

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

11x11 - "The Crucible."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on characters from the series

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

and from the post-finale novels
by Pocket Books

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. DS9 - RO'S QUARTERS

Close on a COFFEE MUG as it's picked up from a low table and brought to RO LAREN's lips. She's curled up in the sofa, in stripped-down uniform, easy and casual.

RO

How's your new waiter working out?

Opposite her sits QUARK, drinking a refreshing snail juice.

QUARK

Penk? Eh, he's alright. Takes the initiative a little too easily.

RO

Sorry. I know how you love to boss people around.

QUARK

(shrug)

I am the boss. He came here to apprentice under the Ferengi ambassador to Bajor. He should show the proper respect.

RO

By doing absolutely nothing unless you tell him to.

QUARK

Right. It's been nice to see the Promenade get back to normal, though. Evacuations aren't good for the bottom line.

RO

Wow, you're so subtle. No Quark, I'm still not going to tell you.

QUARK

I'm just -

RO

No. I'm serious, Quark. There are always going to be some things I can't tell you, and just because we're... whatever we are now... doesn't change that. You're gonna have to accept it when I say no.

QUARK

(smirk)

Oh, so that's how it is, is it? When you want it, I'm at your mercy. But when I want it, I'm still at your mercy.

RO

(flirty)

Haven't you always been? Anyway, it's not the same.

QUARK

Why not?

RO

You're a man. You always want it.

QUARK

That is so sexist.

Ro chuckles and rolls her eyes.

VAUGHN (comm)

Captain Vaughn to Commander Ro.

Ro shushes Quark, grabs her combadge off the table, and taps it to answer.

RO

This is Ro, go ahead.

VAUGHN (comm)

What's your location, Commander?

RO

(confused)

My quarters. Is there a problem?
I'm not due on duty for another
twenty minutes.

VAUGHN (comm)
No, no problem. But I would like
you to report to docking bay two
rather than Ops when you're ready.

RO
Acknowledged, sir. See you there.

VAUGHN (comm)
Vaughn out.

Ro puts down the combadge and knocks back the last of her
coffee, straightening herself up.

RO
Better get ready, then.

QUARK
You let him boss you around.

RO
(shrug)
He is the boss. Now shoo. I'll
probably see you at lunch. Maybe.

QUARK
Now you've had your way...

RO
Go!

Chuckling, Quark finishes his own drink and gets up to
leave. Ro heads to the bedroom.

2 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING

A standard establishing shot, with the *Defiant* in pride of
place on the docking ring, and at least one unidentified
freighter type vessel as well.

3 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

Ro approaches the airlock, in normal uniform. The corridor is otherwise empty, which surprises her.

She pokes her head around the corner of the airlock, and sees a standard Starfleet docking port at the other end. Shrugging, she walks on in.

4 **INT. DEFIANT - CORRIDOR**

She emerges into the normal corridor of the *Defiant*. VAUGHN is just coming around the corner, bright and cheerful.

VAUGHN

Ah, Commander! Excellent, thank you for coming.

He sees the slightly confused look on her face.

VAUGHN

Is something wrong?

RO

Just that I didn't think the *Defiant* was docked at bay two. Isn't it usually at bay six?

VAUGHN

There was a breakdown with the docking seals overnight, so Bowers shifted her here. Good thing too, because we're about to take her out for a spin.

RO

We are?

Vaughn after-you's for Ro, and they begin to stroll down the corridor. Vaughn is thoughtful, ponderous.

VAUGHN

You see, I sat down and thought about it, and it occurred to me that things have gotten a little tense between us recently. No no, I don't blame you.

(smirk)

Well, not entirely, anyway.

RO

Sir, I -

VAUGHN

I realised that, while I may have promised to be your mentor in the ways of the red uniform, I haven't really done all that much to live up to that promise.

RO

I don't think you've got out from behind that desk since you got it.

They reach a turbolift, and enter it.

5 INT. DEFIANT - TURBOLIFT (CONTINUOUS)

VAUGHN

Bridge.

The lift starts moving.

VAUGHN

So that's what this trip is about. I volunteered the *Defiant* for the standard patrols around the Bajor sector, because I thought it would be the perfect opportunity for you and I to work on our CO-XO bond... to try to repair our relationship.

RO

That sounds like a nice idea, sir.

VAUGHN

No command team should be at odds within itself. That's no way to run a posting.

The lift comes to a stop, the door opens, and they exit...

6 INT. DEFIANT - CORRIDOR (CONTINUOUS)

...into another corridor, and continue walking.

RO
What about the station?

VAUGHN
Cenn and Evik can handle things
for a day or so. And it's not like
we're a million miles away.

They reach another door...

7 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE (CONTINUOUS)

...and enter the bridge. Ro sees with some mild surprise that everyone else is already there. PRYNN at helm, NOG at engineering, CANDLEWOOD at sciences, BOWERS at tactical, and BASHIR at a rear panel.

BOWERS
Captain on the bridge.

As Vaughn heads to the command chair, Ro approaches Bashir.

RO
How come you all knew about this
before me?

BASHIR
The orders came in late last
night. You didn't know?

RO
I must have been distracted.

BASHIR
To be honest, I felt a little
strong-armed into it myself.
Still, he's right that we need to
work on some things, as a senior
staff.

RO
Yeah... that did get a little out
of hand there for a minute.

Bowers gets up from his seat to report to Vaughn.

BOWERS

All stations report ready, sir.
The vessel is at your command.

RO

(light)

Hey, isn't that my job?

VAUGHN

Don't be offended, Commander.
Since I knew you wouldn't join us
until later, I asked Mister Bowers
to get a head start.

