

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

8x14 - "Twilight."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novel

*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine
Mission Gamma Book 1 - Twilight*

by David R George III

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

PRYNN TENMEI crashes to the deck beside the captain's chair, in a shower of SPARKS from her exploding helm. She lands in a crumpled mess, eyes closed in unconsciousness or death, her midsection horribly burned and charred, smoking.

ELIAS VAUGHN, standing in front of the centre chair in battle mode, looks down at her with horror. This is his daughter, and she might be lying dead at his feet.

Around them, the *Defiant* shakes under weapons fire, panels sparking and smoke billowing. RED ALERT alarms flash. Vaughn has no time to stop, but he only just manages to take his eyes off Prynn and drag himself to the helm.

He tries to work the panels, but it continues to spark and burn. He throws up his hand to shield himself from the flames, burning himself in the process. Through the chaos, SAM BOWERS (at tactical) and NOG (at engineering) call out.

BOWERS

Weapons power to the shields?

NOG

Weapons are offline!

The ship rocks again as more weapons fire hits.

2 EXT. SPACE

Defiant passes at sub-light, as weapons FIRE from behind. Two smaller attack ships follow - black and sharp, wasp-like. They hammer at the *Defiant*, which does not respond.

3 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

Vaughn moves round the front edge of the helm console, between it and the main viewscreen. He reaches underneath to grab the FIRE EXTINGUISHER that is attached. His uniform sleeve catches fire as he does, but he grimaces through it and wrestles the canister out.

He SQUIRTS the canister's foamy contents over his arm first, then turns it on the console. It successfully puts out the fire. Vaughn leans over and tries to work the console again, but the panels remain dark.

VAUGHN

Dax, reroute flight control.

DAX

I've got it.

With the fire out, the smoke is starting to clear. Vaughn sees JULIAN BASHIR hovering over Prynn's body, checking her with a tricorder. Vaughn stares at her in horror and guilt.

VAUGHN

How far from the planet?

DAX

Not far enough. We can't risk going to warp yet.

BOWERS

Two more Jarada heavies emerging from the far side of the second moon.

DAX

If we can get up to full impulse, they won't be able to catch us. We only have to worry about the ones already firing on us.

BOWERS

I sure wish we had those weapons.

VAUGHN

Absolutely not. We promised the Jarada intelligence on the Iconian gateways, and then made that intelligence useless by turning the gateways off. I'd be mad too. But if we fire back, we'll be out of "diplomatic incident" and into "interstellar war".

The ship ROCKS again under more weapons fire.

BOWERS

Aft shields gone. Ablative armour
down to sixty-seven percent.

VAUGHN

What happened to those evasive
manoeuvres?

4 **EXT. SPACE**

The *Defiant* darts around, evading the two attacking ships.
In the distance in one direction, a reddish planet recedes.
In the other, a large convoy of cargo ships moving away.

5 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

As we were...

VAUGHN

Do we have warp drive?

NOG

The engines are intact, but
there's a micro-fracture in the
port nacelle. We wouldn't be able
to maintain warp for more than a
few seconds.

VAUGHN

How many seconds?

NOG

Forty at most. Maybe no more than
twenty-five.

VAUGHN

How long before we're at a safe
distance to go to warp?

DAX

Six minutes. A minute and a half
after the other two ships get
here.

BOWERS

And if we're still here when they do, this fight'll be over fast.

VAUGHN

Okay, so we need to stay out of the other ships' weapons range.

(thinks a moment)

We could risk going to warp inside the system for our own sake, but the Jarada would see that as a disrespect as much as firing on them. And then they'd chase down both us and the Europani convoy.

He looks back to his chair, where Bashir and some extras are gathering Prynn's unconscious body up off the floor and carrying her out. He sneers - he wants to destroy the Jarada to avenge her, but knows he can't.

VAUGHN

Status of the cloaking device?

BOWERS

Operational.

SHAR

I thought we weren't supposed to -

Vaughn silences SHAR with a cold glance. The ensign returns his eyes to his console, realising this was *not* the time.

VAUGHN

(to Nog)

Reroute all available power to the impulse engines. Everything but gravity, cloaking device and warp drive. Do it now.

Around them, panels begin to go dark as the sound of the engines grows. The alarms quiet, the main screen goes dark, even the main room lights go out, leaving only the light from Nog, Bowers and Dax's panels.

DAX

Approaching ninety percent of full impulse. Estimating ninety seconds before the ships get here. Eighty seconds before we can go to warp. If the impulse engines hold up.

6 **EXT. SPACE**

The *Defiant* is still running, with the Jarada ships following and the convoy in the distance.

7 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

DAX

Thirty seconds. The Europani convoy is out of Jarada space.

VAUGHN

Good, they won't follow them. Now if we can just get out of the system too without having to fire back, this'll all be over.

A pause, tension, everyone waiting, Dax watching panels.

DAX

Ten seconds.

VAUGHN

Nog, bring all systems back online. At zero, shut down the impulse drive.

NOG

Aye sir.

The lights around the room come back on, air conditioners humming, panels coming back to life.

DAX

One. We're clear for warp.

VAUGHN

(to Dax)

Maximum warp for ten seconds. Then
throttle down to warp three-point-
seven and take evasive action.

(to Nog)

Monitor the fracture.

8 **EXT. SPACE**

Just as the first two Jarada ships get close, and another two come into view from the other direction, the *Defiant* leaps into WARP and escapes. All four Jarada ships quickly go into warp too and follow.

9 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

BOWERS

All four ships are in pursuit.

VAUGHN

Engage cloak.

Bowers works his panel, and the lights dim around the bridge as the ship raises its cloak.

10 **EXT. SPACE**

At warp, the CLOAK EFFECT ripples over the ship's surface and it disappears.

11 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

DAX

Warp three-point-seven, starting
evasive manoeuvres.

VAUGHN

The fracture?

NOG

Stressed, but stable.

VAUGHN

Take us to station keeping.

DAX

Dropping out of warp. Engines
answering full stop.

BOWERS

The Jarada are approaching.

VAUGHN

They'll have read our course and
speed when we went to warp, seen
where we cloaked, and noticed the
fracture in the nacelle. Hopefully
they'll put all that together to
calculate the maximum distance we
could travel before we'd have to
drop to sub-light.

NOG

Except we'll be nowhere near.

VAUGHN

No celebrations yet, Lieutenant.

Tension again as they wait to see if the Jarada will find
their hiding place.

BOWERS

They're heading off at different
vectors at warp one... They've set
up a search grid.

VAUGHN

(relieved)

Excellent. They'll figure out what
we did eventually, and probably
bring in some help to search. But
by then we'll be long gone. Mister
Nog, I believe you have a damaged
warp nacelle to repair.

NOG

Aye sir, right away.

Nog bounds off to the door, but turns when Vaughn calls.

VAUGHN

Lieutenant... everyone. Well done.

