

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

14x17 - "Into the Lion's Den"

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on characters from the series

*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*

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

### **TNG 19x17 - "COLD EQUATIONS"**

The Fellowship of AI's vessel is in danger. Most of the crew escape, saved by *Enterprise* - but Rhea and Akharin are both falling towards the black hole, and there is only time to save one. Data needs Akharin's help to revive Lal, so he saves Akharin, even though it means letting Rhea die. Data also repairs Gatt, who has realised his error. With less than an hour left, Chen has a revelation. The Machine is creating a work of art - its subspace explosion will mark this galaxy for cosmic posterity. Finally understanding the Machine's purpose, Picard, Data and Wesley are able to prove that it is futile - that its creation cannot last forever, because nothing does. They suggest a different project - to link all the galaxies together forever, working along-side the Travellers. The Machine agrees to terminate its current project, and begin a new one. With the Machine gone, Akharin grudgingly helps Data... and brings Lal back to life.

### **VOY 12x17 - "TWO TRIBES"**

Janeway accompanies Presider Cin aboard *Vesta* to contact the alien alliance on behalf of the Confederacy. Devore inspector Kashyk (VOY "Counterpoint") paints a dark picture of Starfleet, and his price for peace is that Janeway stand trial for her crimes. On his return to the First World, Chakotay learns where Janeway has gone; General Mattings believes she is in danger and calls in a full fleet, allowing *Voyager* to join up. Cin refuses to hand Janeway over, and the battle is joined. At first the Confederacy fleet is winning the fight... but then the Voth (VOY "Distant Origin") show up - it was they who destroyed Full Circle's comm relays (VOY "Protectors"). Rather than see the Confederacy slaughtered, Janeway finally offers herself up to Kashyk. Lasren delivers her, and his Betazoid senses confirm her suspicions. Kashyk and all the other alien leaders are possessed... by Meegan and the incorporeal criminals called The Eight (VOY "Unworthy").

## TEASER

FADE IN:

### 1 HOLO-IMAGE - REN FEJIN

A 3D hologram of the Breen freighter *Ren Fejin*, captured in 14x13 "Fragments". The image rotates slowly, showing us all sides, as a hand reaches in to point out marked sections...

CANDLEWOOD (o.s.)  
Here a weapons signature, there a  
weapons signature... pretty much  
everywhere a weapons signature.

**OPEN OUT** to:

### 2 INT. BAJORAN CONTROL CENTRE

This hologram is cast above the new conference table at the head of the control centre. As the most advanced Starfleet tech, it is capable of more than the old DS9 Ops table was.

CANDLEWOOD is demonstrating for a partial meeting of senior staff, every inch the respectable chief science officer.

CANDLEWOOD  
(continuing)  
It's kinda amazing the *Ren Fejin*  
survived at all, with all the  
weapons signatures on its hull.

RO peers closely at the hologram from the opposite side...

RO  
And they're definitely Jem'Hadar?

CANDLEWOOD  
Yep. And before you ask - no, it  
did not take me the whole month  
to figure that out, thank you.

He looks askance at NOG who stands next to him, expecting a smart remark. But the Ferengi engineer is just as daunted. On his other side, Cardassian strategic ops officer SLAINE acts as Candlewood's back-up, explaining further.

SLAINE

In fact the sheer mass of weapons signatures, coupled with the Cardassian military's familiarity with Dominion technology and the fact the ship had just returned from the Gamma Quadrant, made it fairly easy to conclude that *Ren Fejin* had come under attack by an entire Jem'Hadar squadron.

RO

But how? The Breen shouldn't have been anywhere near Dominion space. The sensor buoys we deployed in the Gamma Quadrant didn't show any deviation from the agreed lanes.

Ferengi security chief Inspector RWOGO pipes up...

RWOGO

I think we can justifiably assume the Breen - and the Romulans - had no intention of honouring the terms of that agreement. Since we know the Dominion closed its borders some years ago, this evidence strongly suggests the *Ren Fejin* did in fact enter Dominion space. The question therefore is not how but why.

RO

John, did you get anything from the ship's computers that would help?

CANDLEWOOD

(nods)

Tomalak did a fairly good job of blowing them up. But I was finally able to reconstruct enough data to get a solid idea of what they were up to. That's what took the time.

He looks to Nog again - Nog is just confused.

NOG

Why do you assume I'm making fun of you? Just get on with it.

Candlewood is a little taken aback - Nog is quite intense.

CANDLEWOOD

Alright. *Ren Fejin* was carrying information about a planet called Overne Three - coordinates, sensor data, security information.

NOG

Overne... I've heard that name.

RO

Me too. The Overne race are the Dominion's primary producers of starships... and weaponry.

NOG

(haunted)

So the Typhon Pact have allied with the Dominion... against us. And just like that... there's a new Dominion War on the way.

Now Candlewood realises what Nog's problem is, why he's so intense. He feels stupid for not realising.

RWOGO

We don't know that for certain. All we do know is that the Breen knew where Overne was, probably from their alliance during that war, and they went there.

NOG

Why else would they do that unless it was to get Dominion weapons?

SLAINE

I don't think that's it. Those weapons signatures don't exactly suggest they received a warm welcome, do they?

NOG

But the *Ren Fejin* did survive the assault. The Breen are as good at negotiating as the Ferengi - maybe they made the Dominion a deal.

RO

Tomalak could probably tell us.

RWOGO

You'd have an easier time getting latinum out of a gree-worm.

CANDLEWOOD

And the *Eletrix's* self-destruction was very... thorough. The debris's too fragmented and soaked in nasty radiation to tell us anything good.

Ro stops to ponder the conundrum.

RO

We need to know if the Typhon Pact and the Dominion are in bed with each other. And the way things are right now, there's only one way to find that out.

(beat)

We need to ask the Dominion themselves.

Off Ro's apprehension at that...

BLACK OUT

**END OF TEASER**

**ACT ONE**

FADE IN:

**3     EXT. BAJOR - SISKO'S HOUSE - DAY**

Establishing Sisko's house in Kendra province...

**4     INT. SISKO'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

KASIDY sits at the kitchen table, tense and unmoving. She reaches out to nudge an A4-size envelope of papers on the table in front of her. Straightens it. Barely blinking.

After a moment, the office door opens and SISKO emerges, already knowing he's going to be on eggshells. He comes to join her at the table, sits carefully, warily.

KASIDY

When do you leave?

He hadn't told her he was leaving, but he's not surprised she figured it out. He knows she knows him well enough.

SISKO

As soon as possible. Admiral Akaar assigned me to take the *Defiant* into the Gamma Quadrant... and try to contact the Dominion.

KASIDY

(tightly)

Just like the good old days, then.