(to business)

Lieutenant Tenmei, signal the
station we're ready to depart.
Then plot a standard patrol course
along the Bajor-Almatha border,
and once we're clear, take us to
warp one.

PRYNN

Aye, sir.

As Prynn gets the ship underway, Ro takes a place standing
at Vaughn's side. She looks around; everyone is being alert
and professional. She smiles - this feels good.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

8 INT. DEFIANT - MESS HALL

Vaughn takes his usual mug of tea out of the replicator, and takes it back to the small table he shares with Ro. On the surface between them are half a dozen padds.

RO

I wasn't expecting much from the Cardassians after they reopened their borders. But they're being even quieter than I thought.

VAUGHN

Makes you suspicious, doesn't it?

RO

Am I that predictable?

VAUGHN

You have every reason to be. I am too. But the better half of me insists I'm judging based on the past instead of the present. Really, I think they're just being cautious. They've had a rough couple of years.

RO

Haven't we all?

VAUGHN

Yes, but a lot of people blame Cardassia for causing those bad years. So I suppose we can't blame them for poking their noses out slowly, rather than blundering out at full speed.

RO

Unfortunately, experience has trained us to think that anyone going quiet is a bad sign.

VAUGHN

Sadly, yes. But for now, I think we can trust the new Cardassian government. Cautiously.

(sigh)

Which of course doesn't mean there won't still be problems along their borders.

He picks up one of the pads, reads it with disappointment.

VAUGHN

Independent raiders and other opportunists are brave enough to target holdings in the more remote parts of the Union.

RO

Where they can be sure of a tepid response from Cardassia. Can we do anything about that?

VAUGHN

The new agreement says that we are not to cross their borders unless invited to do so, or for humanitarian reasons. Raiders don't really count as either, I'm afraid. But if they so much as put a rivet over the line in to Bajoran space, they're ours.

Vaughn settles back and takes a sip of his tea, gazes into the mug awkwardly. Ro watches him, waiting for him to say something. Finally, she sighs and straightens.

RO

Look, are we going to talk about it? Or are we just going to let it sit there until it grows and grows and takes over the station?

Vaughn looks up at her, unsure where to begin.

RO

Yes. I disobeyed your orders.

VAUGHN
You certainly did.

RO
Because I believed those orders
were wrong.

VAUGHN
Is that really your decision to
make?

RO
Actually, yes, as first officer I
think it is. The XO advises the
captain on all the various options
and perspectives to be sure he
makes the right decision.

VAUGHN
But that final decision is mine.

RO
I'm still not obligated to follow
immoral orders.

Vaughn sits back again with a whistle of amazement.

VAUGHN
Immoral? That's a big word.

RO
I know. I'm sorry. But I had to do
what I thought was right.

Vaughn looks into his mug of tea, nods sadly.

VAUGHN
Yes, I suppose you did. But you
still disobeyed orders to do it.
You, Bashir, Candlewood...

RO
Candlewood's new. He was just
following the crowd. Punish me and

Bashir if you want, but not John.
He doesn't deserve it.

VAUGHN

Even so, two senior officers
joining forces to defy their
commander... one might almost call
it a mutiny.

RO

Two people is hardly a mutiny,
sir. A mini-mutiny at most.

Vaughn chuckles at the little joke. He relaxes, softens
towards her. Ro takes it as an encouraging sign.

VAUGHN

I know we're not exactly friends.
But I need you to trust me, Ro.

RO

What if I promise to obey all your
orders from now on?

VAUGHN

Obedience is still not trust. So
that's something I need to work on
- I need to earn your trust. Your
trust that I have the best
interests of you, the station,
Bajor and the Federation at heart.
Because I do.

RO

I believe you. But having good
intentions doesn't make you
infallible.

VAUGHN

Surely more than eighty years in
the business has to accord me some
benefit of the doubt.

RO

Or maybe it makes you inflexible.
(taps padd)

Like with assuming the worst of the Cardassians. Judging based on the past, not the present. Okay, how about this? I promise to obey all your orders, as long as you promise to give me orders that make sense.

VAUGHN

(chuckle)

You're definitely new at this. Alright, let's drag ourselves out of these doldrums with a little salacious gossip.

(leans forward)

You and Quark?

RO

(folds arms)

You and Opaka?

VAUGHN

Fair enough. I'm not looking for the intimate details. God knows I don't need to hear that. Just that... you know his background. You know he's going to be trying for every advantage he can get.

RO

I trust him.

(off Vaughn's
dubious look)

I trust that he knows not to push it too far. And I don't think he'd seriously try anyway. He's not stupid. He knows I can shut him down in an instant if he steps out of line.

VAUGHN

He's at your mercy.

RO

(grin)

That's exactly what he said.

Vaughn knocks back the last of his tea and stands up.

VAUGHN

Right, come on. We've got raiders
to scare. Bring those.

Ro grabs the padds off the table and stands too. Together
they head to the door.

RO

You're enjoying this, aren't you?

VAUGHN

Well, all things considered I'd
rather be out there exploring the
galaxy. But this is the task I've
been set, and I'm going to do it
with enthusiasm.

They exit.

9 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

The door opens and Vaughn and Ro enter. All the senior
staff are present. Vaughn heads to the command chair while
Ro stashes the padds in a wall cabinet at the rear. Bashir
approaches Ro with a surreptitious glance towards Vaughn.

BASHIR

Everything alright?

RO

I think so. We both explained
ourselves, and I think it's going
to be okay.

BASHIR

I hope you're right.

Vaughn has now settled in, checked his consoles.

VAUGHN

Helm, what's our position?

PRYNN

On course along the border of the
Bajor and Almatha sectors. No
irregularities detected.

