

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

9x11 - "Sale of the Century."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novella

"Satisfaction Is Not Guaranteed"
by Keith RA DeCandido

appearing in

Star Trek: Worlds of Deep Space Nine
Book 3 - Ferenginar / The Dominion

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING

A nice pleasant standard establishing shot of the station.

2 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

HETIK

Dabo!

QUARK looks up from behind his bar, unhappy at the baritone cry. Hunky Bajoran dabo boy HETIK hands over the winnings to RIONOJ, the female Boslic freighter captain, as she gazes lovingly. MORN and a Tellarite male are also present.

Grumpy, Quark leaves his bar and heads through the middling crowd over towards the dabo table. As he walks...

HETIK

You can't lose, Rionoj. Go on -
put it all on double down.

RIONOJ

Okay...

Still gazing at Hetik, the woman does as he says, not even paying attention. Seeing this, Quark relaxes and smiles.

The other players place their bets. Hetik leans sexily over the table, spins it with a muscular flourish. It lands, and everyone sighs with disappointment.

The Tellarite stands, SLAMS down his money and stomps away. Rionoj is not upset though - she slinks upright, leans close to Hetik, runs a hand over his cheek.

RIONOJ

Thank you for a divine evening.

TREIR (o.s.)

You didn't trust him, did you?

Quark turns to see that TREIR, his Orion dabo girl, is standing behind him, arms crossed haughtily. The two of them turn and head back over to the bar.

QUARK

Just keeping an ear on things.
"Hear all, trust nothing." Rule of Acquisition one-ninety.

TREIR

You never compensated me properly, you know. For hiring Hetik. He's drawn in a huge number of customers, and I think I deserve some kind of reward for that.

QUARK

No, you don't. You had that idea while in my employ, in service to my bar. "You pay for it, it's your idea" - Rule of Acquisition number twenty-five.

TREIR

You know, Quark, when you sold me on this job, it was as an improvement over being a slave.

QUARK

Isn't it? You don't have to have sex on demand. You're free to come and go, and you actually earn a wage. If that state of affairs is no longer to your liking, you can walk out the door and that will be that. Except for the breach-of-contract fine, of course.

TREIR

Of course. You do realise that if I leave, those dabo tables will empty out in a second.

QUARK

I'll still have Hetik and M'Pella.

TREIR

Don't be so sure of that. They're not exactly thrilled that you cut all our wages.

QUARK

I didn't cut your wages. I have to take a certain amount for taxes, which I didn't have to do before this bar became Ferengi soil.

TREIR

(roll eyes)

So now you actually have to pay taxes to support your government.

QUARK

I don't support my government! My government is run by an idiot. I should know. And what's worse is I have to help pay for it! So stop wasting my money and get back to work.

With a glower, Treir heads back to the dabo tables. Quark grabs a bottle, pours himself a drink, and knocks it back.

Just then, another Ferengi enters the bar. This is GASH, and he looks awful. Baggy mismatched clothes, dirty, slobbish. He also stinks - people passing him in the doorway step away, covering their noses from the stench. Quark has been expecting him, and is glad to see him now.

Quark takes a few deep breaths, filling his lungs with as much clean air as he can. He steps towards Gash, covering his wince against the smell, and leads him towards a quiet table hidden under the stairs. Everyone else is happy to give Gash a wide berth. Gash places a package on the table.

QUARK

I hope that's what I think it is.

GASH

Course it is. Toldja I'd get it, didn't I? When've I ever letcha down, eh? Heh heh.

Gash reaches out and taps a control, at which the package unwraps itself, revealing an elaborate case containing three ancient paper scrolls.

GASH

Now don't be touchin' em with yer bare flesh. You know what Grisellan parchment's like. Turns all crumbly if oil gets on em. S'how you know they're real.

QUARK

I appreciate all the work you did creating them for me, Gash. I just hope you're as good a forger as your reputation claims.

GASH

Oh, they'll fool those Yridians. Heh heh. Fool the Grisellas too, you betcha.

Quark reaches into his jacket, brings out a padd, and presses a few buttons.

QUARK

Alright, I'm giving you half the payment now.

Gash SNORTS, sending a few globs of snot flying.

GASH

Half? We agreed t' seventy-five percent on delivery, and twenty-five when you sell em!

Quark calmly turns the padd around and shows it to Gash.

GASH

Oh. Guess I misremembered.

QUARK

Guess you did.

Gash reluctantly presses his fingerprint to the padd, which scans it and BEEPS affirmatively. Gash taps the package to wrap itself again, and stands up to go.

QUARK

Wonderful doing business with you,
Gash, as always.

Quark heads back to his bar, holding tight to the package, and taking big lungfuls of fresh air, retching a little. He quickly places the package in a safe, hiding his hands as he taps the key code. Then he turns back to his bar, sighing with satisfaction as Gash leaves. That was a good business transaction. The computer BEEPS.

COMPUTER

Incoming message for Ambassador
Quark, courtesy of Quark's Bar,
Grill, Embassy, Gaming House and
Holosuite Arcade, a wholly owned
subsidiary of Quark Enterprises
Inc., in cooperation with the
Ferengi Alliance government.

QUARK

Well, at least they got the whole
title right. Who's it from?

COMPUTER

Message from Chek, courtesy of
Chek Pharmaceuticals.

QUARK

Interesting. What does the head of
the largest chemical company in
the Alliance want with me?

He taps keys, waits for the connection to go through. He eventually gets a bored-looking male Ferengi SECRETARY.

QUARK

This is Ambassador Quark,
returning Chek's call.

SECRETARY (screen)

(default response)

I'm afraid Chek is very busy right now. You'll have to try back at a later time.

QUARK

If Chek is so busy, then obviously his need to speak to me was not important. Tell him not to waste the Embassy's time again.

SECRETARY (screen)

(suddenly urgent)

Wait! Uh, hold on, I think he's coming out of a meeting right now. Please don't cut the connection!

