

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

10x03 - "Steppin' Out."

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 - ESTABLISHING

Just the usual establishing shot...

2 INT. VIC'S LOUNGE

An evening in Vic's lounge. VIC FONTAINE himself is on stage, his full band behind him. The crowd is middling busy - mostly holographic period-specific lounge patrons, but with a few non-ranking Starfleet people sprinkled in.

The band strikes up, and Vic launches into the Irving Berlin classic, "Steppin' Out With My Baby." The crowd is politely appreciative but not massively enthusiastic.

VIC

(singing)

If I seem to scintillate
It's because I've got a date
A date with a package of
The good things that come with love
You don't have to ask me
I won't waste your time
But if you should ask me
Why I feel sublime...
I'm steppin' out with my baby
Can't go wrong 'cause I'm in right
It's for sure, not for maybe
That I'm all dressed up tonight.

Vulcan security non-com SEVAK (9x20 "Slave") observes both the crowd and Vic with detached and emotionless curiosity.

VIC

(continuing)

Steppin' out with my honey
Can't be bad to feel so good
Never felt quite so sunny
And I keep on knockin' wood.

Vic steps down off the stage into the first few tables on the main floor, working his way between them as he sings.

VIC
(continuing)
There'll be smooth sailin'
'cause I'm trimmin' my sails
In my top hat and my white tie
and my tails.

As the crooner makes his way around the room, Sevak looks closely at Vic's back. The Vulcan frowns, confused - Vic doesn't have a tail. Meanwhile, Vic makes his way back up onto the stage, as the band builds up to the conclusion.

VIC
(continuing)
Steppin' out with my baby
Can't go wrong 'cause I'm in right
Ask me when will the day be
The big day may be tonight.

The lyrics done, even before the music has fully died down, Sevak turns and walks to the exit. Vic notices this and watches Sevak leave. A sad, disappointed expression crosses his face. Then a big grin - a fake one for performance's sake - fills his face as he turns back to his audience.

VIC
Ladies and gentlemen, thank you,
thank you. But I'm afraid it's
time for me to say goodnight.

Some politely disappointed moans from the audience.

VIC
(coy, playful)
Hey, didn't you hear the song?
I've got a big night planned
tonight!

He winks playfully, and the audience chuckles in response.

VIC (cont)
But please, enjoy the rest of your
evening. And don't forget to kiss
your loved ones goodnight.

A last burst of applause as Vic steps off the stage into the wings.

IN THE WINGS

A cocktail girl, GINGER, is standing there with a cloth for Vic's brow and a glass of champagne. She swaps them for Vic's microphone and gushes in a thick Noo Yoik accent.

GINGER
(excited)
Great show tonight, Vic.

VIC
Eh, it was okay. Kind of a thin crowd, though. Guess people had better things to do.

GINGER
Better than you? Ain't no such thing, Vic honey.

VIC
That would be more convincing if you weren't programmed to say it. But I appreciate the effort.

He passes the cloth and the now-empty glass back to her.

VIC
Now go on. I know you got a good night of your own all planned out. I saw you and Bobby swapping googly eyes all through the show. Poor sap could barely keep his drumming straight.

Ginger gives a bashful giggle.

GINGER
What about you?

VIC
(grin)
Doesn't anybody listen? I keep saying I got a big night planned.

GINGER
Well, okay. 'Night, Vic.

VIC
'Night, Ginger.

And Ginger moves away. Vic takes a moment, straightens himself, and steps back out into the main lounge room.

MAIN LOUNGE

The crowd has thinned even further, with many guests having moved on at the end of the night. Waitresses are cleaning up empty glasses, wiping down tables, and there is a definite air of closing down for the night.

Vic weaves slowly through, nodding politely at the lounge's employees and the last remaining guests.

Eventually he approaches the entry passage, the small anteroom that leads off the holosuite and into the station.

ENTRY PASSAGE

Vic pauses, looking out of the holosuite doors and onto the upper corridor of Quark's bar. The distant sound of drinks clinking and dabo players cheering comes to him.

Then, with a small smile, he walks out of the holosuite.

3 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR (CONTINUOUS)

Pulling himself up straight, and with a smile, Vic walks along the upper corridor towards the spiral staircases. He passes a few station residents sitting at tables, and they smile and raise their glasses to him.

He walks down the spiral staircase, passing more civilians and station crew on the way, again nodding acknowledgements and exchanging meaningless pleasantries.

Reaching the main floor of Quark's bar, Vic pauses for a moment to look out over the crowd. It's also late in the night here, but the place is still busy.

Over at the dabo table, TREIR is working the crowd with her usual pizzazz, and the gamblers are falling over themselves to adore her. Vic smirks at the sight.

QUARK sidles over to Vic and puts his arm around him.

QUARK

Vic, my man. Word has it I missed another spectacular show. I could swear I saw Sevak almost crack a smile.

Vic is more grateful to hear Quark say this than he was when Ginger said it. It feels more genuine coming from him. They walk together towards the open door of the bar.

VIC

I ain't a miracle worker.

QUARK

Your usual table's ready and waiting for you.

VIC

Thanks, Quark. You're a gentleman and a scholar.

QUARK

(wry)

Tell that to Ro.

Quark leaves Vic and heads back to his bar. Vic steps over the threshold and out onto the Promenade.

4 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE (CONTINUOUS)

The Promenade features its usual mix of crew members, civilians and visiting aliens, ambling around and seeing the sights. Vic smiles gently to see it.

At the station's shrine, Bajorans begin to file out, a low-level pryLAR at the doorway to see them off. Among the crowd is Major CENN, Ro's new deputy, and Captain KIRA.

Kira spots Vic and waves warmly before moving on, chatting with other Bajorans.

Vic moves off in the direction of Security. Looking through the glass doors, he sees RO at her desk. She is working, alone as usual, so he lets her be. He reaches the next spiral staircase, and climbs up to the second level.

Emerging onto the second level, near the upper entrance to Quark's bar, he finds Quark himself just laying out a drink for him at a small table on the Promenade.

QUARK

Vodka and orange, on the rocks,
just how you like it. Although
destitution knows what you see in
the stuff. Are you sure you
wouldn't prefer a nice refreshing
Sluggo Cola?

VIC

I think you know the answer to
that one, pallie.

With an amused roll of the eyes, Quark heads back into the bar. Vic takes the seat at the table, picks up the drink and takes a slow sip.

He sighs, looks up and out of the window, out onto the star-speckled blackness of space. He nods quietly to himself, satisfied.

VIC

Big night.

On Vic's face...

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

5 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

KIRA lies on a bio-bed, watching a full-body scanner move gradually down over her body from head to toe. She watches the moving blue light a bit nervously, not sure she wants to know what it'll tell her.

WIDEN to reveal... BASHIR running the scan, reading the results off a screen by the side of the bio-bed.

KIRA

So... am I going to explode?

BASHIR

Well, if you do, it won't be because of the new heart. As far as I can tell, everything is in perfect working order.

KIRA

"As far as you can tell?"

BASHIR

Nerys, relax. When I say "as far as I can tell," it's my attempt to be witty. I can tell everything, and you're fine.

KIRA

So I can play springball? I can eat a steak?

