

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

9x19 - "Warpth."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novel

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: Warpth

by David Mack

NOTE: This episode features three different versions of Kira Nerys. For clarity, we will refer to them as follows:

KIRA - Captain Kira Nerys of Starfleet, currently in the infirmary after being attacked by Taran'atar.

INTENDANT KIRA - The Mirror Kira, Intendant of Bajor, on board a Klingon Alliance vessel, tracking rebels.

GENERAL KIRA - A mythical figure from Bajor's ancient past, leading her armies, a vision experienced by our Kira.

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 STARFIELD

A calm, peaceful shot of the galaxy at large...

KURN (o.s.)

We have the strength to crush them.
We should be making a direct
assault on the rebels at Terok Nor.

PULL BACK slowly to show INTENDANT KIRA's face, gazing out over the starscape. She is only half paying attention...

MACET (o.s.)

I concur. We could retake the
station, and break the back of
the rebellion once and for all.

Kira smiles, pitying their shortsightedness. She finally turns to them, indulgent - revealing...

2 INT. INTENDANT'S STATEROOM

...MU-KURN, the boisterous and extravagant Klingon general, dressed in heavy armour with many medals, drinking messily from a stein.

In contrast is MU-MACET (not Dukat), the Cardassian Gul - dark and smooth, sinister and economical.

They sit side-by-side in the Intendant's lavish quarters aboard *Negh'var*, as seen in 9x07 "Saturn's Children". The VULCAN HANDMAIDEN from 9x07 tidies ignored in background.

As the Intendant turns to face them, we see the expansive picture window behind her, with the starfield. She is in her full regalia - black catsuit and silver headdress...

INTENDANT KIRA

At what cost? The rebels have fortified it well, and they're poised to retaliate against Bajor itself. If we lay siege to Terok Nor, we lose Bajor. If they destroy Bajor, we annihilate them and their rebellion. Stalemate.

KURN

You mean to push into the Badlands then. A system-by-system cleansing of the rebel strongholds. That will be a glorious campaign.

Kira's stare conceals a sneer of contempt. Kurn is so far off the mark, Kira pities him. Macet shakes his head...

MACET

Madness. Most of those settlements are little more than lures. Bait meant to draw our ships into danger while the rebels fall back and regroup at Sindorin, where our sensors are all but useless.

INTENDANT KIRA

Quite right, Macet. That's why I deployed the Ninth Klingon Fleet in a sneak attack on Sindorin two hours ago.

Admiring smirk from Macet, appreciative growl from Kurn...

KURN

Regent Martok let you use his beloved Ninth Fleet, did he? What did that cost you?

INTENDANT KIRA

(dark)

More than you will ever know, Kurn.

(lighter)

Once the Ninth Fleet regroups with
the *Negh'var*, we'll be ready to
move on to our next objective.

MACET

And what is our next objective?

INTENDANT KIRA

All in due time, Macet.

KURN

If it's not Terok Nor, and the
Badlands have already been
cleared, then what are you
scheming, Intendant?

(grin)

Not planning to overthrow Martok,
I hope?

INTENDANT KIRA

(pause, then softly)

Control of the Alliance? That's
always been your weakness, Kurn.
You think too small.

On the Intendant's knowing smile...

BLACK OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

3 EXT. SPACE

The NAHANAS COMET. The icy grey mass drifts along, a small cloud of debris leading to the nearby *Euphrates*.

The runabout drifts, rolls slightly, dark and powerless.

The *Defiant* uncloaks in space directly over the comet...

4 ON THE COMET

Two MUNITIONS CANISTERS sit at the bottom of a deep and icy crevice, wired up with components from an environment suit. A Starfleet combadge sits on top of the canisters.

A TRANSPORTER EFFECT begins to take the entire package...

5 EXT. SPACE - RUNABOUT

The runabout suddenly comes to life - lights on, engines surge with power...

6 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

A finger touches a control on the pilot's panel... the rest of the hand UNSHROUDS... moving quickly up to the rest of the body... revealing TARAN'ATAR alone in the cockpit.

7 EXT. SPACE

The runabout stabilises its position and immediately jumps to WARP, bursting away.

...and the comet EXPLODES, buffeting the *Defiant* with rock and ice. The ship is knocked backwards, rolling over...

8 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Taran'atar checks readings, nods with satisfaction, walks to the transporter station, works the panels...

...and TENMEI beams onto the platform, without combadge.

TENMEI

What happened?

TARAN'ATAR

You may resume your post. Do not
alter course.

Warily, she steps off the transporter platform, moves back
towards the pilot station. On the way she steps over the
open hatch where he got the munitions canisters.

She sits down, reads various panels - and is taken aback...

TENMEI

You held me in the pattern buffer.
For more than fifteen minutes.

TARAN'ATAR

Yes.

TENMEI

You could have just beamed me into
space.

TARAN'ATAR

I still could.

TENMEI

So why haven't you?

TARAN'ATAR

You may yet prove useful. Until
I reach my destination, your
presence gives me... options.

TENMEI

I see. And then?

TARAN'ATAR

I do not hesitate to kill, Ensign.
But neither do I kill without
reason. So it would be in your
interest not to give me a reason.

Tenmei turns back to her panels. Taran'atar watches, aware
that he will have to keep a close eye on her...

9 **EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE**

Establishing, suggesting the tension of the situation...

10 **INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY**

KIRA lies in a coma on a biobed, in hospital smocks.

Out of visual range and almost out of earshot, the business of the Infirmary goes on around her.

Close on her unconscious face...

11 **FAST MONTAGE**

-- Kira in the white space of the Prophets

-- Taran'atar's knife slices into Kira's chest

-- The biobed sensors flatline

-- The Opaka-Prophet cradles Kira's face

12 **EXT. BAJOR - DAY**

GENERAL KIRA is military commander of the army of the Bajora. She wears regal robes now dirty from travel, armour strategically placed. A deadly SWORD hangs at her hip.

Behind her on the long, dusty road rides a great army of SOLDIERS, all either on the same type of animal or walking.

They all ride to the giant stone fort of PAREK TONN. Fires burn in its windows, figures move around its battlements. MOUNTAINS loom in the distance, dark and misty.

All of Kira's generals are people we know. One of them comes up alongside now, sharing her discomfort at this sight. It is SISKO, as a Bajoran general...

GENERAL KIRA
You see it too, Jamin?

SISKO
The fires are lit - the fortress
is occupied, and in numbers.

GENERAL KIRA

Could the Paqu have moved against
us while we were in the East?

SISKO

I doubt that.

In time, the Bajora army stands at the base of the fort -
Kira and Sisko right in front of the great wooden doors.
They look up at the walls of the fort, worried...

GENERAL KIRA

Hail!

A low, soft, rumbling voice echoes out from the fort...

ITU (o.s.)

Declare yourself.

GENERAL KIRA

I am General Kira Nerys of the
Bajora. This is Parek Tonn, my
people's fortress. Open the gates
and welcome us home.

ITU (o.s.)

This is not your fortress. It is
ours.

GENERAL KIRA

(stunned, furious)

Who dares to seize our home and
deny it to my face? Show yourself!

A figure emerges onto the battlements, high above them, and
looks down at the army... ITU the Eav'oq, as seen in 8x23
"Rising Son."

Tall white tubular body, long pink ribbon-like limbs, one
wide frowning eye in its face. Kira looks up, horrified at
the creature's alien appearance...

ITU

We are the Eav'oq. We are the ones
who have defended this fortress
for millennia.

GENERAL KIRA
You've defended? But this is --

ITU
-- our fortress.

Kira is getting increasingly incensed at this monster's ludicrous claims. She is tired and in no mood for this...

GENERAL KIRA
And against whom, exactly, have
you defended this fortress?

ITU
Against them.

The Eav'oq reaches out a limb, pointing into the distance. Kira and Sisko turn and look back, where they came from...

...and far in the distance, way on the horizon, something is kicking up a huge amount of dust.

SISKO
(dismayed)
Another army is approaching...

Off Kira and Sisko's disquiet...

13 FAST MONTAGE

-- Taran'atar's knife lodges in Kira's chest

-- The real Kira screaming and crying as flames lick all around her (taken from later in this episode)

-- The Opaka-Prophet's face gazing up at her

14 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

Kira still lies on her biobed, the vision going on inside her unconscious mind...

15 EXT. SPACE - RUNABOUT

The *Euphrates* still running at high warp...

16 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

The vessel is starting to VIBRATE as it is pushed to speeds it was never designed for.

Tenmei pilots, Taran'atar stands slightly behind, splitting his attention between her and his computer scans...

TENMEI

Aren't you going to sit down?

TARAN'ATAR

On Jem'Hadar vessels, there are no seats. Comfort breeds weakness.

TENMEI

You could have just said no.

TARAN'ATAR

I have observed that humans tend to understand Jem'Hadar ways better when they are explained in context.

TENMEI

I don't really give a damn about you or your context. If you like talking about yourself, go ahead, but I'm not looking at our time together as a learning experience.

TARAN'ATAR

Fair enough.

Taran'atar turns back to his scans. Taking a chance, Tenmei moves one hand subtly towards a certain control, TAPS it...

...and the ship JERKS with massive deceleration. Tenmei braces herself against the panels...

...but Taran'atar is THROWN violently forward, CRASHES into the forward window, knocks the seat right off its moorings.

17 **EXT. SPACE**

Euphrates drops out of warp unexpectedly, DRIFTS to a halt, the nacelles sparking and smoking with venting gas...

18 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Consoles are dark or showing red warning lights. Taran'atar gathers his wits quickly, looks around himself...

TARAN'ATAR

Report. What has happened to the engines?

TENMEI

They were experimental. They weren't ready for a prolonged flight, especially not at full speed for this long.

TARAN'ATAR

(sneer)

You sabotaged the ship.

TENMEI

I didn't need to. This was bound to happen sooner or later. All I had to do was not tell you.

TARAN'ATAR

How convenient for you, then, that it failed now.

BEEP - an emergency comm signal comes in. Beeps repeatedly, demanding attention. Tenmei waits, wonders what to do...

Taran'atar steps close up behind her, disappears into his SHROUD, whispers in her ear...

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)

Do not tell them you have been hijacked or that I am aboard. Do not attempt to send any coded messages. Do you understand?

TENMEI

(scared)

Yes, I understand.

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)

Open the channel.

Tenmei taps the keys - and the screen at her side changes to show the face of QURAG, a fairly minor Klingon captain.

QURAG (screen)
This is Captain Qurag of the
Klingon patrol vessel *noH'pach*.
Identify yourself.

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)
Answer him.

TENMEI
This is Ensign Prynn Tenmei aboard
the Starfleet runabout *Euphrates*.

QURAG (screen)
We detected your engine failure.
Do you require assistance?

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)
Yes.

TENMEI
Yes, Captain.

QURAG (screen)
We will change course to intercept
you. Stand ready to receive a
repair crew in two minutes.

TENMEI
Thank you, Captain.

QURAG (screen)
noH'pach out.

The Klingon's face disappears from the screen. Tenmei speaks to the empty space beside her...

TENMEI
Now what?

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)
Now you remain seated and still,
or else I will kill you.

19 **EXT. SPACE - RUNABOUT**

A new vessel drops out of warp near the drifting runabout. It is small, the Klingon equivalent of a runabout. Similar size, but sleeker, and suitably battle-ready.

The Klingon ship snags the Starfleet vessel in a sparkling red TRACTOR BEAM, slowing the ship's erratic flight...

20 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Tenmei turns in her seat to watch two Klingon transporter signatures deliver two Klingon males - KOTH and ORRUK.

KOTH

I am Koth, chief mechanic of the
IKS *noH'pach*. This is my
assistant, Orruk.

ORRUK

I am not your assistant. I am the
chief scientist.

KOTH

(menacing)

Captain Qurag sent you to assist
me. At this time, in this place,
you are my assistant.

TENMEI

(nervous)

Can this wait until after you fix
my ship?

Koth turns back to Tenmei, as charming as a Klingon can be. It is creepy and unpleasant in the circumstances. She knows Taran'atar is lurking somewhere in the room...

KOTH

Of course.

The two Klingons turn to the consoles and tap at them...

ORRUK

Mains are offline.

KOTH

Reserves are intact but unable to deliver the power. We're going to check your ship's nacelles.

Orruk sniffs the air, suddenly draws his disruptor...

KOTH

What in the name of *Fek'lh*r are you doing?

ORRUK

There's someone else here. I can smell him.

Taran'atar UNSHROUDS behind Orruk - the Klingon spins and levels his disruptor. Taran'atar KNOCKS it away, PUNCHES Orruk right under the chin, breaks his neck in one shot.

Koth ROARS and charges with dagger out, but stops with a GURGLE, and looks down -- to find Orruk's own *dk'tahg* in his chest. The two bodies slump to the ground, dead.

Tenmei stands from her chair, enraged and horrified...

TENMEI

You didn't have to kill them!

TARAN'ATAR

They acted with lethal force. I defended myself.

TENMEI

Defended yourself? You butchered -

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

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

21 INT. NOH' PACH - COCKPIT

The small bridge of the Klingon ship, tight and pokey but with all the usual Klingon signifiers. QURAG sits in a central seat, with two other officers at other positions, awaiting reports from the away team.

Through the forward viewport, the *Euphrates* sits powerless nearby. Then, one of the others reacts to a readout...

KLINGON

Unauthorised transport. One human
life sign. Aft compartment.

QURAG

Go handle it.

The officer gets up from his seat, draws his dagger, walks towards the hatch to the aft compartment...

22 INT. NOH' PACH - REAR CABIN

The room is a mess. Benches serve as both dinner tables and engineering workshops, strewn with half-eaten legs of meat and jugs of bloodwine. The officer enters --

-- but stops at the sight of TENMEI bruised and unconscious on the deck, wrists and ankles tied. As his eyes widen...

...the tip of a dagger ERUPTS from his throat. He splutters as his blood SPURTS out, and then he collapses --

-- revealing Taran'atar holding the dagger. The Jem'Hadar turns towards the cockpit...