Quark nods with satisfaction. This "ambassador" thing is good. The screen goes to a horribly cheerful JINGLE advertising Chek Pharmaceuticals, which Quark rushes to mute - not fast enough. Finally CHEK himself appears on the screen - a wily businessman with sharp, gnarly teeth.

CHEK (screen)

Ambassador Quark. A privilege to speak with you.

QUARK

Not at all. My comm lines are always open.

CHEK (screen)

That's very good to hear. I understand that the Embassy is available for private functions - for a small fee, of course.

QUARK

I wouldn't call the fee all that small.

CHEK (screen)

I don't doubt it. After all, you offer a unique service - a piece of Ferenginar that is not actually on Ferenginar. As it happens, that's exactly what I need.

QUARK

The standard fee is -

CHEK (screen)

I'll pay you two bricks for the exclusive use of the embassy for a meeting of ten extremely important businessmen, one week from today, for the entire night, including your gaming tables and holosuites.

QUARK

And what do you expect the extra latinum to get you?

CHEK (screen)

All I ask is that you join us for our meeting. I believe you will have much to contribute to our discussion.

QUARK

And what discussion would that be?

CHEK (screen)

The future of Ferenginar itself, Ambassador. And your place in helping to save that future.

On Quark's slightly wary but intrigued expression...

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

3 EXT. FERENGINAR - NAGAL RESIDENCE

A large, fanciful building that shines like gold in the constantly raining weather.

4 INT. NAGAL RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM

Plush, palatial, monstrously over-decorated and filled with conspicuous wealth. Soft couches, gilt statues, everything ostentatious and tasteless, in a Ferengi style. ROM slumps deflated on the largest couch while ISHKA paces frustrated.

ISHKA

You let them elect Brunt?

ROM

Of course I didn't just let them elect Brunt. I used the Nagal veto. They just... voted to override the veto.

ISHKA

Brunt, of all people! He's spent the last five years trying to destroy this family. Why didn't you just bribe the congressmen?

ROM

I... uh... didn't think of that.

ISHKA

Unnh! Rom, I love you, you know that, but sometimes I think your lobes were stunted at birth.

ROM

I don't think bribing would have helped, Moogie. Kain and Nilva were supporting Brunt's election. What could I have offered either of them?

ISHKA

Men! How they managed not to drive
Ferenginar to ruin for the last
few millennia, I'll never know.

(pause)

We're going to have to tell Krax.

ROM

Do we have to?

ISHKA

He's your first clerk, Rom.

KRAX (o.s.)

Tell me what?

KRAX enters the room - small and weaselly, Zek's son from
1x11 "The Nagus." Rom is not happy to see him.

ISHKA

Good news and bad news, Krax. The
new investigatory arm of the
police force passed the vote in
the Congress of Economic Advisors.

KRAX

Great! What's the bad news?

ISHKA

Liph was removed from the congress
for trying to embezzle from Rom's
funds for social programs.

KRAX

But that's good news!

ISHKA

I haven't finished. His
replacement... is Brunt.

KRAX

Oh. That's not good.

ROM

I know. That's why it's bad news.

KRAX

We're going to have to -

They are interrupted by a signal from the comm system.

VOICE (comm)

Grand Nagus, there's an incoming communication from Doctor Orpax.

ROM

I'll take it in here.

Rom tries to leap to his feet - not easy in the plush sofa. Ishka helps him up, then he goes to the comm screen. The tiny beady face of Doctor ORPAX appears on the screen.

ORPAX (screen)

I'm afraid I have some bad news, Nagus. Your wife, she is not so good. It's the head, you see.

ROM

What's wrong with Leeta's head?

ORPAX (screen)

No no... it is not the mother's head, Nagus. It is the baby's head. You see, her womb, it is designed for a Bajoran baby. Bajorans have very stunted heads. Flat in the back, don't you know.

ROM

So what's the problem?

ORPAX (screen)

The baby's head, it is too big for the womb. It is turning awkwardly, and occasionally cutting off its own food supply. I'm afraid I will have to check her into hospital for the duration of her term.

ROM

How much will that cost?

Ishka smiles with pride that he thought to ask.

ORPAX (screen)

We can discuss remuneration at a later date, Nagus. Right now the important thing is your wife.

ROM

Of course, I -

(Ishka kicks him)

Ow! Oh, uhh, right. You won't charge the Grand Nagus anything extra for the hospital stay. The privilege of tending to the birth of the Nagus's child should be enough remuneration. Think of the promotional value.

Ishka smiles - that's better. Orpax is not so pleased.

ORPAX (screen)

You see, Nagus, this is why I wanted to discuss this at a later date. I'll check your wife into the hospital and keep her under close observation. I'll look in on her personally twice a day.

Rom quickly hits some keys, transferring a small bribe to Orpax. He receives it, and smiles.

ORPAX (screen)

Four times a day it is. I will keep you apprised of her health, and you can visit her during regular business hours.

More taps on the computer - another smile from Orpax.

ORPAX (screen)

As I said, any time of the day or night. Good day, Nagus.

Orpax disappears from the screen. Rom slumps back into the sofa, heartbroken with worry.

ROM

I hope Leeta's going to be okay. She said Bajoran women have easy pregnancies. When Major Kira gave birth to the O'Briens' baby, it was no big deal. I thought it would be the same for us.

Ishka comes close, tenderly kisses Rom's head in comfort.

ISHKA

It'll be okay, Rom. I'm sure your child will be born safe and sound. Speaking of which, how's the raffle going?

KRAX

We've sold twenty-five thousand chances at one slip per chance. Taking out twenty thousand for the ten bar prize for whoever gets the closest time, date and gender, that still leaves us five thousand slips in the black. What better omen for your child's birth than for it to be a source of profit for the family?

But Rom is far from cheered. He only worries about Leeta.

5 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING

Re-establishing...

6 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

Quark, dressed in his best business suit, is just hurrying a protesting Morn out of the bar. He closes and locks the door behind him, then turns back to observe the room.

