

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

11x14 - "No Confidence."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on characters from the series

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

and from the post-finale novels
by Pocket Books

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

The *Defiant* sits at its usual spot on the docking ring, and on an upper pylon sits the Akira-class USS *James T Kirk*. We close in, approaching the tip of a different upper pylon.

2 INT. DS9 - UPPER PYLON AIRLOCK

VAUGHN strides into the airlock, with PRYNN close behind. They approach the window, looking out across the breadth of the station towards the other pylon, where they see the ship docked. Prynn gawks with excitement to see it.

PRYNN

You got an Akira?! Oh my God,
Akiras are awesome! I loved
working on the *Sentinel*.

VAUGHN

Lieutenant Tenmei, please meet the
USS *James T Kirk*. Akira-class,
twenty-six decks, crew of five-
hundred... ish. Commanded by
Captain Elias A Vaughn.

PRYNN

Wait wait wait. You said you were
off on an exploratory mission.
Akiras aren't explorers. They're
troop carriers and heavy defence.
You should have got a Galaxy or a
Sovereign or something.

VAUGHN

Sadly there aren't many of those
to go around. Plus, Starfleet is
still rather skittish about its
borders. And while I have no plans
to go to war again, I don't mind
having a ship that can defend
itself if necessary.

Prynn nods with understanding, and gazes quietly out of the window at the new ship. Now that it's physically here, she can't deny it any longer.

PRYNN

When do you leave?

VAUGHN

Eleven-hundred hours. Transfer of command takes place at ten-thirty. They're moving all my belongings on board right now.

PRYNN

At least you'll be back in some proper Starfleet quarters again. And not some tiny poky little thing like the *Defiant*.

Vaughn gives a small wistful smile, and reaches out to stroke the bulkheads of the station.

VAUGHN

Oh, I don't know. It hasn't been so bad living here. I can see why people are taken with the place.

(rallies)

But I don't regret going. It's the right thing to do. I said I had a new lease on life, Prynn.

(re *Kirk*)

Well, there it is.

Standing upright and straightening his uniform, he offers his arm to Prynn. She straightens likewise and takes it.

VAUGHN

Come on. Last tour.

They stroll back into the depths of the station together.

3 INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE

The turbolift rises into Ops, carrying Vaughn and Prynn. Around the room are all the senior staff, gathered and waiting for this moment. BOWERS at tactical, CANDLEWOOD at

sciences, NOG at engineering, BASHIR, EVIK and CENN at the central Ops table, and RO standing outside the office.

Vaughn and Prynn step off and head down to the table.

VAUGHN

Would you join me, Commander?

With a deep breath, Ro descends the steps and joins Vaughn at the table. Vaughn pulls out a padd and reads from it.

VAUGHN

All hands, attention to orders.

The crew comes to attention.

VAUGHN

Captain Elias Vaughn, commanding officer, station Deep Space Nine, star date 56632. You are hereby requested and required to relinquish command of your post to Commander Ro Laren, executive officer Deep Space Nine, as of this date. Signed, vice admiral Marta Batanides. Computer, please transfer all command codes to Ro Laren, authorisation seven-delta-six-four-green, execute.

COMPUTER

Transfer complete. Deep Space Nine and all assigned vessels now under command of Commander Ro Laren.

RO

I relieve you, sir.

VAUGHN

I stand relieved.

Vaughn shakes Ro's hand, and the entire crew applauds.

The crew goes back to work, clearing space for Vaughn and Ro to speak more casually.

RO
Got everything you need?

VAUGHN
Yep. Cleared out the office and my quarters last night. The place is all yours, Commander. I dare say it should have been all along.

RO
And you and me... we're okay?

VAUGHN
Far more than okay. Just consider what I've said. I'll do the same.
(straightens)
Permission to disembark.

RO
Permission granted, Captain.

Vaughn nods acknowledgement and turns towards the transport platform. He takes Prynn with him on the way.

VAUGHN
Beam over with me?

PRYNN
Actually... I'd rather say my goodbyes here. If that's okay.

VAUGHN
Of course it is. I have to go through the whole thing again on the *Kirk* anyway. And then out towards the Taurus Reach.

PRYNN
Eeshk. Watch out for Tholians.

VAUGHN
I will.

PRYNN

Just make sure you stay in touch,
okay? I don't want to go years
without speaking to you again.

VAUGHN
No fear of that.

They hug firmly, and Vaughn steps onto the transporter.

VAUGHN
Vaughn to *Kirk* - one to beam
aboard.

Vaughn makes eye contact with Ro, nods his respect. Then
the transporter takes him away. Ro watches him go.

Once Vaughn is gone, Ro centres herself and turns towards
the office. She climbs the stairs, enters the office...

4 INT. DS9 - COMMANDER'S OFFICE (CONTINUOUS)

Ro walks up to the commander's desk, touches it, makes sure
it's real. She looks around the space, strolls the floors.
It's all hers now. It's going to take some getting used to.

She walks to the big picture window behind the desk, gazes
out at the stars. She's thinking. She nods to herself at a
decision made, then turns to exit.

5 INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE (CONTINUOUS)

As she exits back out onto Ops again, Nog turns to her.

NOG
USS *James T Kirk* signals ready,
requesting clearance to depart.

RO
Thank you, Lieutenant. Major?

Cenn checks his boards, confirms.

CENN
Clear to depart.

RO

Hail the *Kirk*, and put it on the
viewscreen, Mister Candlewood.

CANDLEWOOD

Aye, sir.

The viewscreen shows an image of Vaughn, at the centre of
an Akira-class bridge (as seen in 8x18 "Lesser Evil").

VAUGHN (screen)

Commander? Everything alright?

RO

I just wanted to wish you a safe
journey, Captain.

VAUGHN (screen)

To us all, Commander. *Kirk* out.

CENN

(off boards)

USS *Kirk* is releasing docking
clamps... and she's away.