SISKO

Kas, we both knew this was coming. After what happened, I wanted - I needed to be here with you, with Rebecca. But Starfleet will always need me back eventually.

KASIDY

And you'll always go.

Sisko notes the envelope on the desk, uses it as an excuse.

SISKO  
What's this?

KASIDY  
Open it and find out.

Sisko takes the envelope, pulls out the papers, reads what they are... and his blood chills. No raised voices...

SISKO  
The divorce petition.

KASIDY  
I went to the courthouse in Mylea and took the papers out. I didn't want someone noticing the names and gossip getting around.

SISKO  
...And you signed them.

KASIDY  
That was the deal, wasn't it? You spend time with Rebecca, I give you what you want.

SISKO  
Not what I want. What has to be.

KASIDY  
I understand why you believe that. And I've been thinking for a while that it's time to move on. We'll always be parents together, but -

SISKO  
I still love you, Kas.

KASIDY  
I love you too, Ben. So... I'm letting you go.

Sisko puts the documents back in the envelope, then stands slowly. Kasidy does too. They hug tight, take comfort while they can. Then Sisko pulls back...

KASIDY

You should go. I'll tell Rebecca.

SISKO

Thank you.

A moment, then Sisko turns and heads to the door, picks up his duffel bag, and EXITS. Kasidy backs up against the kitchen wall, uses it to hold herself upright...

**5 FLASHBACKS - 14x13 "FRAGMENTS"**

-- Kasidy gazes out of the porthole in the DS9 lifeboat, hypnotised by the internal currents of the wormhole...

-- Benny Russell and Eli Underwood dash out of the police station and run into traffic...

-- Cassie tries to follow, Kay Eaton holds her back...

KAY EATON

You have to let him walk his own path, Cassie. If you try to stop him, he'll never come back.

**6 BACK TO SCENE**

Slowly, Kasidy SLIDES down the wall, deflating, until she is sat on the floor and hugging her knees. Starts to CRY.

REBECCA emerges, for once not slamming the door but opening it sensitively. The six-year-old girl sees her mother...

...Kasidy looks away, embarrassed to be seen like this, but too exhausted to move...

...Rebecca looks to the door, sees that her father's duffel bag is gone, understands what that means.

The girl takes a deep breath, closes her eyes, THINKS as hard as she can. Face tense with effort. Opens her eyes... nothing has changed. Tries again - eyes closed, thinking so hard. But nothing. No white flash, no turning back time.

Accepting defeat, Rebecca moves quietly to her mother, sits beside her on the floor, and HOLDS her silently.

7 EST. ALJULI TOWN - DAY

A standard establishing shot of the small Bajoran town...

8 INT. BAJORAN CONTROL CENTRE - CAPTAIN'S OFFICE

SISKO sits in the guest chair of RO's new office. With both of them plus the table, the tiny space is pretty much full.

SISKO

I hope there's no hard feelings,  
Captain.

RO

It's fine, really.

SISKO

It's just with the *Robinson* still  
under repair at Starbase Two-Ten -

RO

Captain, it's fine. The *Defiant* and  
Benjamin Sisko together - you have  
a reputation in the Gamma Quadrant.  
Akaar made the sensible choice.

Sisko nods, accepting that. Doesn't make him feel better.

RO

(continuing)

Besides, you have a much closer  
relationship with at least one  
member of the Dominion than I do.  
The only one I was ever close to  
is... well, he's dead now.

SISKO

Yes... I was thinking, about my  
senior staff for the mission -

RO

Tenmei and Candlewood have been  
keeping the *Defiant* in orbit while  
they investigated the Breen ship.  
They know what they're doing.

SISKO  
(hesitant)  
They're not the crew I'm used to.

RO  
Captain, the crew you're used to  
is about six years in the past.

Ro points out of the glass walls, to the sight of her own  
senior and junior officers working in the control centre.

RO  
(continuing)  
That's what's available now. And  
they're good officers.

SISKO  
Of course. I never intended to  
suggest otherwise.

Ro nods, accepting that. Doesn't make her feel any better.

RO  
What do you think you're going to  
find once you're out there?

SISKO  
Hopefully a big misunderstanding.  
As far as we know, the Dominion is  
happy to keep to itself these days.

RO  
But that's the question, isn't it?  
"As far as we know" could be way  
out of date. And does no contact  
mean no activity...

SISKO  
(nods, understanding)  
...Or just that whatever they're  
up to, they're keeping it quiet?

RO  
There is one thing I'd like you to  
do for me, if you wouldn't mind.

SISKO  
Of course, what do you need?

RO  
The *Canterbury* and its friends are scanning every inch of the Bajoran sector with phase cloak detectors, just in case. But they haven't found whatever was blocking our comm signals through the relay.

SISKO  
So you suspect there's a cloaked Romulan comm scrambler somewhere in the Gamma Quadrant.

RO  
Seems reasonable. Candlewood's the one who broke the secret of phase cloaks, he's your best bet.

SISKO  
I'll let you know what we find.

RO  
Thank you, Captain. Good hunting.

Ro and Sisko commiserate, neither excited about this...

**9     EXT. VANADWAN MONASTERY - DAY**

The monastery-turned-hospice-turned-residence, perched on the top of the mountain...

**10    INT. VANADWAN MONASTERY - HOSPICE ROOM - DAY**

TENMEI sits reading a book by her father's bed. VAUGHN is still there, still clinging on to the edge of life. The door CREAKS open, and CANDLEWOOD pokes his head in.

CANDLEWOOD  
Hi... can I come in?

TENMEI  
Of course. Take a seat.

Candlewood sits opposite Tenmei, looks at Vaughn...

CANDLEWOOD

Still clinging on, I see. He really is a tough old bird, isn't he?

TENMEI

I think he's just stubborn. Even without life support, he simply refuses to give up.

CANDLEWOOD

But... how? I mean, he's not getting any food or fluids...

TENMEI

Julian was explaining how at this stage of things, you don't want to give them too many fluids anyway. He's not doing anything, so he's not using up the fluids he's got. Keep pumping more in and he'll just blow up like a balloon.

CANDLEWOOD

That does sound... undignified. Plus a tiny bit comical.

Tenmei glowers at her friend, but she knows he's just trying to lighten her mood.

CANDLEWOOD

Listen, Pryn... I know Ro gave you leave to stay with your dad until... well, until. But the thing is... there's a mission.

TENMEI

I can't leave him, John. What if he goes while I'm not here?

CANDLEWOOD

I get it. But the *Defiant* is going into the Gamma Quadrant. And she needs Pryn Tenmei at the helm.

TENMEI

The Gamma Quadrant? Why?

CANDLEWOOD

To contact the Dominion. And find out if they're in a new league of evil with the Typhon Pact.

Tenmei considers it. Looks back at her father.