23 INT. NOH' PACH - COCKPIT

...marches straight into the cockpit, and SHOOTs Qurag and the last officer dead in a second, before they can react.

He hauls their bodies out of the way, moves to the pilot's console, presses buttons...

24 EXT. SPACE

...and the Klingon ship FIRES on the defenceless runabout. It EXPLODES, leaving only a cloud of debris. The Klingon ship turns and heads off, cloaking and jumping to warp.

MATCH CUT the jump to warp with...

25 EXT. HARKOUM - NIGHT

A fast-running FIGURE chases through a jungle of metal pipes. They DODGE half-finished constructs, BAT loose pipes aside with one hand, grip a DISRUPTOR with the other.

CLOSER

We are watching a KLINGON WOMAN - not military, a civilian mercenary - chase her prey. She grins, relishing the chase.

POV

In the murk ahead is her target - another running figure. The Klingon is the hunter, this other figure is the prey.

WIDER

A disused open air factory-cum-warehouse on a dark, misty night. A dirty RAIN falls, and lightning CRACKS loudly.

The fleeing figure looks back, checks on the Klingon, then turns and disappears into the maze of pipes and metal.

ON KLINGON WOMAN

Annoyed, but enjoying the chase. Another bright FLASH and a loud BANG - the Klingon looks up, sees that the wall she runs past is toppling. She runs harder to try to escape...

...but too late. The first metal pipe HITS, knocks her to the ground. She tries to crawl... but the rest of the wall falls... and her lower body is pinned under a ton of metal.

She HOWLS in rage, refuses to give up even as she is dying. Reaches for the disruptor that was knocked from her grasp.

Then she senses a figure approaching, looks up...

KLINGON WOMAN'S POV

The one she was chasing approaches slowly, looming in the darkness. Lightning FLASHES, silhouetting the figure.

We do not see her face in the dark, only the bony shape of her facial ridges - enough to identify a CARDASSIAN WOMAN.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As the Cardassian Woman stands at a safe distance...

KLINGON WOMAN
I'm bleeding to death.

CARDASSIAN WOMAN
I know.

KLINGON WOMAN
You could give me a warrior's end.

CARDASSIAN WOMAN
I could.

Instead, the Cardassian Woman bends down and picks up the Klingon woman's disruptor, tucks it into her own belt...

KLINGON WOMAN
(furious)
Have you no honour?

CARDASSIAN WOMAN
I do. But I know better than to trust a Klingon who fights her battles for money. You're not a warrior, you're a mercenary. You have no honour.

KLINGON WOMAN
Do I know you?

CARDASSIAN WOMAN
No. You only think you do.

The Cardassian woman turns, walks away into the darkness. The Klingon woman SCREAMS her last breath out in fury...

26 **EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT**

The damaged *Defiant* sits in a cloud of dust and ice - the remains of the Nahanas comet...

27 **INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE**

VAUGHN enters - BOWERS relinquishes the centre seat to him. Everyone else is treading on eggshells around Vaughn...

 VAUGHN
Report, Mister Bowers.

 BOWERS
Main power and sensors restored,
port nacelle repaired. The cloak
seemed like a lower priority,
seeing as we'd already lost the
element of surprise.

 VAUGHN
I'm not sure we ever had it. Do we
have a fix on the *Euphrates*?

 BOWERS
No sir. But its warp field dragged
some particles in its wake, giving
us an idea of their last heading.

 VAUGHN
Alright - helm, get us underway,
maximum warp.

 ZUCCA
Aye, sir.

 BOWERS
I thought I'd head to engineering,
sir - offer Leishman a hand.

 VAUGHN
Dismissed.

Bowers nods acknowledgement and heads out. As the ship goes to warp, Ensign ALECO quietly gets up and follows him...

28 **INT. DEFIANT - CORRIDOR**

Aleco jogs to catch up with Bowers as they walk...

ALECO
Sir, could I speak with you?

BOWERS
What's this about, Ensign?

Aleco looks around nervous, not wanting to be overheard...

ALECO
Is Commander Vaughn alright to
stay in command?

BOWERS
Why? Because of Prynn?

ALECO
C'mon, Lieutenant. The guy just
blew up his own daughter. And now
he's going after the guy he blames
for it.

BOWERS
(unimpressed)
Are you a Betazoid now, Aleco,
instead of a Bajoran?

ALECO
(bristling)
It doesn't take a telepath to know
he's got to be torn up inside. If
he's on a revenge mission, you
have a duty to --

BOWERS
I know my job, Ensign. So does
Commander Vaughn. Has he displayed
any lack of control on the bridge?
Has he done anything irrational?
We all liked Prynn, and we're all
grieving in our own way. Does that
mean we're unfit for duty?

Bowers reaches a turbolift, which opens, and he stops...

BOWERS

(firm)

Return to your post, Mister Aleco.
Dismissed.

He steps into the turbolift and allows the doors to close, leaving Aleco alone and troubled in the corridor...

29 FAST MONTAGE

-- Kira lying in a coma on the Infirmary biobed
-- Taran'atar's knife in Kira's chest
-- Kira in the white space of the Prophets
-- Kira looks at herself in the mirror (from 9x04)

30 EXT. PAREK TONN - DAY

The vision of Ancient Bajor. Kira and Sisko walk the short distance from the gates of Parek Tonn to where their army waits. Vaughn and RO, both as Bajoran soldiers, await...

VAUGHN

Who is barring us from our own
keep? Why won't they let us in?

SISKO

Because they don't have to.

GENERAL KIRA

Parek Tonn is occupied, but it is
still ours. I won't abandon it -
not to these Eav'oq, not to what
ever army marches from the sea.

RO

We're not equipped for a siege.

SISKO

They told us they'd defended the
citadel before - against them.
(re other army)

SISKO (cont)

Do we want to be here when that army arrives? And if we do, what side do we want to be on?

VAUGHN

You're talking about an alliance.

SISKO

It makes sense. If our goal is to be inside the fortress, then we should make it the Eav'oq's goal to bring us inside. With their enemy approaching, it should be a tempting proposition.

RO

This is ridiculous! Why involve ourselves in their fight? We can move to the other side of the mountains and wait out the battle.

VAUGHN

And what happens if the Eav'oq lose control of the fortress to an even more hostile power? I should think we'd find our options far less palatable then.

GENERAL KIRA

Enough! We'll ride under colours back to the gate... and propose an alliance.

Discussion over, decision made. Kira and Sisko mount their riding animals and guide them back towards the fort.

Once they are back at the doors, they look up. The Eav'oq looks back down. Sisko calls out, loud and strong...

SISKO

Hear me, Eav'oq! On behalf of General Kira Nerys of the Bajora, we come to offer a pact of truce. Is there one among you whom you can give us your word of bond?

The Eav'oq gatekeeper turns away for a moment, as if to confer with others. After several seconds he reappears. The Eav'oq's voice echoes back eerily over the stone...

ITU

We have nominated our sister as
our representative in this matter.

The Eav'oq steps back out of sight... and another figure steps out. A older Bajoran woman with white hair - OPAKA.