BASHIR

You can play springball while eating a steak and shouting at junior officers all day long if you want. It takes more than a knife through the chest to bring down the mighty Kira Nerys.

Kira pulls herself up to a sitting position.

KIRA

How about Ro? Within the boundaries of doctor-patient confidentiality.

BASHIR

Etana is working closely with her to ensure she's sticking to her exercise routine. I have seen nothing to preclude her continuing to serve as security chief.

KIRA

Good enough for me. Thanks, Julian.

Kira jumps down off the bio-bed and heads for the door.

BASHIR

If there are any issues, you get back down here at once, alright?

KIRA

(sour puss)

I thought you said there were no problems.

BASHIR

And every time a doctor says that, something comes along to make a fool of him. I just mean that I'm always here for whatever you need.

With a nod of thanks, Kira turns and leaves, and Bashir turns back to put away his equipment. As Kira exits...

...DAX enters. She strolls about, a little too obviously nonchalantly. She is here for a reason, but is trying to pretend she's not. Bashir finally notices her...

BASHIR

Ezri? What can I do for you?

DAX

Oh, nothing, nothing. Just thought I'd pop in and say hi.

Dax needs to find something to do while she makes her way round the room, so she picks up pieces of equipment and examines them for no reason. Bashir is not fooled, but he will not push her. He carries on putting away his equipment while politely waiting for her to get to the point.

BASHIR

Okay. Hi! How are you?

DAX

Fine, fine. Had a message from Worf on Qo'noS.

BASHIR

How is he?

DAX

He's fine. Apparently Alexander got a promotion on the *Ya'Vang*. He's the new bridge communications officer. Worf whined a bit, but I know he's proud really.

BASHIR

Good. Good for him.

DAX

Any plans for tonight?

Bashir pauses. Could this be the point of all this? Dax is trying to be casual, like this is no big thing. But underneath it she is clearly nervous about something.

BASHIR

Not really. Why?

DAX

I was just thinking of taking a trip to Las Vegas. Wondered if you wanted to join me. Seems like forever since we took in a show.

Dax is still trying to make this casual, but it sounds distinctly like she is asking him out on a date. Bashir is pleasantly surprised.

BASHIR
That sounds like a great idea.

DAX
(muted relief)
Great!

BASHIR
What time were you thinking?

DAX
How about we meet in Quark's about
twenty-one-hundred?

BASHIR
It's a date.

Dax's relieved expression falters a little, like that wasn't quite the right thing to say. Bashir notices the change. But then Dax brightens again.

DAX
Alright then. See you later.

Dax turns and leaves, her step somewhat lighter with that this trial is over. Bashir watches her go, happily bemused.

6 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING

Just a moment, focusing on the docking ring.

7 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

Vic strolls along the corridor, casually observing as he goes, like a tourist. He turns a corner, and a little further along is Lieutenant NOG, stretched out on the floor and elbow deep in the guts of some panel or other.

VIC
Need a hand there?

Nog jerks a little, narrowly missing bonking his head on a bulkhead. He pulls his head out from the panel's insides and turns to see the newcomer.

NOG

Oh, hey Vic. What are you doing wandering around the halls?

VIC

Y'know, just taking in the sights. I ain't due on stage till tonight. Gotta fill the time somehow.

NOG

Maybe you do. I've got to fix the proximity sensors on this docking array, then I'm going over plans for upgrades to the *Defiant's* computer mainframe with Leishman and Candlewood, then when that's done, I'm going back to school.

VIC

School?

NOG

Yeah... It was one of Admiral Ross's suggestions after the review last month. Because I never officially finished all the engineering courses at Starfleet Academy, he wants me to do as many remote courses in my down time as possible. Like anybody 'round here has down time.

VIC

You've already been king of the castle for two years. What more is there for you to learn?

NOG

Always something, unfortunately.

VIC

(re open panel)

Well, don't you have any dog bodies you can hand this stuff off to, so you can hit the books?

NOG

Dogs...?

(never mind)

All of my work crews are busy with this, that or the other. I didn't have anybody else free to do this, and I didn't want the Bajor shuttle crashing into the docking ring and killing two-hundred people when it arrives in an hour.

VIC

That's... understandable.

NOG

But if you were serious about giving me a hand...

VIC

(brightening)

Absolutely.

Vic crouches down, eventually sitting cross-legged on the deck beside Nog.

VIC (cont)

I can't promise I'll know what any of these doodads do, but I can follow instructions like any numbskull.

NOG

Great! Well, you can start by holding this for me while I fix that...

Nog hands Vic a piece of equipment, and then dives back inside the open panel.

NOG

(muffled by
machinery)

Sorry I haven't been in to catch a show in a while, Vic. I've just been up to my ears in repairs. You know how it goes.

VIC
(shrug)
Don't cry for me, Argentina.

NOG
I promise I'll find the time soon.

Vic nods along, accepting Nog's promise. He is wistful for a moment. Nog holds his hand out of the open panel for the device in Vic's hand, and Vic passes it to him. As he does, Vic warms up, happier to be hanging with his pal.

8 **INT. DS9 - OPS CENTRE**

A replicator on the top level of Ops creates a mug of steaming tea. VAUGHN reaches in to grab it, and carries it with him back down the stairs to the central Ops table. Dax is there, just keeping track of things.

DAX
(off panels)
The regular Bajor shuttle will be docking within twenty minutes, Commander.

VAUGHN
Mm-hmm. Any problems?

DAX
Nope. Nog got the repairs done in plenty of time.

VAUGHN
Good.

DAX
Commander... would you take the helm for a minute?

VAUGHN
Certainly.

Dax turns and trots up the stairs to Kira's office. The doors open as she approaches.

9 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE (CONTINUOUS)

Dax pokes her head into the office, where Kira is sat behind her desk reading from a padd.

DAX

Nerys, have you got a minute?

KIRA

Interrupt me, please. Anything to avoid reading more reports from the Chamber of Ministers.

Dax lets the door close behind her and takes the seat opposite Kira, who tosses the padd down in disgust.

KIRA

Politicians. As many words as possible to say... nothing.

DAX

Hey, I used to be a politician, you know.

KIRA

And?

DAX

And... it's worse than you think.

KIRA

So what do you need?

DAX

Just looking for a little advice, actually.

KIRA

From me? I thought you were the font of ancient knowledge.

DAX

In this case, you're the only one I can talk to about this. Except for Quark, and somehow I don't think he'd be impartial.

Kira pauses, then nods with understanding.

KIRA

Julian.

DAX

I'm planning to tell him tonight.
Any helpful hints?

KIRA

Just straight-forward and blunt.
You're not a couple anymore. You
don't owe him anything, except
honesty.

10 INT. DS9 - OPS CENTRE

At the central table, Vaughn sips at his tea. He turns at the sound of the turbolift rising into Ops, and sees that Vic is riding the lift, along with a couple Ops officers.

Vic steps off the lift and wanders into Ops, a little out of place and nervous to be here.

VAUGHN

Mister Fontaine. You're not
exactly a frequent visitor to Ops.
Do you need something?

VIC

Just exploring. Wondered if there
might be a couple of pretty young
ladies in here who wouldn't mind
an old showman's company for
lunch.

Vaughn smirks, understanding what Vic is really asking.

VAUGHN

Dax and Kira are just up there in
the office. I'm sure they won't be
long.

Vic nods, still looking around the room.

VIC

Whew. Quite an operation you guys are running here. I feel like I'm in a super-villain's evil lair or something. You ain't planning to hold the world to ransom, are you?

VAUGHN

Not unless there's been a change in orders, no.

As Vaughn grins with Vic, Kira and Dax exit the office.

DAX

Vic! This is a nice surprise. What are you doing here?

VIC

Hey, dollface. A man has to eat, and the best way to do it is with two gorgeous gals by his side. Would you care to join me for lunch in Quark's?

KIRA

How could we resist such a flattering offer?

(to Vaughn)

Commander, you're in charge.

Dax puts her arms through Vic's, and Kira puts her arm through his other. With the women on either side, Vic puffs up and struts out up the stairs to the turbolift.

Vaughn watches them go, then with an amused shake of the head, turns back to the central Ops table.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

11 INT. VIC'S LOUNGE

Another night in Las Vegas. The floor has been cleared to create a dancing area in the middle, surrounded by tables. It is busier than last time, but still not exactly packed.

From the entry passage, Dax and Bashir enter together. They are both dressed to look fabulous and in tune with the environs. They are not holding hands, and there is a nervous tension between them, if for different reasons.

As they weave their way into the crowd, Vic is nowhere to be seen. They make their way to the bar and perch on stools. Not quite sure how to start the conversation, so they just watch the crowd foxtrotting around the floor.

After a few moments, Ginger arrives.

GINGER

Hey, doc! Vic's been hoping you'd drop by. What can I get you?

BASHIR

(peppy)

Champagne, I think.

Dax isn't quite as enthusiastic - Julian is just being too excited about all this - but after a moment's hesitation, she accedes and nods to Ginger.

GINGER

Great! Back in two shakes.

Ginger leaves.

BASHIR

You want to get a table?

DAX

I guess.

They hop back off the bar stools and make their way into the crowd. As they skirt the edge of the dance floor, they spot two men at a nearby table - engineering Lieutenant CANDLEWOOD (8x17, 8x19) and Bajoran dabo boy HETIK (8x16).

Candlewood wears a nice dinner suit that he looks nervous enough to sweat right through. Hetik wears something dabo-ish but rather more dignified, appropriate to the setting. They both have drinks, and Hetik is enjoying the spectacle.

DAX
Hi, John! Hetik.

CANDLEWOOD
(jumps to his feet)
Oh! Lieutenant. Doctor.

DAX
(waves him back down)
Oh, sit sit sit. We're all off duty. You two having a nice night?

Candlewood glances back towards Hetik, and the two share a mildly embarrassed but distinctly flirtatious smirk.

CANDLEWOOD
So far.

BASHIR
Is this is your first time in Vic's, Hetik? You've got that wide-eyed "I have no idea what's going on here" look.

HETIK
(nodding)
It's, aah... it's an experience.

BASHIR
You'll get the hang of the lingo soon enough.

DAX
Come on Julian - we're cramping their style.

BASHIR
(re Dax's words)
For example.

Bashir lets Dax lead him away. She spots an empty table and heads for it. Bashir makes sure to get there before her and pulls out the chair, all gentleman-like. Her smile falters again just the tiniest bit, but takes the chair and sits.

DAX
Thank you, Julian.

Then he takes the chair opposite. Ginger arrives and places two glasses of champagne before them.

GINGER
Here you go, lovebirds.

Again, Dax falters, but Bashir grins. He raises one of the glasses in a toast and waits for Dax to raise the other.

BASHIR
To... new beginnings.

Dax takes a whole different meaning of that from the one Bashir intended. But she agrees nevertheless.

DAX
New beginnings. Exactly.

They clink their glasses, sip, and place them back down.

DAX
It's nice to see him dating.

BASHIR
Who, Candlewood?

DAX
(nods)
I know he has this reputation on duty for being a prankster and the life of the party, but I get the feeling he's not actually all that good at socialising in real life.

BASHIR

Is it really dating if it's with a dabo boy, though?

DAX

You tell me - you dated Leeta.

BASHIR

Touché.

The band, which has been playing fun, danceable swing music through the scene, ends one song. There is polite applause from the crowd as the dancers pause on the floor.

Some take the chance to rest their feet and take a seat. Others stay in spot, ready for more dancing. When the music re-starts with a new tune, they begin again. Bashir stands and formally holds out his hand to Dax.

BASHIR

Speaking of dating... would you care to dance?

DAX

(shy smile)

I'd love to.

She stands, takes his hand and the two of them sweep onto the dance floor. Bashir leads Dax into a basic but serviceable quickstep.

As they swoop around the floor, Dax slowly lets go of her nervousness and starts relaxing into the music and the fun of the evening...

12 INT. DS9 - NOG'S QUARTERS

Have we ever been in Nog's quarters since he was made Chief Engineer? I'm not sure. Anyhow, he's there now, hunched over his computer consoles. The screens are filled with technical schematics and reports.

Nog goes from one to the next and back to the first, checking things against padds in his hands, making notes in other padds, and generally looking like a student cramming for his finals.

He takes a moment and sags in defeat. He presses a control and the computer bleeps.

COMPUTER

The time is twenty-one hours and
twenty six minutes.

He ponders it for a moment - can he spare the time? He really wants to...

NOG

No. Can't. Got to concentrate.

(sigh; recites
from text)

The basic principles of quadri-
spectral subspace geometry are as
follows...

13 INT. VIC'S LOUNGE

Dax and Bashir are still spinning around the floor. The song comes to an end, and they pause to clap politely, then head back to their table. The band takes a break and the other dancers head to either their own tables or the bar.

DAX

That was fun! I'm a little out of
breath.

BASHIR

You're just out of practise. If we
were to start dancing regularly
again, you'd be waltzing them off
the floor.

DAX

Not everyone has genetically
enhanced stamina, Julian.

Bashir wiggles his eyebrows suggestively, and Dax realises with horror that he took that as a sexual come-on.

DAX

(nervous)

That's not what I meant.

BASHIR

(smirk)

Oh I know, I'm only playing.

But Dax can't help but worry that he's not. This is getting out of hand. Best to just deal with the issue right now.

DAX

Julian... I suppose you've figured out that I had an ulterior motive for asking you out tonight...

Bashir realises Dax is getting serious, so he tamps down his enthusiasm to reflect that.

BASHIR

I did.

DAX

And there's something that I need to talk to you about, because it involves you.

BASHIR

I was hoping you'd say that.

DAX

(pressing on)

The thing is, I've been thinking about some things a lot over the past couple of months. Do you remember back when we were -

An announcer interrupts - a big booming voice.

ANNOUNCER (o.s.)

Ladies and gentleman, please welcome to the stage of the fabulous Dunes Hotel in Las Vegas, the man with the golden touch... Mister! Vic! Fontaine!

The crowd CHEERS and CLAPS. Bashir turns and joins the applause, but Dax sighs in mild annoyance. She finally plucks up her courage, and then gets interrupted.

After a moment, Vic himself appears from the wings and takes his place at the front of the band. But he is not the usual boisterous showman - he is subdued, a little down.

The band strikes up, and with no pre-amble or opening patter, Vic launches straight into a subdued and somewhat sad version of Cole Porter's "Every Time We Say Goodbye."