TENMEI

So it's a mission that's vital to the security of the Federation.

CANDLEWOOD

Pretty much, yeah.

Tenmei ponders a moment longer, then makes her decision.

TENMEI

John, could you give us a minute?

Grateful, Candlewood gets up and quietly EXITS. Tenmei puts down her book, takes Vaughn's scarred hand.

TENMEI

Sorry, dad. I'm only doing this because I know it's what you would have done. Whatever serves the greater good, that's what we do.

(beat)

I'll let Sulan and Nerys know to keep an eye on you, keep you out of trouble. But I have to go now.

She stands, gives him a quick peck on the cheek...

TENMEI

I have a mission.

...and strides for the EXIT. Off Tenmei's determination...

11 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

...to Tenmei at the helm of the *Defiant*, keeping it tight.

TENMEI  
Approaching the Denorios Belt,  
Captain.

SISKO speaks up from the command chair.

SISKO  
Maintain course for the wormhole,  
Lieutenant. Tactical, activate the  
cloak detection system as soon as  
we exit the other side.

Bajoran Lt ALECO answers from the tactical station...

ALECO  
Acknowledged, sir.

Sisko looks around at the bridge crew, who are all looking at their own work and don't see him look at them. Tenmei at helm, Candlewood at sciences, Aleco at tactical, TH'SHANT at engineering, plus extras. They're all strangers to him.

SISKO  
(quiet, to himself)  
Hello, ship.

12 **EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT**

*Defiant* passes the repaired ring of TACHYON BUOYS... which come to life with their criss-crossing blue beams... the WORMHOLE bursts into life...

The ship loops around, passes through the tachyon grid...

...and dives into the wormhole, which closes up behind it.

BLACK OUT

**END OF ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO**

FADE IN:

**13 EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT**

*Defiant* throws a multi-phase tachyon beam from its forward deflector...

...which has caught an OBJECT in its wide blue light. The object is INVISIBLE, only discernible as negative space.

**14 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

CANDLEWOOD calls out from the science station...

CANDLEWOOD

Got it! This is the source of the subspace interference, Captain.

Sisko is the tiniest bit jealous that Candlewood solved this mystery when his own crew on the *Robinson* couldn't. But he knows that's unfair, and tamps it down.

SISKO

Well done, Mister Candlewood. Beam the object to the science lab.

(turns to th'Shant)

Ensign... th'Shant, is it?

th'Shant turns and nods to Sisko, a bit nervous...

TH'SHANT

That's correct, sir.

SISKO

You'll be in charge of analysing the device, Ensign, while we continue the rest of our mission. I want to know who made it, when it was placed there, and if it's designed to do anything besides blocking our comm signals.

th'Shant stands from his station, absorbs this. An order from the famous Captain Sisko does not ease his nerves.

TH' SHANT

Aye, sir.

He doesn't move for a second, until Sisko's stern look of "well?" spurs him into action, and he EXITS the bridge. An EXTRA takes his place. Sisko turns back to Tenmei...

SISKO

Helm, set course for the Founders' homeworld, and engage at warp six. Tactical, engage cloaking device.

ALECO

Aye, sir.

TENMEI

(mutter to self)

Finally.

Sisko hears her mutter, doesn't like it.

**15 EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT**

*Defiant* stops sending out its blue beam, the comm device it caught having already been beamed aboard.

The ship moves off, image wavering and fading as the CLOAK is raised, simultaneously JUMPing to WARP... and it's gone.

**16 EXT. SPACE**

A different part of the Gamma Quadrant, wisps of a pink-purple nebula in the background. Then in the foreground...

...a trio of JEM'HADAR FIGHTERS. They zoom past at impulse.

We CLOSE IN on a seemingly empty area of space...

**17 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Dark lighting, indicating under cloak - except for silent flashes of red from the RED ALERT lights. Everyone tense, no-one speaking, just the soft burbles of the computer and background hum of the ship's systems. After a moment...

ALECO

They've passed.

(new alert)

But long-range sensors are reading two more. On their current speed and heading, they'll pass within seventy-five thousand kilometres.

SISKO

Maintain position. Cut main power.

Tenmei lets out a short sharp SIGH of frustration, but does as she is ordered. The ship's hum dies out even further.

ALECO

They're nearing their closest approach to us... and they're sweeping the area with antiproton beams, just like the others did.

SISKO

On screen.

The viewscreen changes to show...

...two JEM'HADAR FIGHTERS moving slowly nearby. The bridge crew all watch warily, unwilling to even speak too loud...

CANDLEWOOD

Gotta love that we're here to see if the Breen used a Romulan cloak to sneak into the Dominion... by using a Romulan cloak to sneak into the Dominion.

On screen, the Jem'Hadar ships pick up speed and move away.

ALECO

They're moving off, returning to their patrol route.

SISKO

Well done, everyone. Lieutenant Tenmei, resume course and speed to the Founders' homeworld, then join me in the ready room.

Sisko gets up and EXITS, not looking back. Tenmei watches him go, a bit confused, but follows her orders again, working the helm and getting the ship underway.

We FEEL the ship power back up and jump to warp, streaking stars on the viewscreen. Then Tenmei stands, beckons one of the extras (who turns out to be MINNAR - Betazoid male, last seen 14x13) to take her place, and follows Sisko out.

**18**    **INT. DEFIANT - READY ROOM**

Sisko enters, dark and tense. Swings around the desk and takes his seat.

Tenmei follows, takes the guest seat. Not sure what this is about, would rather be at her station, getting on with it.

Sisko says nothing, lets the tension drag out. At length...

TENMEI

Sir?

SISKO

I didn't give you permission to speak, Lieutenant. And I don't recall asking you to take a seat.

TENMEI

Sir?

SISKO

On your feet, Lieutenant!

Tenmei SNAPS to her feet, standing at attention. She is not used to this kind of command style, and it has caught her off guard. Sisko looks up at her from under heavy brows.

SISKO

Am I bothering you, Lieutenant?

TENMEI

Sir?

SISKO

Stop saying "sir" and answer me.

Tenmei considers how to answer this...

TENMEI

Permission to speak freely?

SISKO

No, you do not have permission to speak freely. You have permission only to answer the questions I put to you. Am... I... bothering you?

TENMEI

(gulp)

Yes.

Sisko is impressed - the young officer has the gall to be honest with him. He stands, begins to pace and circle her, inspecting her. Tenmei's eyes try to follow him...

SISKO

Eyes front, Lieutenant. You're at attention.

Tenmei snaps back to attention again. Sisko circles...

SISKO

I understand that you're used to a more relaxed command style. Maybe you even saw this mission as an opportunity for command yourself.