(Nog leaves)
Normal lighting. And get rid of
those alarms. Ensigns Senkowski
and Roness, report to the bridge.

Cradling his burned arm, Vaughn settles back into the
centre chair. As the lights come up, he looks at the broken
helm console, then down at the spot where Prynn landed.

QUICK FLASH

-- Prynn's crumpled body lying on the deck.

BACK TO SCENE

Vaughn closes his eyes, shudders. He did his duty, but his
daughter may be dead because of it.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

12 EXT. DS9 - ESTABLISHING

Focusing on the Ops pod at the top of the station.

13 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Start close on an old BOOK standing on one of the glass shelves along the walls. It is a book of Bajoran prophecy, with Bajoran characters in old gold leaf along the spine. KIRA's hand reaches in and strokes it lovingly.

KIRA (o.s.)

"When the Prophets Cried."

Kira long to take the book off the shelf and read it. She pulls herself back - she is not allowed. She is alone in the office, but the sounds of a normal morning in Ops drift through the closed door. She moves to the replicator, rubbing her unadorned ear absent-mindedly as she goes.

KIRA

*Raktajino. Extra hot, with two
measures of kava.*

The cup appears in the replicator, and she tentatively takes a sip, savouring the scalding hot drink. Deciding to think about what she can do, rather than what she can't, she walks back to her desk and sits down.

KIRA

Computer, list today's itinerary.

COMPUTER

Oh-nine-hundred to thirteen-
hundred hours, no meetings
scheduled. Thirteen-hundred hours,
senior staff meeting. Fourteen-
hundred hours, open meeting for
all station personnel. Fifteen-
hundred hours, meeting with
Promenade Merchants Association
representative Quark.

Kira rolls her eyes - oh, that Quark.

COMPUTER (cont)

Seventeen-hundred hours, subspace conference with Starfleet Corps of Engineers.

KIRA

Play back all waiting messages.

She settles into her chair, sipping her drink and staring out the window while listening quietly to the messages.

COMPUTER

First message from station resident, First Taran'atar.

TARAN'ATAR (comm)

Colonel Kira. It has been many days since my return to the station and I am sufficiently healed to return to duty. I would like to request once again that I be liberated from the infirmary. This indolence is unproductive and... frustrating.

COMPUTER

Second message from Chief of Station Security, Ro Laren.

RO (comm)

Colonel, I'd like your permission on a few changes to the security protocols. The station is close to capacity with Europani refugees, and there'll be even more arriving soon with the *Defiant*. Not only that but more and more Bajorans are making pilgrimages from the planet to see the Orb of Memory in the station's Temple.

Kira looks back over at the book on the shelf.

RO (cont)

So I think it's a good idea to limit the number of people we allow on the Promenade at any one time. We can discuss the rest at the senior staff meeting, but I thought I'd give you a head's up.

COMPUTER

Third message from -

KIRA

Computer, pause messages.

She gets up and goes back over to the book, takes it off the shelf, and looks at it.

KIRA

"When the Prophets Cried"... the Tears of the Prophets. The Orbs.

(quoting)

"When the children have wept all, anew will shine the twilight of their destiny."

She smiles to herself - she doesn't need to read the book, because she knows it by heart anyway. She places it back on the shelf just as the comm signals.

ENSIGN (comm)

Ops to Colonel Kira.

KIRA

This is Kira. Go ahead, Ensign.

ENSIGN (comm)

Colonel, the USS *Mjolnir* is hailing the station. They're requesting an approach vector and permission to dock.

KIRA

Mjolnir? Ensign, did they say why they were arriving so far ahead of schedule?

ENSIGN (comm)
No sir. Should I enquire?

KIRA
(thinks about it)
No. Send my greetings and bring
them in.

ENSIGN (comm)
Aye sir.

She is a little disturbed - she feels like something must be wrong for the ship to be here so soon. Wondering what it could be, she looks back at the book again thoughtfully.

14 EXT. DS9 - UPPER DOCKING PYLON

A small, angular Norway-class Starfleet ship, *USS Mjolnir*, is just coming to dock at one of the upper pylons.

15 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

Kira waits with one Starfleet and one Bajoran security as the door cycles open and a giant of a man steps out, ducking his head as he does. Kira looks up at him, a little dumb-founded at his size for a moment, but quickly covers.

Starfleet Admiral AKAAR is extremely tall, broad and almost casually intimidating. Aside from his size he is human-looking and as old as Vaughn, Native American-styled with long grey hair tied back in a ponytail. His manner is that of a man who is accustomed to telling people what to do.

AKAAR
You are Colonel Kira?

KIRA
Yes, I'm Colonel Kira Nerys.
Welcome to Deep Space Nine.

AKAAR
How do you do. I am Admiral Akaar.

Akaar raises his right fist to his chest, then holds it out flat to Kira - she doesn't really understand the gesture.

AKAAR

I come with an open heart and open hand. A traditional greeting among my people.

KIRA

(a little flustered)

Well, welcome to Deep Space Nine.

AKAAR

Do you have time to speak with me, Colonel? It will require perhaps thirty minutes.

KIRA

Of course. May I ask what this is about, Admiral?

AKAAR

I am headed to Bajor to assist in the resettlement of the Europani, and to observe the aid operations to Cardassia.

KIRA

I see. Excuse me, Admiral, but I wasn't asking why you've come to Bajor. I was asking why you've come to DS-Nine.

AKAAR

I wanted to speak with you.

KIRA

Alright. The wardroom is closest, or we can go to my office -

AKAAR

If you don't mind, we can use a conference room aboard *Mjolnir*.

He gestures back towards the ship. Kira is thrown off-balance yet again.

KIRA

(taps combadge)

Kira to Ops.

 ENSIGN (comm)
Ops, Selzner here.

 KIRA
Ensign, I'm going to be in a meeting aboard the *Mjolnir* for the next half-hour.

 ENSIGN (comm)
Should I consider you unreachable, Colonel?

Kira looks to Akaar - his stiff stare gives her nothing.

 KIRA
Yes. I'll let you know when I'm back. Kira out.

Already anxious and off-balance, she follows Akaar back through the airlock to the ship.

16 INT. MJOLNIR - CONFERENCE ROOM

Akaar leads Kira into a typical but small Starfleet-style room, with steeply angled windows along one side, with the station showing through.

There is a small conference table - Akaar takes a seat with his back to the windows and gestures for Kira to sit opposite him. He has deliberately put her on his home turf, which makes her wary and prickly. She fights to control her natural tendency to indignation.

 KIRA
Will Captain Hoku be joining us?

 AKAAR
No, she will not. I must inform you, Colonel, that the *Mjolnir* will not be standing in for the *Defiant* during its upcoming mission to explore the Gamma Quadrant. The *Gryphon* will instead substitute for *Defiant*.

KIRA

I see. I typically get some notice of these things.

AKAAR

I am giving you notice now.