VIC
(singing)
Every time we say goodbye
I die a little
Every time we say goodbye
I wonder why a little...

While Vic continues in the background, Dax attempts to get Bashir's attention, in hushed tones.

VIC
(continuing)
Why the gods above me
Who must be in the know
Think so little of me
They allow you to go

DAX
So, Julian, like I said, there's
something I want to talk -

BASHIR
(interrupting;
gently)
Ezri, shush. Vic's on. We can talk
in a minute.

Frustrated, Dax bites her tongue and gives up for the moment. She turns to watch Vic's show.

VIC
(continuing)
When you're near
There's such an air
Of spring about it.
I can hear a lark somewhere
Begin to sing about it

There's no love song finer
But how strange the change
From major to minor
Every time we say goodbye

Now Dax is paying attention. As she watches Vic on stage, it becomes clear that Vic is feeling these lyrics for real. She glances over to Bashir, who is enjoying the show but doesn't seem to pick up anything worrying. Dax continues to watch Vic's performance...

VIC

(repeats)

When you're near
There's such an air
Of spring about it.
I can hear a lark somewhere
Begin to sing about it

There's no love song finer
But how strange the change
From major to minor
Every time we say goodbye

Finishing on Dax, who is beginning to suspect something is rather wrong with Vic...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

14 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

Dax and Bashir sit across a table with half-drunk glasses, both still in their finery. It's the end-of-night drink.

DAX

You can't tell me Vic didn't seem a little down in the dumps to you.

BASHIR

It's a sad song, Ezri. You wouldn't want him to dance a jig in the middle of it.

DAX

It was more than that.

BASHIR

(doesn't really care)
Well... he's a sensitive man.

DAX

That's my point. I think he's depressed about something.

BASHIR

You realise we're talking about the emotional state of a hologram here, right?

DAX

You're the one who called him "no ordinary hologram."

A slightly awkward silence. Bashir isn't sure what the problem is, exactly. TREIR appears, to Bashir's relief.

TREIR

Top up on the nightcap?

Bashir lets Dax decide, still hopeful for tonight.

DAX

No thanks, Treir. This is fine.

They hear footsteps, and all look across the bar - Hetik and Candlewood descend the spiral staircase, holding hands and exchanging cute glances. They get to the bottom of the stairs, pause, and then share a romantic goodnight kiss.

At Dax and Bashir's table, Treir purses and mutters...

TREIR

Careful with the public displays
of affection, boys.

DAX

What do you mean? Are they not
supposed to kiss because he's a
dabo boy?

TREIR

I just mean you do not want to get
an Orion girl jealous. Believe me.

She loves it really. With a smile, she wanders off. Hetik and Candlewood separate, and Hetik moves off towards the back rooms of the bar. Candlewood floats towards the door, glowing. Dax and Bashir both smile, amused at the sight.

BASHIR

Almost enough to put ideas in a
man's mind.

Bashir reaches across the table to grasp Dax's hand, but Dax yanks her hand away, flustered.

DAX

Julian... no. That's not what
tonight was about.

Bashir is now more confused than ever. Dax knocks back the last of her drink and stands. The evening is over.

DAX

I should go. Thank you for a nice
night. I'll see you tomorrow.

BASHIR

But... what about what you wanted
to talk to me about?

DAX

You were right, it can wait. The
moment's passed.

She turns and walks away, still flustered by how the whole evening went so wrong. Bashir is left at the table alone.

15 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

A moment to indicate time passing.

16 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

The next morning, Dax walks along the corridor, back in uniform. She comes to a specific set of quarters. She reaches out to tap the door CHIME. She listens closer - there is noise coming through the door.

MATTHIAS (o.s.)

(muffled)

Come in!

The door slides open, and the SOUNDS of a busy morning at home burst out into the corridor. Dax blinks in surprise at the sheer chaos of it.

17 INT. DS9 - MATTHIAS FAMILY QUARTERS

MATTHIAS, the station's counsellor (last seen in 9x09), is just walking past the doorway in her uniform, tying her hair up into a lifted style, using hair-pins that carries in the corner of her mouth. A professional human woman in her early 40s, with a full family life.

MATTHIAS

Morning, Lieutenant. What can I do
for you?

DAX

Um... are you sure this is a good
time?

Dax takes a step further in, and looks around the room. It's like a bomb site. Clothes everywhere, computer screens playing recorded messages with no-one listening.

MATTHIAS

(re: the mess)

What, this? Standard procedure for mornings in the Matthias house.

At the dining table, two young children sit with breakfast bowls. The boy ARIOS (7-ish) and the girl MIREH (5-ish) both have the tiniest hints of Bajoran nose-ridges. Neither is paying attention to the food in front of them, but are taunting each other in typical brother-sister fashion.

ARIOS

You look stupid. You've got oatmeal all over your face.

MIREH

Daddy! Arios called me stupid!

A Bajoran man, SIBIAS (briefly seen in 8x18) in Bajoran civilian clothing is buzzing around the kitchen area.

SIBIAS

Arios, don't call your sister stupid. And both of you, stop fighting and eat your breakfast. School starts in half an hour and you're not even dressed yet.

Both kids pick up their spoons and half-heartedly start eating. But Mireh makes sure to stick her tongue out at Arios first. He does it right back.

Meanwhile, Matthias has grabbed a half-empty mug of coffee off the table. She drinks from it while walking back across the room towards the computer.

MATTHIAS

Lieutenant...?

DAX

Oh, yes. I was just wondering if you had time to chat this morning.

MATTHIAS

Sorry, I've got appointments all morning. But we can talk on the way to the office, if you want.

DAX

That'll be fine.

Matthias takes a last chug of coffee, places the mug down on the computer counter, and picks up a padd instead. Then she goes back over to the dining table and the children.

MATTHIAS

Alright, you two. I've got to go to work. So gimme a kiss.

She leans down to Mireh, and gives her a big RASPBERRY on the cheek. Mireh gives her one back. Then Matthias does the same for Arios, who raspberries her back too.

She stands and goes to her husband, and kisses him - a quick kiss of affection and familiarity.

MATTHIAS

(to the kids)

No fighting, you two. Do what Daddy tells you, and have a good day at school, alright?

(to Sibias)

See you later, hun.

(to Dax)

Shall we?

Matthias and Dax head to the door and exit.

18 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR (CONTINUOUS)

Dax and Matthias walk down the corridor. There's an unusual power structure here, since Dax is second-in-command, but Matthias is the senior officer, plus Ezri's elder by at least a decade. Neither is really in the higher position.

MATTHIAS

So what's on your mind?

DAX

I was in the holosuite last night, in the Las Vegas lounge program, and it looked like Vic, the lead character... well, he seemed depressed.

MATTHIAS

Okay. And...?

DAX

Well I was just looking for a second opinion from another psychologist. Do you think I should talk to him about it? Or just keep out of it?

MATTHIAS

(baffled)

Keep out of what?

DAX

Of Vic's personal life. I feel like I should help him, but I don't want to intrude.

They reach a turbolift and stop. Matthias presses the call button and they wait.

MATTHIAS

I'm still not entirely sure I understand what the problem is. This is a hologram we're talking about, yes?