(beat)

After all, when Captain Ro isn't available, you do command the *Defiant*. You even led the ship in battle. So why did Starfleet bring in the old man to take this rare opportunity away from you?

(beat)

But this isn't an opportunity. It's a mission - one that is critical to literally trillions of lives.

Tenmei keeps it tight, knowing this is no time to argue.

SISKO

I graduated from Starfleet Academy twenty-nine years ago. I served during the Federation-Tzenkethi war, the Dominion war, and the Borg invasion. I've logged more hours in the Gamma Quadrant than anyone in Federation history, and I had a Changeling serve under my command for seven years.

(beat)

While my calls to bring the ship out of warp and reduce its power output might irritate you in your impatience to save the day, they might have also saved this crew, so that we can accomplish our objective. So tell me, Lieutenant Tenmei, which one of us is better equipped to command this mission?

TENMEI

You are, sir.

SISKO

That's right.

TENMEI

Permission to speak freely, sir... so that I might apologise.

Sisko has to smother a smile - Tenmei definitely has gall.

SISKO

I don't need you to apologise, Lieutenant. I need you to conduct yourself like a senior member of my crew. Can you do that?

TENMEI

Yes, sir.

SISKO

Then I won't need to mention this conversation in my log. Dismissed.

TENMEI

Thank you, sir.

Tenmei turns smartly and heads for the door. Sisko returns to his desk and sits. But before she can exit...

SISKO

Lieutenant...

(she turns)

I can appreciate what you're going through. But you need to learn to manage your emotions better.

TENMEI

My father once said the same thing to me, sir.

SISKO

Solid advice... especially if you want that centre chair some day. Return to the bridge, Lieutenant.

TENMEI

Aye, sir.

Tenmei EXITS. Sisko finally lets his command shell drop... and he is just as distracted by his emotions as she is.

**19 EXT. SPACE - FOUNDERS' HOMEWORLD**

The familiar brown orb of the Founders' rocky world, last seen 10x21 "Into the Fire".

**20 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Still under cloak. Sisko ponders the oddly quiet view...

SISKO

Long-range sensors. The Jem'Hadar have to be out there somewhere.

ALECO

(off console)

I'm reading at least a dozen ships at the edge of sensor range. None in the immediate vicinity, though.

SISKO  
Can we beam down?

CANDLEWOOD  
I wouldn't recommend it. There's  
some kind of weird ionisation  
effect in the upper atmosphere.

SISKO  
Then prepare a shuttle for launch.  
Tenmei, you have the bridge.

Sisko stands and heads for the exit. Tenmei leaves the helm  
to take command. But Candlewood stands and interrupts...

CANDLEWOOD  
Excuse me, Captain. But I must  
respectfully disagree.

Sisko turns to pierce Candlewood on the spot. Tenmei's like  
"what the hell are you *doing*?" But Candlewood stays strong.

SISKO  
Oh really?

CANDLEWOOD  
Yes, sir. If you're going to the  
Founders' homeworld in a shuttle,  
you should take the best pilot  
with you... in case there's any  
trouble. That's Lieutenant Tenmei.

Sisko considers him - Captain Ro raised some brash young  
officers, apparently.

SISKO  
And you would be next in line for  
command, I presume.

CANDLEWOOD  
If I recall the mission profile,  
sir, *Defiant's* job from this point  
forward is to stay very very quiet  
and very very still. I can manage  
that much quite happily, yes sir.

SISKO  
Lieutenant Tenmei, do you agree?

TENMEI  
Mister Candlewood has the trust of  
Captain Ro, sir. He commanded the  
ship during the stand-off with the  
Cardassians over Argaya.

(beat)  
And I would prefer to stay by the  
captain's side.

SISKO  
Very well. Tenmei, you're with me.  
Candlewood, you have the bridge.  
But let me be very clear - under  
no circumstances are you to engage  
the Jem'Hadar in battle. You can  
run, you can hide, but you cannot  
fire your weapons. Understood?

CANDLEWOOD  
Very much so, sir.

Sisko nods curtly, and turns to leave the bridge, Tenmei behind him. While extras take over again at sciences and helm, Candlewood settles into the command chair. He blows out a big breath - he's really put himself in it now.

**21    EXT. SPACE**

A circular HOLE opens in seemingly empty space, allowing the tiny shuttlepod *Cooper* to emerge from the *Defiant's* shuttlebay and zoom away... after which the hole closes back up and the cloak wavers back into place.

**22    EXT. FOUNDERS' HOMEWORLD - ATMOSPHERE**

The shuttlepod flies down through the pinkish sky...

**23    EXT. FOUNDERS' HOMEWORLD - SURFACE - DAY**

The shuttlepod has now landed on the familiar small rocky islet, almost filling the space. Tenmei can be seen through the front windows, keeping the engines hot...

...while Sisko stands outside, gazing out over what used to be an undulating golden sea of Founders, but is now just deserted rock since the gods of the Dominion abandoned it.

Sisko raises his hands to his mouth, shouts out loud...

SISKO

Odo!

(no response)

Odo! Are you here?

The sound echoes out over the empty stone, but there is still nothing. Sisko drops his hands, sighs. He turns back to Tenmei, exchanges a look of disappointment. If he can't even find anyone to talk to, how can they solve this?

SISKO

(taps combadge)

Sisko to *Defiant* -

Suddenly the air is filled with a HUM, and four figures BEAM onto the rocky islet using Dominion transporters.

Three JEM'HADAR soldiers behind and to each side of Sisko, all holding heavy weapons and pointing them right at him.

And in front of him, VANNIS the Vorta (last seen 11x04).

VANNIS

Captain Benjamin Sisko. What an unpleasant surprise.

As Sisko stands there at the mercy of the Dominion...

BLACK OUT

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

FADE IN:

**24 EXT. FOUNDERS' HOMEWORLD - SURFACE - DAY**

Sisko has his hands up. Vannis peers up at him, unimpressed and supercilious. He glances over her shoulder...

...and sees Tenmei on her feet in the shuttle, also hands up, as another Jem'Hadar soldier holds his weapon on her.

SISKO

Vannis. We're not here to fight.  
We came to speak to the Founders.

VANNIS

The Founders do not wish to speak with you, or with anyone outside our territory. You know this, and yet you still violated our space.

SISKO

Someone else already violated your space. I want to help the Founders make sure it doesn't happen again.

VANNIS

(cold smile)

Thank you for your obviously genuine desire to help the Founders, Captain - but as you can see, we are quite capable of dealing with trespassers. I will see that you and whichever ship brought you are escorted away. If you are disinclined to permit that... we will have to kill you.

Sisko takes a moment to think it over. He needs to talk to Odo, but getting himself killed won't help. Finally...

SISKO

Then I guess we'll leave.

Vannis after-you's for Sisko towards the shuttle, and he walks slowly, hands still up, to re-enter the hatch.

**25**    **INT. SHUTTLE - COCKPIT**

Sisko enters, hands up, Vannis behind him. Tenmei turns...

SISKO

No sudden moves, Lieutenant.  
Remember we came here to talk.

Tenmei nods her obedience. Sisko turns back to Vannis...

SISKO

If you will just contact the  
Founders and ask them -

Vannis rolls her eyes, gestures to a Jem'Hadar...

...who SLAMS Sisko in the gut with the butt of his weapon.  
Sisko doubles over in pain, coughing. Tenmei tenses...

VANNIS

You may have come to talk, Captain  
- but I'm not in a chatty mood.  
Instruct your pilot to return to  
your ship - I'm assuming *Defiant* -  
with weapons and shields inactive.

Sisko straightens, still panting... and nods to Tenmei. She  
slowly gets back in her pilot seat and does as she is told.

**26**    **EXT. FOUNDERS' HOMEWORLD - ATMOSPHERE**

The shuttlepod flies back up through the sky...

**27**    **EXT. SPACE - FOUNDERS' HOMEWORLD**

...and emerges into orbit, slowing to a halt. There is no  
sign of the *Defiant*.

**28**    **INT. SHUTTLE - COCKPIT**

Vannis peers pointedly at Sisko. He gets her meaning, taps  
his combadge reluctantly...

SISKO

Sisko to *Defiant*.

There is no response. Sisko glances at the two Jem'Hadar soldiers still pointing their weapons...

VANNIS

Try again. The lives of you and all your crew depend upon it.

SISKO

Sisko to *Defiant*. Mister Candlewood, I need you to decloak the ship.

**INTERCUT WITH:**

**29    INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Under cloak, Candlewood in command, Aleco at tactical...

SISKO (comm)

(continuing)

Lieutenant Tenmei and I are carrying two Jem'Hadar and one Vorta. They wish to escort us safely out of Dominion space.

CANDLEWOOD

No response.

Aleco turns to Candlewood, astonished...

ALECO

Lieutenant, the captain gave you an order.

CANDLEWOOD

He's clearly been taken captive. He would never expect me to follow his orders in that situation. No response, Lieutenant.

Aleco turns back to his station, obedient but unhappy...

**30    INT. SHUTTLE - COCKPIT**

Vannis sighs, also not happy...

VANNIS

Captain, if your crew don't show themselves at once, the Jem'Hadar will shoot your pilot.

Tenmei tenses - she has worked with Vannis before, but the Vorta either doesn't remember or more likely doesn't care.

VANNIS

(continuing)

If your ship still doesn't appear, they'll kill you. Then I'll call in every Jem'Hadar ship in the sector to blanket local space with polaron fire, and your crew will die. With your help, they'll live.

SISKO

Vannis, if you kill me or my crew, you'll be offending a Founder.

VANNIS

My orders are from the Founders.

SISKO

Even Odo? You know we know him. We served together for years, and he would never want you to kill me. Please - contact Odo and tell him I need to speak to him. Urgently.

Vannis considers this... she doesn't like it.

SISKO

Yes, I could be lying. But can you really risk it?

Damn it, no she can't. She glances to the Jem'Hadar...

VANNIS

Ensure the shuttle remains here while I contact the Founder. If they attempt to escape, kill them.

Vannis disappears in a spontaneous TRANSPORTER. Sisko and Tenmei exchange a look, still under Jem'Hadar weapons...

31 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

Under cloak. Aleco reads off his tactical console...

ALECO

I'm reading a transporter signal - the Vorta has left. The Jem'Hadar are still there, but no signs of weapons fire.

CANDLEWOOD

(relieved sigh)

Thank God. Okay, Sisko's making some headway. So we stay quiet and let him do what he came here for.

Aleco turns to him again, insistent...

ALECO

I recommend we launch a rescue while their numbers are depleted.

CANDLEWOOD

Absolutely not.

Aleco gets up, walks to the command chair, speaks sotto...

ALECO

John, the Emissary is over there, at the mercy of the Jem'Hadar. Not to mention your own best friend.

CANDLEWOOD

I'm very much aware of both those things, thanks, Vel. But Sisko's orders were clear and unambiguous. We do not initiate hostilities.

Aleco still doesn't like it. But he nods reluctantly.

CANDLEWOOD

Now, it looks like we have some time to kill. So I'm going to go and check in on th'Shant. Can I trust you while I'm gone?

ALECO  
(vaguely offended)  
Of course.

CANDLEWOOD  
Good. Thank you, Vel. I mean that.  
(louder, for the  
extras' benefit)  
Lieutenant Aleco, you have the  
bridge. I'll be in sciences.

ALECO  
(formal)  
Aye, sir.

Candlewood gets up and EXITS the bridge. Aleco glances at the junior crew around him - he's not ready to actually sit in the centre seat yet, so he returns to tactical.

**32 INT. DEFIANT - SCIENCE LAB**

Last seen in 11x16. The door opens, Candlewood strides in, causing th'Shant to JOLT - nervous, perhaps even guilty...

TH'SHANT  
What?! Oh, Lieutenant...

Candlewood is immediately suspicious, but keeps it level...

CANDLEWOOD  
Everything alright, Ensign?

TH'SHANT  
(evasive)  
Yes, of course. You startled me,  
that's all. What do you need?

CANDLEWOOD  
Just checking up on your analysis  
of this comm blocker thingy. What  
have you found?

He gestures to the roughly spherical object they beamed up earlier, about a metre across, that sits balanced on the scanner table. th'Shant turns back to it, voice quavering.

TH'SHANT

Definitely Romulan - the boridium power cells confirm that. It was designed to fill the Idran system with subspace interference, after an activation signal, presumably to prevent the comm relay sending or receiving any messages.

CANDLEWOOD

But without activating any error messages in the relay, or else that would have alerted DS-Nine.

th'Shant flinches at the name of the station. Candlewood notices, recording all of th'Shant's reactions...

CANDLEWOOD

What about the cloaking device?

TH'SHANT

Standard model, not unlike the *Defiant's*. We have not captured a phase-cloak for analysis, sadly.

CANDLEWOOD

I guess they keep those for the bigger jobs. Good work, Ensign. Carry on, and keep me informed.

TH'SHANT

Yes, Lieutenant.

Candlewood turns to EXIT, but hovers in the doorway, giving th'Shant an unnoticed last look of curiosity. Something's going on there. Then he's gone.

Alone again, th'Shant slumps over the scanner table, pulse pounding in his throat. He feels almost sick...

**33**    **EXT. SPACE - FOUNDERS' HOMEWORLD**

The tiny shuttlepod *Cooper*, seemingly alone in the vast of space, with the Founders' homeworld as a backdrop.