Kira bites her tongue.

KIRA

Thank you, Admiral. I'll note the change for my crew.

AKAAR

Colonel, I would like you to detail for me the evacuation of the Europani to Bajor.

KIRA

Almost three million people have been brought here from Europa Nova. The *Defiant* is scheduled back soon with the final convoy from Torona Four.

AKAAR

Yes. How are the Europani being housed on Bajor?

KIRA

In hospitals, some of them, obviously. Schools, government facilities, inns, even some private residences.

AKAAR

Do you know how the Europani on Bajor are being fed?

KIRA

I can have one of my officers in Ops upload whatever data we have about the Europani operations.

She reaches to tap her combadge, but Akaar raises his hand to stop her.

AKAAR

Colonel, I have already seen that data. I do not need to see it again. Raw data and reports have their places, but I wish to hear from you.

That mollifies Kira slightly, makes her feel a bit more appreciated, and she lets some of her building pique go.

AKAAR

Have the efforts to help the Europani had an impact on Bajor's aid to Cardassia?

KIRA

Deep Space Nine is continuing to function as a staging platform for Cardassian aid. The situation has become more complicated with the Europani on the station, but we're managing.

AKAAR

Yes. What I'm asking about is the aid going to Cardassia directly from Bajor... directly from the Bajoran people.

KIRA

(thrown again)

Oh... yes. There's understandably been an impact. Fewer supplies to Cardassia direct from Bajor. But we're still coordinating the relief efforts with supplies provided by other worlds.

AKAAR

Colonel Kira... how do you like commanding Deep Space Nine?

She looks up at him in surprise, not quite sure what he means by the question. She looks past him, to the curves of the station outside the windows. How does she answer?

17 **EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT**

The ship flies at warp, external damage still showing, with the convoy of cargo ships coming up behind.

18 **INT. DEFIANT - SICKBAY**

Dim lighting so as not to disturb the patient. Vaughn leans against the wall inside the doorway, gazing across the room at the unconscious figure of Prynn Tenmei on a biobed.

As Vaughn watches, Bashir approaches the bed and checks various readings over Prynn. When he is finished, he comes over to Vaughn, who straightens to take his report.

BASHIR

Sir.

VAUGHN

Doctor.

BASHIR

She's resting comfortably. I've given her a mild sedative to help her sleep, but she won't even need that in a couple of days. The skin grafts are doing well, and her internal organs... well, she was very lucky.

(beat)

And what about you? How are you feeling?

He stiffens - he is not one to talk about his emotions easily - but then relents a little.

VAUGHN

I'm tired. But I'm alright. I assume I'm healing under here.

He lifts up his arm, which is bandaged from the burns.

BASHIR

That's what Nurse Richter says.

VAUGHN

(looks back at Prynne)

Thank you, Julian.

BASHIR

You're welcome, sir.

(awkward moment)

Well... have a good night then.

VAUGHN

Rest well, Doctor.

Bashir leaves, and Vaughn walks quietly over to stand by Prynne's bed. He looks down at her sleeping face in the dim light, full of relief for not having lost her, guilt and anger at himself for putting her here.

But he knows she will still hate him when she wakes up.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

19 EXT. RAINFOREST

A torrential downpour in a close-quartered jungle zone. Kira stands shuddering from the rain, her uniform plastered wet to her skin. She is holding a knife, utterly miserable.

KIRA
Why did I agree to this?

Wiping the water from her eyes, she peers out to look for something in the storm, hunting something.

KIRA
This is what I get for thinking
about the feelings of a Jem'Hadar.

TARAN'ATAR (v.o.)
Thank you, Colonel.

20 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Kira sits neat and tidy at her desk, as TARAN'ATAR stands at attention in front of her. There is still some bruising on his face, but he is very well healed considering.

TARAN'ATAR
Now that I have been released from
medical captivity, I will be
returning to duty immediately.

KIRA
Doctor Girani only agreed to
release you on the condition that
you don't engage in any physically
strenuous activity for another
twelve days.

Taran'atar inwardly grumbles, clearly not happy with this. He wants to argue, but she is his Vorta.

TARAN'ATAR
This is not our way.

KIRA

Surely the Jem'Hadar care for
their own health.

TARAN'ATAR

We do. But not by lying in a bed.
Once our fitness for combat is
sufficiently restored, a return to
duty is required. If necessary,
there can be an appropriate
reduction in rank.

KIRA

Well then, I guess I'll just have
to demote you to Second.

It was meant as a joke, but Taran'atar isn't laughing.

KIRA

Perhaps we can compromise and cut
it down to six days. Isn't there
anything else you can do in the
meantime?

Taran'atar considers it, not sure if he should say.

TARAN'ATAR

I would be interested in observing
you in combat, Colonel. I can
create a new simulation for you.

KIRA

I don't think so.

He accepts the rejection, turns and heads for the door.

KIRA

Wait. What did you have in mind?

21 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S, HOLOSUITE CORRIDOR

The holosuite doors open and Kira LURCHES out, not just soaked through but covered in mud all up her chest and face. She is exhausted and fed up. Taran'atar follows her out quite calmly.

TARAN'ATAR
You have failed to reclaim your
life.

KIRA
(muttering)
I'm reclaiming it right now.

Kira peels off her matted uniform jacket and tries to wipe
the mud off her face with it.

KIRA
Maybe if I'd had more information.
Or any information.

TARAN'ATAR
Not all missions are carried out
under optimal conditions.

KIRA
Optimal?!
(gathers herself)
Sorry, I'm just frustrated. It's
been a difficult morning. You
know, there's more to see on Deep
Space Nine than just Ops and the
holosuites. Maybe you should visit
some other -

Kira's combadge signals; she struggles comically with her
soaked jacket to reach it and tap it.

ENSIGN (comm)
Ops to Colonel Kira.

KIRA
This is Kira, go ahead.

ENSIGN (comm)
Colonel, we've just received word
from Commander Vaughn that the
Defiant will be arriving with the
evacuee convoy from Torona Four
within the hour.

KIRA
Alright, I'll be up in Ops
shortly. Kira out.
(taps badge off)
After a nice hot shower.

She stalks off down the corridor, Taran'atar following.

22 EXT. DS9 - DOCKING RING

The *Defiant* settles into its place on the docking ring.

23 INT. DS9 - TENMEI'S QUARTERS

Standard DS9 quarters, decorated with tasteful paintings and sculptures. Prynn sits in a low casual chair, watching a screen on a coffee table. It shows a VIDEO of a Bolian man in a wetsuit surfing on waves of deep red water. The Bolian pulls off a dramatic manoeuvre - Prynn is impressed.

The door CHIME sounds, and Prynn's face freezes. She knows who it is. Her hands GRIP the arms of the chair, but she doesn't move. The CHIME sounds again. She peels her fingers away from the chair, taps the screen to pause the video, and cradling her delicate abdomen, stands to face the door.

TENMEI
Open.

The door opens and Vaughn stands there, with his hands held behind his back. He is nervous, not sure how to do what he so desperately wants to do. After an awkward pause...

VAUGHN
May I come in?

TENMEI
(no)
Yes.

He gingerly steps into the room, the door closing behind.

VAUGHN
How are you feeling?

TENMEI

Fine. I've been in better shape,
but I'm improving.

VAUGHN

Good, good.

He looks around at the artwork, trying to find a way to begin. Looking around herself, Prynne spots a photo of an older Japanese woman, her mother RURIKO (8x02 "Avatar, pt 2"), in a frame. Vaughn hasn't seen the photo yet.

While his back is turned, Prynne moves sharply to turn the photo face down and hide it from him. But she moves too quickly, straining her wounds, and puts her hand to her belly with a GRUNT of pain. Vaughn turns at the noise.

VAUGHN

Are you alright?

TENMEI

Yes, yes.

She starts back to the chair, but Vaughn approaches closer.

VAUGHN

Here, let me -

TENMEI

No.

(pause; calmer)

No. I'm alright. Doctor Bashir said it's alright for me to walk around, just not to do too much.

Vaughn accepts she is not going to let him near her. With difficulty, she gets herself back into the chair. They go back to the awkward silences, not looking at each other.

VAUGHN

How bad is it? I mean, I spoke with the doctor, and I know you're going to recover completely. But how bad is the pain?

TENMEI

Not bad.

She is lying, and he knows it, but he will let her lie.

TENMEI

Doctor Bashir told me he could block the pain, but he'd rather not. He wanted me to be able to feel what I was doing so I wouldn't over-exert myself.

VAUGHN

I guess he's gotten to know you already, then. Really, you shouldn't push yourself.

He comes a little closer again. He wants to apologise, doesn't know how; she doesn't want to hear it anyway. But neither of them can find a way out now they are here.

VAUGHN

Prynn... I'm sorry.

She looks at him; she knows why he is really apologising. Keeps it tight, unemotional, polite but not giving an inch.

TENMEI

The blast aboard the *Defiant* was an accident. There's no need to apologise for that. Commander.

Accepting defeat for now, Vaughn sits in another chair.

VAUGHN

Are you still planning to be aboard *Defiant* for the mission to the Gamma Quadrant... Ensign?

TENMEI

Yes, I am.

VAUGHN

Then I think you need to establish a better relationship with me.

Is that a threat? She is furious, but refuses to show it.

TENMEI

Commander, I've earned that position.

VAUGHN

You're an excellent pilot, no question. But there's more to being a Starfleet officer than simply performing a job. There are interpersonal skills, and they include getting along with your commanding officer, no matter how much you blame... how much you dislike him.

TENMEI

Commander, I have not allowed our personal differences to interfere with the performance of my duties.

VAUGHN

No? Wasn't it you who told me to go to hell?

She starts to protest, but he placates her.

VAUGHN

We were alone, I'd said you could speak freely. And it's not as if I don't know how you feel about me. The problem is, I'm not the only one who knows. It's clear to a lot of people that our relationship is... strained. It creates a tense working atmosphere, and it undermines my authority. If we're going to be together in close quarters on the *Defiant* for three months in the Gamma Quadrant, you'd better learn to get along with me.

She looks away, sees the overturned photo of her mother.

VAUGHN

Look at me, Ensign.

She does, face schooled to show nothing.

VAUGHN
Do you understand me?

TENMEI
I do, sir, yes. And you're right.

They hold eyes for a long pause. Finally, Vaughn accepts her agreement, and stands up to leave, heads to the door.

VAUGHN
Good, I'm glad.
(turns back)
Prynn?
(pause)
I am sorry. For everything.

TENMEI
I know.

He leaves, the door closes, and she sinks into her chair.

TENMEI
But it'll never be enough.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

24 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

A GRAPHIC shows on a screen at the rear of the bridge. It is a map of *Defiant's* planned route through the Gamma Quadrant - a rough loop that starts at the wormhole, goes out in the opposite direction from Dominion space as indicated on the map, and returns to the wormhole.

Pull back to see Vaughn inspecting the screen. Elsewhere Bowers , Shar and Prynn work at various other panels, while extras make sundry repairs. It's quite busy.

RONESS

Sir? You wanted the status reports
on the repairs and upgrades.

Ensign RONESS (last seen in 8x12) has approached - she hands over a padd, looking hesitant about his response.

VAUGHN

Something wrong, Ensign?

RONESS

It's just... well, I don't think
you'll be completely pleased about
the progress the crew has made.

VAUGHN

So far, I'm delighted by our
progress. Not to worry.

RONESS

I was wondering... I'm a little
confused as to why the *Defiant* was
assigned to this mission at all,
sir. She was never designed for
exploration, and we've had to make
extensive alterations to get her
ready. If the *Gryphon* can spare
the time to cover for us at the
station, why can't she just take
the mission in the first place?

Vaughn isn't offended. He quite enjoys being wise.

VAUGHN

Defiant has a certain reputation in the Gamma Quadrant, Ensign. If the Dominion does decide to make trouble, having the *Defiant* there will show them we're prepared to handle them. Plus, after all they've been through, the crew of this ship and this station deserve first shot, don't you think?

RONESS

Absolutely, sir.

VAUGHN

Ensign Tenmei, can Ensign Roness help you at the conn?

TENMEI

No sir, I'll be done in just a few minutes. But Lieutenant Candlewood said he could use some extra bodies in the computer core.

Her manner is much warmer than before; Vaughn is glad to see it. He nods to Roness, who takes the hint and leaves the bridge. Vaughn looks down at the padd she gave him, and indeed he is not as happy as he could be.

After a few moments, the door opens again, and Taran'atar stands there, still as a statue. The crew are somewhat surprised and discomfited to see him.

TARAN'ATAR

Commander Vaughn. Colonel Kira told me to come and see you here, at this time.

VAUGHN

Yes, thank you for coming. Let's go to my ready room. There are some things I'd like to discuss with you.

Vaughn leads Taran'atar back out of the bridge again. The door closes, and the bridge crew look to each other in confusion and a little alarm.

25 **INT. DEFIANT - READY ROOM**

Vaughn leads Taran'atar into the office.

VAUGHN
Please, sit.

TARAN'ATAR
I prefer to stand.

With a shrug, Vaughn calls up the same display on a wall monitor, tracing *Defiant's* path with his finger.

VAUGHN
I wanted to confer with you about the space we'll be travelling through. Are you familiar with it?

TARAN'ATAR
Can you provide a more detailed view?

Vaughn taps keys, and the graphic zooms in on the loop. Taran'atar inspects it, and points to one section.

TARAN'ATAR
I have visited this system...
(points to another)
And I have knowledge of these. They are lifeless, and entirely ordinary. To my knowledge, the Dominion has never travelled beyond these systems.

Vaughn turns off the screen, turns seriously to Taran'atar.

VAUGHN
I'd like to ask you something else. Do you think the Dominion will try to thwart our attempt to explore the Gamma Quadrant?

TARAN'ATAR

You watched the message I
delivered from the Founder.

VAUGHN

Yes, but I was looking for your
own opinion on the matter.

TARAN'ATAR

My opinion is not necessary. No
opinion is necessary. The Founder
said it, therefore it is so.

VAUGHN

(sigh)

Very well. Thank you for your time
and assistance.

TARAN'ATAR

Why are you doing this?

VAUGHN

Exploring the Gamma Quadrant?

TARAN'ATAR

Yes. You know nothing of where you
are going, and you are worried
about an attack by the Dominion.

VAUGHN

The fact that we know nothing is
the whole reason we're going.
Plus... it's our nature. Humans
and other races find meaning in
their lives by extending their
knowledge. It's one of the reasons
I transferred to Deep Space Nine.

TARAN'ATAR

It is a weakness.

VAUGHN

What isn't? Thank you again.

Taran'atar takes the dismissal and leaves.

26 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Kira is catching up on paperwork. The comm system signals.

ENSIGN (comm)
Ops to Colonel Kira.

KIRA
Kira here, go ahead.

ENSIGN (comm)
Colonel, I thought you'd want to
know - the *Trager* is requesting
clearance to dock.

Kira tenses. The *Trager* is Macet's ship, Dukat's cousin,
and she is not quite sure if she trusts him yet.

KIRA
Put Gul Macet through to me,
Ensign.

ENSIGN (comm)
Aye sir.

A moment, and MACET's face appears on the screen. He looks
so much like Dukat, Kira has to stop herself from hissing.

MACET (screen)
(genuinely)
Colonel Kira, how nice to see you.

KIRA
Gul Macet. I'd like to know the
purpose of your visit to Deep
Space Nine before I authorise you
to dock.

Macet seems genuinely surprised to be asked, which only
annoys Kira more - she assumes it's arrogance.

KIRA
Is there a problem, Macet? Don't
you have a good reason for
visiting the station?

MACET (screen)
Yes of course, Colonel, of course.
It's simply that... I'm surprised
you haven't already been advised.
We're here to help transport the
Europani back to Europa Nova.

KIRA
How do you know about that? I was
only informed this afternoon.

MACET (screen)
I was contacted by Admiral Akaar.

KIRA
Admiral - ... I see.

She tightens, annoyed at Akaar's end-run around her, and
ashamed of her mistrust of Macet.

KIRA
I'm sorry, Gul Macet. You have my
authorisation to dock. I'm just a
little tired this evening.

MACET (screen)
Not at all. And Colonel... my crew
will remain aboard my ship while
we're docked at the station.

He's being remarkably considerate - the station's residents
won't want to see Cardassians. It warms Kira. He signs off,
and she looks back over to the book on her shelf again.

KIRA
"Anew will shine the twilight of
their destiny." Well, something's
definitely coming.

27 **INT. DEFIANT - CORRIDOR**

Lieutenant Nog steps out of a door and into the corridor,
paying attention to the padd he is reading. He is checking
the progress of the repairs, and is generally pleased,
strutting down the corridor quite happily.

Just as Nog turns a corner, he SLAMS into Ensign Roness. He drops his padd, she drops the equipment she was carrying, and they both tumble to the deck with a thump.

NOG

Sorry, sorry...

RONESS

No no, I'm sorry, sir.

They struggle to help each other up, have a few comical moments of reaching for the dropped items at the same time and bumping heads, and generally enjoy a bit of a giggle.

RONESS

Are you hurt, sir? I didn't see you, I -

NOG

It's alright, Gerda, I wasn't looking where I was going. I was too busy checking diagnostics.

RONESS

I guess we're all pretty busy checking diagnostics these days.

NOG

So how's the work going?

RONESS

Really well. Ensign Senkowski and his team just finished repairing the last of the hull breaches, and they're nearly done replacing the ablative armour.

NOG

That's great. Well, I need to get down to the computer core. Carry on, Ensign.

They both carry on their way. Nog reaches a lift, presses a button, waits a moment, the doors open, and he steps in.

28 **INT. DEFIANT - TURBOLIFT (CONTINUOUS)**

NOG

Deck three, port computer core.

The turbolift starts moving while Nog goes back to his padd. After a moment, the lift stops, the doors OPEN, Nog walks forward, and immediately SLAMS into another body.

But this one does not move. It's like a brick wall, and Nog is thrown back to the floor with a CRASH. He looks up...

...and Taran'atar is there.

This is the first time that the tiny Ferengi has faced the Jem'Hadar one-on-one, and he is instantly as terrified as we have ever seen him. He stares up at the craggy horned face, shaking and shuffling back into a corner, trying to get as far away as he can. He just knows that the monster is going to kill him.

Taran'atar looks down at him from the doorway, unmoved.

NOG

(whisper, terrified)

Don't hurt me...

29 **FLASHBACK - 7x08 "THE SIEGE OF AR-558"**

-- Nog being shot by a Jem'Hadar, screaming in pain.
-- Nog on the makeshift operating table as Doctor Bashir amputates his leg.

30 **BACK TO SCENE**

Taran'atar looks down at Nog, seeming to size him up. Nog is scratching at his biosynthetic leg, his nervous tic.

TARAN'ATAR

We are not at war with each other.
Did you hurt your leg?

NOG

(hissing)

You shot my leg off.
(try again)

A Jem'Hadar shot my leg off. It's artificial.

TARAN'ATAR

You are fortunate to have reclaimed your life.

NOG

I don't feel fortunate. Would you feel fortunate to trade your leg for a chunk of barren rock in the Chin'toka system?

TARAN'ATAR

Chin'toka. I am aware of it. The Dominion housed a communications relay there during the war with your people. Seventy-two Jem'Hadar were killed in that action.

NOG

They were trying to kill us!

TARAN'ATAR

It was the Founders' will.

NOG

That doesn't make it right!

TARAN'ATAR

Of course it does. Everything done in the name of the Founders is right.

NOG

Shooting my leg off?!

TARAN'ATAR

Those Jem'Hadar soldiers were trying to kill you, I'm sure. Their mission was to defend the communications array. They were carrying out their duty. You resisted them. Shooting you was the appropriate thing to do.

(beat)

Everything done in the name of the
Founders is right. If that were
not so, I would not be here.

He leans down, bringing his face much closer to Nog's.

TARAN'ATAR

Or you would not be here.

Taran'atar stands up straight again, gives a last cold
glare down at Nog, then turns and walks away.

The turbolift door finally closes, leaving Nog alone,
shuddering in a terrified ball in the corner.

NOG

(whisper)

I hate them.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

31 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

QUARK is slumped over his bar, chin in his hands. RO LAREN sits on the other side of the bar. The bar is almost empty, only a half-dozen patrons and TREIR, the new Orion dabo girl, sitting by the dabo wheel looking equally bored.

QUARK

I'm ruined. Just look at this place. It's not even twenty-six hundred and there are only -

(counts them)

- seven customers here. And one of them's not even conscious.

RO

Well, I'm not saying you're not having a bad night, but ruined?

QUARK

Believe me, this is the start of a down turn. Even Morn isn't here. Giving a poetry reading in his quarters, Great River help us.

Quark gestures towards Ro's empty glass.

QUARK

Another *pooncheenee*?

RO

What else have you got?

Quark rummages in his stocks, and brings out a bottle.

QUARK

Hmm... how about Saurian Brandy?

She shrugs and nods. He pours the drink.

QUARK

It was Captain Sisko's favourite.
I'll say this for the man - for a
Starfleet type, he sure knew the
value of quality catering.

RO

You're not all that fond of
"Starfleet types," are you?

QUARK

Well, you have to admit, they're
not much fun.

RO

You know, I was a Starfleet type.

QUARK

You may have worn the uniform, but
I seriously doubt you were ever
the Starfleet type.

He smiles, but then straightens as Vaughn approaches.

QUARK

Commander Vaughn. Come for a
nightcap?

VAUGHN

Not exactly, Quark. Did you
procure that item I ordered?

QUARK

Oh, yes.

Quark grabs another bottle and hands it to Vaughn.

QUARK

Here you go, Commander. Now, how
will you be paying for that?

Vaughn smiles. He can't blame Quark for trying.

VAUGHN

Obviously it slipped your mind
that you asked for full payment
when I ordered it.

QUARK
(fake surprise)
Oh, of course. How silly of me.

Vaughn sighs and looks around the near-empty bar.

VAUGHN
The station has quietened down
some since the Europani left.

QUARK
The Europani and the crews of
their ships.

VAUGHN
Well, I hope business improves for
you. Thank you for this.
(to Ro)
Good evening, Lieutenant.

Vaughn leaves with his bottle, and Quark turns to Ro.

QUARK
You were awfully quiet.

RO
Yeah... I actually like Commander
Vaughn. It's just... I guess
you're right. I'm not the
Starfleet type.

QUARK
Take it from me, that's not the
worst thing in the world.

Suddenly he stands again, alerted to a noise only he can
hear, and looking pleasantly surprised.

QUARK
I hear a group of people... a
large group of people, heading
this way.

RO
I don't hear anything. You sure?

QUARK
(deadpan)
Did I mention the ears?

Then a whole crowd of people, human, Bajorans and other aliens, led by MORN, all enter the bar at once, chattering happily. The clientele has quadrupled at least. Morn takes his place at the bar. Ro gets up and prepares to leave.

QUARK
That must have been some poetry
reading. No, you're leaving?

RO
I preferred the quiet. Thank you
for the brandy.

She leans in close, and whispers right into his ear.

RO
Put it on my tab.

She walks saucily out, his eyes glued to her behind.

32 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Admiral Akaar steps out of a turbolift, ducking his head. The super-tall officer looks a little lost in the corridors. He walks one direction, peering at signage on the walls, not really understanding what it says.

He shakes his head in exasperation, tries heading back in the other direction. Finally he finds the door he was looking for, and presses the door chime.

33 INT. DS9 - VAUGHN'S QUARTERS

The door opens, and Akaar sees Vaughn by the window on the opposite side of the room, just turning to see him. Akaar peers into the room, steps in, ducking his head again.

VAUGHN
Did you travel half-way across the
quadrant to inspect my quarters,

Admiral, or are you going to greet me with an open heart and hand?

AKAAR

Elias.

They approach warmly, do the heart-hand gesture opposite each other, clasping each other's arms in friendship.

VAUGHN

LJ, it's good to see you again.

AKAAR

And you, Elias. Although I'm never certain where I'll find you next.

VAUGHN

I make my way around. May I offer you something to eat or drink?

AKAAR

Considering the legibility of their signposts, I'm afraid to think what may come out of a Cardassian replicator.

VAUGHN

Then it's lucky I have this.

He pulls out the bottle Quark gave him; Akaar recognises it and is happily surprised.

AKAAR

Capellan *grosz*? Oh Elias, well done. How did you find it?

VAUGHN

The barkeeper here has some... interesting connections.

Vaughn finds some tiny snifter glasses and pours one for each of them. They raise them in a toast.

AKAAR

To old friends.

VAUGHN

And getting older all the time.

They settle down and sit on the low couches.

AKAAR

I wanted to ask your opinion,
Elias, about Gul Macet.

VAUGHN

His intentions seem genuine, but
regardless, his assistance has
been invaluable. Although I'm not
sure everybody shares my opinion.

AKAAR

What about Colonel Kira?

VAUGHN

Well I can't speak for her, of
course, but I believe she's...
cautious. But she's always put
aside any personal feelings for
the greater good.

AKAAR

What do you think of her, Elias?

VAUGHN

I like her.

AKAAR

That's not what I was asking.

VAUGHN

She's decisive, loyal, solid under
pressure. Maybe a little quick to
temper. Not always as diplomatic
as you might expect of a command
officer, but I find it refreshing.
She's young to be in a position of
such authority, especially for
someone with no formal military or
command training. But I think
there are some things Starfleet
could stand to learn from her.

AKAAR

And how is Prynn?

VAUGHN

She's well.

AKAAR

I've followed her service record. She's considered an exceptional conn officer.

VAUGHN

Do you have something to say, LJ?

AKAAR

Elias, do you think it's wise to have Prynn with you on the *Defiant* in the Gamma Quadrant?

VAUGHN

You said it yourself, she's an exceptional officer. She deserves a chance at alpha shift. And right now, the *Defiant* can use her.

AKAAR

Having Prynn on the bridge is irresponsible and dangerous, more so if she still blames you for what happened to her mother.

(beat)

I'm sorry, Elias, but I've taken steps to have Prynn reassigned.

VAUGHN

(stares, imploring)

Don't do this, LJ.

AKAAR

Captain Mello has agreed to take Prynn onboard the *Gryphon*, and she's offered her own alpha shift conn officer for *Defiant's* trip through the Gamma Quadrant.

VAUGHN

Do you believe I haven't thought through all this? I have. I've fought with myself over and over. I've thought about having her reassigned. I've thought about transferring myself. LJ, I believe there's a reason I was led to this station, and it was to reconnect with Prynn. Please don't take that away from me.

Akaar stops to think about what Vaughn has said. Vaughn presses his advantage.

VAUGHN

Why would Prynn still be on DS-Nine, and ready to pilot the *Defiant*, if some part of her didn't want to reconnect with me? And if you're concerned that I'll somehow jeopardise the crew because Prynn is on the ship, I can promise you that won't happen.

AKAAR

I know. And that is what concerns me. That you will do the right thing for the crew, even if it is the wrong thing for you and Prynn. I'm not worried about your crew, Elias. I'm worried about you.

They hold each other's eyes, not knowing which way to go.

34 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Ensign Shar stands in front of the door to another set of quarters, holding a padd. He knows he has to go in, but is trying to think of some reason he can get out of it.

Finally taking a deep breath and resigning himself, he stabs the door panel, the door opens, and he steps in.

35 INT. DS9 - SHAR'S QUARTERS

CHARIVRETHA, Shar's mother, is placing materials for a meal around a circular cloth laid on the floor. She smiles at Shar warmly as he steps further into the room.

CHARIVRETHA

Thirishar, come in.

SHAR

Good evening, *zhavey*. Thank you for inviting me -

His antennae twitching, Shar realises someone is standing behind him, and turns to see ANICHENT, an Andorian male of a similar age to Shar. He is tall, fit and muscular, his white hair in long dreadlocks like Shar's, then tied in a ponytail. Shar is surprised but thrilled - Anichent is one of his bondmates; strong, dependable, his first young love.

SHAR

Anichent - what are you doing here?

ANICHENT

Hello, Shar.

Shar rushes forward and embraces Anichent tightly, still holding his padd. Anichent is pleased and hugs him tightly back - he wasn't sure Shar would want to see him.

Then Shar senses another presence and turns again to see DIZHEI, a thickset Andorian female of Shar's age. Another of his bondmates - it's a close, affectionate relationship, but not a passionate one.

Seeing her, he first smiles, but then his face drops with realisation, and he turns back to his mother. This is emotional blackmail.

Shar is instantly boiling with rage; the padd SHATTERS in his fist. He takes a couple of angry stalking steps towards the now stern-faced Charivretha, before regaining control enough to stop himself. Charivretha watches him coolly.

CHARIVRETHA

What will you do now, my *chei*?

SHAR

How could you do this? Why would you do this? Do you think -

THRISS (o.s.)

We all did this, Shar.

He turns again to see another Andorian female emerging from the bedroom. This is THRISS, delicate and waifish, the last of his bondmates, and his true passionate love.

THRISS

(continuing)

We miss you.

He rushes to her, grabbing her even more lovingly than he did Anichent, swinging her around in happiness at seeing her. Dizhei and Anichent both come closer too, happy to have the whole four-way bond-group together at last.

SHAR

Thriss... Thriss...

DIZHEI

We love you.

SHAR

(to all three)

I know. I love you too.

ANICHENT

Then come back with us. Come home.

Shar droops, stepping away from them all. It's much harder to say no to them than to his mother, but he still has to.

SHAR

We've talked about this.

THRISS

No, you've talked about it. You've made this decision for all of us.

SHAR

I'm not responsible for your lives. What am I supposed to do?

Am I supposed to let you, or our biology or our culture, decide what my life will be?

CHARIVRETHA

No-one wishes to decide your life for you, Thirishar. Your life is your own. Once you have completed the *shelthreth*, you may return to Starfleet, or do anything else you want to. You need never set foot upon Andor again if that is what you want.

Thriss sobs softly at that prospect; Dizhei moves to comfort her. The emotional blackmail is starting to work.

SHAR

I... maybe... after I return from the mission...

CHARIVRETHA

No. What would happen if you did not return?

SHAR

I have a commitment.

CHARIVRETHA

Commitment? What of your commitment to your bondmates?

(gesturing to the others)

That has existed far longer than your Starfleet career. And it is a personal commitment. More, it is an obligation to your kind.

SHAR

I did not make that commitment. It was made for me.

Charivretha closes on Shar, determined to press the attack.

CHARIVRETHA

You have responsibilities. Look into Thriss's eyes now and tell her you won't come home.

He does look - he is starting to crumble, and he can't let that happen.

CHARIVRETHA

You will do this, Thirishar.

The only thing he can do is turn and leave, so that's what he does.

SHAR

I can't. I'm sorry.

THRISS

(plaintively)

Thirishar!

But he ignores her, as much as it hurts him to do so, and walks out of the door. Thriss, Anichent and Dizhei turn to each other, Thriss in tears, and try to console each other while Charivretha looks after her son in a cold fury.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

36 EXT. DS9 - ESTABLISHING

The *Defiant* is berthed on the docking ring, and the larger, aggressive-looking Akira-class *Gryphon* (last seen in 8x11/8x12) has arrived, sitting at a lower pylon.

37 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Kira sits behind her desk, bemusedly watching Vaughn pace excitedly back and forth in her office.

KIRA

Crew rosters are prepared, though it gave me a little trouble. You are taking almost all my senior officers with you, you know.

She looks up - Vaughn has not really been paying attention. He is bursting with energy, ready for the off.

KIRA

Commander, do you intend to walk to the Gamma Quadrant? I've never seen you like this.

VAUGHN

To tell you the truth, I don't think I've ever been like this. I've wanted to do this for a very long time. Since I was a boy.

KIRA

(smirk)

A boy?

VAUGHN

Yes yes, all those aeons ago. My mother would take me out into the wilderness occasionally, and we'd sit around the fire and I'd look up at all the stars, stretching out forever. I remember thinking

how everything you could conceive
of must be out there somewhere.

KIRA
What happened?

VAUGHN
(a little sadder)
A lot of things happened, Colonel.
Things always happen.

KIRA
Well, Commander, you've only got
ninety more minutes before you
officially become an explorer.

She stands up, walks around to him and reaches out to shake
his hand, a sincere good-luck gesture.

VAUGHN
Permission to disembark, Colonel?

KIRA
Walk with the Prophets, Elias.

He turns to leave, but as the doors open, Admiral Akaar is
there, entering without being asked. Kira's mood cools
considerably to see him.

KIRA
Admiral.

AKAAR
Colonel. I wanted a moment with
Commander Vaughn before he left.
(turning to Vaughn)
I wish to bid you a safe and
prosperous journey, Commander.

VAUGHN
Thank you, Admiral. And... thank
you, for the other thing.

They nod their acknowledgements to each other, and Vaughn
leaves, jogging down the stairs. Akaar turns to Kira.

AKAAR

Do you have a moment to talk,
Colonel? I have a few more
questions, if you don't mind.

She really does not want to have to deal with any more
invasive questions from this supercilious Admiral.

KIRA

Not at all, please take a seat.

38 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

Still bouncing with eagerness, Vaughn walks along the
corridor, soon reaching the airlock. Shar is close behind,
carrying a backpack and not looking quite so excited.

VAUGHN

All ready for the off, Ensign?

SHAR

Almost, sir.

Vaughn enters the airlock, and Shar is about to follow him
when he hears Thriss's soft voice.

THRISS

Thirishar.

She looks puffy and bloodshot, as if she has been crying.
Dropping his bag, Shar turns to a nearby security officer.

SHAR

Lieutenant, could I ask you to
give us a moment, please?

The security nods and steps into the airlock. Shar takes
Thriss's arm and leads her a few steps down the corridor.

SHAR

Thriss, what are you doing here?

THRISS

(tearfully)

Thirishar, please. Don't go. We
love you. I love you. I need you.

SHAR

What am I supposed to do?

THRISS

Come back to Andor with us.

At last, he gives in - he can't stand seeing her like this.

SHAR

I will.

THRISS

(hardly daring
to believe)

You will?

SHAR

I'll visit as soon as I return.

THRISS

No. Please. Now.

SHAR

Thriss, this is what I can do
right now. But it's a promise. I
will come home.

(taps combadge)

ch'Thane to Lieutenant Ro.

RO (comm)

This is Ro.

SHAR

Lieutenant, I need to ask a
favour. My bondmates are here on
the station, and they'll be here
until I return from the Gamma
Quadrant. I'd like for them to be
able to stay together in my
quarters. Will you arrange that?
I know it's an unusual request.

RO (comm)

I'd be happy to, Shar. Where are
they now?

SHAR

They're staying with my zhavey -
with Councillor zh'Thane. Their
names are Shathrissia zh'Cheen,
Thavanichent th'Dani and Vindizhei
sh'Rraazh.

A moment of silence, as Ro tries to process the names.

RO (comm)

Glad I'm recording this. Trying to
spell those names would probably
kill me.

SHAR

Thank you, Laren.

RO (comm)

You're welcome. Safe journey,
Shar. Ro out.

Now alone again, Thriss embraces Shar tightly.

THRISS

I love you.

SHAR

Wait for me.

They kiss deeply, and then Shar slowly steps away, picks up
his bag and enters the airlock, leaving Thriss alone.

39 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Kira is sat back behind her desk, tight and indignant but
fighting not to show it. Akaar sits opposite her.

KIRA

Forgive me Admiral, but isn't this
information available to you from
other sources than me?

AKAAR

Does that mean you cannot, or will
not, answer my question?

KIRA

I can answer it, Admiral, and I will, but -

AKAAR

Do you think Bajor is committed to its own defence right now?

KIRA

Of course. The common defence is one of the central foundations of our government. But I don't care how many replicators Starfleet has provided, they're still spread pretty thinly. If you're implying that there is some other -

AKAAR

I am implying nothing. I simply wish to know if you believe Bajor is prepared to stand on its own.

KIRA

I believe that's what I said.

AKAAR

And what are your reasons for believing that?

KIRA

You know what, Admiral? I think this is a conversation you'd be better off having with First Minister Shakaar.

AKAAR

I am having this conversation with you. Your people are widely regarded as spiritual, Colonel. Is it possible that your collective spirituality defines your society to such an extent that it precludes developing a strong military infrastructure?

KIRA

We have to defend ourselves. But we're also accountable for other responsibilities. And yes, our spirituality guides us along our collective path.

AKAAR

What of those not on the path?

Kira ERUPTS, taking this as a personal slight. She slaps her hands on the desk and shoots up out of her chair.

KIRA

(seething)

That's it. This meeting is over.

AKAAR

(calmly)

Colonel, I am simply asking about your people. Trying to learn about their ways of life, who they are.

KIRA

There's been nothing simple about any of your questions, Admiral. In the few times you've talked to me since your arrival, you've managed to question Bajor's commitment to providing aid to Cardassia, our willingness to defend ourselves, our spirituality, the way I run the station, and now my Attainder.

Akaar slowly rises to his full height - at least a foot taller than Kira. She refuses to be intimidated.

AKAAR

I was not making reference to your Attainder. I am not here to pry into your personal life.

KIRA

Why are you here?

Akaar takes a moment, because this is big news.

AKAAR

I am in the Bajoran system to meet with Councillor zh'Thane and First Minister Shakaar. I am on DS-Nine to preside over a summit between a delegation of representatives from Bajor and two from the United Federation of Planets.

(beat)

And I am in your office to inform you of this summit, at which Bajor's application to join the Federation will be decided.

Kira sits back down stunned, the wind knocked out of her. She looks once again back over to the book of prophecies resting on her shelf. Akaar sits back down opposite her.

KIRA

The Federation...

AKAAR

Yes, Colonel. Shall we continue?

Kira gazes on, still astonished...

40 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

Close on Commander Vaughn in the centre seat, a small smile under his beard. He is not one to be too expressive while in command, but even he cannot resist being happy about this. He taps the console at his side.

VAUGHN

All hands, this is Commander Vaughn. Seven years ago, Benjamin Sisko and Jadzia Dax discovered a stable wormhole, which opened the door to an entire quadrant of new worlds. The war, sadly, closed that door to us. But the war's over now. As of this moment... we are back in the Gamma Quadrant.

The crew CHEERS, claps or otherwise celebrates. We can hear the rest of the ship doing likewise over the comm. The enthusiasm is infectious across the ship.

VAUGHN

On inhabited worlds all over the galaxy, courageous expeditions have taken place to explore the unknown.

(a nod to Nog)

The great Jalia, who discovered the Outer Islands on Ferenginar.

(a nod to Shar)

The crew of the *Kumari*, the first Andorian vessel to circumnavigate their globe. And the two men who led the expedition across the North American continent on Earth - Meriwether Lewis and William Clark.

Vaughn gives a loving gaze to Prynn Tenmei, who sits at the helm, looking back at him and smiling.

VAUGHN

Let us therefore, on this star date, rededicate ourselves to that ideal. All stations, report status.

A nice sweeping shot around all the senior staff as they eagerly wait for the mission to begin.

BOWERS

Tactical and communications, ready.

TENMEI

Navigation and flight operations, ready.

SHAR

Science and sensors, ready.

NOG

Impulse engines are online, warp power available on your command.

BASHIR

Life support at optimum. Medical bay standing by.

DAX

The ship is ready, Captain. Your orders?

VAUGHN

(smiling)

Release all docking clamps. Aft thrusters at one-quarter, port and starboard thrusters at station keeping.

TENMEI

Docking clamps released. Aft thrusters one-quarter. DS9 signals we are cleared for departure.

VAUGHN

Ensign ch'Thane, let's see where we're going. Activate the main viewer.

SHAR

Main viewer, aye.

The main screen comes to life with an image of the star field, the wisps of the Denorios Belt gradually coming closer. Vaughn gazes at it with anticipation.

VAUGHN

Ensign Tenmei, set course for the wormhole. Ahead one-half impulse. Take us in.

41 **EXT. SPACE - DS9**

Running lights bright and proudly showing the name, the *Defiant* arcs away from the station and towards the wormhole. As the ship reaches the Denorios Belt, the bright lights and swirling energies of the wormhole burst open.

42 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

Close on Vaughn, as he smiles into the light.

43 EXT. SPACE

The ship dives into the wormhole, which closes up behind them to leave empty space.

FADE OUT:

THE END