DAX

Yes, but a very perceptive one. He knows he's a hologram, and he can move around from program to program whenever he wants. He's helped a lot of us out in the past.

The turbolift door opens and the two women board. It is empty except for them.

19 **INT. DS9 - TURBOLIFT (CONTINUOUS)**

Matthias still isn't sure what's going on here, but wants to be helpful if she can. She begins pondering, trying to come up with something that might be useful...

MATTHIAS

Alright, well... I know there's been all this talk on Earth lately about holograms demanding better rights and working conditions. After *Voyager* got back from the Delta Quadrant a few months ago and its EMH became a celebrity. The tabloids are calling it a "holo-strike". If he's as self-deterministic as you say, maybe he got himself caught up in all that.

DAX

Is that so bad? People should have good working conditions.

MATTHIAS

All due respect, Lieutenant, but holograms aren't people. They're tools that we design to do a certain job, and if they can't do that job, you talk to a computer programmer, not a psychiatrist.

The turbolift stops, and they exit onto another corridor.

20 **INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR (CONTINUOUS)**

Matthias walks along, Dax a couple of steps behind. Dax is appalled at Matthias' seeming lack of concern.

DAX

You know, I'm not sure I can believe what I'm hearing here. How can a counsellor of all people reject the idea of equal rights for everybody? I thought society was centuries past some people being better than others.

MATTHIAS

Lieutenant, we're talking about a computer program created for entertainment. And I resent your implication that I'm some kind of racist. I resent it very much. Did you miss the part where I'm the fruit of an inter-racial marriage myself? I'm one-eighth Vulcan, and I also married a Bajoran man.

DAX

(flustered)

You know what? You're right. I apologise. I'm just a little emotional about this because I have an attachment to Vic.

They reach the door to Matthias' office. Matthias stops before entering and stands back a little, folds her arms. She is inspecting Dax, figuring her out.

MATTHIAS

Lieutenant, I think you should consider the possibility that your urge to help this fictional character with his emotional problems is more about you than it is about him.

DAX

(caught off guard)

Well... that's maybe... not completely out of the realms of possibility.

But Dax doesn't really want to go there right now.

DAX (cont)

Look, will you at least just come and talk to him with me? Make your own analysis based on your own observations, and we'll take it from there.

MATTHIAS

I'm not free right this minute.
I've got real people's mental
states to worry about. But come
and find me this afternoon, and I
guess we'll give it a shot. If
only to put your mind at ease.

Matthias opens the door and enters her office, leaving Dax
alone in the corridor.

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

Dax perches nervously on a bar stool as a mid-afternoon
crowd does their thing. Some officers, some random aliens,
Ferengi waiters moving back and forth. Quark appears behind
the bar. He looks out onto the Promenade in the same
direction Dax is staring, to see who she is waiting for.

QUARK

Somebody need to see a doctor?

DAX

What?

QUARK

You're waiting for Bashir, right?
Rumour has it you two had quite
the romantic evening last night.

DAX

(uncomfortable)
Don't listen to rumours, Quark.

QUARK

Hard not to with these ears.

Matthias enters and strides firmly towards Dax.

MATTHIAS

Alright, Lieutenant. Let's get on
with it.

Dax pops off her stool, and they walk together towards the
holosuites. Quark's face is blank with surprise.

22 **INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR, UPPER CORRIDOR**

Dax and Matthias walk along the corridor to the holosuites. Dax stops at the panel of one, reads the screen.

DAX
Program's running. He's online.

MATTHIAS
Okay.

Dax taps a control. The holosuite doors OPEN, and the two women walk through.

REVERSE ANGLE

Dax and Matthias emerge from the door, onto a replica of the upper corridor of Quark's. They continue a few steps through sheer inertia before even realising where they are.

They stop. Look around themselves, confused.

MATTHIAS
What the...

Frowning in confusion, Dax turns around and walks back through the door again.

FIRST ANGLE

Dax emerges from the door onto the upper corridor of Quark's. She stops again, looks back through the door.

Matthias is on the other side, standing on an identical upper corridor of Quark's, looking back at her.

Dax walks back through the door to join Matthias.

REVERSE ANGLE

Dax emerges from the door and stands next to Matthias. They are both very confused.

DAX
What's going on here?

MATTHIAS

You tell me.

Together they walk to the railing, and look over it.

ANGLE

Looking down onto the main floor of Quark's bar from the upper balcony. It looks almost identical to the bar they started in - a mid-afternoon crowd, some officers, some random aliens, Ferengi waiters moving back and forth.

DAX

This is a holographic recreation of Quark's. But the computer said that Vic's Las Vegas program was running in here.

MATTHIAS

Was the computer confused?

No idea. Then Dax notices a certain table down on the main level. Vic himself sits at it, with some unidentified lunch companions, in the middle of some amusing anecdote.

Dax frowns, more confused than ever. She turns, a bit annoyed, and hurries towards the spiral staircase.

23 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR (CONTINUOUS)

Dax emerges from the bottom of the stairs, Matthias close behind her. They look around a bit more, and see things about exactly as you'd expect. Quark is behind the bar, MORN sits on his regular stool, Treir is at the dabo table.

Dax makes a bee-line for Vic's table, focusing on his happy and laughing face, not paying attention to his table-mates (but we might notice the shoulder of a Starfleet uniform).

DAX

Vic? What the hell is going on here?

Vic reacts, a total caught-out-there shock. He looks up at Dax, dumbstruck, floundering for words.

VIC

Oh... hey... dollface...

Dax looks at the other people sitting with him at the table... and there is Dax. Another copy of Ezri Dax is sat at the table, joining Vic for lunch, with Kira Nerys sat beside her, both in their uniforms.

Real Dax's jaw drops with shock. She feels violated.

DAX

You made a copy of me? Of everyone?! What the hell is wrong with you?

Vic gets to his feet, flustered, trying to cover, trying to calm her down.

VIC

Doll, look, I can explain...

DAX

(to Matthias)

Do you believe this? You wanted to know if a hologram could need a psychiatrist. I guess you got your answer.

That takes Vic aback. And since the best defence in a good offence...

VIC

I beg your pardon? You been telling people I'm crazy?

DAX

(gestures around)

Well, what do you call this?

VIC

(defiant)

I call it having a nice meal with my friends. Not talking behind their backs to a damn head shrinker!

MATTHIAS
Mister Fontaine -

VIC
You got no business waltzing in
here and laying down the law. Get
out.

DAX
Vic, hang on a minute -

VIC
Get out of here and leave me
alone!

Vic WAVES his arm, and the bar around them DISSOLVES,
taking Vic and all the other characters with it...

24 INT. DS9 - HOLOSUITE (CONTINUOUS)

...leaving Dax and Matthias alone and somewhat shaken on
the bare holosuite grid.

MATTHIAS
Now what do we do?

Dax has no idea. She shakes her head, more worried than
ever about Vic. The two of them turn to leave.

Watching Dax and Matthias leave, the door onto the upper
corridor of Quark's opening for them...

Vic has appeared again, standing alone on the holosuite
grid, at the back of the room. He watches them leave - they
don't see him watching them. His face is filled with
churning emotions - anger, guilt, shame.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

25 INT. DS9 - WARD ROOM

A senior staff meeting. Kira at the head, with Dax, Vaughn, Bashir, Nog, and Ro (still using the supports) elsewhere.

