

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

10x12 - "Heresy."

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. EARTH - SAN FRANCISCO**

A beautiful shot across San Francisco bay, the sun glinting off the water, small tourist boats sailing past. The Golden Gate Bridge and other SF landmarks are clear.

PULL BACK until the edges of a window frame creep in, and it becomes clear we're looking out on this from inside.

KIRA walks past the window, quickly pacing, agitated.

SISKO (o.s.)  
Nerys... relax.

KIRA  
Yeah, that's gonna happen.

PULL BACK further to reveal that we're inside...

**2     INT. STARFLEET COMMAND LOUNGE**

A waiting room of sorts, Starfleet style, lushly appointed and comfortable. Kira paces back and forth impatiently. SISKO sits on a couch, dressed in smart civilian clothes, outwardly more relaxed than Kira but inside just as tense.

SISKO  
You did everything you could to persuade them. It's up to the Council to decide. In the meantime you may as well relax.  
(warm smile)  
My father's saying about the soufflé comes to mind.

Kira tries to follow her best friend's advice. But it doesn't come easily. She stops pacing and gazes out the window at the calm and sunny scenery.

KIRA  
So what's this part of Earth called again?

SISKO  
San Francisco. This is where  
Starfleet Command and the Academy  
are based.

KIRA  
But the government offices were  
somewhere else, right?

SISKO  
Paris.

KIRA  
And your father lives...?

SISKO  
New Orleans.

KIRA  
Have you been to see him?

SISKO  
He knows I'm here. But I thought  
my time would be better spent  
watching you wear a hole in the  
carpet.

KIRA  
I'm trying to relax, Benjamin,  
really I am. But I just don't know  
how you Starfleet captains make it  
look so easy.

SISKO  
Us Starfleet captains.

KIRA  
In name, maybe. But I never went  
to your academy. I've never even  
been to San Francisco. Not in this  
century, at least.

Sisko frowns... Kira sighs. Can't stop worrying.

KIRA

If we don't get this fleet, the whole plan falls apart. There's no way Bajor can face up to the Ascendants alone. And then... the Eav'oq are finished.

The door opens, Kira and Sisko turn in hope... and see Adm ROSS entering. He closes the door quietly behind him. He doesn't seem especially happy.

SISKO  
Admiral...

ROSS  
Captains. The Council has finished its deliberations, and come to a decision.

KIRA  
And...?

ROSS  
And... you'll get your fleet, Captain.

KIRA  
(sags w/ relief)  
Thank the Prophets.

SISKO  
How many?

ROSS  
Six ships.

KIRA  
Just six?!

ROSS  
It's six times what we sent to the Dominion, Captain. It includes the *Defiant*, and my own personal flagship, the *Cerberus*. So this had better go well.

SISKO

It will, Admiral. Thank you.

ROSS  
(to Kira)  
I want to make one thing crystal  
clear, Captain. This is it.

Off Kira's confused, worried reaction...

ROSS (cont)  
(stern)  
That gamble you made in the  
Council chambers - threatening to  
withdraw Bajor from the Federation  
if we didn't do what you want -  
that only works one time. You do  
not get to play that card again.  
If this fleet fails to achieve the  
objectives under which we approved  
it, you don't get another one.

Kira gulps. She has no choice but to agree.

KIRA  
Understood.

ROSS  
I'm placing you in general command  
of the fleet. This is your show,  
Nerys. Make it count.

On Kira's daunted reaction...

**3 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING**

The station at rest...

**4 INT. DS9 - RO'S QUARTERS**

We move gradually through the room, as the SOUND of  
troubled, hitching breaths can be heard...

Eventually we land upon RO. She sits on her bed, hugging  
herself, shuddering and gasping with short, sharp breaths.

RO

No... no...

She lifts a shivering head and looks across the room at... a hypospray, sat on her desk. She stares at it for a moment... then grits her teeth and looks away again.

RO  
(determined)

No.

CENN (comm)  
Ops to Lieutenant Ro.

She looks up in surprise, hopeful and relieved that she might have a distraction.

RO  
Go ahead, Major.

CENN (comm)  
The Captain's just signalled ahead. The fleet has entered the Bajoran sector.

RO  
I'll be right there.

The distraction has worked - she gets up happily and hurries towards the door, leaving the hypospray behind.

## 5 EXT. SPACE

In a big flash of light, the *Defiant* drops out of warp and coasts to a relative stop. Soon after come five more Starfleet vessels. The six varied ships make an impressive sight arrayed in space near to Deep Space Nine.

Besides the *Defiant*, the ships are as follows:

USS *Gryphon*, Akira-class ("Lesser Evil")  
USS *T'Kumbra*, Nebula-class ("Take Me Out to the Holosuite")  
USS *Cerberus*, Prometheus-class ("Message in a Bottle")  
USS *Gorkon*, Excelsior-class ("Descent")  
USS *Blackthorne*, Intrepid-class (like *Voyager*)

## 6 INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE

The turbolift rises into Ops, and Ro jumps off it at speed, excited and relieved that Captain Kira is back. The crew - CENN at the Ops table, DAX hovering and observing in the tactical alcove, extras elsewhere - are all gazing up at the main screen, which shows the external view.

CENN

Kira's on the line, Lieutenant.

She nods for him to go ahead. He presses buttons - Kira's image appears on the screen, in the *Defiant's* centre seat.

RO

Good to see you, Captain. The crew will be glad to have you back.

KIRA (screen)

(wry smile)

The "crew" will have to wait a little longer, Lieutenant. Admiral Ross gave us a limited window of time to do this. So I want to get out there and get it done before I lose my nerve. You're in charge till I get back.

Ro's hope and relief drains away.

RO

If you're certain, Captain.

KIRA (screen)

I also need you to get one pilot and one tactical each in the *Rio Grande*, the *Nile* and the *Yolja*, and get them out to me ASAP. Keep the *Brahmaputra* on watch.

RO

(nods)

Okay...

KIRA (screen)

Wish us luck.

Ro just nods. Doesn't have much in her to be encouraging to others right now. Kira disappears from the screen.

Downcast, legs like lead, Ro clomps slowly up the steps to the office. Dax intercepts her at the top.

DAX

What's wrong?

RO

Leaving me in command, for one thing. And this stuff with the Eav'oq... Maybe it's just cause I don't follow the Prophets or something, but I really don't see why this is our problem.

Dax tenses - this is too close to what Bashir was saying, and she doesn't want to hear it. But she tamps down her protests and tries to encourage Ro.

DAX

It's not about whether you believe in the Prophets or not. It's about whether you believe in Kira... and whether you deserve to wear that uniform.

But Ro didn't take it as an encouragement. She took it as confirmation of all her worst fears and insecurities.

FADE OUT:

**END OF TEASER**

**ACT ONE**

FADE IN:

**7     EXT. SPACE**

The Gamma exit of the wormhole bursts open in its giant blue flower of energy, and the six Starfleet capital ships and three runabouts shoot out of it. The varied vessels look tough and ready for business.

**8     EXT. EAV'OQ TEMPLE**

As numerous Eav'oq flounce gently about in the background, VAUGHN and OPAKA sit side by side on one of the low stone walls that trail through the city.

OPAKA

I wonder if this tension between you and Benjamin is simply that of an atheist versus a believer.

VAUGHN

That's not it.

OPAKA

It's simply a matter of trusting in the judgement of something greater than yourself.

VAUGHN

And I do. I believe in the good of the Federation. The difference is accountability. Understanding that the decisions that come to you are the result of discussion and compromise between people who have an at least similar view of the world as you. Who knows what the Prophets are thinking?

OPAKA

No-one does, Elias. Not really. I wouldn't trust anyone who said he did. But I do trust that They know best.

VAUGHN

Why? How can you be so certain?

OPAKA

I'm not certain, Elias. I don't pretend to ever know the full pattern of the universe. I doubt anyone ever will. But I trust that that pattern exists. And I learn more of it all the time. That's all I need.

KIRA (comm)

Kira to Vaughn.

Pleasantly surprised, Vaughn taps his combadge to receive.

VAUGHN

Captain, you're back. Everything went to plan?

KIRA (comm)

So far. But there's a lot more plan yet to come. I need you up here on the double.

VAUGHN

Understood. Stand by.

He turns to Opaka. He takes her hands, looks into her eyes. Neither of them is willing to say the words, but they don't have to. They know.

That done, Vaughn stands and straightens himself.

VAUGHN

Vaughn to *Defiant*. One to beam up.

Keeping his eyes on Opaka, Vaughn disappears in a transporter beam.

**9**    **EXT. SPACE**

The six Starfleet capital ships and three runabouts fly together at warp, the *Defiant* taking point.

10     **INT. DEFIANT - MESS HALL**

A mission meeting of all the fleet's captains:

Cpt SPILLANE of the *Gryphon* (Scandinavian female human)  
Cpt SOLOK of the *T'Kumbra* (Vulcan male, "Take Me Out...")  
Cpt AKOLKAR of the *Cerberus* (Indian human female)  
Cpt KUWAHARA of the *Gorkon* (Japanese/British human male)  
Cpt THANN of the *Blackthorne* (Selenean male)

Kira is leading the meeting, stood by the display screen on the wall. Vaughn and Sisko are with her as advisors.

SOLOK

If the Ascendants are indeed as mysterious as you say, Captain, how do we expect to find them?

KIRA

This is classified information. But the Ascendants have already made one attack - against the Dominion... or rather their gods.

AKOLKAR

You mean the Founders.

VAUGHN

No - it turns out the Founders had a god of their own. They called it the Progenitor.

KUWAHARA

Had? Past tense?

VAUGHN

The Progenitor is dead. The Ascendants blew up a star to irradiate it to death.

KIRA

Odo had the remains hidden away inside the Omarion Nebula, with a constant Jem'Hadar presence. They think they're just there to

protect the Founders' original home world. But they're not.

VAUGHN

Meanwhile, the Vorta have been quietly pulling together all the rumours, hearsay and seemingly innocuous readings they can to try and track the culprits. They gave us that data. Our conclusion is that the best place to start looking... is the Omarion Nebula.

THANN

They're keeping an eye on their new enemies.

KIRA

The Dominion is probably the biggest target the Ascendants have ever taken on. They may be zealous, but I'm betting they're not stupid. They'd make sure.

SISKO

Now, we don't know what level of technology we'll be facing.

SPILLANE

If they can blow up a star, it must be pretty advanced.

VAUGHN

Not necessarily. One well-placed isolytic subspace weapon can easily make a star go nova.

AKOLKAR

Those weapons were banned in the Khitomer Accords.

SOLOK

Which the Ascendants did not sign.

VAUGHN

They also tend to be a solitary people, spread out to cover as much ground as possible while they search for their Fortress. So hopefully that will play in our favour as well.

SISKO

But if it doesn't, we've got a strong fleet here. The *Cerberus* is one of the most advanced ships in all of Starfleet. The *Blackthorne* has the fastest reactions. *Gryphon* is the most heavily armed, *Defiant* has the smallest profile. You've all got positives and negatives, so work together to even them out.

VAUGHN

Keep your sensors at full power too. We still need more data, and we'll never get a better chance.

KIRA

I think we've covered everything. Return to your ships, Captains... prepare your crews... and pray to whatever you believe in that we don't need them.

The captains file out of the room and into the corridor, where a security random leads them away. Last to leave is Spillane, who offers a reassuring squeeze of the shoulder.

SPILLANE

Keep your chin up, Nerys. You handled the parasites, you'll handle this. We're behind you.

KIRA

Thanks, Disa.

Spillane follows the rest, leaving Kira, Vaughn and Sisko.

SISKO

Spillane's right, Nerys. Trust  
your instincts, trust your crew...  
and know that they trust you.

11 **EXT. SPACE**

The purplish-blue wisps of the Omarion Nebula are in the background... the Starfleet armada holds station in the foreground. Focusing on the *Defiant*...

KIRA (v.o.)

Ship's log, Captain Kira Nerys  
recording. We've been waiting here  
at the Omarion Nebula for hours.  
Waiting's always the hardest part.  
But it finally paid off. The  
*Blackthorne* has detected the  
Ascendant warp signature a couple  
of light years away. *Gryphon*  
confirms. So this is it.

The Starfleet ships all jump to warp, away from the nebula.

KIRA (v.o.)

I just can't help thinking about  
what the Tellarite councillor  
said. About the last time we tried  
something like this. The *Defiant's*  
first mission. I can only pray  
this time goes better.

12 **EXT. SPACE**

At a distance, we can just about see a small ship against  
the backdrop of stars. It's an Ascendant vessel - tiny and  
silver and sharp, as first seen in 8x23 "Rising Son."

KIRA (v.o.)

Magnify.

With data tracking along the side of the image, the small  
ship is suddenly closer. We can see it in more detail.

13 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Kira sits in the centre seat, peering at the screen. She's a little surprised that it's such a small ship.

KIRA

Is that it?

BOWERS, SHAR and PRYNN are at their respective stations. Sisko and Vaughn hover on either side of Kira, supporting.

BOWERS

That's the source of the warp signature, Captain. By the size, it's a single occupancy vehicle. But no indications of it being support for a larger ship.

VAUGHN

So basically yes, that's it.

Prynn glances away from her console, over to Shar. He feels her looking, and looks at her too. They wordlessly exchange good luck wishes, then turn back to their own consoles.

KIRA

Send a standard greeting in all languages and basic lingua-code. We come in peace and would like to meet to talk. The usual.

BOWERS

Aye sir -

Before he can even finish, a transporter effect forms at the front of the bridge, just in front of the view screen. It's made out of flames, a spontaneous fire, until it blows away and reveals the figure of an Ascendant female.

Tall, willowy, a silver covering that may be skin or bio-armour. Large insectile eyes that seem to shine with fire. Clothes are something like a medieval knight. This is RAIQ.

Bowers is instantly on his feet, pointing a phaser at her. Shar likewise, holding out a tricorder. Everyone else is distinctly spooked, but Raiq just looks around, nonchalant.

VAUGHN

(quiet, gentle)  
Lieutenant Bowers, stand down.

BOWERS  
She beamed through the shields.

SHAR  
(off tricorder)  
No she didn't. No life signs.  
She's still on her ship - this is  
just a projection.

PRYNN  
The other ships are reporting  
they've got projections on their  
bridges too.

KIRA  
Tell them to let me handle it.

Prynn nods and relays the message. Unhappily, Bowers lowers his phaser, but remains ready. Raiq begins to walk slowly around the bridge, taking in everything with an eagle eye. Kira steps up to her.

KIRA  
I'm Captain Kira Nerys of the  
United Federation of Planets.

RAIQ  
I am Raiq, Archquester of the  
Ascendancy.  
(looking around)  
I do not know these vessels.

Raiq is not really paying attention to Kira. Barely even looks at her. She's more interested in exploring.

She looks at one of the screens on the wall. It fritzes and begins to run with reams of data. She turns to another - the same thing happens. Shar checks his panels, worried...

SHAR  
She's scanning our databases.

Kira steps forward again, trying to get Raiq's attention.

KIRA

Excuse me. If you want to know about us, we're happy to answer your questions. There's no need to break into our computers.

Raiq glances dismissively at Kira, but doesn't really respond. She turns away and the computer scan stops. She turns to Shar, looks the Andorian up and down.

RAIQ

I do not know your people.

SHAR

I am Andorian.

Raiq turns away. She strolls to the back of the bridge, inspecting. Kira follows, trying to open the conversation.

KIRA

We don't know a lot about your people, but we'd like to. Would you be willing to meet with us in person and tell us more about yourself? We're more than happy to do the same in return.

Raiq ignores Kira and walks up to Vaughn. Right into his personal space. Looks him up and down.

RAIQ

Whom do you worship?

VAUGHN

(stern)

I don't worship anyone.

KIRA

(try again)

As I said, we'd love to meet you in person -

RAIQ

If you do not worship, then you have nothing to fear from the

Ascendants. And we have no interest in you.

KIRA

Well, that's a shame. I was hoping that we...

But Kira trails off, because now Raiq has finally looked at her. The imperious Ascendant woman gazes into Kira's face, seemingly fascinated. Cocks her head, looks again.

RAIQ

That face... I know you.

Kira is confused - what does that mean? The others on the bridge look at her, disquieted. Raiq begins to realise...

RAIQ

The priestess on the world where I crashed. The prison moon, with its primitives, dependent on the broken satellite network. The nurse who returned me to health.

KIRA

(realising)

You're the one who freed Opaka.

RAIQ

You are not she. But you are the same people.

(w/ horror)

You shame the True.

Kira begins to worry... but then Raiq is swallowed up in another massive burst of flame. Kira flinches back, but it's fake fire. When it burns itself out, Raiq is gone.

Scared, Kira turns to Bowers, who is checking his panels...

BOWERS

Her engines are powering up...

Uh oh...

Dwarfed by the six large Starfleet vessels, the tiny silver ship starts to glow... ..but then in a big FLASH of white light, the Ascendant ship disappears. It's gone.

**15**    **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

They blink, surprised. What happened? Kira looks to Shar. He's working his panels hard, intrigued by what he sees...

SHAR

A peculiar discharge of energy,  
with an element of spatial  
displacement... I cannot be  
certain, Captain, but I believe  
the entire vessel transported  
away.

Kira sags, somewhat disappointed, if relieved.

KIRA

Okay... umm... well, at least we  
didn't have to fight. Signal the  
rest of the fleet that -

But then the view screen relays another FLASH of light. Kira turns to see what it is... and Raiq's ship is back. Shar is looking at his panels, dismayed at what he sees...

SHAR

Captain...

**16**    **EXT. SPACE**

The tiny Ascendant ship is back with the Starfleet group...

...and then another FLASH reveals another ship appearing off to one side. And then another FLASH - another ship. And another... and another... and more, surrounding the fleet.

**17**    **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

On Kira's horrified reaction...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

**ACT TWO**

FADE IN:

**18    EXT. SPACE**

Close on Raiq's vessel, as its silver tip begins to glow with power...

...and unleashes a huge jagged bolt of white electricity. All around, other Ascendants ships are firing at the other Starfleet ships... Raiq's weapon SLAMS into the *Defiant*...

**19    INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

The bridge shakes under the assault. Kira stands in front of her chair as everyone scrambles to their stations...

KIRA

Prynn! Get us out of here!

PRYNN

I can't, Captain. They're all around us. We're boxed in.

KIRA

Then we'll have to fight our way out.

Kira confidently takes the centre seat as the ship shakes under fire again. She slaps the comm panel.

KIRA

Kira to all ships. Return fire.

**20    EXT. SPACE**

The Starfleet ships come to life.

**DEFIANT**

manoeuvres into optimal position and FIRES pulse phasers at Raiq's ship. The Ascendant ship shrugs it off. *Defiant* swoops around...

The Ascendants keep firing... they hit *Gryphon*...

21 **INT. GRYPHON - BRIDGE**

Spillane is in the centre seat as the bolt of electricity hits... The ship rocks under the shot. Spillane turns to the Tellarite science officer CROTH...

SPILLANE  
Croth! Analyse those weapons.

CROTH  
They're just a basic electrical charge. But the sheer power in them is staggering.

SPILLANE  
Launch shuttles!

22 **EXT. SPACE**

The *Gryphon* rises up on its z-axis, revealing its front facing shuttle bays... and a dozen small and powerful Starfleet shuttle-craft launch at speed. *Gryphon* FIRES a wide spread of hardcore phaser beams to cover their exit...

23 **INT. GRYPHON SHUTTLE**

Riding with the shuttle PILOT as we zoom out into the battle, seeing Ascendants and Starfleet exchanging fire. The shuttle FIRES and hits an Ascendant ship - no effect.

24 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Shar reads his panels.

SHAR  
Standard phasers are having no effect, Captain.

SISKO  
Bowers - modulate the frequency.

Bowers looks to Kira for approval. She nods. He does it.

25 **EXT. SPACE**

The *T'Kumbra* is under fire from three Ascendant ships, ganging up on it... it takes some damage...

**26**    **INT. T'KUMBRA - BRIDGE**

Cpt Solok and his all-Vulcan crew react stoically...

TACTICAL  
Damage to the port side, Captain.

SOLOK  
Evasive manoeuvres.

**27**    **EXT. SPACE**

But the large, lumbering ship is too slow pulling away... the Ascendants move in for another shot... they FIRE...

And the *Blackthorne* ZOOMS into the weapon's path, the lithe Intrepid-class body twisting to cover the clumsy *Nebula's* flank. *T'Kumbra* and *Blackthorne* both manoeuvre away, but the Ascendants give chase, continuing to fire...

**28**    **INT. BLACKTHORNE - BRIDGE**

Cpt Thann stands giving orders, his golden tentacle-like head appendages swinging as the ship rocks under fire.

THANN  
We have to cover the *T'Kumbra*, we can manoeuvre much faster...

SCIENCES  
The hull plating isn't working.  
The charges are affecting the actual metal itself...

**29**    **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Kira turns to Vaughn...

KIRA  
Launch *Cooper* and *Sagan*. And get those damn runabouts covering the *Gorkon*...

30 **EXT. SPACE**

The *Defiant's* circular belly hatch opens and its two tiny shuttles drop out, diving away as the *Defiant* swerves off.

31 **INT. DEFIANT SHUTTLE**

Human female pilot ZUCCA and Benzite male tactical CARDOK work their panels with nervous concentration...

CARDOK  
Seven-one mark three-oh. Go!

32 **EXT. SPACE**

The shuttle heads straight towards one Ascendant ship, firing and firing... the Ascendant turns to face them...

In the background, the *Cerberus* is under fire - one of its four warp nacelles is damaged and sputters with blue fire.

33 **INT. CERBERUS - BRIDGE**

Prometheus-class, sparse and gleaming as seen in "Message in a Bottle." Cpt Akolkar turns to her engineer...

ENGINEER  
Upper starboard nacelle's gone!

AKOLKAR  
(determined)  
We still have three more. Hell,  
five more if we need them.

34 **EXT. SPACE**

The *Defiant's* shuttle is still firing on the Ascendant ship, heading straight for a collision. Firing, firing... the two ships blow each other to pieces before they get a chance to impact. Both EXPLODE in clouds of debris.

35 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Shar turns to Kira in horror...

SHAR

*Sagan* is destroyed, Captain.

Prynn turns from her panel in shock...

VAUGHN

Prynn.

He points firmly at her helm panel. She gets the message - pay attention to your work. She turns back, shaking...

BOWERS

But at least Cardok showed us the way to kill these things. Constant, continuous phaser fire does eventually get through.

KIRA

Do it!

**36**    **EXT. SPACE**

*Defiant* turns and surges back towards the Ascendants with renewed vigour, pulse phasers blasting away...

*Gorkon* is under fire, takes a hit on its big belly bulge. *Gryphon* fires on *Gorkon's* attackers - hard, constant phaser fire... until two of them finally buckle and explode.

**37**    **INT. GRYPHON - BRIDGE**

Croth punches the air in victory...

CROTH

Yes!

SPILLANE

Celebrate later, Croth.

CROTH

(off panels)

Captain... the hull...

**38**    **EXT. SPACE**

Focusing on the *Gryphon's* external hull, under fire from the Ascendant electrical weapon... a dissolving effect is spreading from the point of attack, disintegrating...

Another Ascendant ship swoops in and fires at *Gryphon* too, a continuous bolt of massive electricity... and another, and another, until six Ascendants are surrounding the ship. The disintegrating effect spreads quicker and quicker...

**39**    **INT. GRYPHON - BRIDGE**

Croth works his panels, verging on panic. He turns to stare at Spillane, scared and disbelieving.

CROTH

It's just disintegrating. There's nothing I can do to stop it.

Spillane takes a second to gawp in horrified realisation, lip quivering. Then she gets down to business. She hits a comm panel...

SPILLANE

All hands, abandon ship. This is not a drill. Get to the escape pods, now, while you can.

The bridge crew look at her, stunned this is happening...

SPILLANE

I mean it. All of you, go.

(beat)

Go!

They finally get that she's serious. They get to their feet and rush for the exits. As he leaves, Croth looks back over his shoulder, has a significant moment with Spillane. She nods acknowledgement to him, and he turns and goes.

Now Spillane is alone. She runs to the tactical panel...

**40**    **EXT. SPACE**

Still under fire, its skin dissolving... *Gryphon's* escape pods launch, shooting away from the mother ship as fast as

they can. Some get caught by Ascendant fire, but most get away. *Gryphon* fires and fires again to cover them...

But eventually its phasers sputter and fail. The Ascendants keep firing... and the *Gryphon* basically CRUMBLES. The hull disintegrates into chunks, the construction breaks down... the crumbling reaches the warp core and the ship EXPLODES.

Most of the debris is eaten up in the flames. A couple of the escape pods get caught up and destroyed. The attacking Ascendant ships JUMP away in flashes of light, undamaged.

**41**    **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

The crew reacts to the explosion on the main viewscreen...

KIRA  
Spillane...

SISKO  
We need to get out of here.

VAUGHN  
(annoyed at Sisko)  
We need to save those people!

**42**    **EXT. SPACE**

The fire of the *Gryphon's* demise has burnt out, leaving the escape pods floating. Ascendant ships are still looming...

In a wide shot of the area, we see the cloud of tiny escape pods. *Gorkon* and *T'Kumbra* manoeuvre close to them. *Defiant*, *Cerberus* and *Blackthorne* take up defensive positions...

**43**    **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

On Kira...

KIRA  
Now!

**44**    **EXT. SPACE**



PRYNN

Awesome.

But then she jerks as she sees a shot coming towards her, instinctively playing her panels to move the ship.

51 **EXT. SPACE**

*Blackthorne* covers the other side of the battlefield... it fires a powerful phaser burst at an Ascendant ship... but the Ascendant JUMPS away and the shot is wasted.

In a flash of light, the Ascendant ship reappears right on top of the *Gorkon* and opens fire. With shields down, *Gorkon* is defenceless. The shot gouges a hole in the saucer..

Then a shot comes from off side - a runabout, firing on the Ascendant. Shots from the other side - a second runabout.

52 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Ensigns ALECO and NARAN are at the controls...

NARAN

Keep firing!

ALECO

I am keeping firing...

53 **EXT. SPACE**

Caught between the two runabouts, the Ascendant ship finally blows. In the background, the various parts of the *Cerberus* dart about, firing on their own targets...

54 **INT. GORKON - BRIDGE**

Excelsior-class bridge, like the *Enterprise-B*. Cpt Kuwahara grips onto his seat's armrests as the ship shakes... The OPS officer turns to Kuwahara, relieved...

OPS

Transports complete, Captain.

KUWAHARA

Make absolutely sure, Ensign.

He checks again, then nods to Kuwahara.

KUWAHARA

Alright, raise shields. *Gorkon* to all ships. Survivors are on board. Let's get out of here!

55 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

Kira stands up from her chair, a new thought forming...

KIRA

All shuttles and runabouts, sync shields and pull in close.

56 EXT. SPACE

One of the runabouts pulls in close to the underbelly of the *Defiant*, the two shield bubbles fizzing and combining.

57 INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE

Kira starts working the panels on her armrests...

KIRA

Kira to all ships. We're gonna use their own trick against them. On my mark, make a split-second warp jump. Head for the wormhole, and don't look back.

Vaughn approaches, worried...

VAUGHN

Captain, what are you doing?

KIRA

Covering your escape.

Before he can protest, she hits a control and disappears in a transporter beam.

58 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Aleco and Naran disappear in transporter beams... and Kira appears in their place. She moves to the controls...

**59**    **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Aleco and Naran rematerialise on the bridge. Vaughn realises what Kira's done, slaps the comm panel...

VAUGHN

Captain!

**60**    **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

KIRA

Don't argue, Commander. You're in charge.

She closes the channel, and gets the runabout moving away from the *Defiant's* belly... She stabs the comm panel again with force, bravado covering her nervousness.

KIRA

Raiq! This is Kira! I didn't get chance to tell you before... I don't just worship the True. I talk with them. In fact, I'm the Hand of the Prophets! We chat all the time!

**61**    **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

While the bridge crew seem horrified at Kira's actions, Vaughn settles into the centre chair.

VAUGHN

Prynn... get ready to do as she says.

SISKO

(*sotto*)

Elias...

VAUGHN

(*furious hiss*)

Don't you even think about questioning my orders on this

bridge, mister. I will throw you  
in the brig.

More worried than angry, Sisko relents for now...

**62**    **EXT. SPACE**

Kira pilots the runabout towards the field of empty escape pods from the destroyed *Gryphon*. Infuriated, the Ascendant ships break off their attack and head after Kira, following the runabout towards the pods.

**63**    **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Terrified but determined, Kira drives the runabout on. Various screens of information are in front of her... One of them shows USS GRYPHON, PREFIX CODE: 18992.

Kira slaps the comm panel again...

KIRA  
Vaughn. Go! Now!

**64**    **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Vaughn grips his armrests...

VAUGHN  
Prynn - do it.

Prynn works her panels...

**65**    **EXT. SPACE**

With the Ascendants distracted following Kira, the *Defiant* powers up and jumps straight to warp from standing still. *T'Kumbra*, *Gorkon*, *Blackthorne* and all three parts of the *Cerberus* jump to warp too, with all the shuttles caught up in their wake. Bright flashes of light flare as they all stretch out into the distance and disappear. They're gone.

Kira is left alone with a chasing pack of angry Ascendants. She drives the runabout into the field of escape pods and *Gryphon* debris... the Ascendants dive in after her...

**66**    **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Kira watches the panels in front of her... waits for the perfect moment... not yet... not yet... Now.

**67**    **EXT. SPACE**

...and all the escape pods DETONATE. Self-destruct charges catch the Ascendant ships unawares. Pieces of the *Gryphon* that are big enough to still carry charges EXPLODE too. Ascendant ships all over are caught and destroyed.

Kira's runabout surges forward through the other side, riding the front of the shockwave to safety.

**68**    **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Kira holds on for dear life as the runabout is swept away in front of the explosion... the rattling gradually lessens and ends. She lets out a scared breath of relief.

**69**    **EXT. SPACE**

The runabout swerves around, looping away from the burning Ascendant ships, in the direction of the Starfleet armada.

**70**    **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Kira hits the comm panel...

KIRA

*Yolja to Defiant.* It worked. I'm  
right behind -

In a flash of light, an Ascendant ship JUMPS in right in front of her, staring down the front window... and FIRES.

Alarms screaming, computers scrambling... the window starts to crack... Kira looks up, and sees the ceiling dissolving over her head. The ship is crumbling around her, air whistling as it escapes through the ever-growing holes... She gets up and runs for the rear cabin, but too late.

With a great WRENCH of metal, the ship splits, and Kira is swept out into space. Silently screaming in panic, grasping for anything to hold on to, but there's nothing. She's in open space now, no air to breath, nothing she can do...

On Kira's horrified face, dying...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

## ACT THREE

FADE IN:

### 71 EXT. SPACE

On Kira, as she drifts in empty space... she stares out...

The few remaining Ascendant ships are ignoring her now. She's of no concern to them. They simply assume she's dead. They're helping their fallen comrades among the graveyard of the *Gryphon* remnants.

Kira watches them move about in the distance, no sound except for the slowing BEAT of her own heart. She shudders slightly, unable to breathe. Time seems to slow down around her as her consciousness gradually slips away.

Her eyes slip sideways a touch, and she sees...

The WORMHOLE opening up, the great blue flower of energy blooming near to her...

She smiles, happy and relieved. The Prophets are coming for her. She tries to force her body to reach for it, although there's not much she can do.

She's fading. As she gazes rapturously at the whirling eddies of the wormhole, we go gradually to...

### **WHITE OUT**

But as quickly as the WHITE OUT comes, it's gone again, revealed as a DIAMOND RING EFFECT.

The *Defiant* appears from out of the light and silently roars back into the area.

The last few remaining Ascendant ships begin to react to its presence...

In split-second timing, the *Defiant* flips onto its side, rolling to show its flat underbelly to the approaching Ascendants, between them and the floating Kira. As it does so, it reveals the runabout *Rio Grande* hiding in between the *Defiant* and Kira.

72 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Vaughn stands in front of his chair, too anxious to sit.  
The whole crew is in major battle last chance mode...

VAUGHN  
Bowers - all weapons, fire!

73 **EXT. DEFIANT**

Close on the *Defiant's* PHASER CANNONS - they move out of their regular housings, angle on hinges to face the direction of the ship's belly... and OPEN FIRE.

74 **EXT. SPACE**

Fore and aft phaser cannons pummel out shot after shot after shot towards the Ascendant ships. Around the circular hatch on the belly of the ship, there's a new PHASER STRIP that lets loose with a continuous spray of phaser fire.

The Ascendants fire their electric bolt weapons...

75 **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

The ship rocks hard from the impact. Vaughn hits the comm panel on his arm rest...

VAUGHN  
Nog! Launch the nanobot shield!

76 **INT. DEFIANT - ENGINEERING**

The room is in chaos with panels erupting in sparks and smoke. In the background, engineering crew rush about containing the damage and keeping the ship running.

NOG is at the master systems display, his fingers flying over controls. He hits one last button with satisfaction.

NOG  
Done!

77 **EXT. DEFIANT**

Hatches in the skin of the ship open and release hundreds of tiny particles, which shoot out to form a barrier...

**78**    **EXT. SPACE**

Phaser bolts from the *Defiant* hit some Ascendant ships. Ascendant weapons leap towards the *Defiant*...

The nanobots form an extra shield against them. They burst in tiny explosions, lessening the weapons' effectiveness, but the weakened bolts still get through to the *Defiant*...

On the *Defiant's* skin, we see the weapons' dissolving effect start to take hold. It eats away at the hull...

...and reveals another hull underneath, perfectly intact.

**79**    **INT. DEFIANT - ENGINEERING**

Nog watches the progress on his displays with pride...

NOG

Nanobots and ablative armour are taking serious damage, Captain. But the main hull is holding.

**80**    **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Panels burst and explode. Sparks fly. Crew dodge flames. Vaughn yells into the comm...

VAUGHN

Sisko! Do it!

**81**    **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Sisko is sat at the controls of the *Rio Grande*. Bashir is behind him, hovering by the transporter platform at the back of the cockpit... Sisko hits a panel...

A GRAPHIC shows the shields around the runabout dropping.

**82**    **EXT. SPACE**

Kira floats in open space, protected from the fight by the body of the *Defiant*. A transporter effect forms over her...

The Ascendants are right on top of the *Defiant* now, unleashing torrents of weapons fire...

**83**     **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Explosions are going off all over the bridge. Prynn is gripping onto her panel as the ship shudders...

A massive electrical discharge begins in the foremost port-side computers. The discharge moves along the line of computers, heading towards Shar's console...

Shar is busy working and doesn't see it coming... but Prynn does. She abandons her post, leaps towards Shar, grabs him from his chair and yanks him to safety a bare second before his panel EXPLODES in flames and shattered plasteel. They thud to the deck as the bridge rumbles in chaos...

On the deck, Shar and Prynn look into each other's eyes. She saved his life. Vaughn yells into the comm...

VAUGHN

Sisko! Do you have her?

**84**     **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Kira is slumped unconscious in Bashir's arms, cradling her on the transporter platform. Sisko turns back to his panels and raises the shields.

SISKO

Yes! We've got her! Let's go!

**85**     **INT. DEFIANT - BRIDGE**

Prynn and Shar are just scrambling up off the floor...

VAUGHN

Tenmei! Get to your damn station and get us the hell out of here!

Scared and almost ashamed, Prynn rushes back to the helm, takes her seat and works the panels.

**86**     **EXT. SPACE**

The *Defiant* ceases fire, and it and the *Rio Grande* get underway and jump to warp as fast as they can.

The Ascendants are left alone with their dead...

**87**    **EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING**

The station at rest...

**88**    **INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE**

Ro sits on the stairs to the office, watching the business of Ops go on. Figuratively biting her nails, just waiting for something to happen.

After a moment, Cenn reacts to his panels...

CENN

Wormhole!

Ro shoots to her feet. It could be good, it could be bad.

RO

Shields. Yellow alert.

He works his panels. The Ops lighting changes, indicating YELLOW ALERT. The viewscreen shows the wormhole opening... and the *Defiant* shooting out, followed by the other ships. Cenn breathes with relief...

CENN

*Defiant*. And the rest.

(off panels)

Wait a minute... where's the *Gryphon*? And the *Yolja*?

(alert)

They're hailing!

Ro nods... Vaughn appears on the screen, revealing the ruined *Defiant* bridge.

VAUGHN (screen)

Drop the shields, now! We've got a medical emergency!

The door opens and Ro rushes in, ETANA right behind her. She sees Kira unconscious on the surgical bay's bio-bed, with Bashir and the other medical staff working feverishly around her. Etana pushes past Ro and goes to join them. Waiting in the main room are Sisko, Vaughn and Dax.

RO

What happened?

VAUGHN

(grave)

Her runabout was destroyed. She was exposed to space.

SISKO

She won't die. She's too important to the Prophets.

VAUGHN

(gritted teeth)

Is this really the time?

SISKO

For you to be picking a fight with me? No, it's not. Kira knew the risks. She always has.

VAUGHN

She can be reckless and you know it. You're her supposed spiritual guide. Well, this is what you guided her to.

DAX

Kira makes her own decisions, Elias. She's known for it.

VAUGHN

(re Sisko;  
accusing)

Based on what he advises her!

SISKO

No - based on her belief in the Prophets. She pushed for this mission because she knows it's what the Prophets want. And she knew it long before I came along.

VAUGHN

She nearly died!

SISKO

And how often have you nearly died for what you believe in? There's no difference, Elias! Prophets, Starfleet, it makes no difference. Something had to be done about the Ascendants.

BASHIR (o.s.)

I'm not so sure it did.

They turn and see that Bashir has emerged from the surgical suite. Etana, TARSES, RICHTER etc are still with Kira.

DAX

Julian... is she...?

BASHIR

She'll live. She's sedated for now, but she'll live.

(to Sisko  
and Vaughn)

No thanks to you.

DAX

(shocked)

Julian...!

SISKO

(darkly)

I beg your pardon, Doctor?

BASHIR

I warned you not to go. It was none of our business. Well, this is what happens when you stick

your nose in where it doesn't  
belong - it gets bloodied.

VAUGHN

We needed to learn about the  
Ascendants, Doctor.

BASHIR

Yes, well, now they've learned  
about us, too.

SISKO

That's enough, Doctor.

BASHIR

It's barely the beginning! The  
Ascendants had never even heard of  
us before. We were safe. And now  
we're in the same boat as the  
Eav'oq. Thanks a lot.

VAUGHN

You're relieved of duty, Doctor!

BASHIR

No, I'm not. Throw me in the brig  
later if you want, but I'm not  
leaving my patient.

DAX

(breaking in)

What happened to you people? I've  
only been away for three months. I  
come back and you're all at each  
other's throats?

BASHIR

Believe it or not, Dax, it's not  
all about you.

Bashir spins on his heel and marches back into the surgical  
suite. The rest are just kind of stunned at the argument.  
Vaughn tries to find something innocuous to talk about.

VAUGHN

So how was your first command,  
Lieutenant?

RO

Better than your last one,  
apparently.

Vaughn can't really argue with that.

In the surgical suite, Bashir has gone back to Kira's bedside, resetting his nerves after the argument. As the medical team works at the periphery, we ZOOM slowly in on Kira's unconscious face.

**90**    **EXT. SPACE**

Kira drifts in space, unable to breath, unable to do anything to save herself. Her eyes slip sideways a touch, and she sees... the WORMHOLE opening up, the great blue flower of energy blooming near to her...

She smiles, happy and relieved. The Prophets are coming for her. As she gazes rapturously at the whirling eddies of the wormhole, we go gradually to...

**WHITE OUT**, then **FADE IN** to:

**91**    **EXT. PAREK TONN (STOCK 9x18)**

The vision of Ancient Bajor from "Warpath." Sisko and Kira stand outside the fortress, as Opaka and Itu open the gates together and welcome them inside...

OPAKA

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

**92**    **WHITE SPACE (STOCK 9x24, 9x19)**

...the white nothingness of the Prophets. The moment from 9x24 "Ha'mara" as the three Kiras stand in a circle, the Prophets themselves weaving in and out...

SHAKAAR PROPHECT

One is the Hand. One is the Voice.  
One is the Fire.

Blend into the earlier Prophets scene from "Warpath"...

KIRA  
Three roads. Three peoples.

VAUGHN PROPHET  
All roads meet.

EVIL JAKE PROPHET  
Some end.

**NEW MATERIAL**

Sisko steps up to her, calm and reassuring.

SISKO  
It's your show, Nerys.

KIRA  
But I don't know what to do!

SISKO  
You should. I told you a long time ago. Don't you remember?

He smiles encouragingly at her, raises TARAN'ATAR'S KNIFE and STABS her in the chest. She gasps in shock and pain...

**CUT TO:**

**93 EXT. PAREK TONN (STOCK 9x20)**

General Kira of the Bajoran Army is on the ground, among the dead or dying bodies of her soldiers. She looks down at herself, sees Taran'atar's knife in her chest. She looks to the side, where Sisko lies bloody and dying beside her.

SISKO  
Should have had allies.

Ancient Bajoran Vaughn steps into the battle against the raging horde of Ascendants, protecting the fallen Kira...

**NEW MATERIAL**

Vaughn turns to her in the midst of the battle, gazes down at her and smiles. Then he begins to glow with an unearthly white light, filling his body and shining out of him. At the same time he gradually fades from view.

The battle scene continues, as we...

**MATCH CUT TO:**

**94    EXT. OPEN FIELD (STOCK 8x13)**

The Ancient Bajoran battle scene from "Horn and Ivory," as Kira (aka Ashla) battles alongside the big red-headed Perikian freedom fighter Torrna...

Kira looks around herself, confused to find herself here..

**95    INT. PRISON CELL (STOCK 8x13)**

Kira and Torrna are captured in a dank and filthy cell...

TORRNA

Damn those foul Bajora - I hope  
their Prophets strike them down  
with lightning.

Kira shakes her head - that's not how it works. But then she looks up, and sees...

**96    INT. DS9 - SECURITY CELLS**

...ILIANA staring at her, as Kira stands inside one of the cells, held in manacles welded to the wall as in "Ha'mara."

ILIANA

You're too late.

The Bajoran Iliana brings up her hand - she's wearing the *pagh-varam*. She wiggles her fingers in a taunting wave.

KIRA

What happened to you?

Iliana grins sourly, and her image begins to slowly MORPH. Her skin thickens and darkens, ridges grow on her face and neck, her hair grows long and black...

...until she is the Cardassian version of Iliana.

ILIANA  
I am the Fire.

And then she's swallowed up in flames, like the Ascendant transporter effect. Grinning at Kira all the while...

**CUT TO:**

**97    INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY**

Kira jolts awake with a small, shocked shriek. She quickly looks around, sees that she's lying on the bio-bed...

She realizes what just happened. She just had a vision about Iliana...

**MATCH CUT TO:**

**98    INT. ASCENDANT PAVILION**

Iliana Ghemor jolts awake from her own restless dream, with the same small, shocked shriek. The Cardassian woman looks around herself, sees that she's lying on a plush mattress on the ground, inside an alien medieval-style tent...

She realises what just happened. She just had a vision about Kira...

BLACK OUT:

**END OF ACT THREE**

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

**99**    INT. ASCENDANT PAVILION

Where we left it - Iliana getting her bearings after the dream. She looks around at the large pavilion tent - plush and opulent, with both military and religious overtones. There's no difference where the Ascendants are concerned.

The flaps serving as a doorway open, and an Ascendant male enters, looking rather worried and urgent. This is ESSK - the priest who held the great gathering in 9x24 "Ha'mara." He immediately averts his eyes when he sees Iliana.

ESSK

Forgive my intrusion, Mistress...  
I heard a noise, I was worried for  
your safety...

Iliana pulls herself together, wraps the bedclothes around herself in protection. Essk keeps a respectful distance.

ILIANA

It was me, Cardinal. A dream.

ESSK

If I may be so bold, Mistress...  
you seem to suffer from dreams  
often.

ILIANA

I do not consider it suffering.  
(w/ gravitas)  
My dreams are visions from the  
True, Cardinal.

Essk looks up at her in wonder...

ESSK

You speak with the True, Mistress?

ILIANA

That surprises you?

ESSK

(ashamed  
to admit)

Simply that... They have never  
chosen to speak to me directly.

ILIANA

Not even you, Cardinal? But you  
are the spiritual leader of all  
the Ascendants. Surely they would  
speak to you if anyone.

This is all very embarrassing for Essk. He agrees with her  
that they should speak to him... and it galls him that they  
speak to her instead. But he could never dare say so.

ESSK

The True have not spoken to any  
Ascendant for millennia. Not since  
the Eav'oq crusade. It is a matter  
of some theological debate among  
us as to why.

This all intrigues Iliana. She's learning about how the  
Ascendants work, and she's noticing every tiny detail. She  
indicates the bed rolls beside her, cajoling...

ILIANA

Sit with me, Cardinal.

ESSK

Mistress... it is improper...

ILIANA

Sit. Cardinal.

Essk daren't disobey. Averting his eyes again, he carefully  
sits beside her, making sure to still keep a distance.

ILIANA

Tell me the story of the great  
crusade against the Eav'oq. I want  
to hear it again.

ESSK

As you wish, Mistress.

Essk settles in to regurgitate the official doctrine.

ESSK

It is the Ascendants' sacred duty, bestowed upon us by the True, the Unnameable Ones, to burn out all heresy against Them, wherever we find it. We had found signs and omens on many worlds... but none so much as we found among the Eav'oq. They possessed miraculous objects - the Eyes of Fire. The True's attempt to gaze directly upon their children... and the Eav'oq had dared to steal what was meant for us.

Iliana nods along, silently translating all this and comparing it to what she knows from Bajoran religion...

ILIANA

The Eyes gave you vision, let you see as the True see...

ESSK

We were able to retrieve one of the Eyes from the clutches of the Eav'oq... and it reaffirmed our conviction that we would one day find the Fortress, and burn with Them. It also foretold...

(pause)

...the coming of the Fire.

Essk glances to Iliana, nervous to be sitting with this legendary figure from his religion. She smiles back at him beneficently, granting him permission to continue.

ESSK

But the Eav'oq were covetous and spiteful. They hid the remaining Eyes away. We battled for many years to reclaim them... until at last, the final day came.

100 **EXT. SPACE - IDRAN ORBIT (STOCK 10x11)**

The Idran planet hangs in space. All around it we can see a gathered fleet of thousands of Ascendant ships - small and silver and deadly.

ESSK (v.o.)

In their treachery, the Eav'oq possessed weapons we had not anticipated. On the eve of our victory we were cast aside...

The great swirling energy wave blooms up from the surface of the planet, growing in power and force, sweeping all the Ascendant ships away, filling the screen until we...

**WHITE OUT**

After a moment, **FADE IN** to...

101 **INT. ASCENDANT PAVILION**

...Essk still telling the tale to Iliana.

ESSK

...and banished across the stars. Even the last remaining Eye went dark, and the True spoke to us no more. But we did not give up our duty... we vowed to continue our crusade in Their name, and vanquish those who dared speak it aloud, while we searched for their Fortress among the stars.

That's the end. Essk bows his head in silent prayer.

ILIANA

Shall I tell you what my dreams have told me, Essk?

ESSK

(breathless)

I would be honoured, Mistress.

ILIANA

You will find the Fortress.

ESSK

How can you be so certain?

ILIANA

Because I know the pattern of the universe, Cardinal.

ESSK

But it has been so long...

ILIANA

Essk... do you not believe that I am the Fire?

ESSK

(nervously)

Of course I do, Mistress. I would never -

ILIANA

Did I not appear to you from the last remaining Eye? And is that not exactly what your doctrine foretold would happen? That the Fire would burst forth from the Eye of the True, and enlighten the faithful?

ESSK

Yes, Mistress...

ILIANA

Does your doctrine not also say that the Fire will illuminate the path to the Fortress?

ESSK

It does, Mistress...

ILIANA

Perhaps you imagine that, since I am so far from home, I do not wish to be among you?

ESSK

I would never presume -

ILIANA

Believe me, Cardinal, this is exactly where I am meant to be. I know with every fibre of my being that this is the task the True have set for me - to lead the Ascendants to their great Fortress. The time of Final Ascension is at hand, Essk. Do not lose your faith now.

Essk swallows, only made more nervous by Iliana's vehemence instead of reassured. He bows his head submissively...

**102 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING**

The station is surrounded by the remains of the Starfleet armada. *Defiant* is docked in the usual place. The *Cerberus* has recombined, but still shows a dead nacelle and scorch marks along the hull. The *Gorkon* has a hole in its saucer. *T'Kumbra* and *Blackthorne* are nearby, also visibly wounded.

Shuttles and workbees move back and forth between them and the station, as they work together to mend their damage...

**103 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY**

Kira sits propped up on her bio-bed. Bashir runs tests and takes readings, while Dax, Sisko, Vaughn and Ro gather around her, worried about her.

KIRA

I understand now. I've been going about this all wrong.

BASHIR

So you've come to your senses at last.

KIRA

Yes. The Ascendants can't be negotiated with. We're going to have to fight them.

BASHIR  
Oh, for God's sake.

SISKO  
"God," Doctor?

BASHIR  
Figure of speech. Look, Captain, all due respect, but this is madness. Don't you think we've kicked that hornet's nest enough? Half the *Gryphon's* crew is dead.

KIRA  
I know. And it's my fault. The Ascendants were going to leave us alone until they recognised me as a Bajoran. So I'm the one who has to fix it.

SISKO  
Then we go back to Starfleet. Ask for more ships.

KIRA  
No, you heard Admiral Ross. He won't give us any more. Not after what happened to *Gryphon*.

VAUGHN  
Then what do we do?

KIRA  
The Prophets told me what to do. They told me two years ago.

Vaughn bites his tongue. He just doesn't get this Prophets business, but this is not the time to argue.

DAX  
Nerys, what do you mean?

KIRA  
I mean... the Dominion. If Starfleet won't help us stop the

Ascendants, then we go to the Dominion. I'm going to extend the alliance, and ask for military aid.

BASHIR

Alright, just hold on a minute. This has gone far enough.

VAUGHN

(low, warning)

Your impulse control seems to be having problems today, Doctor. Perhaps you should look at that.

BASHIR

I'm just tired of people talking about throwing our lives away in yet another war over something that's none of our business. This has to stop. How can you possibly talk about working with the Dominion after everything they did to us?

KIRA

(patient)

Doctor, I know you don't believe in the Prophets. But let me try to explain why I know this is the right thing to do.

Bashir is not impressed, but relents and lets her explain.

KIRA

Two years ago, when we were dealing with the Iconian gateways, I got sent back in time... something like thirty-thousand years into Bajor's past. The Prophets and Iconians worked together to teach me a lesson... that despite everything that had happened, I couldn't give up. I had to keep fighting.

(beat)

But that's not all they tried to teach me. I didn't understand it then... but now I think I do.

They're all looking at her, a bit confused and wary...

**104 EXT. OPEN FIELD (STOCK 8x13)**

The Ancient Bajoran battle scene from "Horn and Ivory," as Kira battles alongside the Perikian freedom fighter Torrna.

KIRA (v.o.)

At the time, Bajor hadn't yet come together as one united world. The various provinces were still fighting each other for dominance. The one that was winning... was the Bajora.

**105 EXT. MEETING ROOM (STOCK 8x13)**

The first council of the new Perikian Republic, as the Bajora envoy tries to persuade them to join up.

KIRA (v.o.)

They saw themselves as trying to bring everyone together, so that there wouldn't be any more fighting. Some of the other provinces didn't agree. They thought the Bajora were just theocratic conquerors trying to control everyone.

**106 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY**

Back to scene. The others stand around, a bit baffled, waiting for the point.

KIRA

Don't you see it? The Bajora were the Dominion of Ancient Bajor. A conquering nation, bringing belief in their gods to all...

RO

Yes, and killing everyone who opposed them.

KIRA

At first, yes. But look what came out of it. The Bajora succeeded in bringing everyone together. We became stronger, united against anyone who tried to control us. Now we're friends with everyone. That's what the Prophets were trying to show me. That if the Bajora can evolve to become peaceful and cooperative, so can the Dominion.

VAUGHN

Oh, Captain... I don't know...

KIRA

You don't have to trust the Prophets, Elias. You just have to trust me. I believe this is the way forward. For everyone.

RO

Do you really think the Federation will go for this?

SISKO

Ro's right, Nerys. You heard them in the Council chambers. They don't like Bajor's current relationship with the Dominion. They certainly won't go for taking it even further.

KIRA

You're right, they won't. So I'm leaving the Federation out of it altogether. I did this for Bajor, not the Federation. So Bajor is the one that will make the deal with the devil, not the Federation. Elias... call

Taran'atar. Let's get this thing started, before it's too late.

On Kira's determined expression...

107 INT. DS9 - WARD ROOM

Begin on Taran'atar, sat at the far end of the table...

TARAN'ATAR

I wish to be certain of what you are proposing, Captain. Please clarify.

Kira sits opposite him, Vaughn and Sisko on either side.

KIRA

I'm proposing that Bajor and the Dominion go beyond simple diplomatic relations. The alliance has been good for both of us, I think you'd agree. Now I want to take the next step. I'm asking for your help. If you commit Jem'Hadar forces to help Bajor fight the Ascendants, I will do everything I can to help you control the chaos in the Dominion, and to persuade the Federation to enter into diplomatic relations with you.

Taran'atar nods to himself, considering all this for a moment... and then looks back up at Kira, decision made.

TARAN'ATAR

No.

A moment of confusion...

SISKO

Ambassador... what do you mean?

TARAN'ATAR

I mean no. There will be no alliance with Bajor.

KIRA

I don't understand. Why not?

TARAN'ATAR

Because I said no.

KIRA

Taran'atar... this is a good deal. It's exactly what Odo wanted - closer relationships with the Alpha Quadrant. And it's good for the Jem'Hadar too - a common enemy to rally against will help you stop the in-fighting.

(beat)

And I'm not ashamed to admit it - we need you. You said yourself, the Ascendants are your enemies. So fight them with us. Bajor can't stand against them alone.

TARAN'ATAR

Then Bajor will not stand.

VAUGHN

Ambassador, perhaps we haven't been clear about the stakes...

Taran'atar slowly gets to his feet, looms over them.

TARAN'ATAR

You have, Commander. Now I wish to be equally clear. I would rather destroy this station, and everyone on it, including myself, than commit any Jem'Hadar lives to protect Bajor. Am I understood?

Kira is quite stunned. Nobody can say anything. Taran'atar takes silence as consent. He stands straight, walks stiffly to the exit. Kira, Sisko and Vaughn are left sitting there.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

**ACT FIVE**

FADE IN:

**108 INT. DS9 - MAIN OPS CENTRE**

Kira, Vaughn, Dax and Ro are stood around the central Ops table, talking quietly and sadly among themselves as the business of Ops goes on around them. Bowers, Shar and Nog are all at their stations.

KIRA

So... what else did I miss?

RO

The Vedek Assembly is in uproar over Yevir's latest publicity stunt. He's even made official overtures of friendship to Kai Solis and the Ohalavaru, which has got the more conservative vedeks frothing at the mouth as I'm sure you can imagine. Asarem's trying her best to keep everyone calm.

KIRA

(chortle)

Good luck with that.

The side door to Ops opens, and Prynn enters. She's looking anxious. She glances over to Shar at the science console. He sees her looking, smiles at her, and turns back.

Vaughn has noticed Prynn's arrival. With leave from Kira, he steps away and goes to her. They talk quietly, out of the way of earshot.

VAUGHN

Prynn? Are you okay?

PRYNN

Dad, I want to apologise. For earlier, on the *Defiant*. I abandoned my post. I'm sorry. You should discipline me.

VAUGHN

Oh, baby... Don't be silly. You brought that whole ship home safe. If you hadn't played that helm like Mozart at his piano, we wouldn't be alive right now.

Prynn smiles in relief and flattery. But then her eye flicks over to Shar again, and she begins to crumble.

PRYNN

I just couldn't...

Vaughn pulls her in close, hugs her tight.

VAUGHN

I know, baby. I know exactly how you feel. And if you want your old man's advice...

He pulls back, looks her in the eye.

VAUGHN (cont)

Go to him. Go to him now.

Prynn is almost in tears, but she smiles at Vaughn. She steps away and heads towards the science station.

Meanwhile, the turbolift rises into Ops, carrying Bashir. The doctor carries a travelling bag over his shoulder. He nods politely at Vaughn as he heads down to the Ops table.

BASHIR

Captain, I have something to say.

RO

(pulling away)

I should probably get back to the Security office. I think I've had enough command experience to hold me for a while.

BASHIR

No, Lieutenant, I'd like you to stay, please. I want everyone to hear this.

VAUGHN

Doctor, what's going on?

Bashir reaches into his bag, pulls out a padd, and hands it to Kira.

BASHIR

This is my letter of resignation  
as DS-Nine's Chief Medical  
Officer, effective immediately.

The room goes quiet. Everyone has heard.

KIRA

Doctor, I know you have some  
reservations about this Ascendants  
thing...

BASHIR

Reservations? You could say that.  
You're allying Starfleet officers  
with a murderous and oppressive  
regime, to help you get into the  
middle of a religious war that's  
not our problem, on behalf of  
people who don't even want our  
help. Well, I refuse to be a part  
of it.

KIRA

The alliance with the Dominion  
isn't even happening, Julian.  
Taran'atar turned us down.

BASHIR

I know you, Nerys. You're not  
going to give up that easily. And  
since you're apparently determined  
not to see sense on this, I  
suppose there's nothing else I can  
do but leave.

DAX

(amazed)

Julian... you can't do this.

BASHIR

I would think you'd be happy to see the back of me, Dax. Since we don't seem to be able to exist on this station together anymore without ripping each other to shreds.

(back to Kira)

You and I are the only ones left of the old guard, Nerys. Everyone else has moved on. And if this is the way it's going to be around here now, then I guess it's just time I move on as well.

(to the room)

Goodbye, everyone. Nice knowing you.

He turns and walks back up the stairs to the turbolift, steps aboard.

BASHIR

Docking ring, section twelve.

The turbolift carries him away. Everyone watches him go in silence, stunned. Kira, Ro, Nog, Vaughn... Dax.

**109 INT. ASCENDANT PAVILION**

Iliana sits in a forest of cushions and silks, given every comfort in her pavilion. She's studying from an Ascendant type of padd. There's a rustle, and she looks up - Raiq has entered the tent. The woman is nervous, averting her eyes.

RAIQ

You wished to see me, Mistress?

ILIANA

Come closer, Raiq.

(off Raiq's surprise)

Yes, I know your name. Come. It's alright, don't be shy.

Raiq takes a few steps forward. But not very many.

RAIQ

I offer you my life, Mistress. I failed you. The infidels escaped death. I am ready to face the penalty.

Iliana actually laughs out loud at that, confusing Raiq.

ILIANA

Raiq, I didn't ask you here to punish you. I wanted to thank you. Sit with me.

Still nervous and confused, Raiq nevertheless obeys.

ILIANA

You provided proof of what my dreams have been telling me for months now. That woman you met, the one leading the alien fleet... do you know who she was?

RAIQ

A heretic, Mistress. She claimed to speak with the True.

ILIANA

She may not have been lying, Raiq. I speak with Them myself.

Raiq looks up at her, amazed...

ILIANA (cont)

You have heard the rumours of the return of the Eav'oq? And of a new race of heretics who claim to know the True?

(Raiq nods)

She is their leader. She is the one you must fight.

RAIQ

Me, Mistress? I am a simple knight. I am not worthy to lead any crusade.

ILIANA

Oh yes you are. You are my chosen one, Raiq. You are my hand, the one I send out among the stars to strike against the heretics.

Raiq is too stunned to speak. Daunted and honoured beyond belief, she bows her head in prayer.

ILIANA

Now... I want you to come with me. I think I've spent long enough indoors for one lifetime. It's time I step outside... and speak to the knights. There's something they need to know.

Iliana stands, looks back to Raiq, and holds out her hand to her. Awed, Raiq takes her hand, stands, and they move to the exit together.

**110 EXT. ASCENDANT ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT**

The tent flaps open, and Iliana emerges into a small town of tents, clustered together in the bottom of the natural amphitheatre formation from 9x24 "Ha'mara." Ascendants are engaged in various activities - group prayers, battle drills, sharpening their spears, stilted socialising.

The head priest, Essk, is standing over a flaming brazier, praying silently to himself. He turns at the sound of shocked whispers from the gathered knights...

But what makes Essk's jaw drop is that Iliana is holding Raiq's hand, guiding her along like a student. Who the hell is this nobody to be holding the hand of the Fire?

Iliana automatically has everyone's attention. They start to gather, to listen to whatever she has to say.

ILIANA

Knights of the Ascendancy...  
Archquesters... Holy soldiers of the True. Hear me. These have been strange days. The first time so many of you have gathered together

in this way in living memory. I spent many years in solitude myself. It has taken me time to become acclimated to so much company. But we can afford solitude no longer. As the events of today have shown us, a new crusade lies before the Ascendants.

Hushed, awed whispers spread through the crowd. Essk purses a little - why did he not know about this first?

ILIANA

The ones you fought today... the ones who took the lives of many brave knights... they are the new heretics Cardinal Essk warned you of. I was sent by the True not only to light the way to the Fortress, but also to guide you in the fight against them. Because those goals are one and the same. They are called the Bajorans, and taking the battle to them will lead us to the Fortress of the True, once and for all.

Excitement among the crowd. They're lapping it up. Iliana holds Raiq's hand high up in the air with her own.

ILIANA

This woman, this simple knight of the True, she has encountered the Bajorans twice now. Once in the person of an old priestess, spreading their twisted version of the True's light. And again today, in the form of a warrior, who killed countless of your brothers and sisters. But trust me, the priestess is just as dangerous as the warrior. Because even now, she works to cement an alliance between the Bajorans... and the Eav'oq.

The mention of the hated Eav'oq gets them roaring. They hold their spears high, waving them in religious bloodlust.

ILIANA

Yes! The two greatest heretics we have ever faced have joined together against us! And these false idolaters will persecute we honest believers for our knowledge of the Truth!

VOICE

Destroy them!

ILIANA

Yes! We will destroy them. We will hunt down every last Bajoran and every last Eav'oq, and every other heretic who stands between us and the Fortress of the True. And we will burn them out! They will all die and burn!

VOICES

(repeating)

Die and burn! Die and burn!

Iliana has one last sure fire hit...

ILIANA

I... am... the Fire!

The Ascendants roar their fervour and thrust their spears to the stars. The spears' tips burst into flame, lighting up the whole black stone quarry in reflected fire light.

Essk stands with a bit more decorum, wanting to be just as enthusiastic as everyone else but somehow not managing it.

Panning up to the black sky filled with stars...

111 **EXT. SPACE (CONTINUOUS)**

The remaining ships of the Starfleet armada zoom along through space, at warp. The five ships still all show significant damage.

We move in closer on the Intrepid-class *Blackthorne* as it flies, seeing the windows along its side. Closer, and now we can make out figures inside. Closer still, to one window in particular, and we see Julian Bashir sat at the window.

**112 INT. BLACKTHORNE - QUARTERS**

Bashir sits in the seat by the window, his traveling bag beside him. Across the room, by the door, is Captain Thann.

THANN

If you need anything, Doctor, feel free to call the bridge.

BASHIR

I'm sure I'll be fine, Captain Thann. I promise I won't be any bother.

THANN

Perhaps you'd like to join the senior staff for dinner later?

BASHIR

Oh, I don't know that I'd be the best company right now. But thank you for the offer.

Thann accepts, nods acknowledgement, and turns to leave. Now alone, Bashir picks up a padd, and with a heavy heart, begins to speak into it.

BASHIR

Doctor Julian Bashir, ex Chief Medical Officer, Deep Space Nine. Personal log. It's done. I just couldn't stay and watch those people - my friends - throw their lives away. Once was bad enough. So I left. I know I can't be the only one who thinks getting in bed with the Dominion against the

Ascendants is a terrible idea.  
It's bound to go wrong. Either way  
we end up in another war. And I  
can't let that happen. So if I  
have to find those others, and  
work with them to stop it from  
happening, then so be it. And I  
think I know where to start  
looking for them. End log.

(beat)

Computer, as soon as we're in  
range of a relay station, please  
transmit that personal log towards  
Earth.

COMPUTER

Specify required destination.

BASHIR

No specific destination. Just mark  
it, for the attention of Mister  
Cole, courtesy of... the  
organisation.

The computer bleeps in acknowledgement. That done, Bashir  
settles back into his seat, preparing for a long trip. Pull  
back out of the window...

**113 EXT. SPACE**

...and away from the armada, as it flies on into space.

FADE OUT:

**END OF SHOW**