A large conference table has been set up, and ten Ferengi businessmen (no women) sit around it. A large table of food has been set up too. Quark goes to it, scoops up a handful of tube grubs, tosses them into his mouth and then takes a spare seat. He is still unsure what this is all about.

Chek sits at the head - passionate, eloquent, convincing.

CHEK

Ferenginar... is in trouble. We live our lives by the Rules of Acquisition. Yet the ninety-fourth rule has apparently been declared null and void. Females are roaming the streets, wearing clothes, and earning profit!

The men around the table generally GRUNT in approval. Quark quietly nods - he can't help but agree.

CHEK

And where are those profits coming from? Us, that's who! Males who've worked all our lives to gain material wealth. And now our craven government is giving these females windfalls!

QUARK

Giving? I can't believe that the Grand Nagus -

CHEK

You yourself, Ambassador, have called the Grand Nagus an idiot.

QUARK

Yes, but he's my brother.

CHEK

Be that as it may, these are dark times. My own business suffered tremendously. Now that women are wearing clothes, sales of my bronchial remedies have plummeted!

A younger man named ZOID speaks up.

ZOID

Surely that's not our problem, Chek. I made more profits this year than ever before. Am I part

of this vast conspiracy to take
your wealth from you?

CHEK

That's not what I -

ZOID

And why is your great empire so
reliant on bronchial remedies
anyway? Are you so focused on the
ninety-fourth rule that you've
forgotten the ninety-fifth?

CHEK

(thumps table)

I have forgotten nothing!

Another man, VOL, adds his voice.

VOL

"Expand or die" you say. But where
is Chek supposed to expand to? All
the growth industries are run by
females. Post-war relief, women's
clothing, ground transportation.
All run by females!

ZOID

The ninth rule, gentlemen. The
opportunity was there, they had
the instinct to point them to it,
and they got profit. It's our way.

CHEK

Exactly! Our way, not their way.

ZOID

Are they not Ferengi?

CHEK

(thumps table)

They are females!

ZOID

That doesn't answer my question.

VOL

They get all the best government contracts. And they're providing good service! I had many lucrative contracts to build housing. The Nagus gave them to a female-run company, who provided adequate housing. No leaks! No chance of going back to fix the flaws and double-charge! It's madness!

An ancient Ferengi called SOD speaks up in a reedy voice.

SOD

You haven't even mentioned the moral crisis.

QUARK

What moral crisis?

SOD

The institution of marriage is being destroyed before our very ears. The Nagus has declared all Pre-Nuptial Waivers void. Worse, the females are now hiring lawyers to renegotiate their contracts.

QUARK

(revolted)

Lawyers?! First taxes, now this?

CHEK

It's a shame, isn't it? The glory of Ferenginar brought down to this insanity. The Blessed Exchequer is probably laughing at us from the Divine Treasury.

(thumps table)

We must end this insanity, now!

QUARK

(re thumping)

Would you mind not doing that so much? You'll dent the table.

CHEK

My apologies, Ambassador. But this is why I asked you here. The Grand Nagus must be stopped! You have spoken out openly against these reforms yourself. Your speech when Zek conferred power onto your brother has become legendary.

QUARK

Has it, now?

CHEK

Oh yes. "This far, no further!" No-one is better suited to lead the charge against the Nagus.

ZOID

It's his brother!

VOL

"Never allow family to stand in the way of profit."

Quark is shaken. He takes a moment to contemplate.

QUARK

Gentlemen, you want me to buy into your scheme to bring down my own brother's government. And all I can do in return is quote rule number two-eighteen - "Always know what you're buying." I only have your word for what's happening on Ferenginar, and you can't even all agree on that.

CHEK

Then it's settled.

(thumps table)

Sorry. In any case, you must come to Ferenginar.

QUARK

What? I can't go to Ferenginar.

CHEK

Nonsense. Your brother's wife is about to give birth. You must be present for the birth of your nephew.

ZOID

Or niece. I have a girl in the raffle.

CHEK

So what do you say?

QUARK

I'll think about it. In the meantime, gentlemen, please feel free to eat, drink and be merry, for you've already paid.

CHEK

(low, menacing)

Ambassador... I need an answer.

QUARK

You've got all the answer you're going to get tonight, Chek.

(to the room)

Enjoy yourself at Quark's!

He gets up from the table, and walks back over to his bar. As the others head towards the food, and Quark's waiters emerge from the back to begin serving, Quark himself can only lean against his bar. He's got a lot to think about.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

7 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE

RO LAREN sits behind the security desk, her hands folded neatly in front of her. Quark sits opposite.

RO

You want me to be your protection detail, on your own home planet?

QUARK

I'm an ambassador now. I'm - oh, what's the hew-mon term? - a VIC.

RO

It's VIP, Quark, which in this case stands for very important pain in the ass. Look, I'm very busy. Almost three-hundred people died in a massacre on a Bajoran village. The one witness we had died without regaining consciousness. I don't have time to indulge your stupid fantasies.

QUARK

Laren, I'm in fear for my life!

RO

What, because of Krax?

QUARK

Uh... how do you know about him?

RO

I'm the head of station security, Quark. The son of a former head of state, whose one and only visit to Deep Space Nine coincided exactly with a murder attempt on a station resident, is something it's my job to remember.

QUARK

Who's Retaya?

RO

Doesn't ring a bell.

QUARK

What about Chu'lak?

RO

Um... Starfleet officer, went on a killing spree - Bolian, I think.

QUARK

Vulcan, actually. Fallit Kot?

RO

An old business partner of yours who tried to kill you - an instinct I can often get behind. Now, if you're done -

QUARK

Now I find this fascinating! You barely remember a serial killer from two years ago. You don't remember an assassin who tried to kill Garak six years ago. But you remember with perfect clarity two people who tried to kill me, one of them eight years ago.

RO

Yes, I've checked more thoroughly on people who might hurt you. You've made a lot of enemies.