DAX

I feel like it's all my fault. If I hadn't blown up at him, made him feel all defensive...

BASHIR

It's alright, Ezri. It would be a shock for any of us.

KIRA

Putting aside the question of why he did it for the moment, do we know how he did it?

NOG

Based on what Lieutenant Dax said, I looked into the activity logs of Vic's program. It turns out he's been keeping tabs on us all for a while now. The program somehow generated spontaneous connections between itself and the replicator files, duty rosters, medical records. He knew I was fixing the proximity sensors in the docking ring. He knew Commander Vaughn drinks tea in the after noon. He knew that you, Captain, visit the shrine for evening services. He knew everything about where we were and what we were doing.

VAUGHN

...And he incorporated all of that data into his simulation of the station, to make it as realistic as possible.

NOG

Yes, sir.

KIRA

And how does a holosuite program manage to do all of that?

BASHIR

We've known since the beginning that Vic wasn't just any old holosuite program, Captain.

DAX

All of us have wondered at one time or another whether he meets the criteria for an artificial intelligence. We just never actually got around to trying to answer the question.

NOG

Maybe with his program running permanently for so long, the matrix has developed enough complexities and nuances that he actually does, now.

RO

Captain, can we cut to the point here? I can't be the only one feeling more than a little violated. This thing has been following us around the station, watching our every move. I don't exactly enjoy knowing he can access any bit of information about me whenever he wants.

BASHIR

But if he is an artificial intelligence -

RO

(interrupting)

That's irrelevant. If he's just a program, then he's a program that's out of control. If he's not, then it's no different from any flesh and blood crew member using the computer to... to stalk us. Either way, it's wrong.

VAUGHN

She does have a point, Captain. Ro and I may not have the personal connection to this man that the rest of you do, but that doesn't change the fact that what he did was a huge invasion of privacy.

Kira pauses to consider all the opinions.

KIRA

You're right, it was. But I don't want to do anything drastic without giving him a chance to explain himself.

DAX

Let me talk to him, Captain.

Kira looks up - clearly, Dax feels strongly about this.

KIRA

Okay. Let me know how it goes.
Dismissed, everyone.

People begin to stand. Vaughn helps Ro to her feet and to grab her walking stick. Bashir watches Dax exit the room, curious about what's going on there.

26 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

As Dax walks down the corridor, Bashir emerges and jogs a couple of steps to catch up with her. They walk and talk.

BASHIR

Ezri?

She turns to him, allows him to catch up.

BASHIR (cont)

I just wanted to say I'm sorry I didn't believe you the other night. When you said you thought something was wrong with Vic. Obviously you were right.

DAX

Oh, don't be silly. You have nothing to apologise for. I could just as easily have been completely insane.

BASHIR

No - you saw something I didn't. You're an excellent counsellor. When am I going to learn?

Bashir is being deliberately flattering. Dax kind of knows it, but he is so sweet and earnest that she falls for it.

DAX

Thank you, Julian.

BASHIR

Do you think you can help him?

DAX

Depends on what the problem is. Ro and Vaughn were right - it was an invasion of privacy - and I'm sure he knows that. That's my way in.

BASHIR

I could come with you, if you want.

DAX

(considering it)

I suppose you are the one who brought him to the station.

BASHIR

And once this is taken care of, we can get back to our dancing.

DAX
Maybe. We'll see.

Dax walks on with an uncertain smile, legs stretching out a bit beyond Bashir, unconsciously distancing herself...

27 **INT. VIC'S HOTEL SUITE**

Vic's private rooms, as seen in 6x20 and 7x10. A KNOCK on the wooden door. A hand opens it - it's Dax and Bashir.

VIC
What do you two want?

Vic is in a dressing gown, a bit messy and bedraggled. He's holding a drink in his hand. He hasn't slept well. He stays at the door, not letting them in just yet.

DAX
(gentle)
The program was switched off when we got to the holosuite. We wanted to check that you were okay.

VIC
I'm fine. Just peachy.

Pause. None of them know what to say next. Vic doesn't want to be bothered - he would rather wallow.

DAX
Look, Vic... I'm sorry I yelled at you. I should have been more understanding. But given a little time to consider it, I'm sure you can see why I was upset.

VIC
(small, surly)
Of course I can. I'm not an idiot.

DAX
Then can we come in, and talk about it? Please, Vic.

Vic pauses... sighs... and turns around to slouch back into his living room. Taking that as an opening, Dax and Bashir enter. Bashir quietly closes the door behind them.

Vic slumps onto his sofa and slugs back his drink. Dax and Bashir perch opposite him on low chairs. He looks up at them, their tentative expressions. He chuckles sadly.

VIC

Look at the pair of you. Anyone would think you'd come to tell someone they was dying. Cancer of the imaging sequencer, is it?

DAX

Nobody's dying, Vic.

VIC

Wait, that's it, ain't it? You're gonna turn the damn program off. Well, go ahead.

(mutter)

Not like anyone'll notice.

BASHIR

Vic, we're not turning you off. We just wanted to talk, find out what's going on with you, before we decide what to do about this.

VIC

(grumpy)

I think I'd rather you just switched me off.

DAX

Okay, I guess that's for the best. I'll tell Kira that's what you want. I'm sure Quark'll be happy to have the holosuite free again.

She stands and heads to the door. Bashir blinks, surprised.

VIC

(sad chuckle)

Reverse psychology? Please.

DAX

(turns back)

Not at all. The fact is we'd be completely within our rights to turn you off. You violated our trust, Vic. A lot of people are pretty pissed off with you.

That seems to genuinely get through to Vic at last.

VIC

(quiet)

Really? I never wanted that.

DAX

(taking the opening)

What did you want, Vic? You must have known we'd be upset if we ever found out what you were up to. Creating fake versions of us in the holosuite, and playing with us like toys?

VIC

And look how long I managed to get away with it, eh? Right under your noses all this time, and ain't nobody smelled a thing.

BASHIR

So you just did it to push our buttons? To get attention?

VIC

(slightly defensive)

No, I... I was just... exploring. You guys talk about the station out there all the time... just wanted to see it for myself.

Dax comes back to him, sits again on the low chairs.

DAX

And did you get what you wanted
out of it?

VIC

(half-hearted)

It was... nice. To see everyone.
Just hang out for a while.

DAX

But it's not real, Vic. You know
that, right? I feel ridiculous
saying this to a hologram, but
it's a fantasy. There's no way to
leave the holosuite for real.

VIC

I'm your fantasy life. You can't
be mine?

DAX

It's not the same. I...

(flustered)

Vic, enjoying fantasies is fine.
In fact, it's better than fine -
it's a necessary part of a healthy
life. But all it does is give you
a break, a time out. It avoids the
problem - it doesn't fix it.

All of a sudden, Vic is on topic. It comes out slowly,
quietly. Not with any accusation, just sad.

VIC

The war was hell for you. I could
tell that even from in here. But
there was something good came out
of it - me. You guys were always
in here to forget your troubles,
and I was happy to help. I felt
like I was doing some good.

BASHIR

Everyone united in common cause
against the Dominion... But the
war's been over for two years.

VIC

And look at me now. You don't need me anymore. Sure, you still came around for a while. But it was just habit. When was the last time any of you came to a show, huh?