RO

Thank you, Major. Now, if you
would please, prepare a runabout
for departure ASAP.

CENN

Are you going somewhere?

RO

I am. And you're coming with me.

Off Cenn's reaction to that...

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

6 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

The runabout heads away from the station, deeper into the Bajoran system.

7 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Ro is piloting, Cenn beside her.

CENN

So now that we're on our way, am I allowed to know where we're going?

RO

Just to Bajor. To see Kira.

CENN

And what about the station? The one you just took command of.

VAUGHN

Bowers and Evik can handle things for a few days. And it's not like we'll be a million miles away.

Ro pauses, then chuckles to herself.

CENN

What's funny?

RO

Just that moment when you hear your father's voice coming out of your own mouth.

CENN

I barely knew my father.

RO

Me either. Anyway... That brings us nicely onto the topic I want to address before we get to Bajor.

Ro glances over their shoulders towards the door at the back of the cockpit.

CENN
(curious, wary)
Go on.

RO
Before we start, I need you to understand that this is highly classified, Major. Top level.

Cenn sits back, nods to himself. Confirmation.

CENN
Ah... here it is, then. At last.

RO
Here what is?

CENN
I had a feeling Vaughn's transfer wasn't the whole secret. That you were still keeping things from me. I figured you had your reasons.

RO
We did. But I've decided those reasons are no longer enough.

CENN
Now that Vaughn's gone?

RO
The timing is suspicious, isn't it? Anyway, listen. The secret we've been keeping is that we still have Axno's ship.

CENN
That was one of the possibilities. I didn't care for it especially, because it implied you lied to me when you told me it was destroyed when Axno killed herself.

RO

Yes. We did. Vaughn ordered us to. It was my contention that you are one of the team and you deserved to know, but Vaughn overruled me. He wanted the information kept to Starfleet personnel only as a security measure. Now he's gone, and I'm in charge. So here we are. And I need to know, Major... are we okay about this?

Cenn takes a moment to think. Doesn't really answer.

CENN

Where is the ship?

RO

Originally it was on Empok Nor. It was recently moved to Derna.

CENN

You realise that by telling me this, I'm obligated to report it up the chain to General Lenaris.

RO

I do. And you're free to do that. But I am imploring you, and I am asking you to implore him, that this has to be a military secret. One that I'm sharing between our military and yours as a gesture of good faith. It can't go any further than that.

CENN

You don't think the public deserve to know?

RO

There's enough civil unrest out there already over Raiq's mere existence. Tell the public we have

one of their ships as well... it'd be a disaster.

CENN

Raiq... that's why we're going to Bajor. You're going to let her in on the secret.

RO

She deserves to know too. And more than that, she deserves to know... what we learned from the ship.

CENN

Why? What did you learn?

As Ro prepares to answer...

8 EXT. JANIR MONASTERY

The small monastery sits in its valley, by the winding river. Unlike Kendra, it's still warm here.

9 EXT. BAJOR - SURFACE

The runabout has just touched down in an open wooded area. As the ship settles, the hatch opens. Ro and Cenn step out.

RO

So you're gonna stay and contact Lenaris?

CENN

I think I should. And it's not like you'll need me for this.

RO

No... it's gonna be tough, though. It could be good, or it could be the end of the world.

CENN

And that's not just a metaphor.

Ro chuckles with gallows humour. Then she turns and calls back through the runabout's open hatch.

RO
Well? Are you coming or not?

Then PIF trots happily out of the ship and onto the grass.

PIF
Sorry to keep you, Commander. It's
a whole new world, and I wanted to
look my best. What do you think?

He bares his teeth in the brightest Cheshire cat smile, his
spines upright and perky.

RO
Handsome as ever. I don't know how
Quark will manage without you.

PIF
Tiffo will keep him company. Come
on, then. Race you!

And Pif pelts off into the distance.

CENN
Why did we bring him, again?

RO
We're going to need him. I hope.

With a nod of goodbye, Ro heads off after Pif. Cenn turns
and heads back into the runabout.

10 EXT. JANIR MONASTERY - ARBORETUM

A beautiful, tranquil rock garden area with pools, plants,
paths and twittering birds.

KIRA crouches among the plants, working with them by hand.
She's wearing simple novice's robes, dirty from the earth.

After a while, we see Ro stroll up.

RO
Well, that's a sight I never
expected to see.

Kira looks up, beams with delight at Ro's arrival. She gets up, wipes her hands down, and they hug in greeting.

KIRA

Ro! What are you doing here?

RO

I needed to talk to you about something. Didn't realise I was interrupting gardening time.

KIRA

You know, Vedek Bareil tried to get me to do some gardening once. I couldn't see the sense in it. But... it's weird how it really does help to relax you.

(pause)

So what's on your mind?

RO

Vaughn left this morning. I am now officially in command of DS-Nine.

KIRA

You don't seem too happy about it.

RO

I'm not unhappy about it. But I'm also not... sure, I guess. If this is where I should be. It's only a few years since I was hiding in caves and running for my life.

KIRA

That's the story of pretty much any Bajoran I could name. But I thought Elias was mentoring you?

RO

He was. Turns out he and I have some very different ideas about how to do things.

KIRA

(chuckle)
Oh, you should have seen some of
the fights Sisko and I had.

RO
But you ended up being perfect for
command.

KIRA
Perfect?! Prophets, I was anything
but. Starfleet was never the right
fit for me. But it is for you.

RO
Hi, my name's Laren. Have we met?

KIRA
(laughing)
I mean it! For me, my Starfleet
life was always in conflict with
my spiritual life. You don't have
that problem. You're the perfect
Bajoran to work with Starfleet.

Ro is surprised into a smile. She never thought of that.

RO
You do seem comfortable here.

KIRA
I didn't expect to be. My whole
life has been one fight after
another. Against the Cardassians,
then Starfleet, Klingons, Maquis,
Dominion, Ascendants.... I never
stopped fighting till I came here.

(sigh)
It's amazing the tranquillity that
comes, when you finally find the
place where you're supposed to be.

She looks sideways to Ro, sees she's not so sure.

KIRA
Don't worry. It'll come to you
too. In time.

SPLASH. Ro and Kira turn in surprise, and see Pif ankle-deep in one of the small rock pools, and shaking himself dry in the usual dog way. He sees them watching, and grins.

PIF

Water! Actual real, fresh water.
You have no idea!

They all chuckle together. Then Ro gets to business.

RO

Where's Raiq? I think it's time we
told her the truth.

On Kira's reaction to that...

11 **INT. JANIR MONASTERY**

By the archway, where RAIQ and Kira watched the sunrise together. Now the silver-skinned Ascendant woman stands framed by it, talking to Kira and Ro. Pif is elsewhere.

RAIQ

Axno's vessel.

Ro nods. Raiq is wary, slowly realises...

RAIQ (cont)

That is how you healed me. You
placed me into the vessel... and
it took away my pain.

KIRA

Yes.

RAIQ

You knew?

RO

Don't be angry with her, Raiq. We
kept it from her too... until your
life was in danger and we had no
other choice. If you're angry...
be angry with me.

RAIQ

I will go to the vessel now.

RO

That won't be possible.

RAIQ

And who are you to deny me?

RO

I'm the one who knows where it is and how to find it. But I've come to offer you something else, that I hope you'll accept instead. Some information that the ship gave us.

RAIQ

(sneer)

What is this... information?

RO

When we investigated the ship, the communications system was still working. We found a message... from another Ascendant.

(beat)

You're not the only one, Raiq.

On both Raiq and Kira's reactions to that...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

12 INT. JANIR MONASTERY

Picking up from Ro's revelation to Raiq. The Ascendant woman doesn't know what to say...

KIRA

I didn't know this part.

RO

Lieutenant Candlewood translated it, using Shar's program.

Ro pulls out a padd, works it for a moment, then hands it to Raiq, who takes it cautiously.

RO

Press the green button.

Unsure what to expect, Raiq does. VEXH's voice issues from the padd, a recording from 11x07 "In Love and War."

VEXH (comm)

Hear me, brothers and sisters. If you are there, hear my words. I am here, I received your call. I came as swift as I was able. But I was far from the Hearth, and my vessel is wounded. Have you yet to arrive? Or have you arrived already, and continued the Quest without me?

(pause)

Is it true that the Fire came to us at last? And that the Final Ascension approaches?

(pause)

Hear my words, I beg. I am Vexh, Archquester of the Ascendancy. Without guidance, I await you, here at the Hearth. Answer me, my brothers and sisters, if you are able. Is there no-one?

They all absorb that. Kira tries to be encouraging.

KIRA

That's amazing. Raiq, this is exactly what you've wanted all along. You're not the last of the Ascendants anymore.

Raiq doesn't seem to hear her - she's still processing.

KIRA

It's even a male. You could start all over again.

(still no response)

Raiq?

RAIQ

(quiet)

He does not know of the Ascension.

RO

No. It sounds like he got there too late. He doesn't even know he's the last. Or the second last.

RAIQ

He must know. The vessel keeps us always in contact with each other.

RO

He said his vessel was damaged.

RAIQ

Kira... I am not alone.

KIRA

(warm)

No. You're not.

RAIQ

Ro. If you will not take me to Axno's vessel, will you take me to Vexh? Or did you come here to offer this before me and then snatch it away again?

RO

I was never going to take this away from you, Raiq. I came here hoping you'd ask me to take you. I want to take you.

KIRA

He said he was at the Hearth. You mentioned that to me before, Raiq.

RAIQ

It is a sacred place. Where we gather to continue the species, where we assembled before the Quest. Where the Fire came to us.

KIRA

Can you find your way back there?

RAIQ

I am not certain. Without my own vessel, I too am without guidance.

RO

Luckily, I brought a guide along. The nearest thing we have to an expert on the Gamma Quadrant.

Okay then. They're really going to do this.

13 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Still parked on the planet's surface. The trees and hills of Bajor show through the windows. Cenn sits at the front panels, alone, with GENERAL LENARIS on the screen.

CENN

I'm really not happy about this, General. One Ascendant on Bajor was bad enough. Now they want to go find another one? And another ship, too?

LENARIS (screen)

I can see Commander Ro's point, Major. This Raiq does deserve to know she's not the last of her species. But your points are very well taken too, I assure you.

CENN

What do you want me to do?

LENARIS (screen)

Go along with it. This is a fact finding mission if nothing else. But just remember that you're an officer in the Bajoran Militia, Major, not in Starfleet.

CENN

I'm very much aware of that, sir.

Pif's perky head pops in through the still-open hatch.

PIF

They're coming back!

Then Pif is gone again. Cenn turns back to Lenaris.

CENN

I'd better go, General.

LENARIS (screen)

One last thing, Major.

14 EXT. BAJOR - SURFACE

Ro, Kira and Raiq walk across the grass towards the ship.

KIRA

Oh, umm... just to warn you, Ro's guide is a bit unusual. He's not humanoid, for a start.

RAIQ

You think Ascendants care about the physical form of others? Such concerns are senseless. What is in

the heart is all that matters.
Faithful, heretic... or godless.

At the sight of Raiq, Pif is no longer his effervescent self. He sits, watching her closely. Kira heads into the ship first, followed by Raiq. Ro hovers back.

RO
You alright?

Pif just gives a low growl, then heads inside. Ro follows.

15 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Ro enters the cockpit to see Kira and Raiq heading into the back. Cenn turns to her as she enters.

RO
Everything ready, Major?

CENN
Yes, sir. Bowers is aware we'll be going through the wormhole.

RO
Alright, then. Let's get this... quest... underway.

Ro settles into the other seat. Cenn works his panels. The hatch closes, and the ship begins to rise.

16 EXT. BAJOR - SURFACE

The runabout lifts off on thrusters and into the air.

17 EXT. BAJOR - ASHALLA

The usual establishing shot of the Bajoran capital.

18 INT. MONASTERY - KAI'S OFFICE

Last seen in 11x01 "Systems Under Repair."

Kai SOLIS reaches out to shake the hand of JAKE SSKO.

JAKE

Thank you very much for agreeing to meet me, Kai Solis.

SOLIS

You're very welcome, Mister Sisko. Please, take a seat.

Jake sits in a guest seat; Solis heads behind his desk. Jake gets out a padd, sets it on the table between them, presses a button so it starts recording.

JAKE

I realise it's not very often that you give interviews to the press. But the Federation News Service was pestering me for an exclusive.

SOLIS

Had it been anyone else, I might well have refused again. But I trust your outsider perspective.

JAKE

We've actually met before, up on the station, for the Gratitude festival. You were raising money for charity.

SOLIS

Ah yes, for the war orphans fund. Of course, I remember meeting the son of the Emissary.

JAKE

(wry)

I'm sure you also remember being arrested by Constable Odo for not having the proper permits.

SOLIS

(grin)

Not my first moment of civil disobedience, I assure you. And hopefully not my last.

JAKE

Don't worry, Kira gave him hell for that.

SOLIS

Kira never did suffer fools. Not that Constable Odo was a fool. He was only doing what his conscience and his position demanded of him. I bear no grudge. In fact, it taught me a valuable lesson.

JAKE

And what's that?

SOLIS

That there are times when it is necessary to step outside of the rules to get things done. And times when it is not necessary. The trick, naturally, is telling which is which.

JAKE

It's been a difficult time for the church on Bajor, over the last few years.

(re Solis)

Obviously there's the Ohalu movement, but now the Oralian Way, and Raiq the Ascendant living with you. Some of the more traditional among the populace have had a hard time adjusting.

Solis takes a deep breath. They're into the meat of the interview now.

SOLIS

It's true there has been tension. Bajorans are a passionate people, no doubt. I would not have it any other way. But we must be wary of turning those passions against each other.

JAKE

Is that what you see happening?
Bajorans turning on each other?

SOLIS

I have my opponents in the Vedek Assembly, certainly. Those who claim I have no right to even be Kai at all. But I have faith that in time, those opponents will come to see that we are not a threat.

JAKE

Your opponents - that would be Vedek Bellis Nemani.

Solis shakes his head, amused. Jake will not catch him out.

SOLIS

I will not speak ill of my fellow spiritual leaders, young man. Bellis is far from the only member of the faithful who has had some trouble accepting an Ohalavar in the Apex Chair.

JAKE

I think 'trouble' is understating it, Eminence. From my research, he's opposed every single motion you've made before the Assembly since your election, even if - to an outsider like myself - it was the best thing for all Bajorans.

Solis pauses, trying to find a way to explain himself best without getting into trouble in the press.

SOLIS

You must understand, Mister Sisko, that the function of the Assembly is to discuss ideas of a spiritual nature, and come to some consensus about how best to guide the people in their search for the Prophets. More than a hundred individuals, representing an entire planet's

worth of people. There have always been opposing views and there always will be.

JAKE

Forgive me for saying so, Kai, but that sounds like an evasion. You say the Assembly's job is to find a consensus. Vedek Bellis seems determined to make it impossible.

SOLIS

Nothing is impossible. As long as I remain in the chair, I will work to find that consensus. And I will never give up that work.

JAKE

As long as you remain in the chair.

The implication being that Solis might not always be in the chair. As Solis absorbs that possibility...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

19 EXT. SPACE

The Gamma exit of the WORMHOLE bursts open and the runabout flies out of it.

20 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

At impulse. Cenn is driving the ship, Ro beside him. Kira and Raiq stand behind, gazing out at the stars. Raiq was just inside the Fortress of the True. She's absorbing that.

CENN

Any ideas for a heading?

KIRA

Raiq, you met us not far from the Omarion Nebula.

RAIQ

I was observing the metamorphs.

KIRA

So your Hearth can't have been too far from there.

CENN

It's not your homeworld?

RAIQ

The Hearth is where we gather to give birth, but not where we were first born. The cradle of the Ascendants was lost many millennia ago. We live our lives always on the Quest. Or we did.

RO

So... yes on the Omarion Nebula?

RAIQ

It is a place to begin.

Ro nods to Cenn, who gets the ship underway.

21 **EXT. SPACE**

The runabout jumps to WARP.

22 **EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE**

Bringing us back home...

23 **INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR**

The bar is doing a roaring trade. Lt Cmdr EVIK strolls in, pauses in the door and looks around the space with a smile. Busy behind his bar, QUARK calls over to him.

QUARK

In or out, Commander.

EVIK

As you wish, Ambassador.

And he means that. Evik strolls over and leans on the bar, watching the crowd. The two have a friendly camaraderie.

QUARK

I hope you're not here looking for an excuse to shut me down.

EVIK

Not at all - in fact I enjoy it here. It's a vital resource for the station's community. Plus it's... charming.

QUARK

Charming?! I would have preferred exciting, welcoming, alluring even... but whatever gets people to give me their money, I guess.

EVIK

Ah, you're a traditionalist.

QUARK

I'm a pillar of the community.

EVIK

Is Mister Gaber not around?

QUARK

Don't tease me, Commander. First day in months I can work without my skin crawling. Would have been nice if Ro had told me what she needed him for, though.

EVIK

Why would she? I would certainly never tell you anything you didn't need to know.

QUARK

You can trust me, Commander.

EVIK

For the most part, I think that's true, Quark.

Quark is surprised - people don't usually say that to him.

QUARK

Thank you, Commander. I appreciate that. I also appreciate that you haven't been constantly keeping an eye on me. All your assorted predecessors were always in here, harassing my customers, trying to catch me in something illegal.

EVIK

Don't get me wrong, I've read all the reports from Constable Odo, Commander Ro and Major Cenn about your, shall we say, colourful background. But I believe in taking people at face value. At least until they disappoint me.

QUARK

So as long as I don't disappoint you, you stay out of my business?

EVIK

Exactly! You see? We'll get along
just fine.

Under all of the above, Evik has been watching a MARKALIAN while talking to Quark. The Markalian has been slowly making his way through the crowd, excusing himself between customers, including one Bajoran woman in a flowery dress.

Just as the Markalian finally makes his way to the exit to leave, Evik shoots out his hand and grabs the Markalian firmly by the arm. Evik is entirely calm and relaxed, but leaving no doubt the Markalian is going nowhere.

QUARK

What? What happened?

EVIK

Sir, I believe you took something
from that woman, and I'm sure
she's not the only one. Empty your
pockets, please.

Evik drags the Markalian towards the bar, again quite calm but leaving no room for argument. Despite struggles and moans, the Markalian begrudgingly begins emptying his pockets onto the bar while Evik holds him firm.

EVIK

Pickpockets, Quark? Really? That's
very... disappointing.

QUARK

(nervous)

You can't possibly be suggesting I
was involved in this.

EVIK

I never said any such thing. And
I'm sure you'll see these items
are returned to their rightful
owners. As a pillar of the
community. Isn't that right,
Ambassador?

Evik smiles warmly, but the threat underneath is not lost on Quark. Evik drags the Markalian away. Quark gulps, looks down at the items on the bar. Resigned to his defeat, he starts gathering them up to return to their owners.

24 **EXT. BAJOR - ASHALLA**

Returning to the Bajoran capital...

25 **INT. VEDEK ASSEMBLY CHAMBER**

Seen in 8x01 "Avatar pt 1" and 8x20 "Twist of Faith."

A full session of the Assembly, with Bajoran clerics of all ages, races and sexes gathered. A raucous tumult of noise, as all the vedeks talk over each other in energetic voices.

At the front of the room, Solis sits in the Apex Chair, gritting his teeth and holding his patience. Finally he's had enough, and strikes a GONG at his side. The loudness of the sound speaks to his frustration.

Surprised, the crowd quietens down. Solis glares at them.

SOLIS

Unlike some in this Assembly, I am committed to the principle that every voice in this room be heard. But one at a time. Squabbling like this is undignified, and unworthy of the position of trust you hold in society, ladies and gentlemen. Comport yourselves appropriately.

Most of the crowd is duly chastised. But Vedek BELLIS (last seen 10x02 "Brave New World") steps forward, determined.

BELLIS

You are hardly one to speak of propriety, Eminence. Why have you neglected to tell this Assembly about the hugely inappropriate actions taken by Kira Nerys?

SOLIS

I may be willing to hear every voice, Vedek Bellis, but I am not willing to forgo the traditional courtesy of hands on table.

Bellis is annoyed to be kept to formality, even more so that the mood of the room seems to be with Solis.

Pursing his lips, he slowly stands and presses his hands to the table in front of him.

SOLIS

Thank you. Now, I am not aware of any actions taken by Novice Kira. Why don't you enlighten us all?

BELLIS

My sources in the Militia tell me that a ship left the space station yesterday, came to Bajor, stopped at the Oralian Temple in Janir, and then travelled through the wormhole into the Gamma Quadrant.

(beat)

I'm surprised you didn't know, Eminence, given that Lenaris is a well-known member of your... sect.

Bellis's demeaning word choice does not go unnoticed.

SOLIS

Why should the movements of one Starfleet ship be of concern to this Assembly, Vedek?

BELLIS

We all know who lives at Janir. The last Ascendant. She is in the care of Kira Nerys, a woman who has already once been Attainted by this house for placing herself outside of our authority. Clearly, the crew of the station remain in league with their former captain.

A third Vedek, PRALON (woman, 50s), finally speaks up.

PRALON

"In league"? You sound like some deranged conspiracy theorist.

BELLIS

What else am I to think, Pralon? The ship came to visit Kira and the Ascendant, and then took them both back through the wormhole.

PRALON

Why would they do such a thing?

BELLIS

To search for more Ascendants.

The claim sends the room back into clamouring angry voices. Solis bangs the GONG again to bring them back to attention.

SOLIS

Even if that were so, Vedek, why is it any of our concern?

BELLIS

Is it not obvious, Eminence? Bajor is splintering. The Ohalavaru. The Oraliens. And now the Ascendants. What was once strong is now broken, poisoned by destructive alien beliefs and superstitions.

More shouting and angry voices.

PRALON

You have gone too far, Vedek!

BELLIS

Bajorans now worship the gods of Cardassians? And of people whose very existence is predicated on destroying other worshippers? That is going too far, Pralon. And the so-called Kai has allowed it to happen, in the name of diversity.

YEVIR (o.s.)
You're wrong, Bellis.

The room comes to quiet again as they all look around. Vedek YEVIR has kept quiet and hidden till now. He stands calmly, commanding the room's attention with pure charisma.

YEVIR
Forgive my breach of protocol,
Your Eminence...
(Solis nods)
...but I believe Vedek Bellis is quite mistaken. Janir is my home, my congregation. I have spent time with Kira and Raiq both. And they are not our enemies.

BELLIS
Vedek Yevir, you were the one who Attainted Kira. You were against the Ohalavaru from the start.

YEVIR
And I have since learned how wrong I was. It saddens me that you have not, Bellis. I hope that they do find more Ascendants, if that is their mission. And that when they do, they will enrich Bajor with more ways to know the truth of the Prophets. I pray for it, Vedek.

Ending on Solis, grateful for Yevir's support...

26 **EXT. SPACE**

The runabout travels at warp...

27 **INT. RUNABOUT - REAR CABIN**

Raiq stands at the rear picture window, watching the stars streak away from them at warp. Kira is with her.

KIRA
Have you thought about what you'll say if we do find Vexh?

(no response)
He may not react well to hearing
that all the other Ascendants are
gone, and he missed the boat. Axno
certainly didn't.

RAIQ
(quiet)
I have thought.

And apparently come up with no answers.

Then the ship's engines suddenly die out, and the stars out
the window return to normal space. Surprised and alarmed,
Kira looks to Raiq in confusion, then turns for the door.

28 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Ro and Cenn are still at the controls. Pif perches out of
the way at the back. Kira strides in from the rear cabin.

KIRA
What's going on? Why did we stop?

In response, Ro points to a display on one of the panels in
front of her, and looks back at Kira, her expression grim.

RO
Jem'Hadar.

Kira realises the problem...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

29 EXT. SPACE

The runabout sits stationary against the backdrop of a nice pink-purple swirly nebula.

30 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Kira, Ro, Cenn and Pif are all tense. Jem'Hadar.

RO

We detected a Jem'Hadar patrol at the limits of the *Nile's* sensor horizon. I'm pretty sure I got us into the edge of the nebula before they spotted us, but it was close.

KIRA

We can't let the Dominion find us here. Laas was very clear that he doesn't want any contact with Starfleet... and especially with me. But we can't hide inside the Omarion Nebula either.

RO

No, we never made it to Omarion. This is the Chamra Vortex.

KIRA

Chamra?! That's barely ten light-years from the wormhole.

(sag)

We can't give up already. I owe Raiq more than that.

CENN

One good thing - the vortex should hide us long enough to come up with another solution.

RO

In theory.

KIRA

Alright, take us deeper into the nebula. But watch out for those gas pockets.

Once again, Kira has slipped naturally into the role of commander, and the others go along with it. Cenn moves the ship deeper into the pink-purple wisps of the nebula.

KIRA

Kira to Raiq - can you come in here, please?

After a few moments, the rear door opens and Raiq enters.

The moment she does, Pif's hackles raise and he stifles a growl in his throat. She walks past him unheeding - he turns and leaves the room, returning to the rear cabin.

Cenn watched the silent exchange. He's worried for Pif.

CENN

If you'll excuse me, Commander, I'll take a break while I can.

RO

Sure. Go ahead, Major.

Cenn gets up, excuse-me's past Raiq, and heads aft.

31 INT. RUNABOUT - REAR CABIN

Cenn enters to see Pif curled up on one of the bunks, clearly not happy. Cenn approaches and sits nearby.

CENN

Pif? Are you okay? You haven't been your usual happy self since we left Bajor.

PIF

Just having... her... on board.

He means Raiq. Cenn sympathises.

CENN

I know how you feel. It's tough to deal with one face-to-face. But you knew that was why we left the station. To get her.

PIF

Commander Ro needed me. It was a chance to walk on a planet and breathe fresh air for a moment. But... they killed so many people. They attacked the *Even Odds*, put my family at risk. I had to stand there and watch one of them blow up an entire star system. Just a mouthful of survivors, all their children gone. Because of her.

CENN

But we stopped them from being able to do it again.

PIF

No we didn't. It could start all over again if we're not careful.

CENN

I don't think it will. Not that I trust her, or the other guy. But you can trust me. We'll keep it under control.

Pif nods, not entirely convinced. Cenn slumps in his chair.

CENN

To be honest, it's not been a bag of laughs for me, either.

PIF

Why not?

CENN

It sounds facile next to exploding star systems, but it's... it's more changes. On Bajor, I was just a simple soldier. Now my superior

in the Militia is an Ohalavar, my superior on DS-Nine is an atheist, we've got Oraliens worshipping in the shrine, and here we are on the hunt for yet another variation. It's dizzying. I'm not sure how to handle it all.

PIF

Why do you need to "handle" it?

CENN

What do you mean?

PIF

I mean, why are you worrying about it? It's all stuff that's going to happen anyway.

CENN

(wry)

Don't you believe in the power of one man to change the universe?

PIF

To change his own universe, maybe. There's only so many things you have influence over, Major. Your friends, your family, your job... the rest, you just have to let it go. Do what your conscience asks of you, and let the rest of the universe figure itself out.

CENN

(chuckle)

Is that what you're doing, hiding in here?

PIF

Hey, I didn't say you couldn't wallow for a while. It'll pass. I'll be back to "my usual happy self" in no time, just you see.

CENN

Well, while we're stuck here in this nebula hiding from Jem'Hadar, why don't you put your supposed Gamma Quadrant expert skills to use and come up with some ideas?

Grinning, Pif sits back up, his spines erect. A job to do.

32 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Raiq, Kira and Ro are all on their feet. Kira and Ro are defensive, Raiq on the attack.

RAIQ

I was right about you all along. You tell me there is another, you bring me all this way, then you refuse to take me any further.

RO

No, that's not what we're saying. We're not refusing to take you. We're just hiding until the bad guys go away.

RAIQ

(sneer)

The metamorphs and their animals? I fear no "bad guys". I was the chosen of the Fire. Let them try to stop us. I will burn them all.

KIRA

Raiq, just stop. Not every situation calls for a burning. We're just going to wait here until they've gone, and then we'll be on our way. Which, by the way, we still don't know where it is.

RAIQ

Because you keep Axno's vessel from me. With it I could find the Hearth in an instant. But no, you must keep me under your control.

RO

Well, how do you expect to us to react? Why would we give you what you want when every word out of your mouth is a threat?

(stops, chuckles)

There's that voice again. Look, we're not going to do this. We're not going to fight. We're going to talk. We can figure this out together, if we talk.

Raiq calms down a bit. Maybe talking would be better. But it doesn't come naturally. They come down from the tension.

The rear door opens again and Cenn and Pif enter. Pif is definitely livelier now.

PIF

Commander!

RO

Pif, hi. What's up?

PIF

When you repaired the *Even Odds*, did you happen to download the ship's databanks?

RO

Probably. If Dez gave us access, Nog would have kept a record.

PIF

And can you access them here?

RO

Yeah, should be able to. Why?

PIF

The *Even* was a retrieval ship. We followed legends and stories all around the quadrant.

CENN

Hoping to make money off them.

PIF

Of course. Now, I wasn't much for planning. I left that to Dez and Facity. They'd just tell me to run, and I ran. But all those legends, they must be recorded in those data banks somewhere.

KIRA

(getting it)

And there might be a clue there to finding the Hearth.

RO

It's worth a shot. Computer, create subspace link with Deep Space Nine and access full data banks on freighter vessel *Even Odds*. Download to this station.

COMPUTER

Working.

Kira smiles to Raiq, as if to say, "See? All good."

CROSS-FADE INTO...

33 **MONTAGE**

-- Cenn sits at one of the front stations, going through page after page of data, reading and reading. Ro is at the station beside him, doing the same.

-- Kira brings a bowl from the replicator, places it onto a console for Pif. He looks up at her gratefully, she ruffles his fur affectionately, and then he goes back to tapping through pages of data, in between nibbles from the bowl.

-- Raiq stands at a side panel, trying to make sense of the data on it. This is not how she's used to doing things. She swipes her hand across the surface, expecting it to respond like an Ascendant ship. She hisses in frustration.

-- Cenn is still going through records. He frowns, either not understanding or actively disliking something he reads.

-- Ro slumps against the station next to him, reading and reading. She's been doing it for hours, her eyes are tired.

-- The rear cabin is dark, and Raiq stands at the window, gazing out at the wisps of the nebula. She reaches out to touch the window, reaching for her home. Behind, unnoticed in the doorway, Kira stands watching her in sympathy.

34 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

At his panel, Pif suddenly BARKS in victorious excitement. Making Ro jerk awake and slide off her panel with a bump.

RO
(slurry)
What, what's going on? Is it the
Jem'Hadar?

PIF
I think this could be it!

Ro rouses herself, and she, Cenn and Kira all gather around Pif's console. Raiq is still in the other room.

PIF
I always knew I remembered Dez
talking about the legends of the
Ascendants. We told Jake all about
it one time. About the mythical
crusaders who destroyed entire
planets for sacrilege.

CENN
Not so mythical, as it turns out.

PIF
No. But here, this is something
I'd forgotten till now. "The Black
World" - that was all we knew to
call it. Kind of a trader ship's
boogeyman, the place you never go
if you plan on living a long life.

RO
What was so bad about it?

PIF

Every hundred years or so, it
caught fire.

KIRA

(thinking)

Raiq said that they returned to
the Hearth every hundred years.

RO

And we know how Ascendants love
their fire.

CENN

So maybe the planet catching fire
was just a metaphor - for lots of
Ascendants showing up there?

KIRA

Is there anything about where this
place is?

PIF

That's the thing about legends.
Everybody told you never to go
there, but nobody could ever say
exactly where you weren't supposed
to go. But, as always with these
things, somebody did once decide
to do what nobody else dared.

RO

Not Dez...

PIF

Ha! No, he was never that brave.
But there was a story that one man
was. It was said he went to the
far side of the Preetala sector,
and was never heard from again.

KIRA

Do you know where that is?
(Pif nods)

Then it's the best shot we've got.
Major, any sign of the Jem'Hadar?

CENN

(off panels)

Not in sensor range. But that's
limited from inside the nebula.

KIRA

Think we can make a run for it?

RO

We can't stay here forever.

KIRA

Okay. You work on that. I'll go
and tell Raiq we're on our way.

Kira leaves to go to the rear cabin.

CENN

So we're going to the planet that
catches fire, where people are
never heard from again, to find
somebody who wants to kill us all?

RO

Fun, right?

No. No it's not. Cenn gets the ship underway...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

35 EXT. BAJOR - ASHALLA

A new day in the Bajoran capital...

36 INT. VEDEK ASSEMBLY CHAMBER

Kai Solis sits in his chair, waiting to begin the day's session. He looks out across the chamber...

...and it's half empty. The Vedeks who are there, including Pralon and Yevir, seem equally surprised and confused by the smaller numbers. Where is everybody else?

Solis waits, trying not to be impatient. But this is a bad start to the day.

After another few fidgety moments, a side door opens and a low-level monk rushes in. He goes to Pralon, whispers something in her ear. Pralon listens, thanks the monk and sends him on his way. It's news, but is it good?

SOLIS

Vedek Pralon? There is news?

Pralon doesn't want to have to tell him, but she can't not. She's quietly furious underneath it all.

PRALON

Prylar Haim informs me that Vedek Bellis has just entered the monastery. He is on his way here.

SOLIS

At last.

After a few more moments, a larger ceremonial door opens, and Vedek Bellis strides in.

He is at the head of a phalanx of other clerics - all the number that were missing. They march into the room behind Bellis, a determined army of stony-faced contrarians.

Bellis comes to the centre of the room, does not sit, but places his hands firmly and unambiguously on the table. Solis sees the insincerity in the action, grits his teeth.

SOLIS

(tense)

The chair recognises Bellis Nemani. I hope, Vedek, that you will begin with an apology for keeping this Assembly waiting.

BELLIS

I will not... "Eminence."

The naked disrespect gets mutters going through the crowd.

BELLIS (cont)

I am not here to pay pointless courtesy to a chair I do not recognise. I speak for the common people of Bajor, who believe in traditional worship, in the natural order of this world.

(re his followers)

We all speak for them, whose voices are ignored and drowned out in this new world of blasphemy.

PRALON

Drowned out? You never shut up.

BELLIS

I must speak out, since no-one else here will. This man has no right to sit in that chair. This Assembly was built upon the path of the Prophets. So how can it possibly have as its leader, a man who does not even follow that path? It is nonsense.

PRALON

The kai was popularly elected by this chamber, Vedek. Sore losers seldom get their way.

BELLIS
You think this is jealousy?

PRALON
(simply)
Yes.

BELLIS
Then that just shows me how out of touch you are. The people did not vote for this man. The followers of Ohalu are nothing but a handful of deviants. This Assembly no longer represents the people, and as such it should no longer stand.
(to the room)
My followers and I call for a vote of no confidence in Kai Solis's ability to lead Bajor.

Arguments explode across the room, angry voices on both sides. The noise rages for a while, as Solis slumps in his seat. Finally he grabs the GONG and bangs it hard.

SOLIS
I am disappointed, Nemani. I had hoped you would grow past your resentment. I'm sad for you.

BELLIS
Will you allow a public vote? Or are you a tyrant, Solis?

PRALON
That's not how this works, Bellis.

BELLIS
I wasn't speaking to you.
(back to Solis)
Well?

SOLIS
As I have always said, Bellis, I will hear every voice. Very well. A vote. I hope you are prepared for the results.

BELLIS

We will see about the results. But in the meantime, this Assembly stands in recess.

PRALON

You do not have the authority to declare that, Bellis!

BELLIS

What I have is more than enough followers to drag this farce to a halt. The Vedek Assembly cannot sit in session without a minimum of seventy in attendance.

(grandly)

Until the people's voices have finally been heard and this man is removed from the Apex Chair, it will not.

SOLIS

You'd bring the entire religious structure of this world to its knees out of spite?

BELLIS

Out of duty. Out of conscience. There are times it is necessary to step outside of the rules to do the right thing, Solis. To do what our conscience demands of us. This is one of those times.

His job done, Bellis turns and marches back out of the room, his followers trailing behind.

Solis sits in his chair, stunned.

Pralon and Yevir both go to him, and gaze in amazement at Bellis's retreating back.

37 **EXT. SPACE**

The runabout approaches a dark and rocky planet.

All five are present. While Cenn drives, Ro studies the displays and readouts.

RO

I'm picking up faint traces of an Ascendant warp signature. I think this is the place.

CENN

It looks like the planet is synchronously locked. A very slow axial rotation. One hemisphere would be almost permanently dark.

RAIQ

The Hearth does sit in darkness, all the better to witness the power of the True's light.

KIRA

Very poetic. But I guess it does fit. Any life signs?

CENN

Possibly. There's a lot of geothermal interference.

KIRA

Do you think we're in danger?

RAIQ

From Vexh? The Hearth is a place of power. He is in a strong position from which to attack, if he so chose.

RO

And there's no way to know what he'll choose until we get there.

KIRA

Then I guess we just have to take the plunge. Take us down, Major.

Cenn gets the ship underway again.

39 **EXT. SPACE**

The runabout heads down towards the planet.

40 **EXT. BLACK WORLD - SURFACE**

The runabout touches down again. Instead of sunny fields and trees, this time its on cold dark rock, no signs of civilisation, against a backdrop of permanent night.

As the ship settles, the hatch opens. Raiq steps out first. She sighs with relief to be back here. She looks up to the blanket of stars. This was the last place she felt right.

Now she's here, it's like she can feel the other Ascendant nearby. Without waiting for the others or even looking back, she strides off into the distance.

Kira, Ro, Cenn and Pif step out of the ship.

PIF

Not exactly Bajor, is it?

CENN

Should we let her go on ahead like that? Or should we stick close by?

KIRA

Best to let her face him alone at first. She can break it gently.

RO

You realise there's every chance Vexh is not the one we need to be worried about?

Kira looks to Ro for an explanation.

RO

Nerys, I want her to have this too. But do you really trust that she's on our side here? We've gone to all this trouble to keep Axno's

ship out of her hands. Who's to say she won't just get into Vexh's ship, turn around, and come right back to Bajor with guns firing?

By the look on Cenn's face, this is exactly what he believes will happen.

KIRA

I guess... faith. I have faith that she's had time to see that we're not her enemies.

RO

I hope you're right.

Kira strides off after Raiq. Ro, Cenn and Pif follow.

Together they trudge up a slight incline of dark and dusty rock, until they reach a peak, and look over it to see...

41 **EXT. BLACK WORLD**

Stretching out before them all is the giant natural bowl formation that was the Ascendants' encampment all last year. Black stone swoops down from the edge where Kira, Ro, Cenn and Pif stand, to a central depression far below.

Unlike last year when the place was packed with tents and pavilions and training spaces and silver vessels, all lit with flaming braziers, now it is cold and dark and empty.

Raiq is a few steps ahead of them, slowly making her way down the incline towards the centre. They stay at the lip of the quarry, letting her go on ahead of them.

At the centre of the quarry, where Iliana's pavilion once stood, now there's a single Ascendant ship. Clearly damaged like Axno's, the silver skin is dull and lifeless. Raiq is heading straight for it.

From far above, Kira and the rest watch as she approaches.

With some distance yet to go, we see the ship's transparent canopy slide open, and a figure emerge. The figure pauses, trying to ascertain if this really is what he thinks it is.

Raiq continues to approach. Kira *et al* continue to watch.

The figure climbs out of the ship and down to the ground, and finally we see him clearly - an Ascendant male, VEXH. He looks at the nearing Raiq with amazement and relief. She looks back with the same emotions... and something else.

Finally they're together, and without any words said, they EMBRACE, filled with blessed relief to see another of their kind. As they hold each other, FLAMES begin to lick around their bodies, generated by their armour.

Up on the ridge, Kira and Ro share a wary look. This could be good, or it could be very very bad.

On **RAIQ**

...as she and Vexh hold each other, flames licking around their bodies... and Raiq's eyes shift sideways toward where she knows Kira and Ro are watching.

On that suspicious note...

BLACK OUT:

END OF SHOW