QUARK

So has Kira. I bet you don't have all of hers memorised.

RO

I trust Kira to be able to take care of herself. You, I trust to panic and hide under the table.

QUARK

"He who dives under the table
today lives to profit tomorrow."

RO

Rule of Acquisition number twenty.

QUARK

Love a woman who knows the rules.

RO

Spare me the foreplay, Quark.

QUARK

Fine, I'll go straight to the
pleading. You're right, I do have
enemies. Another man who came here
to kill me is Brunt, and he just
got elected to Economic Congress.
For that matter, last I heard my
cousin Gaila went back home, and
you've seen how much he hates me.

RO

(thinks a moment)

Alright. I think I can sell that
to Kira. But be honest with me,
Quark. You're not really worried
about getting hurt, are you? You
just wanted me to come along.

(Quark smiles
sheepishly)

Why didn't you just ask? In that
oh-so-sincere voice you've been
honing to near-believable levels?

QUARK

I wasn't sure you'd buy it. And I
didn't need to. That was Plan C,
and you bought Plan B.

RO

Wouldn't have worked anyway. The
only way I can come is officially,
otherwise I'd have to use leave.

QUARK

So? Doesn't Starfleet lavish you with lots of unnecessary leave time? That's what Nog's using.

RO

Well yes, but since I've only been back in Starfleet for about three-and-a-half seconds, I haven't actually accrued any yet.

QUARK

Well, if you need any help convincing Kira, I have some excellent bribery suggestions.

RO

Get out of my sight, Quark.

He trots out onto the Promenade with a grin.

8 EXT. BAJOR - MYLEA COAST - DAY

Establishing a fancy rustic restaurant on the edge of a picturesque cliff looking over the sea, near to Mylea.

9 INT. RESTAURANT

NOG stands in an entrance way to the restaurant, looking with awe out at the gorgeous sunset. He turns as JAKE and RENA walk up hand in hand, and beaming ear to ear.

JAKE

Finally! We've been waiting for, ooh, at least seven minutes! Nog, this... is Rena.

RENA

It's a pleasure to meet you, Nog. Jake's told me all about you.

NOG

Well, don't believe a word of it. I'm actually a very nice person.

They all chuckle good-naturedly, and turn to the maitre d'.

JAKE

Reservation for three, in the name
of Sisko.

MAITRE D'

Of course. It is an honour to
serve the son of the Emissary and
his new bride - as well as one of
our Starfleet benefactors.

Jake shrugs sheepishly at the treatment, and they follow
her through into the restaurant. They take a seat at a
table. Vertical holographic menus appear out of slot
projectors in the table, and Rena and Jake start browsing.
Nog is still looking out of the window at the sunset.

NOG

It's beautiful...

Jake sniggers at Nog's uncharacteristic sentimentalism.

NOG

Sorry, it's just that I haven't
seen many Bajoran sunsets. On
Ferenginar, sunset just means
going from light grey to dark
grey. And of course there are no
sunsets on the station.

RENA

I came here once to paint the
sunset for my grandfather.

NOG

Did he like the painting?

RENA

He... died not too long ago. I've
put the picture up in his house.
Anyway, what are you having? I've
heard the steamed asna is amazing.

NOG

Fish? When there's a garden full
of succulent slugs just outside?

RENA
You're not gonna ask me to chew
your food, are you?

JAKE
You know he actually did that
once?

They laugh again, and we **CROSS-FADE...**

10 **INT. RESTAURANT**

They're now almost through their meal, half-finished food
is before them, and they're still laughing over old times.

NOG
I was scared to death the Dominion
was going to have him executed.

JAKE
And I was scared to death that he
was gonna die in combat without me
around to protect him. Let's face
it, Nog, I carried you.

NOG
What you talking about? I carried
you, you stunt-eared hew-mon.

JAKE
Oh yeah? Who was the only sane
person on the *Valiant*?

Nog begrudgingly has to grant him that one.

RENA
It's funny - you two really did
rub off on each other.

NOG
What do you mean?

RENA
Well, Jake's the son of a military
captain. You're the son of a

Ferengi waiter. Which one would you have predicted would wind up in Starfleet, and which one would wind up working on a pirate ship?

JAKE

Even Odds wasn't a pirate ship...

NOG

Let him have his delusions.

RENA

Yeah, it's probably safer.

JAKE

You know I'm sitting right here?

NOG

From what you told me about the *Even Odds*, Uncle Quark would probably say you're a better Ferengi than I am now.

RENA

Well, you did say I didn't have to chew your food.

NOG

Actually, I wanted to talk to you guys about Ferenginar.

JAKE

What about it?

NOG

I was wondering if you wanted to come with me. I've seen your world, when I was at the Academy. I practically lived in your grandfather's restaurant when I was off-duty. I was hoping to return the favour.

Jake and Rena exchange an awkward glance. Nog winces.

NOG

Never mind - I shouldn't have asked. You two are newlyweds.

RENA

It's not that we're not flattered by the offer, but -

NOG

No, it's alright. It was selfish of me to ask. I guess... I just didn't want to be stuck on a transport with Uncle Quark and Lieutenant Ro for two days.

JAKE

What's wrong with Ro? I haven't got to know her that well, but she seemed okay to me.

NOG

She's fine. It's the way Uncle Quark acts around her.

JAKE

How does he act?

NOG

(re Rena)

The way you do around her.

Rena laughs out loud, while Jake pulls a face.

JAKE

Doesn't your mom still live on Ferenginar?

Nog nods, silently. Chews on a slug.

RENA

When was the last time you saw her?

NOG

When Father and I left Ferenginar. Fifteen years. I'm not sure I'd know what to say to her. Leeta's

more my moogie now than my real mother ever was. I barely even remember her.

RENA

You should go see her. You never know when you'll have your last chance to see family before they're gone.

A pause as Nog considers it. He is conflicted.

NOG

I probably will.

RENA

Good.

JAKE

You know, Nog, if you really want us to come -

NOG

No, it's okay. I'll be alright. Besides, why would you want to leave this sunset?

He smiles, and they all make an effort to bring back the light mood as they return to their meal.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

11 EXT. FERENGINAR - ESTABLISHING

A daytime shot of the First City, where it is raining.

12 EXT. FERENGINAR SHUTTLE PORT

A pneumatic double door opens in the front wall of an airport-like building. Quark, Nog and Ro step out onto the street, and are immediately assaulted by a strong, surging RAIN. Quark and Nog seem unconcerned, but Ro is appalled.

Down the pavement, a shelter surrounds a taxi rank. Quark leads them to it, pops a few latinum slips into the SLOT. The door OPENS and they step in, all drenched to the skin already. The shelter is busy with Ferengi and one Vulcan.

RO

Why don't you guys have any kind
of covering to keep you dry?

Nog looks at her, perplexed. Quark enters some more slips into a slot and receives three towels, hands them around.

NOG

What for? It's only frippering.

RO

(wiping off)

Only?

NOG

Oh yes. You should see it when
it's oolmering. Or worse,
glebbering.

RO

You mean it gets worse?

QUARK

All the time. You think this is
bad rain?

RO

Quark, when I was with the Maquis, we hid out in the jungles of Volon Six. The humidity was abominable. My shirt was so wet you could read through it, and it was black. Being out in that frippering rain for thirty seconds made me realise how good I had it on Volon Six.

A hovercar pulls up to the shelter. An opening appears in the wall, and the car's door opens. The driver leans out.

DRIVER

I'm here to take Quark, Nog and their guest to the Grand Nagus.

That earns some surprised and impressed looks. Ro steps forward, but Quark holds her back. He pulls out another slip, waves it. The driver presses a button, and a canopy CONCERTINAS out from the car, making a rain-tight seal.

RO

Why didn't he just do that in the first place?

QUARK

Why should he, when he can get paid for it?

Grumbling, Ro ducks under the designed-for-Ferengi-height canopy and heads into the car. Quark and Nog follow.

13 INT. LIMOUSINE

Not too special - no point wasting money. But Nog is still impressed. Quark drops the slip he promised into the slot.

DRIVER

We'll be at the Nagal Residence in twenty minutes.

Quark drops some more slips in the slot.

DRIVER

Ten minutes it is.

As the hovercar begins to move off, Ro shakes her head.

RO

Whoever invented those latinum slots must have made a fortune.

NOG

Fram. Those slots are the most valuable patent in the whole Ferengi Alliance.

QUARK

And he didn't even invent them. Some kid came up with the idea, and Fram paid him two slips to use it, then made a mint off it.

RO

What happened to the kid?

NOG

Who cares? He lost.

QUARK

Twenty-fifth rule.

RO

I'm starting to understand why you exploit each other so much. With weather like this all the time, it puts you in an aggressive mood. For example, I'm feeling a strong urge right now to strangle you.

QUARK

It'll grow on you, trust me.

RO

Quark, the only thing growing on me is mold.

QUARK

Food for later, then.

Miserable, Ro slumps back into her seat.

14 INT. NAGAL RESIDENCE - ENTRY HALL

Rom and Ishka wait as the big round door opens. Quark, Nog and Ro are there, drying off once again from the rain. Ro ducks to enter through the low, Ferengi-height door. As they pat their faces with towels, Rom hands Quark a padd.

ROM

Welcome. Please place your imprint on the waivers, and deposit your admission fee in the box by the door. My house is my house.

QUARK

As are its contents.

Quark thumbs the padd, hands it back, pays the fee. There is a SQUELCHing sound as Rom grabs him in a hug.

ROM

Brother, it's so good to see you!
You too, Nog!

RO

Do you really have to go through all that nonsense every time you go into someone's house?

QUARK

Do I mock Bajoran traditions?

RO

Quark, I mock Bajoran traditions. So don't think yours are getting off easy.

ISHKA

And who is this?

QUARK

Mother, this is Lieutenant Ro Laren, head of security on Deep Space Nine.

Ro bows slightly, does the traditional Ferengi greeting.

RO
A pleasure to meet you, ma'am.

ISHKA
Likewise, Lieutenant.

QUARK
She's serving as my bodyguard.
After all, I'm an important
diplomat, so Starfleet felt the
need to send some protection.

ISHKA
(to Rom)
I told you. Make him ambassador,
I said, and he'll start getting
delusions of grandeur.

RO
I wouldn't worry about it, ma'am.
Quark already had plenty of other
delusions.

QUARK
Hey!

ISHKA
Oh, I like you!

They finally all move through into...

15 INT. NAGAL RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM

...and settle into the couches, Rom as downcast as ever.

ISHKA
I just wish the news was better.

NOG
What do you mean?

ROM
Leeta's gotten worse. Her immune
system is weakened because the
baby is causing so many problems.

ISHKA

I'm still not sure you should be using Orpax. Remember, he did misdiagnose Quark.

RO

What?

QUARK

It wasn't a misdiagnosis exactly. Brunt bribed Orpax to tell me I had Dorek Syndrome. He knew I'd try to sell my vacuum-desiccated remains to offset my debt, and then he bought up the whole lot.

RO

(catching on)

And when you didn't die, you had to break the contract. That's why the FCA banned you for, what was it, two years?

QUARK

Only one year actually. It just seemed like two. Anyhow, that wasn't Orpax's fault. He's still the most expensive doctor on Ferenginar, and you know that means he's good.

RO

I don't see the connection there.

All the Ferengi turn to look at her, astonished.

NOG

She's a Bajoran.

ISHKA

We all know how little Bajorans understand Ferengi.

ROM

Moogie!

ISHKA

Well I'm sorry, Rom, but it's true. I know you love Leeta very much, and I'm glad that she makes you so happy, but she doesn't understand commerce at all!

QUARK

What do you expect? She was a dabo girl. And not a very good one.

ROM

She was a great dabo girl!

QUARK

You haven't seen Treir in action.

ISHKA

(exasperated)

This is why Ferengi females need to take a more active role in society. Tradition has made us so subservient, so uninteresting, that males are turning to other races to find a decent companion.

Rom continues to mope. Krax enters the room, in a state.

KRAX

Grand Nagus! The Economic Congress has called an emergency session.

ROM

I can't. Tell them to postpone until tomorrow. Or the day after.

KRAX

This can't wait. That's why it's an emergency session. Besides, Brunt is the one who called it.

ISHKA

Rom, sweetie - you have to go. If Brunt's up to something, we need to know what it is.

ROM
I guess you're right.

NOG
We'll go with you.

ISHKA
You'll have to sit outside. The
congress's sessions are closed.

QUARK
Closed? You don't sell live
broadcasts?

ISHKA
Visual records are on sale the
next day. The suspense builds
anticipation.

QUARK
Makes sense.

RO
I'd like to go too. You did
promise me a tour of the Tower of
Commerce.

QUARK
(sigh)
I did, didn't I? Fine, we'll make
a trip of it, then.

On Rom's poor, miserable face...

16 EXT. FERENGINAR - TOWER OF COMMERCE

Establishing the tallest building on Ferenginar, a beacon
of greed for the whole Ferengi people. And it's raining.

17 INT. TOWER OF COMMERCE - ENTRY HALL

An elevator door opens, and Rom, Quark, Nog, Ro and Ishka
all exit. Rom's miserable expression hasn't changed. Quark
is habitually complaining, and Ro rolls her eyes at him.

QUARK

For ten strips, you'd think they could at least make it faster than walking up twenty-five floors.

Nobody pays him any attention. Ishka directs them all to a waiting area, where they sit. All except Rom, dressed in his full Nagal regalia. He goes to the door at the other end of the room, opens it sluggishly, and enters...

18 INT. HALL OF CONGRESS (CONTINUOUS)

The same room that used to be the Nagus's private office, as seen in 5x20 "Ferengi Love Songs." Now the floor holds a large, ornate table, around which are sat eleven of the most important Ferengi in the Alliance.

They all rise politely at Rom's entrance, and he makes his way listlessly to his throne at one end of the table, propping the Nagal staff up against it.

Once Rom is seated, all the others sit too, except for the one opposite him - BRUNT. He has the gleeful grin of one who is about to do damage. Krax is standing nearby.

KRAX

This session was called by
Congressman Brunt.

BRUNT

Thank you for coming. Trust me, this will be brief, but painful. You're all aware that the Grand Nagus's wife is expecting a child. Just two days ago, I purchased a chance in the raffle. Today, however, I am ashamed to have done so. As you all will be when I reveal what I have learned. An investigator from the new agency that Congressman Nurt has formed came across a fascinating document while following an anonymous tip about a businessman named Dav.

Rom finally perks up at that name - this is not good.

BRUNT

Dav has a daughter, Prinadora. For a time, Prinadora was married to the youngest son of Keldar... Rom.

All eyes turn to Rom in fascination.

BRUNT

Prinadora and Rom had a standard five-year marriage contract, with a standard monogamy clause, during which she bore him a son named Nog. Rom then signed an extension - an indefinite extension! Rom and his son eventually left Prinadora. He went to work for his brother on a Cardassian space station - but he was still married!

On older Ferengi - KAIN - splutters in outraged disbelief.

KAIN

Do you mean to tell me that his marriage to that Bajoran woman is in violation of a contract? A Ferengi contract?

BRUNT

Yes, that is what I mean to tell you, Congressman Kain. Our Grand Nagus...

(pause for drama)

...has broken a contract!

Moralistic uproar erupts, as Rom stares in confusion.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

19 INT. NAGAL RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM

The family and Ro are all gathered back in the living room.

QUARK

What do you mean, the marriage is
illegitimate?

Thoroughly miserable, Rom hands Quark a padd. He reads.

QUARK

According to this, some...
(distasteful)
...investigator called Rwego was
looking through Dav's records.

NOG

(*sotto*, to Ro)
My mother's father.

QUARK

The investigation included a check
on Rom and Prinadora's marriage
contract. Turns out the extension
wasn't what we all thought it was.

ISHKA

Rom, what is he talking about? I
thought you signed a five-year
extension.

QUARK

So did I. And that, when the term
expired, Dav would be entitled to
all of Rom's assets. That's why
Rom had to come work for me on DS-
Nine - because he had no money.
But according to this, it was an
indefinite extension, with the
proviso that Dav got all Rom's
assets if he ever left her. Which
he did. But they're still married.

NOG
Father... is this true?

RO
Don't you remember?

NOG
I was only seven, and Father never
talked about it.

ISHKA
I only heard about it, too. Rom,
answer your son - is this true?

But Rom continues to stare dumbly into the distance, as if
he has forgotten how to speak. Finally...

ROM
I have to go see Leeta.

And he walks out without another word.

QUARK
What do you think he'll tell her?

NOG
The truth.

QUARK
Which is?

ISHKA
Rom wouldn't lie to us. He's a
good boy.

NOG
Grand-moogie's right. Father would
never do anything like that. He's
not capable of it.

RO
Isn't he?

QUARK
What are you saying?

RO

I remember reading Odo's files when I first took over the job. He said he made a mistake about Rom. It was one of only about three mistakes Odo ever admitted to for the entire time he was on the station. His specific words were that he'd underestimated Rom. I'm willing to bet each and every one of you in this room has done the same at one time or another.

QUARK

I haven't. If anything, I've over-estimated him. He's an idiot, always has been.

NOG

He's not an idiot! You always put him down, Uncle, but you know the truth is your bar would have fallen apart if not for him.

QUARK

Oh yeah? Well, if -

ISHKA

Enough, both of you! This whole thing is ridiculous. Have we all forgotten that Brunt is the one who raised this accusation?

That brings everyone up short.

QUARK

Mother's right. Brunt's been out to get this family for years. The evidence has to be fake.

ISHKA

So where do we stand?

Krax enters, branding an isolinear rod.

KRAX

In trouble. This is the visual record of the session. I was able to get an advance copy for a fee. The congress is going to review the evidence, and vote in the next session on whether to oust Rom as Grand Nagus.

ISHKA

We can't let that happen.

QUARK

Why not? Seriously, what would be so bad about Rom not being Nagus?

ISHKA

Rom is a fine Nagus, Quark. Just because you insist on clinging to the outmoded ways, doesn't mean -

QUARK

They're not outmoded, they're the way Ferengi society flourished! But leave that aside for a moment, Mother. Forget which of us is right and which of us is wrong, because you'll never see sense that I'm the one who's right.

ISHKA

Quark...

QUARK

The point is - why are you here, Mother?

ISHKA

What are you talking about, Quark?

NOG

She's here to help dad, obviously.

QUARK

And why is that? Shouldn't she be in retirement on Risa with Zek?

(back to Ishka)

It's true, isn't it? You came back because Rom couldn't handle it. He needed help, just like Zek did. At least with Zek, you had an excuse. He was old, losing his focus. But with Rom, you're fighting his very nature. Rom isn't a great leader - he's an engineer. He sits in dark rooms with computers and solves problems other people give him.

NOG

An engineer is someone who fixes things that are broken. Makes them better. Some of the best leaders I've ever known were engineers.

ISHKA

Nog's right. Rom is just the man to fix Ferenginar.

QUARK

Ferenginar isn't broken! And you should all know Rule number two-eighty - "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

ISHKA

So what's your solution, Quark? Put Brunt in the Nagus's chair? Because that's what's going to happen, and you know it!

Quark pauses in his rant, forced to accept that.

QUARK

You're right. We have to stop him.

RO

That may be easier said than done.

They turn to see that Ro has been studying Rom's padd.

RO

I've only done a basic check, but if this is a fake, it's a very very good one. We all know how hard it is to forge a Ferengi contract, and none of the usual indicators are here.

ISHKA

Keep checking. We have to prove it's a fake.

RO

We may not be able to. But we may not have to, either.

NOG

She's right. There's more than one way to prove a crime. One way is evidence - another is a confession.

RO

(grins)

Starfleet security training at its finest.

NOG

I took Professor Pembleton's course on -

QUARK

Can we save the mutual admiration society for later, please?

NOG

Sorry. We need to investigate. I'll go see Prinadora.

ISHKA

Are you sure that's a good idea?

NOG

It's my first time back home in years. What could be more natural than wanting to see my mother?

RO

You'd better be discreet. I doubt Brunt's gonna keep this a secret. This will be all over the planet by dinnertime. You going to visit your mother, right after your father is revealed to be cheating her, won't help Rom's case any.

NOG

I'll be careful not to be seen.

QUARK

How're you gonna pull that off?

NOG

Starfleet security training at its finest.

Nog gets up and leaves. Krax joins him. Ishka goes to the replicator and orders a snail juice. Quark is pondering, troubled. He finally looks up, sees Ro, smiles gratefully.

QUARK

Listen, Laren... I'm glad you're here. You've got to get to work on that contract. Use all those skills Starfleet taught you, all the Maquis tricks you picked up. That contract's a fake, and we have to prove it.

RO

Quark... what if it's not? What if Brunt's telling the truth?

QUARK

Brunt wouldn't know the truth if it bit him on his lobes. Besides, it has to be a fake. Rom wouldn't do that.

RO

I know you love your brother, Quark, but he still hasn't actually denied -

QUARK

I don't just love him, Laren, I know him. I grew up with him, we spent a long time together on the station, and I can tell you this - Rom isn't capable of what Brunt's accusing him of. And you know why? It would mean hurting someone.

RO

I don't follow.

QUARK

The one thing Rom can't do is hurt someone he loves. And I can tell you this - Rom loved Prinadora as much then as he loves Leeta now. Why do you think Rom's so bad at business? Why do you think he's floundering so much as Grand Nagus that Moogie had to come back and help him? It's because he's a nice guy. And there's a saying I heard from Captain Sisko when we were playing that game of his - "nice guys finish last." It should be added to the Rules. Rom always finished last because he can't help being a nice guy. It's why he made my bar the embassy. Why he stayed behind on the station when the Dominion took over. Why he let Nog go to the human school and attend Starfleet Academy.

His throat dry from talking, Quark goes to the replicator, orders a Slug-o-Cola, takes a chug, wipes the slime from his lip. Ishka stands to the side, watching her son.

QUARK

If Prinadora was still legally Rom's wife when he became Grand Nagus, then she would be entitled to all the benefits of being the Nagus's wife, and there's no way

Rom would deny her that. So I want you to take that contract and put it to every test you can think of. And then I want you invent a few new ones. But you're going to exonerate my brother.

RO

Is that an order, Ambassador?

QUARK

You're my bodyguard. You're supposed to do what I tell you.

RO

You just keep thinking that.

ISHKA

Quark?

He turns to see Ishka, gazing at him proudly.

ISHKA

That was the sweetest thing I've ever heard you say about Rom. I may not like you very much, but times like this remind me why I love you.

(puts her arm
around him)

Now let's go save Rom.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

20 EXT. FERENGINAR - FIRST CITY

Establishing the city as it moves towards evening. Raining.

21 INT. SUBWAY CARRIAGE

A Ferengi mass-transit system, like any city subway. It surges through the city above ground, past the buildings. Rain pelts against the windows.

Every square inch of available space is covered with advertising of some kind - garish pictures and moving video, like the worst stereotype of Times Square or Tokyo.

It's the evening rush. Two average everyday Ferengi males - JOQ and BINDU - stand holding onto a pole. Nearby, a female drops a slip of latinum into a slot, and a seat folds down from the wall, allowing her to sit.

The two males purse their lips in disapproval. They are habitual co-travellers, but not really friends. It's standard time-filling conversation.