As Ro stands by his side, Vaughn turns to smile at her.

VAUGHN
See? Nothing to worry about.

An alert sounds on Bowers' panel. He checks it...

BOWERS
Sir, we're receiving an urgent
message.

VAUGHN
Never fails.

RO
Is it from inside Cardassian
space?

BOWERS
No, Commander. It's from Deep
Space Nine.

Vaughn and Ro exchange surprised looks.

VAUGHN
Well? Don't make me guess,
Lieutenant.

BOWERS
It's... a little confused, sir.
Major Cenn says he had a call from
General Lenaris, who had a call
from a Major Rochan at the
monastery in the capital, and he
had a call from -

VAUGHN
Get to the point, please.

BOWERS
It's the Oralian Temple at Janir.

RO

That's where Kira's staying. With Raiq.

BOWERS

Yes, sir. And apparently, Raiq has killed several worshippers and two Militia officers, and escaped.

Shocked and horrified faces all around the bridge. Silence.

RO

What about Kira?

BOWERS

Unknown. There's been no sign of her since Raiq... They don't know if she has Kira with her or not. They don't even know if Kira is alive... or dead.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

10 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

Where we left it. The bridge crew is reacting to the news with silent and horrified gulps. Vaughn sits stony-faced in his command chair.

VAUGHN

Any indication of where Raiq went after Janir?

BOWERS

Negative. Reports say she stole a shuttle, then firebombed all the other shuttles so nobody could follow her.

VAUGHN

The Militia's response?

BOWERS

On alert. They're searching, but they lost track almost instantly.

VAUGHN

Was the shuttle capable of space flight, or just atmospheric?

Candlewood checks his own panels...

CANDLEWOOD

The records indicate that Janir monastery does have one space-capable shuttle registered. It belongs to a Cerin Mika.

RO

Mika - that's Kai Solis' niece.

Vaughn takes a moment to think, speaks quietly but firmly.

VAUGHN

Tenmei, set course back to Bajor,
maximum warp.

PRYNN

Aye sir.

Prynn works her consoles, and the viewscreen shows the star
field streak into warp.

VAUGHN

Time to destination.

TENMEI

Forty-seven minutes.

VAUGHN

Candlewood, keep trying to get
more out of Cenn and Lenaris.
Bowers, Nog - I want this ship
ready to go into battle by the
time we reach Bajor. This is not a
drill. Ro, ready room.

Without waiting for a response, Vaughn gets up from his
chair and exits the room, expecting Ro to follow.

11 INT. DEFIANT - READY ROOM

Vaughn enters the room, stalks to the desk. Ro enters close
behind. The door closes. Vaughn is thinking, mind working.
Ro looks like she could vomit, but Vaughn holds her off.

VAUGHN

Save the *mea culpas* for later,
Commander. And I'll save the
gloating. We need to stop her.
Where is she going?

RO

We both know exactly where she's
going, don't we?

Vaughn looks up at Ro, holds her gaze for a moment. Then
THUMPS the table and turns away.

VAUGHN

Dammit! This is exactly what I was afraid would happen. Bashir said she wouldn't remember.

RO

The whole thing was guess work, sir. You know Bashir did his best. But I guess it just wasn't enough. She knows about the ship, and she's going after it.

VAUGHN

Can she even know where it is? Maybe she can sense there is a ship because she bonded with it, but can she sense where it is? At interplanetary distances?

RO

We don't know, do we? We just don't know enough about her.

VAUGHN

We don't know anything! So we'll just have to assume the worst.

(beat)

Vaughn to bridge.

BOWERS (comm)

Go ahead, sir.

VAUGHN

Alter course, Lieutenant. We're not going to Bajor. We're going to Cajara. And tell Nog I want every joule of energy he can get out of those engines, safeties be damned.

BOWERS (comm)

Understood, sir. Bridge out.

VAUGHN

If we don't get to Empok Nor before Raiq does...

RO

The whole Bajor system is dead.

Vaughn holds her gaze again, tense and worried..

12 EXT. STAR FIELD

At high warp, we're streaking forwards as fast as we can.

PULL BACK slowly to reveal the edges of the main screen, then Prynn's console, and then Prynn herself, driving the ship with total clarity.

13 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE (CONTINUOUS)

Ro hovers over Prynn's shoulder, trying her best not to bother her but too nervous to sit.

PANNING AROUND, we see Vaughn back in the command chair, watching Ro. Around them, the bridge is quiet but for beeps from the computers and loud hums from the engines. Everyone is working hard, heads down, no mood for chatting.

VAUGHN

Strange how a million miles a second can feel like walking in mud sometimes, isn't it?

Ro turns to look at him, a smile of gallows humour.

RO

Makes you wonder why they gave up on transwarp. Permission to check Engineering, sir.

VAUGHN

Please do.

14 INT. DEFIANT - ENGINEERING

The WARP CORE is working as fast as it can go, throbs of energy pulsing through it. As Ro walks into the room, she sees Nog at the panels opposite, directing his staff.

NOG

Mikaela, keep those intermix levels balanced. K'Uhllo, I need

eyes on the starboard coil, make
sure it doesn't overheat - go!

K'Uhllo (Damiani male, 10x07 "Instinct") dashes out of the
room. Ro approaches, wary of adding to Nog's burden.

RO
Nog... anything you can do to get
us there faster.

NOG
I'm working on it, Commander. But
to quote a giant of the field, "I
can't change the laws of physics."

Nog nervously glances around the room at his officers, then
steps close up to Ro, speaks *sotto*.

NOG
How did this happen, Ro? We were
so careful.

RO
I guess we should have been more
careful. I don't know.

NOG
I haven't told them anything. And
I won't. But they're bound to
wonder, especially if we're going
into battle.

RO
Just keep them concentrating on
their jobs. Let me and Vaughn
worry about the rest.

Nog nods reluctantly. Ro turns to leave again.

15 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

As Ro re-enters the bridge, she sees the face of Major CENN
on the screen. But whatever he's saying is lost in static
and a chopped-up, garbled transmission.

VAUGHN

Candlewood! Why the bad signal?

CANDLEWOOD

The comm relays are struggling to keep up with our speed. I'm compensating now.

As Ro stands beside Vaughn in his command chair, and he glances up at her in greeting, Cenn's signal clears up. He's in Ops on DS9, and the view behind him is frenzied.

VAUGHN

Major, we haven't been receiving you clearly till now. Start from the top, please.

CENN (screen)

Yes, Captain. We've been getting updates from Lenaris and from the officers on the ground in Janir. They confirm at least six deaths, status of Novice Kira unknown.

RO

Was Raiq definitely the assailant?

Vaughn's look says "What the hell kind of question is that? Of course she was." Ro ignores him.

CENN (screen)

Confirmed, I'm afraid. Survivors report seeing a silver-skinned woman throwing fire balls from her hands, and running towards the shuttle park with another woman who was bound and gagged.

VAUGHN

(mutter)

That's how she knows where to go. She'll torture it out of Kira, and kill her when she's no more use.

(to Cenn)

What about the ship she took?

CENN (screen)

Confirmed it was a warp-capable shuttle that was taken. Sensor readings have suggested multiple possible headings, but she seems to be always one step ahead.

VAUGHN

That's alright, Major. Tell the general we'll take it from here.

CENN (screen)

Sir...?

VAUGHN

You heard me. I want the station at red alert, tell Evik to get deputies armed and ready at every sensitive point, in case you're boarded. We'll take care of Raiq.

CENN (screen)

Aye, sir. DS-Nine out.

The signal drops. The screen returns to star field at warp.

VAUGHN

Tenmei - time to target.

PRYNN

Entering Bajor system now, sir.

RO

Any sign of the shuttle?

CANDLEWOOD

Not at present, sir. But Empok Nor is behind Cajara from this angle. She could be hiding, or we could have beaten her here.

VAUGHN

Tenmei, drop out of warp as close to the planet as you dare. Bowers, shields up, phasers and torpedoes on hot standby. Candlewood, I want

sensor resolution instantly. We need to know who got here first.

CANDLEWOOD

Aye, sir.

VAUGHN turns to Ro at his side, speaks confidentially.

VAUGHN

You ready for this?

RO

Yeah. I'm just disappointed it came to this. I really thought -

VAUGHN

We're past that point now. Now we just have to deal with those consequences of yours. And hope to God we beat her to the punch.

TENMEI

Approaching Cajara. Dropping to impulse power in three... two... one... now.

The engines die out, the sounds replaced by shields raising and weapons charging.

The viewscreen changes from the warp starfield to a massive gas giant planet tight in foreground, and getting closer.

CANDLEWOOD

Scanning now.

RO

Increase screen magnification.

The image on the screen zooms in on the curve of the planet, the abandoned Empok Nor station just starting to appear over the edge. That's no moon...

VAUGHN

Is she there?

CANDLEWOOD

Can't get a clear shot. The
magnetic fields from the planet...

VAUGHN

Tenmei, get us in closer.

On screen, the planet curves away beneath them, the station
growing nearer and clearer.

CANDLEWOOD

Sensors clearing up...

VAUGHN

And?

In response, Candlewood presses some buttons and sends an
image up to the view screen. It's a tight zoom on one of
the crossover bridges of the station. A program clarifies
the image further, pixilating the picture as it resolves...

Something is poking out from behind the bridge - the tip of
a ship's wing. It's parked on the vertical side, away from
the normal docking platform, trying to hide from view.

As Candlewood continues to work his panels, the image
rotates, creates a wire-frame to fill in the rest of the
ship, then fills in the details of the ship from records.
It's clearly a small personal Bajoran transport.

Everyone looks at this with dismay.

VAUGHN

Damn it.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

16 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

The Bajoran ship, hidden behind the arm of Empok Nor, is on the screen.

VAUGHN

Candlewood - I need life signs.
Who's there?

CANDLEWOOD

(off panels)

One Ascendant, one Bajoran. Both
strong. And energy readings.

Ro rushes to a panel at the side, scans the readings...

RO

Yep. Raiq is on board. Those are
the same readings Cenn picked up
from Axno's ship the first time
around. It's definitely coming to
life.

VAUGHN

Mister Bowers, target torpedoes on
the location of those energy
readings.

RO

Sir... Kira's still with her.

VAUGHN

Aware of the obvious, Commander.
I'm sure Kira is fighting every
step of the way, and I intend to
give her as long as I can. But if
we can destroy Raiq and the ship
before she can launch, I'm going
to take that chance. Otherwise we
end up in a battle for our lives.
A battle we might lose.

Ro steps back up close to him again, speaks quietly.

RO

She probably knows we're here. And that we won't fire on Kira. That's why she's still got her.

VAUGHN

I know. And that's why I have to do exactly the opposite. Candlewood - readings.

CANDLEWOOD

Still rising, sir.

VAUGHN

Is she about to launch?

CANDLEWOOD

(scared)

I... I can't tell!

Ro goes to him, lays a comforting hand on his shoulder.

RO

Just relax, John. You know how to do this.

Candlewood nods, takes a deep breath, goes back to work.

BOWERS

Captain, the docking platform controls are locked down tight. If she's going to get out, she'll have to burn through the bulkheads.

VAUGHN

And that'll take time.

CANDLEWOOD

Sir! Power readings through the roof. She's going to launch.

VAUGHN

Bowers - fire!

They look to the screen. Bowers moves his fingers to the torpedo launch control. But before he can press it...

VIEWSCREEN

The runabout docking pad EXPLODES, a white FLASH of energy blasting it apart from the inside out. The Bajoran ship is blown to pieces. The section of habitat ring CRUMBLES, bits tumbling away, an ever-expanding gash in the circle.

RO staggers as the explosion makes the *Defiant* SHAKE. As they all recover, Candlewood is at his console, terrified. Fast, urgent exchanges...

CANDLEWOOD

She jumped! Oh God she jumped straight out of there...

RO

She could be anywhere now.

VAUGHN

Life signs! Is Kira still alive?

CANDLEWOOD

Ummm... yes!

VAUGHN

Can we beam her up?

CANDLEWOOD

Can't get a lock. Radiation.

VAUGHN

But we can beam someone down.

BOWERS

Not without dropping the shields.

As if in answer, the ship ROCKS again from a weapons blast. Lights flicker and sparks fly.

VAUGHN

Return fire!

BOWERS

(mutter)

I will if I can find her...

On Bowers' console, we see a firing resolution. He FIRES - the enemy indicator is gone in a FLASH. The shot is wasted.

VAUGHN

Tenmei - random evasive!

Prynn works her console, constantly checking and adjusting, checking and adjusting. The view on the screen swerves and dips and rolls.

RO

Bridge to Bashir and Nog. Get Richter and Leishman to transporter room one now! They'll need full emergency and trauma kits.

BASHIR (comm)

Acknowledged.

VAUGHN

What are you doing?

RO

Trust me.

Ro begins to stride from one console to the next, doling out the plan. She's got an idea, and she's in charge now.

RO

(at helm)

Tenmei - plot a split-second fly-by of the habitat ring. Focus on Candlewood's lifesign readings.

(at tactical)

Bowers - get ready to drop the shields for point-six-two seconds at the apex of Tenmei's flight plan.

(at sciences)

That's all the time Candlewood will need to beam Richter and

Leishman down to the nearest safe point to Kira - if you start the cycle two-point-three seconds before the apex. Get working, all of you. Ro to transporter room. You ready?

CHAO (comm)
On your signal, Commander.

RO
Guys?

Prynn and Candlewood and Bowers are all working feverishly. One by one they turn to her, stoic and determined...

ALL
Ready.

RO
Go.

Prynn launches the ship straight at Empok Nor. Everyone holds on for dear life. In split-second timing...

-- Prynn's console - following the flight-plan
-- Candlewood - he begins the transport sequence
-- Graphic - transport sequence beginning
-- Viewscreen - Prynn twists the ship to avoid a crash
-- Bowers - works his console
-- Graphic - shields dropping on Bowers' console
-- Candlewood - completes transport sequence
-- Bowers - raises shields again
-- Prynn's console - flight-plan shows us moving away

CANDLEWOOD
(relieved)
Transport complete!

RO
Tenmei - set course away from
Empok Nor. Anywhere. Go!

We feel the ship surge away into open space. Meanwhile, Vaughn has been watching Ro all this time. He's impressed.

VAUGHN
Nicely done, Commander.

RO
Now we know Kira's taken care of,
while we keep Raiq occupied by
drawing her away.

VAUGHN
Bowers - give me something to
shoot at.

BOWERS
Working on it, sir.

FLASH - Raiq jumps back into view right in front of them,
perfectly centred in the viewscreen - and FIRES.

The big bolt of white electricity SLAMS into the ship. The
viewscreen shorts to STATIC. Consoles EXPLODE all across
the bridge. Prynne SURGES the ship vertically up to evade.

RO, clinging onto a console, trying to read it, back to the
room, coughing from the smoke...

RO
Report!

BOWERS
Damage to all decks. Dissolving
effect is taking hold on decks two
and three front. Shields at
seventy-three percent, weapons at
full.

RO
Cloak?

BOWERS
Non-operational.

RO
Ro to Nog - launch the nanobot
shield!

(no response)
Nog! Engineering, come in!

Through the comm, there's the sound of hissing vents, sparking systems, garbled shouts. Worried, Ro turns back towards Vaughn...

...only to see that his side console has exploded in his face and he's now lolling backwards in his chair, burned and semi-conscious.

RO
Captain!

PRYNN
Dad!

Prynn starts to get up...

RO
Prynn, no! I'll take care of him.
You get us out of here - back to
DS-Nine fast as you can.
(Prynn hesitates)
Now!

Fighting shock and tears, Prynn turns back to her consoles. Ro starts tapping at the command chair's remaining console.

RO
Ro to Bashir - you've got
incoming!

She hits a last button, and Vaughn TRANSPORTS away. As the ship gets underway, she looks around at the crew.

BOWERS - stoic and controlled, every inch the soldier.
PRYNN - in tears but doing her best to concentrate.
CANDLEWOOD - terrified, muttering prayers under his breath.

Ro takes her own deep breath...

17 INT. DEFIANT - SICKBAY

Ro stands in the doorway, hovering out of the way, watching across the room where Vaughn lies on a bio-bed.

Vaughn's face and hands are burned, uniform melted into his skin, staring up at the ceiling with blind eyes. He hitches painful breaths, wracked with occasional coughs that sound bloody. Bashir runs machines over him, quiet and defeated.

VAUGHN

You don't like me very much, do you, Julian?

Bashir cannot answer that. Vaughn is wracked with more gurgling, revolting coughs. Once he settles...

VAUGHN

It's alright, you can say how you really feel. It's not like I'm going to be around to hold a grudge.

BASHIR

Then I'll admit that you're not the easiest commanding officer under whom I've ever served. But I respect your service and your tenacity.

VAUGHN

My stubbornness, you mean.

(cough)

I'm not Ben Sisko. I'm not Kira Nerys. I know your passions get the better of you sometimes. Mine do too. I understand that. But if you'll allow a dying man to give you a bit of advice, I'll tell you this straight and clear. Whoever it ends up being, don't ever speak to your captain that way again. Do you understand?

Vaughn coughs again, rough and bloody.

BASHIR

I understand, sir. Thank you.

VAUGHN

Ro? Are you there?

RO

(steps forward)

I'm here, sir. You should save your strength. We'll be back at DS-Nine in -

VAUGHN

Shut up and let me talk while I still can. You did well today. But you need to stop her. I need you to stop her.

Ro doesn't answer. Vaughn coughs up his worst yet. Bashir rushes up with a hypospray, injects him. It doesn't work. Vaughn goes on retching... until something just breaks, and he slumps back to the bed, limp.

Bashir's sensors tell us what is obvious. Bashir sags in disappointment and frustration. Ro steels herself.

RO

What did he mean, about talking to your captain?

BASHIR

Just some things that were said during Raiq's medical crisis. He wasn't happy. But he was actually referring to you.

RO

Me?

BASHIR

He's dead. The *Defiant* is yours now... captain.

On Ro's daunted expression...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

18 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

The door opens. Ro steps solemnly onto the damaged bridge, Bashir half a step behind her.

Nog is repairing the viewscreen. He stops at the sight of Ro. Prynne sees his reaction, turns as well. Candlewood, Bowers. Everyone turns to look at Ro. She's on the spot.

The look on her face makes it clear what happened. Prynne whimpers. Ro gazes at her with sympathy. Bowers straightens and clears his throat, bringing the room back to attention.

BOWERS

Captain on the bridge.

A mark of respect. Ro is grateful. She takes a deep breath and steps haltingly towards the command chair. She looks at it for a moment, then gently settles into it. Dead man's shoes, but it has to be done.

RO

Mister Bowers - status.

BOWERS

Two minutes out from DS-Nine.
Shields holding at seventy per cent, weapons at full, nanobot defence ready.

RO

Kira? Raiq?

BOWERS

Unknown at present.

CANDLEWOOD

(off panels)

No, it's not unknown. Nog?

Off Candlewood's nod, Nog throws a last couple of switches and reactivates the viewscreen.

VIEWSCREEN

A long-distance shot of DS9 against the Denorios Belt.

Then Candlewood zooms the image in - the lower core, and AXNO'S SHIP holding position below it, pointing the tip straight up, obviously threatening.

RO gulps with horror.

RO
Can you get through to Cenn?

BOWERS
(shakes head)
Scrambling field.

PRYNN
Same as at Drang.

RO
The runabouts?

Bowers works his panels, taking readings. Everyone waits.

BOWERS
Hot standby, taking on civilians.
(beat)
Sir... we are in weapons range.

Ro gets his gist. She hesitates - should she open fire?

RO
Hail her.

BOWERS
Sir...

RO
No. If we talk first, we may not
need to shoot later.

BOWERS
Aye, sir.

Bowers works his panels, then nods to Ro.

RO

Raiq... it's Ro. Speak to me. You don't have to do this.

No response.

RO

Kira's alive. You didn't kill her. You don't have to kill the rest of us either. Talk to me.

Still no response. Ro is disappointed. She looks towards Bowers, ready to order him to fire.

Then a BALL OF FLAMES bursts into life in front of the viewscreen, the image of DS9 at its back. The flames waft away to reveal RAIQ, looking strong and healthy. She peers at the crew with disdain. Ro stands to face her.

RAIQ

I remember you. You sent me to the Eav'oq.

RO

That's right. I'm Ro Laren.

RAIQ

You told me none had survived. That was a lie. This vessel has shown me there is another.

RO

I never lied to you. I didn't know about Vexh until later. None of us did.

RAIQ

And had you known, would you have told me?

RO

I... don't know. We were afraid of what you might do.

RAIQ

You should be. You are Bajoran.
You shame the True. But I will
cleanse the heresy. You will burn
in the True's glorious flames.

RO

Kira's Bajoran, but you already
let her live. And everybody else
at Janir. If you really wanted to
kill us, you could have done it a
hundred times. But I don't think
you really do. Not anymore.

RAIQ

You think you can sway me with
words? My path is lit by the
righteous fire of the Unnameable
Ones. You will all die and burn,
beginning with this repulsive
alien temple to blasphemy.

RO

Raiq, please. I'm sorry we didn't
tell you about Vexh or the ship.
But you don't need to do this.
Stop it before it goes too far.

RAIQ

Make peace with your false gods.
You will see soon that they are
nothing but lies.

RO

Is that all you can say? Think for
yourself, don't just parrot
doctrine. We all just saved your
life! We don't deserve to die. And
if you try... I'll have to stop
you. Don't make me.

Raiq gives a nasty grin, and then the FLAMES take her away
again. Ro flinches back from it.

RO

Bowers, target her engines.

BOWERS

There are no engines.

RO

Then just fire!

Bowers does - we see the phasers blast out on the screen towards Raiq's ship. But Raiq JUMPS away before they hit. The shots are wasted. Ro curses under her breath.

RO

John, I need constant sensor sweeps. Prynn, whatever he gives you, get us there as fast as you can. Sam, weapons free, however you like. Nog, get through to Cenn somehow and tell him to get the hell out of there!

The crew gets to work.

CANDLEWOOD

works with furious concentration, all the better to control his rising nerves and panic. He sees a SPIKE of energy on one display - he rapidly punches commands into his panel.

PRYNN

sees the coordinates come onto her panel, and instinctively works her own panels in response. She's cold, determined, ready to exact vengeance for her father.

VIEWSCREEN

The image of the station swoops and swerves dizzyingly around until we see Raiq's ship FIRING on the docking ring.

RO

gripping onto the arms of her command chair as the ship fights against inertia, watching everybody do their work.

BOWERS

works his own panels, stabs a control.

VIEWSCREEN

showing the phasers blasting out towards Raiq... but she JUMPS again, and the phasers hit nothing.

RO

Again!

CANDLEWOOD

Another spike of energy...

PRYNN

Another determined swerve of the ship...

BOWERS

Another shot fired...

VIEWSCREEN

Raiq firing on the habitat ring from a high angle... and she JUMPS again. Another missed shot.

CANDLEWOOD

She's moving too fast!

Chaos continues around the bridge as they all try to do whatever they can to find her...

GRAPHIC

A 3D wire-frame of the station, with icons depicting the *Defiant* and Raiq's ship. Raiq JUMPS to a different position and FIRES on the station. The *Defiant* tries to react, but too slow. Raiq JUMPS again to another place around the station and FIRES again.

VIEWSCREEN

As the *Defiant* swoops and swerves, the image moving with it, we catch snippets of the station being blasted, white

SHOCKS of electricity coming from every angle, bulkheads being ripped away, FLAMES licking out and dying in space...

RO

We're too close! Prynn, pull us back to get a clearer shot...

Prynn works the panels and we feel the ship swerve away again, the image of the station falling out of frame...

VIEWSCREEN

Against the black starfield, Raiq's ship JUMPS right back in front of the ship again, and FIRES.

Panels all over the bridge EXPLODE, electricity igniting across consoles, wires and conduits rupturing in flames.

NOG is thrown back from his console in a showers of sparks. BASHIR rushes to check on him in a crumpled pile on the deck. Meanwhile Raiq JUMPS away again.

BOWERS

Shields are down, but we still have weapons.

CANDLEWOOD

Sir, she's firing on the station again...

RO

On screen!

Candlewood sets the viewscreen to a full view of DS9. Raiq is above it, FIRING a huge bolt of jagged white electricity at the Ops dome. The DISSOLVING effect spreads across the skin of the station, reaching down towards the Promenade. The bulkheads of the station begin to peel away.

RO

Fire everything!

Bowers works his panels. On screen, we see the *Defiant* fire TORPEDOES at the ship...

From this greater distance it takes longer to reach the target. But Raiq is concentrating on her own target.

...and the torpedoes HIT. Raiq's ship buckles and EXPLODES.

NOG

Yes!

The crew relaxes and breathes with relief. But then they look at the screen...

...and see that Ops is gone. It's a broken husk at the top of the station, machinery and bodies floating into space. They all gawp in horror. Ro gets to her feet...

CANDLEWOOD

Commander, the dissolving effect is still spreading!

RO

What?

Candlewood changes the view on the screen...

VIEWSCREEN

The crumbling begins, reaching down from the Promenade to the rest of the central core, out along the crossover bridges, to the habitat ring, to the docking ring...

Pieces of station disintegrate away... the crumbling finally reaches the power core... and BOOM.

The crew all flinch away, covering their eyes as the BLAST blinds them all...

One by one, they force their eyes back to the screen, where there is nothing but burning pieces of the station, debris tumbling through space...

Deep Space Nine has been destroyed.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

19 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

On a ruined and burning bridge, Ro stares dumbfounded at the sight on the screen. She staggers a few steps until she can slump back into the command chair.

Around her, nobody knows what to say. Candlewood begins to cry. Bashir helps Nog up off the deck.

RO
(quiet, croaky)
Where's Raiq?

Bowers turns back to his panels. Works them silently.

BOWERS
Sensors place her back in orbit of
Bajor. Do we pursue?

Ro doesn't answer. She seems miles away, unable to process.

BOWERS
Commander?

RO
Quiet. I'm thinking.

BOWERS
Sir, if she launches an isolytic
weapon into Bajor's star...

RO
She won't.

The others all look at her strangely. Has she lost it?

But Ro is thinking, things coming together in her mind. Things she can't quite believe are true.

BOWERS
(pushing her)

Commander Ro - we have to stop
her. What are your orders, sir?

Ro turns at Bowers' insolent tone... and smiles sadly.

RO
Stand down.

BOWERS
I beg your pardon?

RO
This didn't happen, Lieutenant.
Stand down. That's an order.

Confused, Bowers just sits and stares at her. But Ro
settles back into her command seat, and calls out loud.

RO
You might as well come out now. I
know you're there.

The others look between themselves. What the hell is going
on? Nobody moves. Ro sits there, trying to project complete
confidence, desperately hoping she's right about this.

RO
I'm not going anywhere. I can wait
here all day.

After a few more moments' silence, with the image of the
tumbling debris of the former Deep Space Nine on the screen
and the bridge sparking and smoking around them...

...the BURST of flames appears at the front of the bridge
again, the Ascendant hologram-transporter effect. The
flames waft away to reveal...

Vaughn. Alive and well.

Ro gazes at him, cold and blank.

RO
Nice touch.

VAUGHN

Well done, Commander. How did you know?

RO

I didn't - not for a long time, anyway. You had me convinced. But then you took it too far. Destroying Deep Space Nine...

VAUGHN

You think it could never happen?

RO

I sat here thinking, "This can't be real." And then I realised, I was right. It wasn't real. All the little clues came back to me.

VAUGHN

What clues?

RO

You said this was exactly what you were afraid would happen. And you're right, it was suspiciously perfect for proving your point. That we were wrong to trust her. That you knew better.

VAUGHN

Who says I don't?

RO

You dying in battle... still plausible, I suppose. Perfect for pushing me into command, seeing how I'd react.

VAUGHN

You were doing very well. That split-second transport to help out Kira on Empok Nor - that was an impressive manoeuvre.

RO

And Bowers - using your words.
"Locked down." "Hot standby."
Almost as if you were scripting it
all for him.

Stony-faced, she stands and looks around at the rest of the
crew, who have been watching this exchange impassively.

RO
Were you all in on it?

VAUGHN
Computer, remove holographic
characters.

An affirmative bleep. Ro looks at Prynne... she dissolves
into nothingness, a hologram.

Ro turns to Bowers, then Nog, then Candlewood - each
dissolves away. Astonished, she finally turns to Bashir...
and he doesn't disappear. He just looks vaguely ashamed.

VAUGHN
Thank you, Doctor. You can go now.
Your debt is repaid.

BASHIR
I'm sorry, Ro. I had to.

Bashir leaves the bridge. Ro turns back to Vaughn...

RO
If everybody else was fake, why
not Bashir?

VAUGHN
He was the ringleader of your
"mini-mutiny". And this was his
punishment - to play his part.

RO
What part? Your stooge, your
plaything - Ah. So that he could
fake your death convincingly.

VAUGHN

I have some damn good holodeck technology at my disposal, but some things are just better the old-fashioned way.

RO

Did the *Defiant* even leave DS9?

VAUGHN

The *Defiant* didn't. We did.

RO

Ah - your holo-ship. That's why we were on port two. What about Axno's ship?

VAUGHN

Not even on Empok Nor anymore. I had it moved to the former Romulan facility on Derna.

RO

But why do all this? What kind of sick and twisted fantasy -

VAUGHN

Not a fantasy. A test. Of your command skills, your decisions. And you were doing beautifully. Tactical, technical, personnel management - all excellent. All up until the end.

Ro turns on her heel, glares at him with ice in her eyes.

RO

Really. I'm making bad command decisions. Me. What about you?

VAUGHN

What does that mean?

RO

Did you never think to just be straight with me? To actually do what you said, and spend some time

getting to know each other? Did that even occur to you?

(no answer)

No, I bet you just went right to schemes and plots and deception. You know what - you were right before. You're not Kira Nerys. Or Sisko, or Picard... none of them would have treated me like you just did. You think this is how a good commander behaves? Lying to your crew, making them lie to each other, putting them through your little tests like rats in a laboratory?

VAUGHN

I needed to know.

RO

Needed to know what?

VAUGHN

I'm leaving, Ro. Soon. I need to know you're ready.

RO

Leaving? What do you mean, you're leaving?

VAUGHN

I put in for transfer the moment I got back from the wormhole. I want to see what's out there while I still have time to enjoy it. But before I go and leave you in charge, I need to know you'll be able to handle what is coming your way. And from what I've seen today, you're not.

RO

I handled it fine.

VAUGHN

You should have fired first, Ro!

RO
(astonished)
What?!

VAUGHN
Because you didn't fire first,
Deep Space Nine was destroyed.
Those thousands of people, your
friends and crew - dead. Because
you thought you could talk her out
of it. All you did was give her
the chance she needed.

RO
Did you forget who we work for?
Starfleet doesn't shoot first.

VAUGHN
Raiq has established herself as an
enemy combatant, Commander. An
enemy. When we see an enemy, we
shoot at them. We don't ask them
round for tea.

RO
You don't know she's an enemy!

VAUGHN
She can't not be! It's in her
culture, her very blood. And every
time we see her she's threatening
us all over again. That's all she
ever says!

RO
Maybe it's all you ever hear. But
I get it. You want to run off and
have your fun, but you want to
make sure I'm here to do all your
dirty work for you.

VAUGHN
I want you to protect Bajor and
Deep Space Nine. That's what you
swore an oath to do.

RO

I didn't swear to kill at first sight without even trying to talk first.

VAUGHN

What is there to talk about? They're pure, Laren. Relentless. Fanatical. Trusting that they won't kill us all at their very first opportunity is suicide.

RO

But you're only making it worse! Keeping secrets, telling lies... Haven't we already seen where that leads? And you're leaving me here to clean up the mess while you swan off around the galaxy.

VAUGHN

I'm just doing everything I can to protect the ones I care about. Whatever saves the most people, whatever serves the greater good, that's what we do. No matter how difficult or distasteful.

RO

The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, right?

VAUGHN

Exactly.

RO

You know that's exactly the line Section Thirty-One use. You start thinking that way, and it doesn't take long before those few get fewer and fewer. Less and less important. Those hard decisions a little bit easier every time. Cold equations - isn't that the phrase?

Vaughn gestures at the screen, with its tumbling debris.

VAUGHN

And what about those thousands of
dead people?

RO

There are no dead people! They're
fake. And the fact that you had to
fake them proves that you're wrong
about her.

VAUGHN

The day will come. I guarantee it.

RO

Then I'll deal with it my way. You
go off on your adventures. Have
your fun. But I will not treat an
innocent woman like an enemy just
because you say so.

VAUGHN

I'm still your superior officer.
You're obliged to obey my orders.

RO

Obedience isn't trust. You said so
yourself. So let me respond to
your orders right now.

She leans across the command chair, facing him across it,
and enunciates clearly and firmly.

RO

No. I will not.

As Ro holds Vaughn's gaze...

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW