are capable of doing, I might add. Some are quite happy to ride roughshod over people's lives in the name of security.

ROSS  
What are you saying, Doctor?

BASHIR  
Oh, nothing. Certainly nothing your fellow admirals here on the station need to hear about, wouldn't you agree?

A moment, as Ross digests Bashir's unspoken threat.

ROSS  
Tread carefully, Doctor. However clever you think you are, you're still subject to the chain of command.

Bashir is not cowed, but sits back with a small smug smile, satisfied that he's scored his point.

BASHIR  
Given everything we've discussed, what course of action do you recommend regarding the Kornaks, Admiral?

ROSS  
(a touch annoyed)  
As you say, there's nothing to be done about it now. But be aware of the consequences of your actions in future, Doctor. And I think you'd do well to reconsider those counselling sessions, too.  
Dismissed.

Bashir languidly stands from the table and walks out. Ross watches him go, not pleased at how the meeting went.

18 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE

Ro is sat behind her desk, wearing her armature supports. Sat opposite her is Adm Nechayev. Leaning against the wall behind Ro is her walking stick.

Ro is holding herself tight, refusing to give Nechayev the pleasure of seeing her rattled. It's an attitude-fest.

NECHAYEV

I'm sure it won't come as a surprise, Lieutenant, if I tell you there are people who don't believe you have any business wearing a Starfleet uniform, much less being head of security on such a major outpost as this.

RO

I'm well aware of Admiral Akaar's opinions about me. And frankly, I couldn't care less about them.

NECHAYEV

Don't make the mistake of thinking Akaar is the only one, Lieutenant. You've managed to aggravate an impressive number of officers in your time.

RO

I'm sure they can handle it.

NECHAYEV

Fortunately for you, an equally impressive number have made a habit of standing up for you, regardless of how... "flexible" your adherence to regulations is.

RO

I guess it pays to have friends in high places.

Nechayev bites her tongue.

NECHAYEV

It also pays to have the skills to back up the attitude. Your work during the parasite crisis, and on unravelling the Sidau massacre, was undeniably excellent from an intelligence perspective. But don't imagine for a moment that you're invulnerable, Ro.

(cold smile)

I haven't forgotten that it was my mission on which you decided to abandon your oath and betray Starfleet to the Maquis.

RO

(prickling)

I never betrayed anybody. I just learned that Starfleet isn't always as right about everything as they think they are.

NECHAYEV

And of course you're the only person qualified to make such a decision. But no matter. I'm not here to rehash ancient history. I want to discuss your relationship with Gul Macet.

RO

What about it?

NECHAYEV

You've done good work cultivating him as a resource. My question is, how devoted do you think he is to the Ghemor government, given the recent revelations about the... "connections"... between their families?

She's referring to the Iliana-Dukat thing. Ro has to stop to think - this is an angle she hadn't thought of. On Ro's worried expression...

19    INT. DS9 - OFFICE

Adm Batanides looks up from her desk to greet Kira as the Captain enters the room. Kira has had a long day, and is in no mood for more bureaucracy. Batanides gets up from the table and stands to shake Kira's hand again.

BATANIDES  
Captain, come in. Thanks so much  
for coming. Can I get you  
anything?

KIRA  
Umm... a raktajino, I suppose.

BATANIDES  
Oh, tell me about it. It's been a  
long and thirsty day.

Batanides heads to the replicator and hits keys. The replicator produces two cups; she hands one to Kira.

BATANIDES  
Sit down, Captain. I won't keep  
you long.

They move back to the desk and sit, and Batanides begins rummaging around the various padds in front of her.

BATANIDES  
Oh, where did I put it? I swear,  
I'd lose my head if Tomil wasn't  
there to hand it to me every  
morning. Don't know what I'm gonna  
do when he finally decides to make  
an honest couple of Grem and  
Sondi.

Kira smiles, not quite sure how to react. Batanides finds the padd she was looking for, but pauses with a new idea.

BATANIDES  
Speaking of which, how's Ensign  
ch'Thane doing? I understand he's  
still back on Andor?

KIRA.

Yes, he is. Haven't heard much from him. But Ensign T'rb is doing a fine job filling in. I just feel guilty that I can't give him the job on a permanent basis. While Shar's still on paternity leave, the position has to be held open for him.

BATANIDES

Yes, that's the rules, I'm afraid. Still, it's all good experience.  
(brandishes padd)  
So, let's get down to business, shall we? You had a bit of a tricky year, looks like.

Kira takes a deep breath. The friendly chatter had to be too good to last.

KIRA

A little bit, yes. But all the mitigating circumstances are there in my reports...

BATANIDES

Yes, I read over them on my way here. And frankly, they all read just fine to me. Perhaps it was a little... "unorthodox," shall we say, to undertake a mission to the alternate universe with only Commander Vaughn as back-up, but looking at it, it's entirely understandable. So you have nothing to worry about.

KIRA

(caught off guard)  
Oh... well... good.

BATANIDES

(chuckle)  
Not what you expected, Captain? Honestly, I'm not surprised that

so many captains see admirals as the devil. I think that too many of us forget on our way to the top that we've all been in your position. So I like to put the smiling face on the admiralty when I can. You've got enough problems without us breathing down your necks all the time.

KIRA

That's very refreshing to hear, Admiral. Thank you.

BATANIDES

You're welcome. I must say your diplomatic skills have improved as well. I don't think I've ever seen Akaar so surprised as when you did that heart-hand thing he loves.

Kira is forced to grin. Batanides is turning out to be nothing like she expected. She relaxes.

KIRA

That was funny, wasn't it?

As the two women chuckle together...

**20 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING**

Just enough to indicate time passing, with a suggestion of late night. *Defiant* and *Sentinel* where they were.

**21 INT. DS9 - VAUGHN'S QUARTERS**

Dimly lit, late at night. Vaughn sits alone on his couch, idly strumming at his guitar. The playing helps to calm his mind. His uniform jacket is cast off and thrown over the back of the couch.

After thirty seconds or so...

COMPUTER

Incoming signal from unknown source.

He calmly puts his guitar aside and stands up, pulling his shirt tight and neat. He takes a deep breath.

VAUGHN

Accept.

The speakers respond with a SQUEAL of static, like the sound of an old modem. Vaughn winces slightly at the sound.

As the sound continues, a transporter effect forms over Vaughn. He dissolves...

**22**    **INT. DS9 - QUARTERS**

...and rematerialises in another set of quarters. The room is completely dark, lit only by the stars through the window and the small blue lights on three vertical transporter pattern enhancers, laid out in a triangle.

Vaughn has materialised in the centre of the triangle. He looks around, not surprised by any of this.

Admiral Batanides steps out of the darkness, into the circle of pale light cast by the enhancers. She looks up at him, calm and firm. She too is out of uniform.

BATANIDES

Elias. Good to see you again.  
Now, what have you got for me?

On Vaughn's face...

FADE OUT:

**END OF ACT THREE**

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

**23**    INT. DS9 - QUARTERS

Vaughn and Batanides stand in the dim light.

VAUGHN

Marta. Good to see you too. The  
new transporter enhancers work  
well, I see.

He steps out of the light and moves towards the window.  
Batanides follows, and they stop together to gaze out.

BATANIDES

So far. If they worked right, then  
no-one will have any idea either  
you or I were here.

VAUGHN

I hope so. We shouldn't be seen  
together. But I'm afraid the  
answer to your question is... not  
much. I was surprised to hear you  
were coming, in fact. Do you have  
anything to report?

BATANIDES

There have been a couple of  
incidents where I suspected their  
involvement. Nothing I could  
prove, of course.

VAUGHN

Of course.

BATANIDES

Remember the Tomed Incident?  
(faux forgetful)  
What was that guy's name?

She reaches into a pocket and pulls out a small data chip.  
Vaughn plucks the chip from her hand, with a knowing look.

VAUGHN

It'll come to me.

BATANIDES

So. I've completed my review of Kira. Have you completed yours?

VAUGHN

I have.

BATANIDES

Do you think she's ready to join our little group?

VAUGHN

Actually... no. Oh, I have no doubt she could handle it. If she had to. But the truth is, I don't want her to. She's been through enough. And... I have someone else in mind who I think would be more suitable.

BATANIDES

Who?

VAUGHN

Not who you'd think. I'd rather not say more until I have to.

BATANIDES

If you're sure. Just remember, things can happen quickly. Don't leave it too long to bring this new person in. You're not getting any younger, Elias.

VAUGHN

I can always rely on you to cheer me up, Marta.

At that, he walks back over to the pattern enhancers and steps into the triangle. Batanides works some controls.

BATANIDES

Keep in touch.

And Vaughn dissolves in a transporter beam. Batanides remains there, silhouetted against the window of stars.

**24**    **EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE**

Establishing shot, suggesting the new morning...

**25**    **INT. DS9 - WARDROOM**

The door opens, and Vaughn enters. All four admirals plus Kira and Dax are sat at the table - Kira at its head.

AKAAR

Commander Vaughn, good morning. I believe you know everyone - almost everyone. May I introduce Admiral Marta Batanides.

Akaar gestures towards Batanides. She has another disorganized pile of padds in front of her. When she half-stands to shake Vaughn's hand, she accidentally knocks one onto the floor. Nechayev rolls her eyes.

BATANIDES

Oops. Nice to meet you, Commander.

Vaughn takes the last seat at the table.

AKAAR

I have called this last meeting for all of Deep Space Nine's command level officers so that we can address any remaining issues together. Admiral Ross, I believe you had something?

ROSS

I do, Admiral, thank you. While I believe that Lieutenant Nog has everything well in control, both on the station and on the *Defiant*, I can't help worrying that he never did complete his courses at the Academy.

26 INT. EVEN ODDS - SHUTTLE BAY

*Even Odds'* drop ship sits in the bay, with Prees working on some open panels. Pif fetches tools for her in his teeth.

In the background, Taran'atar is carrying heavy objects again, under Prees's directions. Brad stands nearby, still keeping watch with a weapon at the ready. In foreground, Dez and Facity walk by, keeping a close eye on Taran'atar.

FACITY

I'm still not happy about this, Dez. I know you have this thing for taking in orphans, but a couple of stranded Ferengi and an adventurous Friagloim are a lot different from a Jem'Hadar.

DEZ

I see something in him, Facity. He's... trying to figure himself out. I know how that feels.

FACITY

You have issues, Dez. Just remember what I said. There's a lot of things can go wrong here.

(beat)

I'll be on the bridge.

Facity leaves, Glessin passing her to enter. The Cardassian is stiff, wary-eyed. Dez frowns a little to see Glessin in this unfamiliar locale. But then he looks back over at Taran'atar. He makes a decision, and walks over to him.

DEZ

Taran'atar... I want to talk to you.

Taran'atar pauses, then puts the object he was carrying on the ground and turns back to Dez. Nearby, Prees and Brad keep a wary eye.

DEZ

Why are you here?

TARAN'ATAR

Why does everyone on this ship ask the same question? I am here. I am offering to help. What does it matter why?

DEZ

Because none of us understand. And until we do, we can't trust you.

Taran'atar growls under his breath. He hates this. In the background, unnoticed, Glessin prowls, watchful.

TARAN'ATAR

I was returning to the Dominion. I expected to be put to death for my... deviancy.

DEZ

Really? Why would you do that?

TARAN'ATAR

Because that is the order of things. I have followed that order loyally for twenty years. I see no reason to stop now.

DEZ

Well, I see a reason. I think maybe you're starting to discover that underneath those twenty years of fighting and killing, you're actually a nice guy who just wanted to help someone. Or maybe, you didn't really want to go home and be killed.

In a sudden flash of movement, Glessin comes at Brad from a side angle with a hard PUNCH in the face. As Brad THUDS to the floor unconscious, Glessin quickly grabs her weapon, spins and points it right into Taran'atar's face.

GLESSIN

You won't need to. I'll kill you myself.

Back to the admirals' meeting...

AKAAR

I myself still have concerns about Lieutenant Ro's ability to perform as security chief.

KIRA

You just never give up, do you?

AKAAR

I beg your pardon, Captain?

KIRA

What is your grudge against Ro? It's pathetic. I thought Starfleet was supposed to be about accepting people as they are, not holding on to every old resentment.

AKAAR

(stiffens)

I was not referring to any personal issues between Ro and myself. I was referring to her physical health. A security chief needs to be in peak condition.

KIRA

She gets attacked, nearly killed, now you want to take away her job too? Hey, I've got an artificial heart now! Wanna fire me?

AKAAR

Captain, please -

KIRA

No, it's just more of the same.

Under the previous, Batanides subtly turns her eyes towards Vaughn. He doesn't look at her, but he does turn his head slightly, raise his eyebrows and look up to the ceiling. She apparently takes this as a signal, and speaks up.

BATANIDES

Admiral Akaar, crew assignments are my business. And I agree with Captain Kira. Lieutenant Ro will make a full recovery.

ROSS

To be fair to Admiral Akaar, Ro's back was broken. That's nothing anyone recovers from easily.

**28 INT. EVEN ODDS - SHUTTLE BAY**

Everyone stops dead, not daring to move. Glessin holds the weapon on Taran'atar, his scarred hands trembling with emotion. Taran'atar stares back, not worried in the least.

DEZ

Glessin... what are you doing?

GLESSIN

What you won't. I don't know why you let this animal on board. He was on one of those ships!

TARAN'ATAR

What are you talking about?

DEZ

He means... that it was the Jem'Hadar who attacked us in the first place.

TARAN'ATAR

Why?

DEZ

Why what?

TARAN'ATAR

Why did the Jem'Hadar attack you? They would not have done so without reason.

Dez is hesitant to answer. It will get him into trouble.

DEZ

We... reclaimed... some items from a world that is under Dominion control, on behalf of a client.

TARAN'ATAR

You stole from the Dominion. You are the ones who seek to die, not me. Perhaps I should help you on your way and destroy you myself.

GLESSIN

You see? He's a murderer! Nothing but a filthy death machine! He killed them all.

DEZ

Killed who? Glessin, who are you talking about?

GLESSIN

All of them! Neane... Coamis... everyone on the *Danasket*... the entire Obsidian Order fleet... a billion Cardassians...

TARAN'ATAR

(sneer)

Then kill me in futile revenge, if you have the courage. I suspect you do not.

GLESSIN

(getting tearful)

I never hurt anybody, I was just a medic, just out of the Institute, and you killed them all!

TARAN'ATAR

Do you imagine I should apologise to you? That fleet's mission was to destroy the Great Link. You tried to murder the Founders. You all deserved your fate.

DEZ

You're not helping, Taran'atar.

Taran'atar ignores Dez. Focuses on Glessin.

TARAN'ATAR

You were insects trying to look  
gods in the eye. The Dominion can  
never be destroyed. The Link is  
forever.

Dez reaches out again to Glessin, treading on eggshells.  
Glessin is emotionally ruined at this point.

DEZ

Glessin, please. Give me the  
weapon. You're only going to get  
yourself killed.

**29**    **INT. DS9 - WARDROOM**

In the meeting, Nechayev is rather displeased.

NECHAYEV

Why would you just let him go?!

KIRA

Taran'atar is a free man, Admiral.  
He's an individual, with the  
ability to make his own choices,  
and he decided to go home. I have  
no authority to deny him that.

NECHAYEV

What you have is a responsibility  
to Starfleet, Captain. Taran'atar  
represents an enormous tactical  
opportunity. Thanks to him we have  
proof that the Jem'Hadar's  
genetically engineered loyalty to  
the Founders can be overcome.

VAUGHN

Using brainwashing techniques  
created by Cardassian torturers?

NECHAYEV

This is no time to be squeamish.

AKAAR

Admiral, I have to say I agree with Commander Vaughn. Starfleet should be far above condoning torture, even of our enemies.

KIRA

The Dominion isn't our enemy anymore.

NECHAYEV

Of course they are. You and I both know what a signed piece of paper is worth, Captain. We should be prepared.

AKAAR

(forceful)

Admiral, you've been overruled.

NECHAYEV

Alright. There is another angle. What about L'Haan? You said that Taran'atar claimed the Intendant's Vulcan handmaiden was ultimately responsible for freeing his mind from its chains. We've had the answer under our noses all along.

VAUGHN

(amazed)

Are you serious?

BATANIDES

(gentle warning)

Careful of your tone, Commander.

VAUGHN

(stands, angry)

No.

(to Nechayev)

You would actually suggest using Vulcans to force mind-melds on

Jem'Hadar soldiers on the off chance it might set them free from the Founders? And then what? Hope they can run fast enough to not be slaughtered the very next second?

ROSS

It is a rather impractical suggestion...

VAUGHN

Impractical? How about unethical? How about wrong? Have you all forgotten what the Betazoids had to go through to free themselves from the Jem'Hadar?

AKAAR

Alright, Commander. You've made your point.

VAUGHN

(not listening;  
to Nechayev)

I'm glad I left Intelligence if you're any example. It was a sad day for all of Starfleet when Admiral Uhura finally retired and you took her job.

KIRA

Commander!

DAX

Alright, that's enough.

NECHAYEV

(standing)

You have stepped over the line, Commander.

Dax stands and slams her hands down on the table.

DAX

I said that's enough!

Now everyone quiets and looks at her, astonished.

DAX

I am ashamed of you people. I am the youngest and the lowest ranked officer in this room, and I am the only one who isn't acting like a petulant child. Kira and Vaughn made the choices they did in good faith. That's what being a good commander is all about. Now you may all have forgotten that from behind your desks, but the fact is, you weren't there.

Dax makes a show of sitting back down in her seat, and waits pointedly for Vaughn and Nechayev to do the same.

DAX

Now. Are we going to talk like grown ups?

Vaughn and Nechayev bite their tongues, but do as she says. Batanides has a proud and impressed smile for Dax.

**30    INT. EVEN ODDS - SHUTTLE BAY**

Where Taran'atar stares at Glessin, clearly the one in charge even though Glessin is holding the weapon.

DEZ

Glessin... give it to me.

Dez reaches out slowly and takes the trembling weapon. Glessin clearly doesn't have it in him. He lets go easily enough, but can't take his eyes off Taran'atar.

The pressure released for the moment, Prees appears to gently guide Glessin away, while Pif nuzzles Brad's cheek. Taran'atar looks down at the unconscious Dosi.

TARAN'ATAR

Your security officer is pitiful. She can be knocked unconscious with one blow.

DEZ

We don't have a security officer.  
Brad is our jewellery specialist.  
But people are usually easily  
intimidated by a Dosi with a gun.  
    (glance at  
        Taran'atar)  
Most people, anyway.

FACITY (comm)

Dez! Are you there? We've got a  
problem.

DEZ

Facity? What's wrong?

FACITY (comm)

It's the Jem'Hadar.

DEZ

    (worried look  
        at Taran'atar)  
What about him?

FACITY (comm)

Not him. Them. They're back.  
There's a Jem'Hadar ship on the  
sensors, and it's coming right for  
us.

On Dez's newly panicked expression...

FADE OUT:

**END OF ACT FOUR**

**ACT FIVE**

FADE IN:

**31 INT. EVEN ODDS - BRIDGE**

Dez strides onto the bridge, followed by Taran'atar. Facility is in crisis mode. The main viewscreen is ] repaired, shows the ominous image of a Jem'Hadar ship bearing down on them.

DEZ

Have they said anything?

FACITY

Not yet.

DEZ

Do we have shields?

FACITY

No.

They stand there, staring at the screen. They know there is nothing they can do to defend themselves.

DEZ

(whisper)

Why are they just sitting there?

Why don't they just shoot?

TARAN'ATAR

Let me speak to them.

FACITY

Dez, that's not a good idea.

TARAN'ATAR

I am an Honoured Elder among the Jem'Hadar. They will listen. I may be able to save your lives.

Dez looks back and forth between Taran'atar, Facility, and the screen. Trying to decide. Finally...

DEZ

Srral... open a channel to them.

SRRAL (comm)  
Channel open.

TARAN'ATAR  
*Even Odds* to Jem'Hadar vessel.  
I am First Taran'atar of the  
Jem'Hadar. I wish to speak with  
the Vorta. Please respond.

An uncomfortable pause. Then the screen image changes to show the Vorta VANNIS (9x16 "Olympus Descending") on a Jem'Hadar bridge, wearing one of their viewer-headsets.

VANNIS (screen)  
First. Explain your presence on  
this vessel. Records indicate you  
are assigned to Deep Space Nine.

TARAN'ATAR  
I was returning to the Dominion  
when this vessel came under  
attack. I responded to their call  
for help.

VANNIS (screen)  
(suspicious)  
Why?

TARAN'ATAR  
I felt it was the right thing to  
do.

VANNIS (screen)  
Well... that's certainly a  
conversation for another time.  
The attack on this vessel was  
not authorised by the Founders.  
I regret any deaths it caused.

Taran'atar pauses, confused.

TARAN'ATAR  
But these people stole from a  
Dominion world. That is a crime.

VANNIS (screen)

I do not disagree. But it is the Founders' wish that all Jem'Hadar vessels refrain from attacking without specific orders to do so, for the time being. The other squadron ignored those orders. We destroyed them for disobeying the Founders. Then we returned here to offer our assistance.

DEZ

Then you haven't come to kill us?

VANNIS (screen)

(cheery)

Surprisingly, no. But I would suggest that you refrain from stealing from Dominion worlds in the future. I may not always be around to save you.

TARAN'ATAR

(warning glance)

I assure you they will comply.

(back to screen)

May I join your squadron? I have news that I must deliver to the Founders. There are things... they deserve to know.

On Taran'atar's pensive, worried face...

GARAK (v.o.)

Thank you for telling me, Captain.

**32**    **ON MONITOR**

GARAK, a gentle but real smile on his tired face.

GARAK (screen)

I'm sure that Alon will be glad to hear Iliana is finally at peace.

WIDEN to reveal...

33 **INT. DS9 - KIRA'S QUARTERS**

Where she sits alone at the computer console. She tries not to let Garak see her wince at the white lie she just told.

KIRA

Please tell him I'm sorry. There was nothing we could do. She blew the airlock herself. The *Defiant* was able to save me, but...

GARAK (screen)

I quite understand, Captain. It's good to have everything tied up in a nice neat bow on occasion. Makes life so much more palatable.

Garak's expression seems to suggest he knows perfectly well it is a lie. Kira is grateful he is going along with it.

KIRA

Thank you too, Garak. Your help was invaluable. It seems you're always there when we need you.

GARAK (screen)

You're entirely welcome, Captain. We ought to help one another when we can. So few of us are left.

They smile sadly at each other, sharing their sadness.

TARAN'ATAR (v.o.)

What will happen to the Cardassian?

34 **INT. EVEN ODDS - CORRIDOR**

Taran'atar and Dez walk along the corridor.

DEZ

He's been through some things. He'll get better. We'll help him.

TARAN'ATAR

Even though he defied your authority?

DEZ  
We don't kill people just for  
having issues to work through.  
(beat)  
Thank you for not killing him  
either.

TARAN'ATAR  
I chose not to.

They reach a door and it opens at their approach onto...

35 **INT. EVEN ODDS - TRANSPORTER ROOM (CONTINUOUS)**

DEZ  
And what have you chosen now?

Taran'atar looks at the transporter pad, pausing to verify  
his decision to himself.

TARAN'ATAR  
To return to the Founders, and  
leave my fate in their hands.  
Perhaps I did falter for a moment,  
but this is as it should be.

Taran'atar steps up onto the transporter platform.

TARAN'ATAR  
Taran'atar to Jem'Hadar vessel.  
I am ready.

DEZ  
Wait - what about your shuttle?

TARAN'ATAR  
(wry smirk)  
Keep it. You need the spare parts.

Dez nods, and Taran'atar dissolves in a transporter beam.

VAUGHN (v.o.)  
Honestly, I didn't think you'd  
ever leave.

The evening after-dinner crowd. On a higher level, Dax and Vaughn sit at a table. Dax has just dropped the bombshell.

DAX

I guess the impossible happened,  
then. But I think it's time.

VAUGHN

(jokingly annoyed)  
And just who am I supposed to  
replace you with?

DAX

Steady on. Admiral Batanides  
hasn't agreed to it yet.

VAUGHN

Oh, I'm sure she will after that  
little display.

Dax looks up to see TENMEI trotting over. She gives Vaughn a half-hug - Vaughn receives gladly. Dax is glad to see it.

TENMEI

Hey, dad. Where were you last  
night?

VAUGHN

What do you mean?

TENMEI

I popped by your quarters just  
after twenty-two hundred. I was  
having a get together with my old  
friends from the *Sentinel* and I  
wondered if you wanted to join us.  
But you didn't answer the door.

VAUGHN

Twenty-two hundred? Pryn, baby,  
that's way too late for an old  
fart like me. I was fast asleep by  
that time. I must have just not  
heard the door. Sorry.

TENMEI

Eh, that's alright. You need your beauty sleep. We're still on for dinner tomorrow night, though, right?

VAUGHN

Count on it.

A warm smile between them, and Prynn heads off. QUARK soon arrives, with a big schmoozing smile and a tray of drinks.

QUARK

Commander, Lieutenant, how are you this evening? Having a wonderful time, I hope.

(hands out  
the drinks)

Here are your favourites - a Berengarian ale for you, and a Tilamin froth for you. Enjoy!

DAX

You're in a good mood.

QUARK

Why shouldn't I be? There's a whole extra Starfleet ship and all its crew on the station. More people means more opportunity, and more opportunity means more profit. It's basic math. And if there's one thing I've learned from living alongside Starfleet all these years, it's that after a visit from an admiral, everybody needs a good stiff drink.

DAX

Can't argue with that. Thanks, Quark.

Quark heads away. Dax takes a sip from her new drink, and then turns back to Vaughn.

DAX

I wanted to say, by the way - interesting idea, name checking Uhura. Bringing up any of the Big Seven is always a risky move.

VAUGHN

The Admiral was a good woman. We worked together on the Betreka Nebula incident. I had a great deal of respect for her.

DAX

Oh, you don't have to convince me. Curzon found Nyota very... appealing... as well.

Vaughn looks curiously at Dax for a moment. Eventually the penny drops.

VAUGHN

Oh God, you slept with her, didn't you?

DAX

(faux shocked)  
I did not! Curzon might have.

Vaughn shakes his head, half amused and half appalled.

DAX

(protesting)  
What? She was a beautiful woman, a vibrant woman. And there's nothing wrong with two healthy older people enjoying each other's company.

(beat; faux innocent)  
Have you heard from Sulan lately?

Vaughn turns a withering glare on Dax.

VAUGHN

That's none of your business, Lieutenant.

Dax rolls her eyes and chuckles at him. Kira walks up to their table, looking tired and haggard.

VAUGHN  
Captain? You okay?

KIRA  
I suppose. Captain Amalfitano just told me that the *Sentinel* is due to leave first thing tomorrow.

DAX  
Don't let Quark know.

Vaughn pulls out a chair for Kira - she slumps into it.

VAUGHN  
I guess that means the admirals have had enough of us.

KIRA  
I guess. Akaar's staying on a bit longer. Ezri, I wanted to thank you for your help in there.

DAX  
You held your own, Nerys. But you're welcome. That's what I'm here for.

But Kira doesn't look any happier.

VAUGHN  
Captain, seriously. What's wrong?

KIRA  
(sigh)  
I told everyone I didn't know what happened to Iliana after she blew the airlock on Terok Nor.

DAX  
And do you?

KIRA

No. All the evidence points to her being gone for good. It's over, it's done with. But...

VAUGHN

But...?

KIRA

But I can feel it. I've got no logical reason to think it at all, but I just know... she's still out there somewhere.

On Kira's worried, sombre face...

**37    EXT. SPACE - FOUNDERS' WORLD**

The Jem'Hadar ship pulls into orbit over the golden world.

VOICE (comm, v.o.)

Dominion vessel two-eight-eight,  
you are cleared to enter orbit.  
Welcome home.

VANNIS (comm, v.o.)

Thank you. Entering orbit now.

**38    EXT. FOUNDERS' WORLD - SURFACE**

CLOSE on Taran'atar's face as a Dominion transporter signal deposits him onto the rocky islet. We don't see much else around him for now, but shock slowly registers on his face.

As we gradually pull back, we see why. Where we are used to seeing the planet-sized lake of the Great Link, there is an empty, rocky hole. Dry stone stretches away into the distance, the bottom of the lake revealed. Geometric shapes are dotted in places for the Founders to emulate.

After a few moments, there is the rustling sound of a Founder shape-shifting, and Taran'atar turns to see ODO just solidifying behind him on the islet.

Taran'atar is so confused and surprised that he forgets to react with the proper deference. He just goes straight to the questions.

TARAN'ATAR

Founder... the Great Link. What happened to it? Where are the other Founders?

ODO

The Link is gone, Taran'atar. The Founders left.

TARAN'ATAR

But the Dominion. The Jem'Hadar. What will happen to us without the guidance of the Founders?

ODO

What will happen... is what's been happening. The Dominion is in chaos... and the Jem'Hadar are on the verge of civil war.

As Taran'atar and Odo look forlornly out over the empty link...

FADE OUT:

**END OF SHOW**