JOQ

See FCN this morning?

BINDU

(huff)

Of course I saw FCN this morning.
I watch FCN every morning, you
know that.

JOQ

So you heard about the Grand
Nagus, then.

BINDU

I heard what FCN reported about
the Grand Nagus, but I don't
believe it for a minute. You can't
trust everything you see on FCN.

JOQ

FCN reported that Zek was retiring. And they predicted that Rom would replace him.

BINDU

They also proclaimed the Dominion was weeks away from victory over the Federation, several months before the Dominion lost the war.

(re Slug-o-Cola advertising)

They declared Eelwasser the new winner in the cola wars, and that Slug-o-Cola would be out of business within a year.

JOQ

Alright, I admit they were off there. But -

BINDU

And then of course they reported that ridiculous story about the Nagus's paramour being rescued from the Dominion by a crack team of Ferengi commandoes. I mean really, Joq - you don't believe that nonsense, do you?

JOQ

But what if they're right about the Nagus, Bindu? He broke a contract. And a contract is a contract -

BINDU

- Is a contract, yes I know the Rules, Joq. But I don't see you complaining about getting a vacation, do I?

The carriage LURCHES for no particular reason, leading all the passengers to GRUMBLE at the driver.

JOQ

Of course not. I need a vacation from that stupid supervisor. He hates giving us breaks, hates paying us overtime, and he's taking it out on all of us. It's been miserable at work since the reforms came in.

BINDU

Really? My office has been wonderful. Productivity is up, profits are up, and yes, wages are down overall since we have to pay tax now, but it's looking very likely that we'll get a higher-than-usual salary bump next year.

JOQ

That's madness! How can work be improved?

BINDU

Well, everyone wants to go to work now it's a pleasant place to be. And you know what? It's working. Soon I'll have enough saved up to buy that house in the suburbs.

JOQ

Why would you want to do that?

BINDU

Well, let's see.

(counts fingers)

I'd have more space than I have now. I'd actually get a seat on the aircar. And I wouldn't have to talk to you every day.

JOQ

Laugh all you want. But mark my words, Bindu - this is the end of Ferenginar as we know it. Rom will lead us all to ruin!

The carriage LURCHES again, and Joq BONKS his head against the pole. He mutters, and Bindu chuckles. Then the biggest advertising screen begins a new COMMERCIAL, copied by some of the smaller ones, catching their attention.

It's Brunt, grinning wide and holding up an Eelwasser bottle, the logo clearly visible. The annoyingly cheerful Chek Pharmaceuticals JINGLE plays in the background.

BRUNT (screen)

I'm Congressman Brunt. When I joined the FCA, I drank Slug-o-Cola. But now I know better. Like all good members of the Economic Congress of Advisors, I go with what works now - and that means Eelwasser.

(takes a gulp)

Aah - refreshing. When I'm Grand Nagus, which I hope for the sake of Ferenginar I will be soon, I'll make Eelwasser the official drink of the Nagal Residence, because I believe in doing what's right.

Brunt is replaced by a large Eelwasser logo, with the Chek Pharmaceuticals jingle playing louder.

VOICEOVER

Sponsored by Chek Pharmaceuticals, on behalf of the "Brunt for Grand Nagus" campaign.

BINDU

Eugh. I don't want a Grand Nagus who drinks Eelwasser. That stuff is vile.

JOQ

Who cares what he drinks, as long as he isn't Rom. Besides, you heard who's backing him - Chek Pharmaceuticals. They're a good business, and they're not insiders like Slug-o-Cola.

BINDU

What do you mean, insiders?

JOQ

Nilva runs Slug-o-Cola, and he's on the Congress.

BINDU

So's Brunt.

The carriage GRINDS to a halt at a station, knocking a few of the passengers off their feet. As they shuffle dully towards the exit, Joq and Bindu join them.

JOQ

Yes, but he was only just appointed a few days ago. He's an outsider who'll bring Ferenginar back to the old ways, before Rom and his cronies got a hold of it.

BINDU

Whatever you say, Joq.

They join the milling crowd on the platform, and turn to go opposite ways.

BINDU

See you tomorrow.

JOQ

Assuming Ferenginar's still standing tomorrow.

Bindu rolls his eyes and walks on.

22 INT. TOWER OF COMMERCE - ENTRY HALL

The elevator opens again, and Brunt steps out. He has a bounce in his step - everything is going his way. He runs right into Quark, who was just heading to the elevator.

BRUNT

Well well well, if it isn't Quark.

Realising who it is, Quark stops in his tracks.

QUARK

Brunt.

BRUNT

That's Congressman Brunt to you.
It's been a long time, Quark.

QUARK

Only about a year and a half.
Three centuries less than I'd have
preferred, to be honest.

BRUNT

I have to admit I'm surprised to
see you here, Quark. When Chek
told me he was recruiting you, I
warned him you were trouble.

QUARK

You said that, did you? Based on
our close personal relationship?

BRUNT

What a disgusting notion. No, I
simply told him that you were all
talk and no action.

QUARK

What are you talking about?

BRUNT

Please - I remember that grand
speech you gave when Zek handed
over the Nagal staff to your idiot
brother. You called that dreary
bar of yours the last outpost of
what made Ferenginar great. Well,
that lasted right up until Bajor
entered the Federation. Nine
months, was it? Filed your tax
returns this quarter?

QUARK

I don't have to justify myself to
you, Brunt.

BRUNT

I suppose not. But do you know
what the best part is?

QUARK

I'll give you five strips if you
don't tell me.

Brunt considers the bribe, but he's having too much fun.

BRUNT

The best part, Quark, is that no
matter what happens... you lose.

(grin)

Either you help me and Chek
destroy your brother completely,
or you help him maintain a
Ferenginar you hate.

(beat)

And any day when you lose is a
great day for me.

Brunt walks on towards the congressional chamber,
practically floating with glee. Quark hisses, steps into
the elevator, and watches him go with loathing.

FADE OUT:

THE END