**34**    **INT. SHUTTLE - COCKPIT**

Sisko GRUNTS himself awake. Looks around, unfocused and groggy. Banging headache. He sees boots, deck, chair legs. He's on the floor. Looks up, sees a JEM'HADAR staring down, weapon pointed right at him, rock steady. Shakes himself.

SISKO  
Lieutenant Tenmei...

Tenmei JERKS in the pilot seat - she had been dozing off as well. The second Jem'Hadar keeps his weapon trained on her.

TENMEI  
Sorry, Captain - what did you say?

Sisko struggles to his feet, stretches out his back, the Jem'Hadar's rifle staying trained on him with every move.

SISKO  
How long has it been?

TENMEI  
(checks panels)  
Just over twenty-seven hours.

Tenmei gets up from her chair, making her Jem'Hadar guard tense and refocus his rifle on her...

**FLASHBACK - 9x19 "WARPATH"**

Taran'atar SMACKS Tenmei backhand across the face, hard enough to knock her unconscious against the consoles.

**BACK TO SCENE**

Tenmei flinches against the memory, but steels herself. She will not show weakness in front of these monsters.

Suddenly the HUM of the transporter again - the Jem'Hadar disappear in the rainbow hues of a Dominion beam. At the same time two other figures beam in - Vannis... and ODO.

SISKO  
(smile of relief)  
Odo... is that really you?

ODO

It's me, Captain. But is it you?  
Last I heard, you left Starfleet.

SISKO

I did step away. But I'm back.

ODO

You're also back in Dominion space.  
It's not that I'm not pleased to  
see you, but I thought you under-  
stood that we closed our borders.

SISKO

And we've respected that for three  
years. But something has happened  
that concerns us greatly, and it  
involves the Dominion. I only came  
here to talk to you about it.

ODO

Then talk.

SISKO

We're worried about the possibility  
that the Dominion has allied with  
the Typhon Pact.

ODO

The Typhon Pact? I don't recognise  
that name.

SISKO

It's an alliance between six of the  
Federation's neighbours, including  
the Breen, the Romulans and the  
Tzenkethi.

Odo takes that on board, strolls away as much as the tiny  
shuttlepod allows, his investigator's analyst brain kicking  
in. Sisko smiles quietly - it looks just like old times.

ODO

Yes... this makes more sense now.

SISKO

What does?

ODO

That a Breen freighter and a  
Romulan warbird were discovered  
together in Dominion space.

SISKO

(tensing)

The *Eletrix* and the *Ren Fejin*.

ODO

So I've only recently been told.

Odo sends a quick glance at Vannis - she bows her head.

ODO

I assume the *Defiant* is nearby?

Sisko hesitates to admit it out loud - but this is Odo.

SISKO

Yes.

ODO

Then I think you'd better take me  
with you, Captain.

TENMEI

Where are we going?

ODO

The Overne system, of course.

Off Sisko's relieved yet daunted reaction...

BLACK OUT

**END OF ACT THREE**

**ACT FOUR**

FADE IN:

**35 EXT. SPACE**

The *Defiant* at warp, escorted by a Jem'Hadar fighter.

**36 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

SISKO stands with ODO at the back of the bridge, subdued and out of earshot of the junior crew. Odo looks around... Tenmei, Candlewood, Aleco, th'Shant. All unfamiliar faces.

ODO

Strange... I travelled on board the *Defiant* many times, of course, but somehow it feels... strange to me now. The same but... different.

SISKO

I know exactly how you feel. A lot has changed since those days.

ODO

And it's easy to lose track when you're immersed in the Link. It's as if time runs differently there.

Sisko understands - just like it does in the wormhole...

SISKO

Odo... you said you'd only just found out about the Romulans and the Breen. Are the Vorta not reporting everything to you?

ODO

Vannis has made no secret of the fact she would rather follow Laas' vision of the Dominion than mine. But there's more to it than that.

SISKO

Like what?

Odo hesitates, as if he's vaguely ashamed of this...

ODO

I've been spending time away from the Link recently - what there is of it anyway. Weyoun found all the locations where the rest of the Hundred were sent. Since most of the Founders left, I thought I'd go out, try to find some of them.

SISKO

Have you had any success?

ODO

One or two. But like you said... a lot has changed.

SISKO

Odo, the Typhon Pact races are not all belligerent. But if they gain an advantage over the Khitomer Accords by allying with you, then the war hawks could win out.

ODO

(shakes head)

There is no alliance between the Dominion and the Typhon Pact, I can assure you of that, Captain.

SISKO

Then why were they at Overne?

ODO

Exactly what I was on my way to investigate... when Vannis found me and told me you were here.

TENMEI (o.s.)

Captain...?

Sisko pulls his professional mask back on, turns to Tenmei.

SISKO

Yes, Lieutenant?

TENMEI  
Sorry to interrupt, sir, but we're  
approaching the Overne system.

SISKO  
Follow their lead, Lieutenant.

TENMEI  
Aye, sir.

Tenmei works her panels - Sisko and Odo both prepare...

**37 EXT. SPACE - OVERNE III - ORBIT**

Last seen 14x11 "Nightmare Fuel". Several Jem'Hadar ships  
hover in orbit - now joined by the *Defiant* and its escort.

**38 INT. DOMINION FACTORY**

ODO and SISKO stand gazing at the spot where the machines  
the Breen took used to be - a huge blank area, big as a  
house. ALECO and one JEM'HADAR are with them, both armed.

SISKO  
I'm sorry this happened, Odo. But  
I promise you it will not happen  
again. Starfleet is guarding the  
wormhole with multiple ships - the  
Typhon Pact won't be back.

ODO  
That's good to know, Captain.

FOOTSTEPS approaching... Sisko and Odo turn to see...

...VANNIS approaching them across the concrete floor.

VANNIS  
Founder, I have spoken with the  
Overne who works as the facility's  
supervisor - when it is operating.

ODO  
So can you tell us the purpose of  
the equipment that was stolen?

VANNIS

Senra-Nesk says that the machinery utilised to manufacture structural integrity field generators and deflector generators has been taken. The equipment used in full-scale testing of those systems has been removed as well.

ODO

(to Sisko)

Does that mean anything to you?

SISKO

I don't know. It might.

ODO

(back to Vannis)

Thank you, Vannis. You may go now.

Vannis bows her head and walks away back to the exit.

Odo and Sisko gesture for Aleco and the Jem'Hadar to stay on guard, while they stroll together through the factory, between the rows of inactive machines.

SISKO

Whatever they need that equipment for, they were prepared to take incredible risks for it. You told me they faced down a Jem'Hadar squadron to get it. And when they came back through the wormhole, they self-destructed rather than let us find out what it was.

ODO

(grunt)

Humanoids. Always ready to go to war at a moment's notice. Why should I be surprised?

SISKO

I agree. And I'm sick of it.

39 **POV ANGLE - BEHIND THE MACHINERY**

POV - we PEEK from behind some of the many machines filling the factory. Observing Sisko and Odo from a distance...

SISKO

You may not be aware of this, Odo, but over the last few years, Starfleet has outfitted some of its vessels with a new, much faster kind of propulsion system called quantum slipstream drive.

ODO

(nods knowingly)

And the Romulans and their allies take exception to the Federation having such advanced technology.

Our POV shifts slightly, keeping pace as the others walk...

SISKO

They already stole the plans from the same shipyard where I built the *Defiant*. We were able to stop them before they made use of it.

40 **ANGLE - WITH SISKO AND ODO**

Back to a neutral POV, with Sisko and Odo as they walk...

ODO

Hardly a surprise. If it's as fast as you say, they probably have good reason to fear you'll use it to great tactical advantage.

SISKO

You may be right.

ODO

Then what's the problem? You have the drive, why shouldn't they?

Sisko stops in surprise, appalled at that. Odo stops too, remains quite calm, daring Sisko to prove him wrong...

41 **EXT. SPACE - OVERNE III - ORBIT**

The *Defiant* in orbit, surrounded by Jem'Hadar fighters...

42 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

No longer under cloak. Candlewood approaches Tenmei...

CANDLEWOOD

(*sotto*)

So... this Odo guy, I don't really know him. He says we're safe here, surrounded by Jem'Hadar, even without the cloak. Do we believe him?

TENMEI

Sisko does. So I guess we have to. At least you had the cloak up. How did that go for you, by the way?

Candlewood glances to th'Shant, busy at engineering...

CANDLEWOOD

I'll tell you about it later.

Tenmei is intrigued, but knows this isn't the time...

43 **INT. DOMINION FACTORY**

Back to Sisko, who stares at Odo in disbelief...

SISKO

Odo... how can you say that?

ODO

If this Typhon Pact feels there's an imbalance with the Khitomer Accords, I'd expect them to try to even it out. It's only logical.

SISKO

That's one thing in theory. But another in practise. We know we'd never use slipstream, or any other technology, to strike first.

ODO

What about the Klingons? Or the Cardassians? Would they be so reluctant to use it to attack?

SISKO

Odo, I didn't come here to debate this with you. Some of what you say may be true, but you know the Federation. You fought by our side against your own people. That has to say something about how you feel about us - about our hearts.

ODO

It's not your hearts I'm concerned about. It's your trigger fingers.

SISKO

(sigh)

All I know is that I'm trying to avoid another war. I think maybe you've helped me do that.

ODO

I'm not sure how.

SISKO

Knowing that the Founders haven't allied with the Typhon Pact should help keep our own war hawks from taking control. Knowing the Typhon Pact are still looking for some kind of technological advantage will help us to negotiate with them. Help us to understand them.

Sisko gazes across the room at the big gap in the machines, with Aleco and the Jem'Hadar. They start to walk again...

SISKO

And maybe once I get back, we can figure out what exactly they plan to do with what they stole.

ODO  
I'll have the Overne provide you  
with full technical specifications  
to take back to Deep Space Nine.

With horror, Sisko realises that Odo doesn't know...

SISKO  
(w/ gravity)  
Odo... there is no more Deep Space  
Nine. The Typhon Pact destroyed it.

Odo is simply stunned. Takes a moment to find his voice.

ODO  
...what? Is... is Nerys...?

SISKO  
No no, she's fine. In fact she's a  
vedek now, with her own monastery.

ODO  
A vedek... Is she happy?

SISKO  
I don't think I've ever seen her  
more at peace.

ODO  
I'm glad. She deserves peace.

SISKO  
We all deserve peace, Odo.  
(beat)  
And what about you? Were you able  
to find peace with your people?

ODO  
It's been... an education.

SISKO  
I hope that's a good thing.

ODO  
That remains to be seen.

By now they have circled back around to their armed guards.

ODO

Captain... the Dominion closed its borders specifically to take stock of who we are - all of us, not just the Founders.

(gestures around)

That's why this place and so many others are no longer in operation. We have enough weapons to defend the Dominion - we don't need more.

SISKO

I hope, Odo, that your vision for the Dominion comes true one day. And when you're ready - when the Founders are ready - we'd welcome another opportunity to get to know them, as friends.

ODO

Thank you, Captain. Please, tell Nerys... that I asked after her.

SISKO

I will. Goodbye, Odo.

ODO

Goodbye, Captain. And good luck.

Sisko and Aleco stride to the exit. Odo watches them go...

**44 POV ANGLE - BEHIND THE MACHINERY**

As we peek again, watching Odo from our hiding place...

BLACK OUT

**END OF ACT FOUR**

**ACT FIVE**

FADE IN:

**45    EXT. SPACE - THE WORMHOLE**

The Alpha Quadrant end of the wormhole bursts open... the tachyon grid activates... and the *Defiant* emerges.

**46    INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Sisko back in command. He gazes at the viewscreen...

...which does not feature the familiar sight of DS9, just empty space. Sisko swallows his emotion at the fresh wound.

ALECO

*Canterbury* and *Brisbane* responding  
to standard friend-or-foe signals,  
Captain. Everything normal.

SISKO

Thank you, Lieutenant. Helm, set  
course for Bajor, full impulse.

TENMEI

Aye, sir.

**47    EXT. SPACE**

The *Defiant* turns and heads deeper into the Bajor system...

**48    INT. BAJORAN CONTROL CENTRE**

The image of the wormhole closing up again, and the tachyon grid deactivating, shows on the big viewscreen over the Ops table. RO watches it... SLAINE reports...

SLAINE

Confirmed, Captain - *Defiant* has  
returned. Captain Sisko requests  
a conference on his arrival.

RO

Send back agreed.

(beat)

Maybe then we'll finally find out  
what in fire has been going on...  
and why DS-Nine was destroyed.

Inspector RWOGO, who has been observing, pipes up.

RWOGO  
Actually, Captain, on that topic,  
I've been having thoughts. Could  
we speak in private, please?

Ro is intrigued... she looks to Slaine...

SLAINE  
You have at least an hour until  
the *Defiant* arrives.

RO  
Alright then. Join me, Inspector.

Ro heads to her own tiny office, Rwego on her heels. They  
both enter the glass-walled room, close the door, and sit.

But as Slaine watches from the Ops table, Ro presses a  
button on her new desk - and the transparent walls turn  
milky and translucent, like happened to Bashir's medical  
office in 14x14. Slaine is intrigued - what's going on?

**51    EXT. SPACE - BAJOR - ORBIT**

The *Defiant* pulls slowly into orbit of Bajor...

**52    INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Tenmei works her controls...

TENMEI  
We're locked into geo-synchronous  
orbit over Aljuli, Captain.

Sisko stands from the command chair...

SISKO  
Thank you, Lieutenant - please  
complete the after-mission checks

and secure the ship. Everyone else, you're dismissed.

Sisko heads for the exit, and the rest of the crew staffing the bridge shut down their stations and head out as well. Tenmei and Candlewood remain, both making sure the ship is locked down and secure before they all head down to Bajor.

TENMEI

You can go too if you want, John.  
I can handle it.

CANDLEWOOD

No, that's fine, I'm in no rush.

Candlewood glances over his shoulder, making sure the last person - Ensign th'Shant - has left, and they are alone.

CANDLEWOOD

Truth is, I need to talk to you, Pryn... about Ensign th'Shant.

TENMEI

(defensive)

Vakell? What about him?

CANDLEWOOD

Look, I know you like him. But I think there's something going on with him. Something... shifty.

TENMEI

(turns away,  
back to work)

Don't be ridiculous.

CANDLEWOOD

Pryn, listen to me. The way he reacted to the Romulan subspace blocker, the way he completely freaked out when the bombs -

TENMEI

He saved lives when the bombs went off, John! He saved the captain, and Major Cenn, and dozens more -

CANDLEWOOD

I know that, but -

TENMEI

- so don't you dare go accusing him of working with the Typhon Pact to kill a thousand people. You're dismissed, Lieutenant.

CANDLEWOOD

Prynn, please -

TENMEI

I said get out.

Candlewood sighs... shrugs like "Fine, have it your way, can't say I didn't try"... then turns to leave as ordered.

**53 INT. BAJORAN CONTROL CENTRE - CAPTAIN'S OFFICE**

SISKO sits in the guest chair of RO's new office again. The windows are now back to transparent glass.

SISKO

You have a good crew, Captain. Especially Lieutenants Candlewood and Tenmei - they did sterling work under what must have been very difficult circumstances.

RO

I'm glad you think so, because you'll be with them a while yet.

SISKO

I don't understand...

RO

Starfleet called again while you were away. Akaar wants you to stay in command of *Defiant*. For now.

SISKO

I'm sorry, Captain. It was never my intention -

RO  
Hey, I said it's fine and I meant  
it. It'll be good for me to not  
have an excuse to run away again.  
I need to spend some time working  
on my relationship... with Bajor.

SISKO  
I know how you feel, Ro. I still  
love your world... but sometimes I  
feel like it doesn't love me back.

NOG (comm)  
Nog to Captain Ro.

RO  
Go ahead, Nog...

NOG (comm)  
Could you and Captain Sisko come  
out here please? We think we've  
got something.

Intrigued, both captains rise and open the door...

**53 INT. BAJORAN CONTROL CENTRE (CONTINUOUS)**

...and exit into the large and busy control centre. They  
head to the new Ops table, which now casts a new HOLOGRAM.  
Ro and Sisko join NOG, CANDLEWOOD, SLAINE and RWOGO.

RO  
What have you got, Nog?

NOG  
(re hologram)  
This is the tech the Breen stole  
from Overne Three.

SISKO  
For building structural integrity  
field and deflector generators.

NOG  
Yes, sir.

RO

But why would the Typhon Pact need to steal the Dominion's structural integrity tech? Don't they have their own?

SLAINE

They do, but apparently not good enough for what they need it for.

SISKO

What do you mean?

SLAINE

I spoke to my contacts at Lakat, where they're building Cardassia's version of slipstream. One of the biggest barriers they're facing is maintaining structural integrity at such enormous speeds.

NOG

She's right. I've studied it with the S.C.E., and next to the phase variables, structural integrity is the biggest problem in creating a working slipstream drive.

RO

Was there any evidence of this tech on board the *Ren Fejin*?

(no response)

John?

Candlewood had been distracted, snaps back to attention...

CANDLEWOOD

Sorry. Umm, no, there wasn't. But you can see how big it is. The *Ren Fejin* couldn't accommodate that.

SISKO

So they had the *Eletrix* fake an accident, so it was free to help.

RWOGO

...And when they returned through the wormhole, and it became clear they weren't going to get away with it... they self-destructed the ship to hide the evidence.

With horror, they all slowly put the pieces together...

RO

So the Typhon Pact tried to steal the plans to slipstream from us...

RWOGO

...but we were able to stop them before it was too late...

NOG

...so they decided to try and build their own instead...

SLAINE

...but their own tech wasn't up to the required standard...

CANDLEWOOD

...and they were so desperate to counter our advantage...

SISKO

...that they were prepared to invade the Dominion to get it.

A moment to absorb that... Rwego rubs her hands together.

RWOGO

Well! One thing's for sure. As the Eighty-Eighth Rule clearly states, "It ain't over till it's over."

(off their looks)

If they were so desperate that they'd go to such extraordinary lengths - twice - I see no reason to think they won't try again.

Off everyone considering that very strong possibility...

54 EXT. SPACE - OVERNE III - ORBIT

Back to the Dominion world, with Jem'Hadar ships in orbit.

55 INT. DOMINION FACTORY

ODO sits on a low-level machine, gazing quietly at the big gap in the factory, where the Breen and Romulans stole from them. Boots on the concrete floor - Odo doesn't look up.

ODO

What is it, Vannis?

VANNIS

Forgive my intrusion, Founder, but it has been some time since the Starfleet ship departed. If you have no further need of me...

ODO

Yes, thank you. You can take your squadron and leave now. I'd like to remain here alone for a while. I have a lot to think about.

VANNIS

As you wish, Founder. I could arrange for another ship to pick you up when you're ready...?

ODO

I'm quite capable of making my own way back to the Founders' home world, thank you.

VANNIS

To your homeworld, surely...?

Odo looks pointedly and unhappily at Vannis. Did she just try to correct one of her gods? A moment of defiance, then she bows her head obsequiously. Odo is not impressed.

ODO

(firmly)

You may leave now, Vannis.

VANNIS

Founder.

She backs up a step, then turns and marches to the exit.

Once the footsteps have echoed away, Odo stands, sighs...

VOICE (o.s.)

Founder...

Odo turns, shocked at the deep rich VOICE out of nowhere.  
But he can't see anyone...

ODO

Who's there?

A whisper-rush of air, and a Jem'Hadar UNSHROUDS in the  
otherwise deserted factory...

...it is TARAN'ATAR. Odo is stunned...

ODO

Taran'atar? But... you were killed.

TARAN'ATAR

No, Founder... I was saved. And  
now... we need your help.

Off Odo, intrigued by the sudden mystery...

BLACK OUT

**END OF SHOW**