OPAKA

My name is Opaka Sulan... and I
will speak for the Eav'oq.

From General Kira's surprised face...

31 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

...to the real Kira's unconscious face in the infirmary. RO lies in the next bed, with QUARK slumped across her asleep.

SSHHH of the doors opening, then soft slow FOOTSTEPS. Quark jerks awake, looks nervously towards the door...

A figure has entered, hidden beneath a heavy cloak. Quark tenses, nervous and uncomfortable at this stranger...

...but then the figure pulls back its hood -- and it is the real SISKO. He smiles gently, and Quark relaxes...

SISKO

Hello, Quark.

QUARK

Captain. Nice robe.

SISKO

I wanted to travel incognito.

Sisko turns towards Kira, all his attention now for her. He grabs a chair, sits next to her, takes her hand in his.

Watching this, Quark takes one of Ro's hands likewise. He looks over at Sisko, and they share a nod of understanding and empathy. It's a nice moment of bonding between them.

Looking at Kira's face again...

GENERAL KIRA (v.o.)

All we are asking for is to help
defend the fortress.

We **WHITE OUT**, fading into...

32 EXT. PAREK TONN - DAY

General Kira stands, Sisko by her side, calling up to Opaka on the battlements of the fort, trying to stay calm and control her temper. Opaka is the epitome of diplomacy...

OPAKA

Your aid is welcomed. But the
Eav'oq do not acknowledge your
claim to their fortress.

GENERAL KIRA

But it's been our fortress for
generations!

OPAKA

Are you so sure? Don't be fooled
by facades. Of this fortress, you
have seen only the outer walls.

GENERAL KIRA

What if we negotiate peace between
the Eav'oq and their foes? Will we
be granted shelter then?

OPAKA

The Ascendants will not negotiate.
For eons they have sought this
fortress, but it was hidden from
them, mantled in mist. Now the
road is open, and they are coming
to claim it. Their only aim is to
possess the fortress... or be
annihilated in the attempt.

GENERAL KIRA

If we turn away the Ascendants...
will the Eav'oq grant us haven?

OPAKA
Not until you arrive at the truth.

GENERAL KIRA
Which is...?

OPAKA
You will know it... when you walk
its path.

On General Kira as the memory comes to her...

FLASHBACK

The Opaka-Prophet cradling Kira's face...

BACK TO SCENE

As General Kira ponders the confusing memory that is hers
and yet not hers, and looks up at Opaka...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

33 INSERT

Monitor image of a debris field, clearly Starfleet tech...

ALECO (o.s.)

The wreckage is definitely from
the *Euphrates*. It was destroyed
between five and six hours ago.

34 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

VAUGHN and BOWERS watch the monitor over ALECO's shoulder.
T'RB is next to them, and everyone is listening in...

VAUGHN

Any sign of Taran'atar?

T'RB

We're reading biological residue
from two humanoids - both Klingon.
No sign of Jem'Hadar DNA.

BOWERS

Is it possible the Klingons
captured Taran'atar, then
destroyed the runabout?

VAUGHN

Why would they do that? And even
if they did, why haven't they
notified Starfleet?

(sigh)

No, I'm afraid the most likely
scenario is that not only does
Taran'atar have a huge lead on us,
he now also has a cloaked ship
that's currently faster than us.

ALECO

Won't the Klingons notice that one
of their ships is missing? What
happens when they issue an alert?

VAUGHN

I doubt they will. As a point of pride, the loss of one of their ships isn't something they'd want known, especially not with most of Almatha sector currently under Romulan oversight.

Vaughn nods to himself, an idea occurring...

VAUGHN

Mister Bowers, continue analysing the debris. I have some research to do.

Vaughn turns and stalks out of the bridge, no more said...

Aleco looks up at Bowers, pointedly... and Bowers is forced to accept that maybe Aleco has a point.

35 INT. DEFIANT - READY ROOM

Vaughn enters, moves to the desk computer, presses buttons. It takes a while to enter the program he wants.

At last the screen changes to show the face of a grizzled Klingon veteran, LORGH. He looks groggily into camera...

LORGH (screen)

Oh, it's you. If I'd known, I'd have gone back to bed.

VAUGHN

(all business)

No jokes, Lorgh. Prynn's dead, and the bastard who killed her has one of your ships.

LORGH (screen)

What do I need to know?

VAUGHN

I have reason to believe that a Jem'Hadar named Taran'atar has captured one of your ships in the Almatha sector.

LORGH (screen)
Taran'atar... that would be your
observer? The one sent by Odo?
(Vaughn nods)
What was Prynn's part in this?

VAUGHN
Taran'atar hijacked her runabout
to get off Deep Space Nine. We
found the runabout destroyed a
short while ago, and the remains
of two Klingon personnel.

LORGH (screen)
I see.
(checks records)
There is a scout ship on a regular
patrol near your coordinates - the
noH'pach... and it is overdue to
check in with sector command.

VAUGHN
I don't suppose you can tell me
where the *noH'pach* is now.

LORGH (screen)
No... but I can tell you that it's
a *Haqtaj*-class vessel. The rest
I'm sure you can do on your own.

VAUGHN
Thank you, Lorgh.

LORGH (screen)
If you find the *noH'pach*, I think
the Empire would be grateful if
you kept this incident out of any
official reports.

VAUGHN
Of course.

LORGH (screen)
It would also be wise to avoid any
Romulan involvement.

VAUGHN
I'll try - but I might need to
expose a few of your secrets -
schematics for the *Haqtaj*-class,
for example.

LORGH (screen)
Whatever is necessary.
(beat)
I hope your daughter had the
honour of dying in battle, Elias.
If so, I'm sure she's already
being hailed in Sto-Vo-Kor.

VAUGHN
(blank face)
No doubt.

With a short nod, Lorgh cuts the connection. Vaughn stands, trying and failing to keep his grief reined in. He *won't* go to pieces... he'll rely on anger instead.

36 INT. NOH' PACH - COCKPIT

On Taran'atar as he stands at the pilot's station...

JEM'HADAR FIRST (o.s.)
Curious... do you think this makes
you free?

Taran'atar does not turn, but we PAN sideways to reveal...

...the nameless JEM'HADAR FIRST from Sindorin (from 8x08
"Abyss") standing at the rear of the cockpit, watching him.

QUICK FLASH

-- The First grabs Taran'atar's hair and pulls him close,
as he rests in the First's torture device (from 8x08)

BACK TO SCENE

Taran'atar rubs his eyes, refusing to acknowledge...

TARAN'ATAR
You are not real.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Who are you to judge what is real,
and what is not?

TARAN'ATAR

I am a Jem'Hadar.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

You don't know what that means.

TARAN'ATAR

It means "soldier."

JEM'HADAR FIRST

How can you be so old, and yet so
naive? Soldiers have value. You
and I are expendable, utterly
disposable. We are slaves.

Annoyed, Taran'atar turns to argue despite himself...

TARAN'ATAR

I am not a slave... I serve
willingly.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Captain KIRA looks down at the bloody knife in her chest...

KIRA

Some service.

Taran'atar LAUNCHES across the room, instantly infuriated,
his hands out to throttle Kira where she stands. But...

ANOTHER ANGLE

...the delusion is now WEYOUN, who SLAPS Taran'atar roughly
across the face before he can attack him.

WEYOUN

Remember your place, First!

Momentarily cowed and ashamed, Taran'atar bows his head...

...but then he looks back up angrily into Weyoun's face.

37 **INT. NOH' PACH - REAR CABIN (INTERCUT)**

Tenmei sits on the deck near an open toolbox, bruised and suffering. She rubs her wrist-ties against the rough metal edge of the toolbox, gradually wearing them down.

She looks up at the SOUND of Taran'atar's voice through the walls. He is yelling, having an argument with someone - but we can only hear his side of it, muffled and unclear.

Tenmei frowns, worried that he is going even more insane. It spurs her to work harder at breaking her bonds. Finally they SNAP; she begins untying the ones around her ankles...

38 **INT. NOH' PACH - COCKPIT (INTERCUT)**

Taran'atar's delusion still wears the shape of Weyoun...

WEYOUN

A Jem'Hadar is obedience! Without
it you aren't a Jem'Hadar at all!

TARAN'ATAR

I know.

WEYOUN

What are you, then, now that you
have failed as a Jem'Hadar?

TARAN'ATAR

I am dead. I must reclaim my life.

WEYOUN

So you have left your assignment
to present yourself to the Vorta
for correction, yes?

TARAN'ATAR

(confused)

I have not. I cannot. I will not!

ANOTHER ANGLE

JEM'HADAR FIRST

You just don't want to. And why
should you?

TARAN'ATAR

Because it is the order of things.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Surely you don't still cling to
the outrageous idea that these
Founders are the omnipotent and
omniscient lords of all creation?

Taran'atar turns away, thinking, desperately trying to work
out the confusion in his head...

TARAN'ATAR

The Founder herself denied it. She
proclaimed reverence for another.
I wondered if her confinement had
harmed her... but how could a god
succumb to such trivial punishment?

(pause)

Perhaps she spoke the truth. She
is not a god. And neither is Odo.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Then why continue to bind yourself
to their will?

TARAN'ATAR

Because...

(quiet, defeated)

Because I have no choice.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

(conclusive)

The very definition of a slave.

TARAN'ATAR

I am not a slave!

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Then you've emancipated yourself!

TARAN'ATAR

No... I defied the will of the
Founders... but neither do I obey
my own...

ANOTHER ANGLE

Captain Kira is back, bloody knife in her chest...

KIRA

Then whom do you obey?

Taran'atar is overcome with rage at the mere sight of Kira, and launches against her. But she pulls the knife out of her own chest --

-- and DRIVES it into Taran'atar's. He GASPS in shock and pain, his hands going to his chest --

-- but there is no knife, only his black jumpsuit, and the delusion is gone. He is alone.

He stands, catching his breath, confused, disoriented. He closes his eyes, forces himself to calm through sheer will.

...then an insistent repeated BEEP from a console. He snaps back to attention, checks the console, frowns...

...draws his disruptor, and stomps to the aft compartment. The hatch opens, he steps over the threshold...

39 INT. NOH' PACH - REAR CABIN (CONTINUOUS)

...and FLASH-CRACK - the moment his boot makes contact with the deck plate on this side of the door, he's ELECTROCUTED. White-hot energy all around him. He shudders, shaking on the spot, his body tense and spasming, over and over...

Tenmei huddles in a corner, crouched and hugging her knees, getting as far away as possible. She trembles in fear, but watching her handiwork with a small smile...

It's a typical Starfleet improvised tech job - cables from a ripped open panel in the wall, connected to the deck, feeding the power. At last the panel EXPLODES...

...and Taran'atar slumps to the deck with a THUD, eyes open but no sign of life in them. Skin smoking, clothes burned.

Tenmei shoots to her feet, runs forward, dodges past the body, over the threshold into the cockpit...

40 INT. NOH' PACH - COCKPIT (CONTINUOUS)

...and rushes to the front consoles, desperately tries to work out which buttons to push. Finally she hits the right one - the hatch behind her begins to slowly rumble closed.

Slightly relieved, but knows she's a long way from out of trouble yet... she inspects the panels, trying to figure them out with a professional pilot's eye...

TENMEI
(re various panels)
Communications... tactical...
helm... operations...

She glances behind, seeing that the door is still closing, not yet fully closed. No sign of movement from the back. Just as the door is about to close --

-- a pair of hands DARTS through the gap and begins pushing the hatch back open. Tenmei SQUEAKS in fear, dashes back to the communications panel, tries to figure it out...

Taran'atar's hands force the hatch further open, the gears GRINDING against his strength. He gives a rising GROWL as he pushes harder and harder...

TENMEI
(pushing buttons)
S.O.S.... please...

Finally the hatch's hydraulics give up -- and Taran'atar SLAMS the door open with a loud CLANG.

Tenmei sets her feet into some kind of judo pose - she has no chance of beating him, but she has to do something...

Taran'atar barrels into the cockpit, ROARing in fury, skin still smoking and burned...

...and SLAMS her against the consoles, hands to her chest, knocking the breath out of her - she slumps to the deck.

He reaches down, hooks a burned and smoking arm around her neck, hauls her to her feet -- and starts to drag her back towards to the aft compartment...

41 **INT. NOH' PACH - REAR CABIN**

Tenmei STRUGGLES and SCREAMS in rage, fighting all the way... but he is so much stronger than her.

With his spare hand, Taran'atar finds a pair of Klingon MANACLES. Snaps them around her wrist...

...then drags her to a PIPE that hangs out of the ceiling. Forces both of her arms in the air, SNAPS the other manacle into place, hanging it over the pipe.

Tenmei is left dangling by her wrists, toes barely touching the deck, all her weight on her wrists. She still KICKS and SCREAMS against him...

...but he ignores her. He removes any objects from within her potential reach, then steps up close...

TARAN'ATAR
Don't do that again. Next time, I
will employ a more... thorough...
means of restraint. Is that clear?

She glares at him, not giving an inch. He doesn't care. He turns and leaves, heading back to the cockpit.

Tenmei is left alone, her fear beginning to break through her rage...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

42 EXT. SPACE - HARKOUM ORBIT

A PLANET as seen from space - and a small, deadly STEALTH VESSEL zooms up out of the atmosphere, fast but smooth.

Moments later, a second ship pursues the first up from the surface - a weak CARGO VESSEL that rumbles and shudders as it goes beyond tolerances to keep up with the first ship.

43 INT. CARGO VESSEL

The cockpit of the second ship. A frustrated and furious male CHALNOTH (as seen in TNG 3x18 "Allegiance") is at the controls, driving the ship hard in pursuit of his prey...

CHALNOTH
That damned Cardassian bitch stole
my own damn ship!

The Chalnoth takes a moment to glance behind himself --

-- at the half a dozen dead ALIENS of various species - a Caitian, a Tiburonian, an Efrosian, others. All have phaser burns in their chests - he killed them to steal their ship.

The Chalnoth turns back to front --

-- and JUMPS as an enormous Romulan *D'Deridex*-class warbird suddenly decloaks, right on top of them. He grits his teeth and GROWLS, steers the ship sharply to avoid a collision...

VOICE (comm)
Romulan Warbird *Verithrax* to the
crews of the *Githzarai* and the
Otamawan. Cease your activities
and return to the surface at once.
If you do not comply, you will be
boarded by crew of this vessel and
placed under arrest.

The Chalnoth doesn't bother replying. He drives the shaking ship further forward, refusing to give up the chase...

44 EXT. SPACE - HARKOUM ORBIT

The stealth vessel swoops down into the atmosphere, GLOWS with the friction. The Romulan warbird rumbles slowly to hover in between it and the chasing cargo ship...

...which SWERVES between the Romulan ship's warp nacelles to continue the pursuit. It rattles down into the dirty grey-yellow atmosphere... pulls closer... closer...

45 INT. CARGO VESSEL

The Chalnoth pushes his ship to breaking point. At last he is right on top of his prey... then *literally* on top.

CHALNOTH

Think I don't know my own ship's
shield harmonics, idiot woman?

46 EXT. ATMOSPHERE

The cargo ship now flies barely a metre above its target. The shield bubbles of both ships FIZZLE and SPARK as they push against each other... and then cross.

47 INT. CARGO VESSEL

The Chalnoth stands from his seat in victory...

CHALNOTH

Ha! Not so smart now, are you?
Computer! One to transport to the
Githzarai!

48 INT. CHALNOTH SHIP

An alien transporter signature deposits the Chalnoth into the rear hold of his own vessel.

He looks around - there is a rack for holding weapons on the cabin wall, but it is empty. He is *enraged*...

CHALNOTH

First you steal my ship, then you
take my knives? I'll use them on
you first, you Cardassian whore!

VOICE (comm)
*Verithrax to Githzarai and
Otamawan. This is your final
warning. Surrender immediately or
face the consequences.*

The Chalnoth marches forward, WRENCHES aside the separating curtain, reveals the tall back of the pilot's seat. Grabs the back of the chair, SPINS it angrily towards him --

-- but instead of the Cardassian Woman, there is a BOMB on the seat, and an auto-pilot device wired into the panels.

RED LIGHTS count down from three to zero... the Chalnoth gives a grim smile of respect for his opponent...

49 EXT. ATMOSPHERE

...and BOOM - an explosion engulfs both of the small ships, destroying them both as they burn up in the atmosphere.

Nearby, the Romulan warbird pauses above the planet. Then it turns away, its image rippling as it returns to cloak, and we are left with the empty starfield again.

PULL BACK, and the edges of a window frame come in around the image, revealing...

50 INT. INTENDANT'S STATEROOM (CONTINUOUS)

...the starfield as viewed through the picture window of the Intendant's quarters. Then turn to reveal...

...Intendant Kira draped lavishly upon her bed, propped up against a mound of pillows. She stretches seductively, and reaches to where the Vulcan handmaiden holds a bowl of fruit. Kira takes one and sucks it provocatively...

MU-HOVATH (o.s.)
It's almost done, Intendant.
I apologise for the delay.

INTENDANT KIRA
No need. As long as it's ready
before we reach our destination.
You're doing wonderfully, Hovath.

She's talking to the Mirror version of HOVATH (from 1x14 & 9x10), a Bajoran scientist working for the Alliance, with the traditional evil goatee. He works hard on a mass of complex machinery, full of cables and connections.

The Intendant slinks off the bed, struts towards Hovath... He tenses, wipes off sweat - she makes him nervous. She has no clue what all this stuff does but she seems to be happy. Finally, Hovath steps back with a relieved sigh...

MU-HOVATH

It's ready. All the modifications are made. It only needs power.

INTENDANT KIRA

Computer, activate the new power circuit. Authorisation Kira-one-eight-one *shakom doka*.

As power SURGES into the machine, we pan around and see a large round platform underneath a ceiling of targeting sensors - a transporter. Kira smiles with satisfaction...

MU-HOVATH

This machine, Intendant... it's a dangerous invention. But the scope of it, it's absolutely...

He drifts off, suddenly afraid he's said too much...

INTENDANT KIRA

Go on, Hovath. I'm eager to hear your opinion as to what we - or rather what you've accomplished.

MU-HOVATH

If we can stabilise the system, we'd no longer be limited to the one alternate universe. They'd all be open to us. Unlimited worlds and resources. We could transform the Alliance! Whoever controls this... would be unstoppable.

INTENDANT KIRA

Well said.

She strides back to her Vulcan handmaiden, and takes two goblets of wine. With a nod, the servant leaves the room silently. Then Kira hands one goblet over to Hovath...

INTENDANT KIRA
Have a drink with me, Hovath.
(chink goblets)
To your genius, Professor. And the
historic service you've performed
for the Alliance today.

MU-HOVATH
My honour to serve, Intendant.

Kira takes a deep drink of the wine, Hovath does the same. A few seconds later, the realisation hits - the drink is poisoned. His breathing seizes, his knees buckle...

INTENDANT KIRA
I'd offer you the antidote, but I
drank the last dose an hour ago.

Kira deftly plucks the goblet from his shaking hand before he can drop it, and we hear his body THUD to the deck...

51 FAST MONTAGE

-- Kira in the white space of the Prophets
-- Kira screaming and crying in flames (from later)
-- Unconscious on the biobed as Sisko holds her hand
-- Fighting hand-to-hand on Ancient Bajor (8x13)

MATCH CUT Intendant Kira's face to:

52 EXT. PAREK TONN - DAY

General Kira, as she rides away from the fortress towards the approaching ASCENDANT ARMY. Sisko, Vaughn and Ro are with her, the full Bajoran army riding behind...

...until the Ascendants fill their view with sheer numbers. Kira tries to remain confident, but the Ascendants look merciless. In the lead is RAIQ, from 8x23 and 9x16...

GENERAL KIRA
Hail! I am General Kira Nerys of
the Bajora. I come seeking parley.

RAIQ
Stand aside. We ride to the
fortress.

SISKO
(*sotto*)
Nerys... we should fall back.

Further back in the Ascendant army's ranks, we see points
of light - FLAMES being lit. Kira's eyes flare, she rears
her own animal...

GENERAL KIRA
Fall back! Fall back!

The four Bajorans turn their animals around, gallop back to
their army. A deep MOANing sound, and Kira glances back --

-- to see hundreds of flaming ARROWS heading towards them.
Kira urges her animal harder, harder...

... but the flaming arrows HIT. Cut into Bajoran and animal
alike, stabbing and burning at once. SCREAMS everywhere...

As the others fall around her, Kira forces her animal on...
but another moaning sound, another barrage of arrows...

Kira looks up - they're coming for her, and she GASPS --

53 INT. WHITE SPACE

-- as she reacts to the attack. But the army is gone, and
she is whole. She gets her bearings...

KIRA
A vision. You showed me Parek Tonn.

OPAKA PROPHET
The end of the journey. And the
beginning.

Kira turns her head...

54 **EXT. PAREK TONN - DAY**

...and she stands on the blasted landscape outside the fortress. The Prophets wear familiar faces...

KIRA

None of this is real. It's just an illusion. It never happened.

OPAKA PROPHET

Never.

SHAKAAR PROPHET

Yet.

EVIL JAKE PROPHET

Always.

VAUGHN PROPHET

Our hand must defend the fortress.

KIRA

But it isn't real!

SISKO (o.s.)

It's real.

Kira turns -- and sees Sisko dressed as his BENNY RUSSELL alter ego. She is confused to see him like this...

SISKO

It's as real as anything you've ever known. Look into your heart. The fortress is real - not just to you, but to the Eav'oq, and to the Ascendants as well.

As Kira looks up at the towers, understanding dawns...

KIRA

The fortress... it's faith. And it's more than that. It's the Celestial Temple itself.

SISKO

Yes.

KIRA

It isn't Parek Tonn... it only
looks like it, because the faith of
Bajor and the faith of the Eav'oq
are built on the same foundation.

VAUGHN PROPHET

Our hand is of Bajor. Our hand is
of Idran.

Kira looks the other way, along the long, empty road...

KIRA

Three roads. Three peoples.

OPAKA PROPHET

Our hand rises where the roads
meet. This is where our message
leads our hand.

KIRA

I still don't understand. Do you
mean you're trying to bring the
Eav'oq and Ascendants together?
Even though the Ascendants might
try to exterminate the Eav'oq?

VAUGHN PROPHET

All roads meet.

SHAKAAR PROPHET

Some cross.

EVIL JAKE PROPHET

Some end.

WHITE LIGHT bleeds over everything again, until we are...

55 INT. WHITE SPACE (CONTINUOUS)

...back where we were. Kira looks at them - their unfeeling
blank faces, the faces of her friends - and is horrified.

Her gods, the ones she has worshipped all her life, are
advocating war. She speaks to them with *disgust*...

KIRA

Is this what you want? Two races
who worship you are on a path to
war, and you're just going to let
it happen? Is that your will?

VAUGHN PROPHET

Our hand must act of its own will.

OPAKA PROPHET

Our hand must shape the future.

Around Kira and the Prophets, other shapes begin to form
and coalesce, surrounding them. Kira turns to look...

Some shapes form into Eav'oq - tall, tubular, a single eye
that shines with peace and gentleness.

Other shapes form into Bajorans - some strangers, some that
Kira knows. They are tearful, silently pleading with Kira.

The final group forms - Ascendants. Silver bio-armour,
fiery merciless eyes, sneering superior attitude.

Kira reacts to the sight. Sisko steps from behind her...

SISKO

Not all the Prophets' children
interpreted their message in the
same way. The Eav'oq created a
philosophy of unity and pacifism.
Bajor developed a religion of
empathy and reason.

KIRA

And the Ascendants... made it into
a crusade.

FLAMES burst up in a circle around them, burning the Eav'oq
and Bajorans. They SCREAM and cry and wail as they burn...
while the Ascendants look down on them with satisfaction.

Kira, caught in the middle with Sisko and the Prophets,
cries out in anguish and empathy, but there is nothing she
can do. (This is the scene sampled earlier in the episode.)

OPAKA PROPHET
Our hand must not yield. The
fortress must not fall.

Kira nods with horrified understanding of what she must do.
The white light fades away like mist, revealing...

56 EXT. PAREK TONN - DAY

...Captain Kira stood in the shadow of Parek Tonn fortress,
looking down at the Ancient Bajoran version of herself, who
lies on a makeshift pallet while Bajoran Bashir gently
tends to her wounds, and Bajoran Sisko holds her hand...

OPAKA PROPHET
Follow the path. When you know
where it ends, you will know how
to begin.

ON GENERAL KIRA

...as she GASPS awake, hands flying to her chest. Bajoran
Bashir soothes her back down. (Real Kira is gone.)

BASHIR
Relax, General. You've bled a
great deal. The night-mint I gave
you will help, but you need rest.

GENERAL KIRA
No. Help me up. Now.

Sighing, knowing there is no use arguing, Sisko and Bashir
help Kira up. Kira takes a deep breath and shouts up...

GENERAL KIRA
Gatekeeper! Opaka! Hear me!

Opaka and Itu peer over the battlements...

GENERAL KIRA
I was mistaken. This is not our
fortress. We built upon the same
bedrock, the same foundation, and
the towers we've built look much
alike... but this place is yours.

Opaka's voice echoes back down over the stone...

OPAKA

What is your wish, then? To return
to your own fortress and leave the
Eav'oq to defend theirs?

GENERAL KIRA

No. My army will make its stand
here, against the Ascendants.

ITU

We have not asked this of you.

GENERAL KIRA

Nevertheless, it will be done. To
defend your keep is to defend our
own. And our passion to defend it
might show you how truly precious
it is. Let us stand with you.

Opaka and the Eav'oq turn away for a moment, conferring.
Kira looks nervously back at her generals, unsure what will
happen. Then there is a great groaning, and the gates open
before them. Opaka and Itu stand in the gateway...

OPAKA

Stand with us. Bring your people
into the fortress of Idran.

Kira sighs with relief... and leads her army through the
gates. Sisko, Vaughn, Ro and Bashir all follow.

Inside the fortress is entirely peaceful. Grassy areas with
gentle pools of water, bridges leading between gleaming
marble buildings, and numerous Eav'oq lolloping peacefully.

The gentle, serene singing sound heard in 8x23 "Rising Son"
fills the space. There is nothing vaguely military here.
General Kira turns to Opaka, shocked...

GENERAL KIRA

Where are the armaments?

OPAKA

What armaments?

GENERAL KIRA

The catapults, the cannons, the archers, the pikemen. How do the Eav'oq plan to repel the Ascendant siege without weapons?

OPAKA

They don't. The Eav'oq are pacifists. They will not end sentient life, for any reason.

GENERAL KIRA

They said they'd defended this place against Ascendants before!

OPAKA

And so they had - by hiding it. By concealing the road that led here. But now that road is exposed, and the Eav'oq cannot hide the fortress any longer.

Panicked at what she has got her soldiers into, Kira looks at her tired, damaged troops, and their meagre armaments.

She runs to a stone stairway that runs up the inside of the fortress walls, the point from where Opaka and the Eav'oq spoke to them earlier. Sisko follows her up the steps...

57 EXT. PAREK TONN - DAY

Looking out from the viewing platform, over the battlements and out along the road... Kira sees the massive, well-armed Ascendant army growing ever closer. She turns to Sisko, and they share a worried look. This is going to be very bad...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

58 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

KIRA lies still, in her coma. Sisko remains by her bedside, holding her hand, silently praying for her...

59 INT. NOH' PACH - COCKPIT

TARAN'ATAR stands at the controls, piloting the Klingon ship, tense and on edge...

60 INT. NOH' PACH - REAR CABIN

TENMEI hangs from her wrists, dangling from the pipe in the Klingon ship's ceiling. She is deathly scared, unable to do anything, but definitely not ready to give up...

61 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

VAUGHN in command, Bowers and the others at their stations. Bashir and Nog are on the screen, talking from their lab. Nog holds an unwieldy Cardassian disruptor-like device...

BASHIR (screen)

We've sent you replicator specs
for the prototype. We needed to
use Cardassian parts to make it
compatible with --

VAUGHN

Skip the tech - does it work?

NOG (screen)

We don't know. Probably.

VAUGHN

Gentlemen, if I'm going up against
a Jem'Hadar elder, I want more
than 'probably.'

BASHIR (screen)

I understand that, sir... but we
have no way of conducting a test.

NOG (screen)
(cheerful)
But both our simulations worked.

VAUGHN
That's tremendously reassuring.
Please tell me there isn't some
complicated ten-step process for
using that thing.

NOG (screen)
No, sir. Point and shoot.

VAUGHN
And after I pull the trigger?

BASHIR (screen)
Whatever conditioning he was given
by the Intendant should be undone.
But what he might do then...

VAUGHN
What about friendly fire?

BASHIR (screen)
It's calibrated specifically for
Taran'atar's brainwaves. It should
have no effect on anyone else.

VAUGHN
Good work, gentlemen. *Defiant* out.

The view screen returns to the warp star-field image. Firm
and resolute, Vaughn turns to Bowers, Aleco and T'rb...

VAUGHN
Bowers - progress.

BOWERS
Using the specs your source gave
us, we've been working on seeing
through the *noH'pach's* cloak.
Unfortunately, there's just no way
to run a powerful enough scan to
make up for its head start on us.
But I have an idea...

VAUGHN
I'm listening...

Bowers brings up a GRAPHIC on his screen - a star chart, with a single line marking the *Euphrates'* flight path, to its wreckage. Bowers traces the line with his finger...

BOWERS
Until we lost Taran'atar's trail, his course had been extremely consistent. Almost single-minded, in fact. He deviated briefly to reach the comet and set a trap. But once we were taken care of, he returned to his original heading. I believe even if he's cloaked, he's still on that heading now.

VAUGHN
Then why bother cloaking?

BOWERS
To confuse us. Make us waste time debating his next move, when he's actually on the same move he's been making since the beginning. I don't think evading capture is his primary objective. That's just a means to an end. I think he's on a deadline for a rendezvous - presumably with his new master.

VAUGHN
Alright. So where's he going?

Bowers changes the display - it zooms in on a certain area.

BOWERS
Straight into Cardassian space. The closest system on his current heading is Harkoum.

VAUGHN
What do we know about Harkoum?

Aleco and T'rb bring up a new report...

T'RB

Former Cardassian colony, used for mining and manufacturing. Once they bled it dry, they abandoned it... or at least officially. Its harsh terrain and distance from the core Cardassian worlds made it ideal for another purpose...

ALECO

Maximum security detention. Any prisoners sent to Harkoum stood a good chance of... "disappearing". Bajoran and Starfleet Intelligence both believe the Obsidian Order used the prisoners for scientific testing. Everything from biogenic weapons to trying out new torture techniques.

VAUGHN

And then once the Obsidian Order fell...

ALECO

(completing the thought)
...it was abandoned all over again. I'd imagine any prisoners still there were left to just die in the darkness.

VAUGHN

Perfect location for a secret base.

BOWERS

Long-range sensors picked up a Romulan warbird in orbit a few hours ago - the *Verithrax*. But even if they've left the system now, they won't have gone far.

VAUGHN

Then we'll make it a quick visit.

(to Zucca)

Ensign Zucca, what's our ETA relative to the *noH'pach*?

ZUCCA

Based on the last readings, we're closing the gap. We'll make orbit about six minutes behind her.

VAUGHN

No matter how good its cloak works in space, in an atmosphere it'll make a ruckus. Ion trails, atmospheric disturbances, the works. I want a lock on that ship, as quickly as possible, the moment we're out of warp. Understood?

ALECO / T'RB

Aye, sir.

Vaughn returns to his seat, ready to get down to business. He hits the comm panel...

VAUGHN

Bridge to engineering. We've just received specs for a new piece of equipment. I want one ready by the time we reach Harkoum. Understood?

LEISHMAN (comm)

Yes, sir. You'll have it.

VAUGHN

Bridge out. Bowers, is my strike team ready?

BOWERS

Yes, sir. But I'd like to ask --

VAUGHN

(doesn't look)

No.

BOWERS

Sir, it's highly irregular for --

VAUGHN

I said no.

Bowers takes a deep breath, shares an uncomfortable glance with Aleco. He gets up from his seat, approaches Vaughn...

BOWERS
(quietly)
Sir... we need to talk. In private.

Vaughn's expression leaves little room for manoeuvre...

62 INT. DEFIANT - READY ROOM

Vaughn enters, followed by Bowers. As soon as the door is closed, Vaughn turns, in no mood to be disobeyed...

VAUGHN
I've made my decision.

BOWERS
What decision is that, exactly? To get yourself killed? Because if you've got a death wish, I'm scrubbing this op right now.

VAUGHN
The hell you are. I don't have time for this...

Vaughn moves to the door, the conversation over. But Bowers steps into his path, not letting him get away...

BOWERS
Make the time. Heins and Neeley are good field commanders. They can do this without you.

VAUGHN
Maybe. But they're not going to.

BOWERS
All due respect, sir, but that's not your decision. You may command the ship, but as your acting first officer on this mission, I am responsible for the crew. Letting you lead the strike team is a bad call, and you know it.

VAUGHN

(getting angrier)

Why? Because I'm old? I'll slow them down? Or maybe you're afraid I'm in this for the wrong reasons?

BOWERS

All of those had occurred to me.

Vaughn is on the verge of losing his temper, but he makes an effort to pull himself under control...

VAUGHN

Sam, I'm the only one on this ship who's had any significant face time with Taran'atar. More than anyone but Kira and Ro - and they are in no shape to help right now. If Nog's gizmo works and snaps him out of the Intendant's control, our best chance of bringing him in without a fight is if he sees a familiar face, hears a voice he knows. Here and now, that's me.

Bowers seethes for a moment. Sighing, he finally accepts Vaughn's explanation, though he is not happy about it...

BOWERS

Just tell me you'll let the team back you up all the way, and not run off and try to face him down one on one.

VAUGHN

Sam, believe me - I'm really not eager to face off against a rogue Jem'Hadar. And if you think this is all about avenging Prynn, I can assure it's not. This is not a suicide mission, or a revenge mission. I understand full well that Starfleet and Kira need an explanation for what happened, and either me or Taran'atar being dead won't help that.

VAUGHN (cont)

But an alliance between Taran'atar
and the Intendant is one of the
worst combinations I can think of.
So we need to stop him, and this
is the only way this'll work.

(beat)

You'll just have to trust me...
when I tell you that I know what
I'm doing.

Bowers grits his teeth a moment longer, but finally nods...

BOWERS

I'll get the crew ready. Just
remember what I said.

VAUGHN

I will.

Bowers turns and leaves.

Vaughn hardens, staring at the closed door...

VAUGHN

I'll remember... First I capture
Taran'atar alive... find out what
the Intendant is planning...

(beat)

...and then I'll kill him.

Off Vaughn's stony face...

BLACK OUT:

THE END