DAX

(gently)

Is that what this is all about? That we haven't been to see you?

VIC

It's why I'm here, isn't it? The reason I exist. To make music for you guys. You two, Kira, Quark, Odo, Nog... God help me, even Worf.

(quiet)

I miss you guys. You're my friends.

Sympathising, Dax nods to herself - she understands.

DAX

Vic... I'm so sorry. You're right - things haven't been the same since the war.

BASHIR

Of course they haven't. Things change, Dax. It's the only real universal constant.

DAX

(turns to
Bashir)

But he's right, Julian. You must feel it too. Everyone's too caught up in their own stuff. The old gang may have moved on, but we haven't made any effort to create a new gang.

BASHIR

Then what do we do about it?

DAX

I don't know...

BASHIR

What we need is something to bring the station together. Some kind of event, that every one can come to and enjoy together, as a community. One might even call it... a show.

Bashir looks meaningfully to Vic. It takes a second, but Vic gets the hint.

VIC

Hey doc, I'd love to help. Really I would. But it ain't gonna happen.

DAX

Julian, you can't be serious. There's thousands of people on this station at any one time. You can fit maybe a dozen into this room at best. It's a nice idea, but Vic's right... it'll never work.

BASHIR

Oh, I think we can figure it out. Just let me place a few calls.

On Bashir's victorious grin...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

28 INT. VIC'S HOTEL SUITE

Vic looks in a mirror, eyes wide with nervousness. He is wearing his very best suit, and wants to look as suave and sophisticated as possible. He fidgets, straightening the collar, bow-tie, pocket-square. Everything must be perfect.

Nog walks up, slaps him on the shoulder.

NOG

Vic, stop fidgeting. You look as smooth as a... what's something that's smooth?

VIC

Silk?

NOG

Exactly. Smooth as a silk. So relax. You've done this a thousand times.

VIC

Not for a thousand people, I haven't. If Frank could see me now...

Vic turns away from the mirror, still nervous.

VIC (cont)

You really think I look okay?

Now Kira enters from a side room, and walks up to him.

KIRA

You look great. You're gonna knock 'em dead.

VIC

(wryly)

I'll settle for entertained.

29 INT. DS9 - MATTHIAS FAMILY QUARTERS

Mireh comes out of the family's bedrooms, wearing a pretty party dress. The five-year-old girl stands and pouts.

MIREH

Mummy! This dress itches.

Matthias, also wearing a glamorous evening dress, walks over to her daughter.

MATTHIAS

Oh, I'm sorry, baby. Come here then, let me see.

Matthias steps behind Mireh, checks the back of her neck. She reaches off screen, comes back with a small tube, and squeezes some cream out into her hand. She starts rubbing it into Mireh's neck.

MATTHIAS

Better?

MIREH

A bit. Thanks Mummy.

MATTHIAS

You're welcome, baby.

(calls out)

Sibias, hun? Is Arios ready?

SIBIAS

He certainly is.

Sibias appears from the bedroom, pushing Arios in front of him. Both are wearing smart dinner suits, Arios an adorable miniature version of his father.

MATTHIAS

(gasp)

Oh, look at my two handsome men.
And doesn't Mireh look pretty?

SIBIAS

(to Mireh)

You look beautiful, baby.

Mireh pouts and scratches at her neck, unimpressed.
Matthias crouches down in front of the kids.

MATTHIAS

Now, I'm letting you both stay up
past your bed time because it's a
special night. But that means I
don't want any arguments when I
say it's time to go to bed, okay?

MIREH

We promise, Mummy.

ARIOS

(trying his luck)
Can I have a jumja stick too?

Matthias pretends to have been harassed into it.

MATTHIAS

Okay. Just this once.
(to Sibias)
Get their coats, will you, hun?

Sibias goes off to find the children's coats. Matthias goes
to the replicator.

MATTHIAS

Four jumja sticks, please.
(checks over shoulder,
then *sotto*)
Two of them sugar free.

The replicator creates four jumja sticks, arranged in two
pairs. Matthias grabs them, and brings them back over the
kids, who are now wearing light jackets.

She hands two of the sticks to the kids, and one of the
others to Sibias, keeping the last for herself.

MATTHIAS

Okay - everyone ready?

The family moves to exit.

30 **INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR (CONTINUOUS)**

The kids walk on ahead, both sucking happily on their jumja sticks. Sibias and Matthias follow behind, also sucking on theirs. Sibias leans in close to his wife.

SIBIAS
You look beautiful too, Phil.

MATTHIAS
Why thank you, kind sir.

SIBIAS
(tasting his jumja)
Ooh! We get the full sugar ones.

MATTHIAS
(flirty)
We may need the energy later.

They walk on down the corridor.

31 **INT. DS9 - OPS CENTRE**

Vaughn exits from the commander's office, and walks down the steps to the central Ops table, where Dax awaits.

VAUGHN
All locked up for the night?

DAX
Yep. No more ships due in. Every one who needs to be here is already here.

VAUGHN
Good.

Vaughn turns to talk to the Vulcan officer Sevak, who stands in the tactical alcove, checking panels.

VAUGHN
Mister Sevak - are you sure you're okay running Ops all by yourself?

SEVAK

Indeed, sir. I am quite capable.
Tonight's event is, after all, for
the benefit of the crew's
emotional needs. And since I have
no such needs, I would venture
that I am, in fact, the ideal man
for the job.

Vaughn suppresses a chuckle at Sevak's excess verbiage. He
turns to Dax.

VAUGHN

Well, Lieutenant... after you.

The two of them head up the stairs to the turbolift.

32 INT. VIC'S LOUNGE - IN THE WINGS

Bashir is waiting near the curtains as Vic walks towards
him, with Kira and Nog following. Vic is still nervous,
checking his cuffs, clearing his throat.

VIC

How long have I got?

BASHIR

T minus five minutes, Vic.

VIC

(stops to listen)

Sounds kinda quiet out there.

BASHIR

Stop worrying. I've got it all
under control. You ready?

Vic gulps, readies himself.

VIC

I'm ready.

BASHIR

Then let's go.

Bashir leads Vic and the others out onto the stage...

33 INT. VIC'S LOUNGE - MAIN ROOM

Vic, Bashir, Kira and Nog emerge onto the stage... And Vic stops dead. The room is completely empty, except for Ginger the cocktail girl waiting by the bar.

VIC

I don't understand... where is everyone?

BASHIR

They're waiting for you to take the stage. This way.

Bashir walks towards the bar. Ginger pours a glass of champagne and hands it to Vic as they pass. Vic looks at it, not sure what to do.

NOG

Go ahead. You'll need it.

A small hesitation, then Vic knocks back the drink and hands the empty glass back to Ginger.

GINGER

Break a leg, Vic.

Bashir holds the curtain for him, into the entry passage. Still not quite sure what's going on, Vic walks through.

34 INT. VIC'S LOUNGE - ENTRY PASSAGE (CONTINUOUS)

Vic, Bashir, Kira and Nog gather in the small anteroom. Kira touches a control, and the door opens. Vic's jaw drops as the ROAR of an enormous crowd comes to him from Quark's and beyond. He looks to Bashir, confused.

VIC

Doc, we've been over this. There's no way to -

Bashir holds up an object in front of Vic's face. It is the MOBILE EMITTER from *Voyager's* EMH. Bashir reaches out and clips the device to the lapel of Vic's jacket, as if it was a flower. Vic's image fritzes slightly, resetting itself.

VIC
What was that?

BASHIR
It's called a Mobile Emitter, and you have no idea how many favours I had to call in, or how many promises I had to make to get hold of it. It's due back at Jupiter Station, near Earth, as soon as we can possibly get it there. So this is a one-night-only event.
(warmly)
Make the most of it.

Bashir walks through the holosuite door, out onto the upper balcony of Quark's bar. He turns around and looks back at Vic, almost daring him to follow.

Vic begins to realise what Bashir is implying. He takes a small step forward... and another... and then he's over the threshold. For real. The amazement on his face is clear.

35 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR, UPPER CORRIDOR (CONTINUOUS)

Vic looks around, listening to the sounds, gaping in awe, as Kira and Nog follow him out and the door closes.

BASHIR
Your audience awaits, Vic.

VIC
(mostly to self)
Big night.

Still absorbing everything, Vic follows Bashir around the balcony. They pass the spiral staircase, and continue on towards the upper exit out of the bar onto the Promenade. The door opens...

36 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE (CONTINUOUS)

... onto the upper walkways of the Promenade, and a sea of faces awaiting Vic's arrival. The ROAR of people is huge. Morn, Treir and Hetik all stand just outside the door, beaming back at him with anticipation.

Looking out to the crossover bridge in front of them, a full LIVE BAND is set up. Real instruments like the ones Vic's holographic band plays. A mix of Starfleet officers, Bajoran civilians, and friendly aliens, they are all tuning up their instruments in preparation for the show.

Kira notices Vic's thunderstruck expression.

KIRA

I put a call out for all the best professional musicians from all over the station and Bajor. I can't guarantee they'll be exactly what you're used to, but I've had them practising non-stop for a week now.

NOG

I've taken care of all the power requirements, and made sure that the Promenade's acoustics are just right.

KIRA

Quark even pulled the entire Promenade Merchants' Association together to cater for everyone. Almost the entire station has turned out to see you, Vic.

VIC

(shell-shocked)

No pressure or nothin', huh?

OUTSIDE SECURITY

Ro stands outside her office doors, still in her supports. She is keeping a close eye on the massive crowds filling every space of the Promenade.

Major Cenn pushes out of the crowd towards her. He is very uncomfortable with all this, and is looking for refuge.

CENN

Prophets, I hate crowds.

RO
(sarcastic)
Really? I never guessed.

CENN
Who is this guy, anyway? What's
the big deal?

RO
Frankly, I'm not sure myself. I
mean, I went on one night out
there, more than a year ago,
and... well, I don't really get
it.

CENN
I'm surprised you're letting this
happen, Lieutenant. This many
people has got to be a security
nightmare.

RO
I've got every warm body working.
I even pulled Etana back in just
for the night.

(beat)
Speaking of which, shouldn't you
be covering the replimat, Major?

CENN
Right.
(deep breath)
Prophets, I hate crowds.

He wades back into the melée, soon lost in the masses of
people. Ro smiles a little, amused at his discomfort.

A moment, and Quark is the next to melt out of the crowd.

QUARK
Laren - can you please tell
Sergeant Shul to stop bossing my
customers around? This is a night
to celebrate, not to be penned in
like *jebrets*.

RO
It's for everyone's good, Quark.

QUARK
(unconvinced)
Yes, well...
(small smile)
Nice to see you enjoying yourself
for a change.

Ro is taken aback for a second... but then a begrudging smile does break through after all. Quark smiles back.

QUARK
See? Knew you could do it.

And he melts back into the crowd.

PROMENADE - MAIN FLOOR

The crowds have split into a natural break near the cross over bridge, making a front line that can look up to the bridge to see Vic and the band.

Just pushing their way to the front are Vaughn and Dax. Matthias and family are also just arriving from another direction - the parents shielding the kids from the mass.

MATTHIAS
Commander, Lieutenant. Quite a
turn out.

VAUGHN
Indeed.
(to Sibias)
Sibias, good to see you again.

SIBIAS
You too, Commander.

MATTHIAS
Lieutenant Dax, I want to
apologise to you for what I said
the other day.

DAX

What did you say?

MATTHIAS

About having "real people's"
feelings to worry about.

(looking around)

Clearly, helping Vic with his
problems has helped a lot of other
people too. It's nice to see so
many folks all enjoying the same
thing. I shouldn't have been so
judgemental.

DAX

Don't worry about it, Counsellor.

BASHIR (o.s.)

Ezri.

They look over to see that Bashir, Kira and Nog have come
down the spiral staircase and are making their way over to
them all. TENMEI has arrived as well, and joins Vaughn.

BASHIR

He's about to go on.

The gang pulls together, ready for the show. Quark's voice
echoes from loudspeakers all over the Promenade.

QUARK (o.s.)

Ladies and gentlemen! And...
variations thereupon. Please
welcome to the stage, in a special
one-night-only event exclusive to
Deep Space Nine... Mister! Vic!
Fontaine!

Roaring, deafening APPLAUSE. Vic struts to the centre of
the stage, the true showman in full Vegas bloom. He has got
the crowd in his hand, and they love it.

VIC

Ladies and gentlemen...

(no, that's
not right)

...friends... I just want you to know how much it means to this old show horse to see you all here tonight. And I promise, you're gonna get the show of your lives, because...

At Vic's signal, the band strikes up - a full big band sound that fills the entire Promenade. It's the old classic "You Make Me Feel So Young," by Myrow & Gordon.

VIC

(singing)

You make me feel so young
You make me feel like
Spring has sprung
And every time I see you grin
I'm such a happy individual

As we pan around the crowd, thrilled with the show, I want to see every station-bound recurring character we've got. Matthias and family. Hetik and Candlewood. ETANA and RICHTER. Nog standing with PERMENTER, LEISHMAN and T'RB.

VIC

(continuing)

The moment that you speak
I wanna go play hide-and-peek
I wanna go and bounce the moon
Just like a toy balloon

Bajoran medic AYLAM is giving flirty glances to a totally oblivious Doctor TARSES. BOWERS standing with the various security team members from 9x20 "Slave" (minus Sevak), all holding glasses of beer and having a great time together.

VIC

(continuing)

You and I, are just like
A couple of tots
Running across a meadow
Picking up all forget-me-nots

Bashir reaches out to take Dax's hand... she lets him. She even giggles a bit as he grabs her in a hold for a bit of on-the-spot dancing.

VIC
(continuing)
You make me feel so young
You make me feel
There are songs to be sung
Bells to be rung
And a wonderful fling
To be flung

By the security doors, Ro is bopping on the spot a little, joining in despite herself. From across the crowd, she spots Quark near his bar, and he is grinning back at her.

VIC
(continuing)
And even when I'm old and gray...

Vaughn rolls his eyes, but smiling the whole time.

VIC
(continuing)
I'm gonna feel the way I do today...

Bashir looks adoringly at Dax...

VIC
(continuing)
'Cause you make me feel so young.

Ending on Vic as he winds up his song, and the crowd goes wild, roaring their approval... And Vic smiles for his friends, truly content.

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW