

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

8x05 - "Reflections."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the short stories

"Second Star to the Right..." and
"...And Straight on Till Morning"

Written by Judith & Garfield Reeves-Stevens

appearing in the anthology

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: The Lives of Dax

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. LAS VEGAS DESERT - NIGHT

A desert mountain area. Peculiar, incongruous objects are strewn around in a messy jumble like a junkyard - human-shaped neon signs, massive billboards, an enormous silver shoe made of lights - all the stuff you might see on the Vegas strip of the 1960s.

It's a clear night, with moon and stars shining brightly. As we PAN around, we also see EZRI DAX clambering awkwardly up the rocks. She's wearing a sophisticated evening dress, flimsy high-heeled shoes, a tiny handbag. She's clearly been on a night out.

She is also clearly lost, and getting fed up about it. She stops, sighs, looks around.

DAX

Okay...

(to humanoid
neon sign)

I saw you from the front gate, and
you were on my... left. So the
gate must be somewhere in that
direction, on my right.

She sighs again, looks up to the stars to see if they will help. They do not.

DAX

I just have to... go straight down
there and... ugh, why do I even
pretend I know what I'm doing?

Frustrated, she kicks at the sand and gravel, sending up a cloud of dust and stubbing her toe. She hops in pain and, being in high heels on sand, only succeeds in toppling herself off balance. She falls with an annoyed moan, but a pair of hands catch her under the arms and set her back up.

DAX

Julian...!

But she turns around to see that it's actually a suave and smiling VIC FONTAINE in his usual snappy tuxedo.

VIC

Sorry to disappoint ya, doll. I was going to ask what a broad like you's doing in a dump like this, but I think I get the picture. The boyfriend's a big no-show, am I right? Or am I right?

DAX

Actually, Julian doesn't know I came up here.

VIC

What, did you two love birds have another spat?

DAX

No no, nothing like that. We had a date, down on the strip. Kira let us have one last fling before she turns the whole station off to replace the power core. But Julian got called away to emergency surgery.

VIC

Never stops, does it?

DAX

Doesn't seem like it.

She drifts off, lost in her own thoughts. Vic takes off his jacket and drapes it around her shoulders.

VIC

You're shivering.

She looks up, suddenly realising her distraction...

DAX

I did it again.

VIC

Ya gotta give me more than that to go on, doll.

DAX

Rambling. I think one thought, and that makes me think of another, and it's not as if I have only one lifetime of memories to remember, I have eight, so... so everything I think reminds me of something else, and the next thing I know...

She drifts away again, frowns to herself...

DAX (cont)

I hate raktajino. Aagh!

VIC

Don't tell me - rambling.

DAX

Especially when I'm upset.

VIC

Like when a certain young doctor gets called away for emergency surgery on a Saturday night.

DAX

It's not Saturday... is it?

VIC

Hey, doll. It's not Saturday, this isn't Las Vegas, and it sure isn't 1962. But why spoil a beautiful evening with cold hard facts? C'mon, you look like you need to take a load off.

DAX

I don't think I can walk much further on this gravel.

VIC

Then why don't you walk over there?

He points, and a patch of clean green grass has appeared right next to her where there was none before. Amazed, she gingerly tests it with one foot, then steps on.

DAX
Did you do that?

VIC
Do what?

DAX
The grass. Aren't all the parameters set at the factory or something?

VIC
Doll, do I look like a parameter?

DAX
I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...
You know.

VIC
No offence taken, doll.

Dax walks over to the giant shoe and sits down on its edge, looks out across the Vegas vista. Vic just waits...

DAX
Vic, may I ask you a question?

VIC
Shoot, dollface.

DAX
What's it like being a hologram?

VIC
Answer me this first - what's it like to be a Trill?

DAX
I think you mean a joined Trill.

VIC
You say tomato...

DAX

What's it like being joined...?
In a word, confused.

VIC

Couldn't have said it better
myself.

DAX

What does a hologram have to be
confused about?

VIC

You think being confused is something that can only happen to your kinda people? I'm a twentieth century hologram in a twenty-fourth century world. Sometimes I have to ask myself if I'm the only Real McCoy on the face of the Earth, and all you people are just mathematical constructs being generated by some big hunk of transistors and vacuum tubes out in the great beyond. Don't get me wrong, sweet-heart, I love my life. But still, sometimes, I wonder where it is I'm going, and worse yet, where I was before I was here.

DAX

Those kind of questions are just a common function of any self-aware intelligence trying to build patterns from the past to anticipate the future. What I meant was, how confusing can life be when you've been programmed to mesh perfectly with your environment? You know when the lights will go on. You know where the grassy parts are. It's a perfect match.

VIC

(bark of laughter)

Perfect? It doesn't work that way,
dollface.

VIC (cont)

From my side of the street, I'm looking at you saying, How confusing can it be for her? She can go anywhere in the whole wide universe, see anything, be anyone, for real.

DAX

It doesn't work that way for me either. I didn't choose my life.

VIC

Join the club, sweetcakes.

DAX

I've heard you sing, Vic. You're good.

VIC

(preens)

Maybe not as good as Frank, but I'm not going to argue.

DAX

Which makes me think you enjoy what you do.

VIC

Oh yeah. To be up at that mike, belting out pure gold, holding that audience in the palm of my hand... Like the man said, "Baby, it's witchcraft."

DAX

Exactly. So at the end of the day, no matter how you got here, is there anything you can imagine would be more fulfilling than being a lounge singer in 1962 Las Vegas?

VIC

(smiling)

Ya got me. But sounds like there's something else you'd rather be...

DAX

Well, that's what this switch to command track is about. I'm trying to find out what I want to do with my life. I never really got a chance to find out before. Not on my own. Not before I was joined.

Vic pauses to consider something.

VIC

This 'joined' megillah, it's not something that sneaks up on you, is it? I remember Jadzia talking about it once. Training for years, selection committees. Only one out of a thousand qualifies, and even then that don't guarantee you a place at the table.

DAX

You're half-right, Vic. That's how it normally goes for every other Trill... except me.

VIC

I don't get it. What makes you so different?

DAX

I never wanted to be joined.

VIC

Right, now I remember. Jadzia bought it, the symbiont's heading home, something goes wrong. It has to be joined or it's lights out, and you were the only Trill on the ship.

DAX

I wish... I wish it had been that simple.

VIC

You mean, that's not how it happened?

DAX

No, it's exactly how it happened.
It's just... that's not all that
happened.

Vic sits down next to her, pulls out a flask and takes a
sip as Dax cuddles up to his side.

VIC

I've got a crazy feeling we're
gonna be here a while...

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

2 EST. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING

Deep Space Nine hangs mostly dark - Empok Nor hangs totally dark nearby...

3 INT. QUARK'S BAR

It's dark, as if late night. The last few customers are leaving. QUARK watches them go with a disapproving look. He's alone behind the bar - no other staff.

QUARK
Shutting down the entire station.
Essential personnel only to remain
aboard. Nobody ever thinks about
the small businessman.

He walks up the stairs towards the holosuites, along the corridor, checks the readouts by the doors.

QUARK
Las Vegas, again? What do they all
see in that place, anyway? It's
not like they can't gamble and
drink right here.

He walks away disgusted, leaving the room unmolested.

4 EXT. LAS VEGAS DESERT

Vic and Dax sit side-by-side on the edge of the giant shoe. She takes a sip of his flask and hands it back to him.

DAX
What is this place anyway?

VIC
YESCO. The Young Electric Sign
Company. They've been making all
the signs on the strip since the
whole big ball of wax got started.

DAX

But these look broken. Is it a repair facility?

VIC

Some things can't be fixed, sweetheart. The Silver Slipper. The Golden Nugget. Caesar's... all *kaput*. All *finito*. That's Las Vegas for ya. A real Neverland. Home to lost boys, lost dreams, here today, gone tomorrow...

DAX

Wait a minute. What's a sign from Caesar's doing here?

VIC

What kind of question is that?

DAX

Well, this is Vegas 1962, right?

VIC

Don't stop now, you're on a roll.

DAX

But the gaming establishment known as Caesar's Palace was still in operation as of 2053. For two months following the outbreak of Earth's World War Three, Caesar's was the operational command centre for Colonel Amber's Regimental Volunteers. It was the site of the final battle of -

VIC

The siege of Las Vegas. How's a little girl like you know so much about things like that?

DAX

That's the whole reason I came up here tonight. I was checking out this location for Julian...

DAX (cont)

...in case he wanted to try out a new historical last stand. He's got this thing for lost causes.

VIC

Then you've come to the right place.

DAX

But if this is 1962 --

VIC

-- Or a reasonable facsimile thereof --

DAX

-- then how can there be a dead Caesar's sign here, and how can you know about what happens after World War Three, ninety years later? Isn't that like breaking the rules?

VIC

Depends on who makes those rules, wouldn't you say?

DAX

That would be whoever programmed you in the first place, right?

VIC

My pal Felix. Great guy, but sometimes he's been known to borrow a bit of code from this place and that. So out here, at the edge of the program, sometimes things get a bit muddled. Sort of like me, ya know? Sure, I'm strictly 1962, but I gotta tell ya, I know every-thing there is to know about that station you all say you come from, and that century. You'd be surprised what happens when programming gets all mixed up out here. Ya get all sorts of... unexpected combinations.

She looks at him thoughtfully, trying to imagine what's going on inside his holographic head.

VIC
So what's your story?

DAX
Stories would be more like it.

VIC
No, not their stories, doll. Your story.

DAX
My story. My story...

VIC
We've got all night. As long as you need.

She takes a deep breath, steeling herself for a long story.

DAX
I was on a starship.

VIC
Imagine that.

5 EXT. SPACE - ESTABLISHING

A Nebula-class starship, the *Destiny*, travels at warp.

DAX (v.o.)
A starship called *Destiny*.

6 INT. DESTINY - CREW QUARTERS

The room is darkened, intimate. The unjoined Ezri Tigan is lying in bed, seeming younger, with longer hair. She rolls over and we see she is in bed with a young Trill male, BRINNER FINOK. They snuggle as if post *delicto*.

EZRI
Well, that's certainly a pleasant way to spend the evening.

BRINNER

You know just how to make a man
forget his troubles.

EZRI

You really do let Commander Teyall
get to you too much. She doesn't
hate you.

BRINNER

(insistent)

She hates me.

EZRI

Maybe I should thank her. If you
didn't think she was being mean to
you, you might not have had all
that tension to work out, and this
might not have happened.

BRINNER

I'm so glad my pain benefits you.

EZRI

Dealing with crew members' psycho-
logical issues is my job, Ensign.

BRINNER

My, aren't we formal? Well, I
suspect last night's method isn't
exactly in the Starfleet
Counsellor's handbook. Or maybe it
is. Maybe I should transfer and
become the assistant assistant
ship's counsellor.

EZRI

Pig.

They giggle and snuggle under the bedclothes...

DAX (v.o.)

Wow - Brinner. Haven't thought
about him in a long time...

7 **EXT. LAS VEGAS DESERT**

Back to Vic and Dax in the Vegas sign graveyard...

DAX

We'd been friends for a long time
- all the way through the Academy.
And we were the only two Trill on
the ship, so we automatically
tended to end up spending time
together. But that night was the
first time anything had ever
happened between us... like that.
He was so sweet. So young and
intense and eager to impress.

VIC

Sounds a little like someone else
we both know.

DAX

Maybe. It was nice - already being
friends with him. Made things
comfortable. Easy.

8 **INT. DESTINY - CREW QUARTERS**

The young pair are still giggling and play-fighting when
the comm signal chirps...

T'PEK (comm)

Doctor T'Pek to Ensigns Tigan and
Finok. We will be arriving at
station Deep Space Nine in thirty
minutes. Report to Shuttlebay One
at that time.

They poke their heads out from under the bedclothes with
confused looks...

BRINNER

Acknowledged, Doctor.

EZRI

What do you think that's about?

BRINNER

What, you think they tell me
anything? Come on - we'd better
get up.

They start to get out of bed, look for their clothes...

9 **EXT. SPACE - DEEP SPACE NINE**

The *Destiny* hangs at rest near to Deep Space Nine. Every docking port on the station is busy with Starfleet ships or other vessels, so there's no room for the *Destiny* to dock.

10 **INT. DESTINY - SHUTTLEBAY**

Ezri and Brinner stand in the shuttle bay, both in Ensign's uniforms. Ezri is in sciences blue, Brinner in services yellow. A Starfleet runabout sits inside the bay with its hatch open.

Ezri and Brinner are paying attention though to a medical TRANSPORT POD that sits on an antigrav sled. It contains a SYMBIONT floating in purplish water, moving gently.

Ezri peers in with an expression of distaste - her reflection shows in the glass over the symbiont.

EZRI

Ewww, that's gross!

BRINNER

Zee! That's Dax. One of the
greatest. Show some respect.

She grins - she's only teasing him.

Across the bay, a tall and imposing Vulcan female in sciences blue, Dr T'PEK, steps out of the runabout. They see her and snap to attention.

EZRI

(whispering)

It's a big ugly worm, and you'll
never catch me with one of them in
my pocket.

BRINNER
(whispering)
They'd never pick you anyway.
Triple-niner.

They try to control their giggles...

11 EXT. LAS VEGAS DESERT

Vic looks confused...

VIC
Wait, what's a triple-niner?

DAX
It's just a silly little insult.
It means I was one of the ninety-
nine-point-nine percent of the
Trill population unfit to be
joined. I wasn't offended - I knew
he was just kidding. And I would
have shot one right back, except,
just then...

12 INT. DESTINY - SHUTTLEBAY

DAX (v.o.)
Odo appeared.

ODO steps out of the runabout behind T'Pek, wearing his
Bajoran uniform. Ezri and Brinner are shocked...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

13 INT. DESTINY - SHUTTLEBAY

Ezri and Brinner react with shock at the sight of the Changeling. But neither the Doctor nor the armed security guards seem to be reacting...

DAX (v.o.)

Of course, at that point, I had no idea who Odo was. All I saw was a Changeling. But Doctor T'Pek wasn't offering any protest, and the security guys weren't firing, so I just figured if they trusted him, I shouldn't be too worried.

T'Pek and Odo come to the medical pod. T'Pek waves her tricorder over it. Odo rests his hand on it affectionately.

T'PEK

The symbiont remains in stable condition. The delay has not compromised it at all.

ODO

As I said, Doctor, Jadzia had no difficulty using transporters. The Dax symbiont could have been beamed onto this ship and you could have been on your way an hour ago. If you hadn't insisted on using the runabout.

T'PEK

Constable, I do not have to tell you what a valuable asset Dax is to Starfleet, and the Federation. As Jadzia Dax, it was on the front lines of the war, and we cannot risk losing that knowledge or experience.

(more)

T'PEK (cont)

Some symbionts have had unusual reactions to the beaming process, and with Dax already suffering from some type of energy shock and host-death trauma syndrome, an hour's delay did not present an unacceptable risk in relation to what a transporter reaction might have triggered. It was the logical thing to do.

ODO

Dax was more than an asset, Doctor. It - she - was a friend.

T'PEK

I understand. And we will have your friend on Trill in two weeks. Enough time for recuperation and preparation for a new joining.

Odo draws himself up, seemingly unimpressed... then nods sharply, turns, and re-enters the runabout.

Ezri has been watching the conversation in confusion. Brinner is unable to take his eyes off the symbiont...

T'PEK

Crewmen, please conduct the medical pod to sickbay.

Two security grab the antigrav sled and manoeuvre it out of the shuttlebay door. T'Pek follows, indicates that Ezri and Brinner should follow too...

Ezri lingers behind as the runabout powers up and the shuttlebay doors open...

...and as the runabout lifts off and passes through the forcefield, Ezri catches a glimpse of Deep Space Nine in the distance.

Then the bay doors close and she turns to follow the others, running to catch up.

14 **INT. DESTINY - CORRIDOR**

Ezri jogs up to join Brinner, T'Pek and the crewmen. The corridor is deserted except for them - she notices...

EZRI

Where is everyone?

T'PEK

We are now in security condition
alpha, Ensign.

Ezri is impressed anyway. T'Pek keeps striding forward with purpose, Ezri's tiny legs struggling to keep up... Finally, the group stops at a turbolift - T'Pek taps her combadge.

T'PEK

T'Pek to Doctor Solon. We are ready.

EZRI

Is that thing really that important?

While they wait, T'Pek peers down at Ezri imperiously...

T'PEK

Ensign, the Dax symbiont has just served six years on one of the most important outposts involved in the war with the Dominion. As a Starfleet officer, it knows the latest codes, the latest battle plans, the latest strategies. It knows our strengths. It knows our weaknesses. It knows the same about key personnel in Starfleet Command and the Klingon Defence Force. How would you have us transport it back to your home world? On a pleasure cruiser?

EZRI

No, ma'am.

The turbolift doors open and a Latino human male in medical blue, SOLON, steps out. T'Pek hands him her tricorder without preamble.

T'PEK

All life signs are stable for now.
But host-death syndrome is known
to cause rapid reversals without
warning.

SOLON

I've been familiarising myself
with all the necessary emergency
requirements.

He awkwardly looks between Ezri and Brinner. They awkwardly
look back, having no idea what's going on...

SOLON

Which one?

T'PEK

We might not have a choice. You may
proceed. Keep a full implantation
team on standby. And keep the
subspace link to Trill open.

SOLON

See you in sickbay.

Solon steps back into the turbolift with the security and
the medical pod.

T'PEK

Ensigns, follow me.

She struts away, and Ezri and Brinner follow bewildered.

15 **INT. DESTINY - OFFICE**

T'Pek, Ezri and Brinner enter a generic office space. T'Pek
sits behind a desk, takes out a padd and inspects it.

Ezri and Brinner wait at attention uncomfortably...

T'PEK

Ensign Tigan, your medical records
are incomplete.

EZRI

With respect, Doctor, I don't understand. Since starting at the Academy I've been scanned, genetically decoded, retro-pulsed and bio-filtered. Starfleet should have a blueprint of every cell in my body by now.

T'PEK

There is no symbiosis evaluation.

A-ha - now Ezri understands.

EZRI

No ma'am, there isn't.

T'PEK

Is it not law that all Trill are to submit to preliminary screening tests on their twelfth birthdays?

EZRI

It's not really a law, ma'am. More like... a custom.

BRINNER

That's right, Doctor. Your first screening is a rite of passage, like a human *bar mitzvah* or a Klingon bloodkill. There's no actual legal requirement to take part. It's just that everyone does.

(glance at Ezri)

Almost everyone.

T'PEK

Ah. So the records are not incomplete. You simply chose not to undergo screening.

EZRI

Yes, ma'am.

T'PEK

Why not?

16 **EXT. LAS VEGAS DESERT**

Vic is just sitting, calmly listening, letting Dax get it all out of her system...

DAX

I was so sick of that question, Vic. Every time I met a new person, every evaluation meeting with a superior, every time the subject of joining even came up, I had to answer that question. I hated it more than any other question. Well, maybe except for my mother asking me why I insisted on leaving home to join Starfleet. And I just knew I was going to get the full interrogation from Doctor T'Pek.

(Vulcan impression)

How can you make such a profound decision that will affect your entire life at such a young age? How can you not aspire to fulfil the biological destiny of your species? Ooh, or my favourite, what dark secrets are you hiding that you don't want the symbiont to find out?

(sigh)

The truth is, the explanation was much more complex than that. I wasn't even sure I could explain it. I'd spent hours talking about it with Brinner and I still couldn't pin it down. So I just kept it simple.

17 **INT. DESTINY - OFFICE**

Back to the spiky Vulcan and the naive Trill...

EZRI

I don't wish to be joined, ma'am.

But T'Pek does not react beyond an arched eyebrow. She simply taps at the padd...

T'PEK

Ensign Finok, your medical records do include a preliminary symbiosis evaluation, and several follow-ups scans.

BRINNER

Yes, ma'am.

T'PEK

Logic suggests you do wish to be joined.

BRINNER

Yes, ma'am.

T'Pek returns to her padd and taps away for a while more, ignoring Ezri and Brinner...

T'PEK

Very well. Ensign Finok, you are to report to sickbay until further notice. I will have Commander Teyall excuse you from all other duty until we reach Trill.

BRINNER

(blanches)

I... don't understand, ma'am. Are you saying I'm going to be joined with Dax?

T'PEK

Unlikely. However, in the event the symbiont's condition worsens, we must stand ready to perform an emergency joining procedure. And, since Ensign Tigan has not seen fit to have her suitability for joining assessed, you, it would appear, are the only suitable Trill on the ship.

BRINNER

B-but... I haven't been trained.

T'PEK
But Dax has. Eight times. Report
to sickbay at once.
(to Ezri)
I have no further need of you,
Ensign. Carry on.

Brinner is now pale with shock and nerves, Ezri not much better. He leaves the room like a shell-shocked zombie, and she follows him out into the corridor...

18 INT. DESTINY - CORRIDOR

The pair walk without talking back down the corridor...

...until they reach the turbolift. Brinner taps the panel, they wait in silence, the doors open and Brinner steps in.

Before the doors close, their eyes meet and register their shock. Then the two Trill are separated.

Ezri walks alone back down the corridor, emotions battling.

EZRI
I wish I was a Vulcan.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

19 INT. DESTINY - CORRIDOR

Replay the moment as the turbolift doors close, Ezri and Brinner's eyes meet, then they walk down the corridor...

DAX (v.o.)

I really couldn't blame Brinner for feeling so overwhelmed. What else could I expect when the whole of Trill society was dedicated to believing there could be no higher goal than to sublimate yourself to brain-eating vampires? And here he was, getting what he'd always been told he should want, dangled right in front of his nose. And yet he must have known the chances of it actually happening were tiny.

20 EXT. LAS VEGAS DESERT

Back to Vic and Dax in Vegas...

DAX

Can you imagine that? Being told you have to want something in one breath, and then that you're never going to get it in the next?

VIC

Sounds like a tough gig, alright.

DAX

That's one of the reasons I never wanted anything to do with being joined. The whole thing just seemed so unfair. Maybe growing up away from the homeworld meant I didn't get the full cultural impact. But Brinner did. As much as I didn't want to be joined, he really did. And I was happy for him.

VIC

You don't sound so sure of that.

DAX

No, really, I was glad he was getting what he wanted. It's just... we'd only just started seeing each other as lovers. I'd barely had time to start getting used to thinking of him in this new way. And now he was about to have this huge life-changing experience, and he wouldn't be the same Brinner I'd known for years.

VIC

If it happened. You said yourself the chances were small.

DAX

Intellectually I knew that, but you know as well as I do, Vic, that what the head tells you and what the heart tells you can be galaxies apart.

(beat)

I remember the very first time Jadzia ever came to the station. She told Julian that because of the whole long-lived, changing bodies thing, romantic relationships are something Trills tend to avoid, because they just complicate things.

VIC

(smirk)

Sounds like you were just trying to give him a polite brush-off.

DAX

Oh, totally. I mean, I've been married six times, so romantic relationships obviously happen. But there's some truth in it too.

VIC

Okay, so there's two Trills on board, and he's the one in the hot seat. You're in the clear. How does that turn into you being the only one around at crunch time?

DAX

(stop badgering me)
I'm getting to that.

21 **EXT. SPACE - ESTABLISHING**

The *Destiny* zooms by at warp...

DAX (v.o.)

With all the fuss, it was three days before I even got a chance to see Brinner again.

22 **INT. DESTINY - CORRIDOR**

Ezri walks down the corridor, trying not to look suspicious. She passes various crew members, keeps an eye on them to make sure they're not watching her too closely.

DAX (v.o.)

The only times we'd ever gone that long without speaking to each other were when we were sent on separate training assignments at the Academy. I knew he had to be on emergency call in sickbay at all times, and he'd probably be studying up on joining.

Ezri stops by a door, checks again to make sure no-one's watching, and begins tapping at the panel...

DAX (v.o.)

So I snuck into sickbay. He wasn't under quarantine or anything, so I wasn't doing anything wrong. I was just visiting a friend.

23 **INT. DESTINY - SICKBAY**

The door opens and Ezri steps quietly in. It's dim - she looks around - there's a tech working at a station at the other end of the sickbay complex who doesn't notice her.

Ezri creeps over to a door on the back wall, presses the panel to open it. It does, and inside is Brinner, standing over the medical POD that carries the Dax symbiont.

Brinner sees her and instantly REACTS, stepping in front of the pod as if protecting it from her...

BRINNER

This facility is off limits!

She's surprised by his reaction. Why so harsh?

After a moment of confusion, she realises they're playing again, and steps in. The door closes behind her. She holds up a small bottle of liquor she'd been hiding...

EZRI

I brought us a bottle of *samsit*.
The same bottle, in fact, that
resulted in us not leaving my
quarters three nights ago.

He doesn't respond. His attitude is formal, cold, stiff. Confused, like he doesn't quite know how to respond...

EZRI

Brinner? Are you okay?

BRINNER

I'm fine, thank you for asking.
But you have to leave.

EZRI

(hands up)

I'm not here to argue, if that's
what you're worried about. I know
you really want this, and whatever
you want to do with your life,
that's your decision.

For a moment, it looks like he has no idea what she's talking about. She notices it but presses on...

EZRI

I'm just here to visit a friend who's probably freaking out and could use someone to take his mind off his troubles.

(playfully pointed)

A friend who hasn't responded to any of my messages over the last three days, by the way.

BRINNER

I'm... sorry. And I appreciate the offer. But you really should go. I'm supposed to be under medical quarantine.

She knows that's not true. She moves closer, seductive, thinking he's just playing hard to get. His reaction is very uncomfortable, shrinking back...

EZRI

(flirty)

Good. That means no-one will come in to... disturb us.

BRINNER

Ensign, please...

EZRI

Ensign? My, aren't we formal.

BRINNER

Ezri...

That actually stops her cold, she looks hurt.

EZRI

Ezri? We're back to that? As if the last week never happened?

DAX (v.o.)

That actually hurt me.

24 **EXT. LAS VEGAS DESERT**

DAX

That first night, I told him about how my brother Norvo used to call me "Zee" when he was just learning to speak and "Ezri" was too much of a challenge. Since then it's been like my secret nickname. I don't let just anyone use it. But Brinner thought it was cute, so I didn't mind him calling me that.

VIC

And so for him to go back to Ezri seemed like a step backwards.

DAX

Exactly.

25 **INT. DESTINY - SICKBAY**

BRINNER

I don't know what else to say...

Ezri gives it one more try, leaning in close...

EZRI

So don't.

She KISSES him. He cringes, actually pressing back as if to get away from her, jostling the medical pod as it SLOSHES.

She's getting frustrated, so she nibbles at his lower lip, hoping to get him going. He shudders and cringes with disgust. She pulls back, hurt.

DAX (v.o.)

I didn't need to be a Betazoid to feel that something wasn't right. In a matter of days, I'd gone from being Brinner's best friend, to being his lover, to being an object of disgust to him. It was like a phaser to my heart.

26 **EXT. LAS VEGAS DESERT**

DAX

I thought it was all my worst
fears coming true. He wasn't even
joined yet, might never be joined,
but I'd lost him already...

27 **INT. DESTINY SICKBAY**

DAX (v.o.)

...he'd changed.

Ezri stares back at Brinner upset. He stares back warily.
Then the truth occurs to her, and horror dawns on her face.

EZRI

You... you're not Brinner.

He PUSHES her hands away from him sharply. The bottle goes
flying, SMASHES against a wall. The tiny shards of glass
cut his hand, and drops of blood seep out --

-- turning quickly into a golden AMBER LIQUID.

Ezri SCREAMS - Brinner's arms SHOOT out, becoming tendrils
of golden, flowing changeling that reach towards her. She
tries to shuffle back away from him in the small space --

-- but he's got her. He winds around her waist, around her
arms, pinning her. Then his FACE begins to melt --

-- and comes towards hers. The golden liquid FLOWS over her
face, into her nostrils and mouth, and down her throat. Her
screams are strangled and her eyes flare wide in panic...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

28 INT. DESTINY - SICKBAY

DARKNESS at first, with the echoes of Ezri's strangled cries. Then a bright piercing LIGHT, and Ezri opens her eyes (POV shot) to see Dr Solon and CAPTAIN RAYMER, a human woman with short grey hair, looking down over her.

Ezri's lying on a biobed. Both the others are looking beaten up, as if they've been in a firefight.

SOLON

Are you all right? Ensign? Answer me! Are you all right, Ensign?

RAYMER

Do you know where you are?

Ezri struggles, looks around groggily. She speaks hoarsely.

EZRI

Sickbay. USS *Destiny*.
(beat -
she remembers)
There was a changeling.

RAYMER

We know. A tech heard your screams.
We were able to get the security
fields up in time. We got it.

EZRI

It looked just like Brinner.

SOLON

That's what we concluded. But the
security monitors were disabled
all through sickbay so we couldn't
be sure.

EZRI

Am I all right?

SOLON
You'd better be.

EZRI
Why? Where's Doctor T'Pek?

RAYMER
That's how the changeling got on board the ship. She was in charge of changeling detection. If not for you...

EZRI
(realising)
That's why she was so interested in my records. So she'd know who to replace.

Ezri struggles up a bit, looks around. She sees panels blown out, techs looking worse for wear.

EZRI
Has something happened?

RAYMER
The changeling had a comm device. When we cornered it, the ship was attacked by Jem'Hadar. You've been out for a couple of hours.

An alarm goes off on the other side of the room. A nurse comes running over to Solon.

NURSE
We're losing it, Doctor.

Raymer takes Ezri's hand, suddenly looking empathetic. Ezri is immediately wary.

RAYMER
I've read your file. I know how you feel about symbionts.

Techs lift her biobed on anti-gravs and carry her over to where the symbiont tank sits. She begins to understand...

EZRI

No... Where's Brinner? Brinner wanted this. It's his dream!

SOLON

We don't know. The changeling probably killed him, just like it killed Doctor T'Pek.

The techs lock her bed into place next to the symbiont tank. She starts to sob...

EZRI

No... Brinner...

RAYMER

I'm sorry, Ensign, truly. But as of now, you are the only Trill on the *Destiny*. The only one who can save Dax's life.

The techs begin to prepare her for surgery, revealing her abdominal pouch and applying various potions as tears run down her face. Raymer keeps talking, keeps her attention.

EZRI

Please...

RAYMER

Ensign, listen to me. I've spoken with the Symbiosis Commission. With the damage we've taken, there's no way we can get you to new facilities within ninety-three hours. You know what that means.

EZRI

The joining... will be permanent.

RAYMER

That's right. So the Commission is firm. No joining can be forced. Whatever happens next is your choice. Do you understand? You have to make the decision.

(more)

RAYMER (cont)

The Dax symbiont has less than thirty minutes to live. You have your whole life. But whatever you decide, you have to decide now, one way or the other.

Ezri looks around, as if hoping for a way out of this...

RAYMER

What is your decision, Ensign?

EZRI

I'm a Starfleet officer. You could order me.

RAYMER

Because you are a Starfleet officer, I shouldn't have to order you. Now, Ensign, what is your decision?

Ezri closes her eyes to consider...

DAX (v.o.)

I was terrified. I don't remember ever being so scared in my life. My life actually flashed before my eyes. There wasn't much of it.

(beat)

And looking back on it all, there was one thing I couldn't deny - I was a Trill. By all rights, Brinner should have been there. The changeling should have killed me, not him. But somehow, I'd been given a second chance. To do something incredibly important.

She opens her eyes, looks at Raymer...

EZRI

Do it.

Raymer nods, and steps back to let the nurses continue to prepare Ezri for surgery...

29 **EXT. LAS VEGAS DESERT**

Dax withdraws her hand from Vic's to wipe a tear from her face. He looks stricken.

VIC

Man oh man. That was it?

DAX

Not quite. It took about fifteen minutes to prep me. I'd never done any of the stretching exercises, stuff like that. All I remember was poor Doctor Solon reciting everything he'd read about joining over the last three days. I think he was more upset than I was.

VIC

Fifteen minutes? Instead of years of training? And then what, they just plug the slug into the pocket, and... that's it?

DAX

No. That's... just the beginning.

Dax drifts away, remembering...

30 **INT. DESTINY - SICKBAY**

Eyes full of tears, Ezri watches as Doctor Solon brings the SYMBIONT over to her bare stomach, places it on her skin.

It WRIGGLES around slimily, finds the pouch, starts working its way underneath...

She looks away - she can't bear to watch. This is not the serene, wonderful moment Jadzia experienced - this is a horror, a violation, one Ezri knows she must endure.

VIC (v.o.)

Just the beginning. So then what happened?

DAX (v.o.)
What happened next was... every-
thing, Vic. Eight lives and three
hundred years of everything. All
at once.

Close in on Ezri's eyes as the memories and personalities
of Dax begin to come to her.

31 INT. TRILL SENATE ROOM

Focus on LELA among many other Trill, mostly men, in a
parliament-like arrangement.

She stands behind a podium with her hands clasped behind
her back, and looks down to the chamber floor, where a
VULCAN woman stands making a speech to the room...

DAX (v.o.)
I remembered the time Lela was
present in the Trill Senate
Chambers during first contact with
the Vulcans.

32 INT. SHIP'S INTERIOR

A nervous TOBIN crouches in an alcove, terrified and hidden
from view, as uniformed FIGURES in face-obscuring helmets
prowl the ship with their weapons drawn...

DAX (v.o.)
The time Tobin was on board a
science vessel that was attacked
and boarded at the height of the
Earth-Romulan war.

33 INT. CAVE SET

A group of figures in zero-G space suits stand in a cave.
The walls are threaded with STREAKS of luminous sickly
green material that THROBS with energy.

One of the group leans over to look into a bowl-like
formation that's filled with the sickly green ice. A small
indistinct SHAPE is under the ice...

DAX (v.o.)
That horrible day when we joined
Starfleet on a joint mission to a
passing comet that seemed to
contain Trill life signs. Audrid
was so excited at the possible
scientific breakthrough...

Suddenly, the shape BURSTS out of the ice, BREAKS through
the faceplate of the man leaning over it, *Alien-style*...

DAX (v.o.)
Until the life signs attacked her
husband and took over his body...

The same caves later - AUDRID clambers through the passage,
crying and desperate, as a bellowing insane VOICE echoes
through the caves after her...

She comes to a dead end and turns, horrified and scared as
the man from before comes into view, approaching her with
his faceplate broken and screaming incoherently at her.
Before the man can attack --

-- he is felled by a PHASER shot from behind and falls
forward, revealing another figure in a space suit.

DAX (v.o.)
...and Fleet Captain Christopher
Pike was forced to shoot him dead
to save her life.

Audrid watches her husbands possessed body collapse...

34 INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM

A standard living room, with shelves, houseplants, a broken
window, and an alien grand piano off to one side.

JORAN has his arm hooked around a young Trill woman's neck
and a broken, bloody piece of GLASS held to her throat.

Another man holds a WEAPON on them both, urgently shouting
MOS for him to let her go. Joran's eyes are cold and calm.

DAX (v.o.)
And the time Joran was found by the
police just as he was about to add
the final note to his symphony.

35 **EXT. LAS VEGAS DESERT**

Dax and Vic sit where they were, on the edge of the giant
glittery shoe, with the night-time view of Las Vegas in the
distance...

DAX
All that and more.

36 **INT. DESTINY - SICKBAY**

On the biobed, Ezri cries and stares solemnly off into the
distance as medical personnel continue to work around her,
out of her field of vision...

DAX (v.o.)
So much more.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

37 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING

As earlier...

38 EXT. LAS VEGAS DESERT

A moment, as Dax and Vic absorb what's been revealed...

VIC

All of that, and it hit you - pow!
- just like that.

DAX

I couldn't explain to Brinner what
it was like. And he'd had all the
preliminary courses.

VIC

Brinner? He was okay?

DAX

The changeling didn't kill him. It
just put him into medical stasis
and hid him in a supply closet.

VIC

Kinda odd thing for a changeling
to do, don't you think?

DAX

I suppose. No-one ever figured out
what that changeling was really
trying to do. We don't think there
was any way it could have joined
with Dax. Maybe it could have
linked minds somehow. Accessed
Dax's Starfleet secrets. Maybe even
have kept Dax alive long enough to
get back to the Founder's homeworld
and... who knows what could have
happened then?

VIC

Which is why you couldn't tell anyone what really happened.

DAX

Not while the war was on. In most sectors, especially on the front lines, it was Starfleet policy to keep any reports of changeling impersonations classified. To keep up morale. And to keep other changelings from finding out which ones had been caught. I think the policy's changing now. But it still comes down to the same thing. At that moment, I was the only Trill on board.

VIC

But it turned out all right in the end, right?

DAX

Are you kidding me? Vic, that first year, I honestly didn't know if I could survive as Ezri Dax. I felt like I was being crowded out of my own head by eight strangers. You have no idea how many times I thought about going to get Dax removed, even if it meant I had to die, just so it would stop. And Brinner? He could barely even look at me.

39 INT. DESTINY - TURBOLIFT

Ezri, now Dax, steps into a turbolift that already carries Brinner. It's uncomfortable, awkward, sad. At various points, they both make a start at trying to say something, but don't know what to say.

DAX (v.o.)

He was safe. But nothing could ever be the same between us again.
(more)

DAX (v.o., cont)

Not when I'd got the very thing
he'd wanted so desperately, worked
all his life for. And I didn't
even want it. My worst fears had
come true after all - joining had
come between us. It was just the
other way around than I expected.

The turbolift stops, the door opens, and they both exit
into the corridor, heading different ways, neither having
said a word. Ezri pauses, turns, watches Brinner's back
getting further away...

40 **EXT. LAS VEGAS DESERT**

Vic finally twigs where this has all been leading...

VIC

Aah... and that brings us full
circle back around to our young
Doctor Genius.

DAX

Friends for years, the stresses of
war bring us together to find some
comfort, and then the moment they
do, everything changes.

VIC

Well, what's changed this time?

Ezri gets up, paces around the small grassy patch...

DAX

Me! I've changed. On the *Defiant*,
I had this kind of realisation -
that 'I' means so much more for a
joined Trill. I knew it before,
intellectually, but I never really
felt the power of who I am now.

VIC

You're feeling more... integrated,
if that's the right term.

DAX

More integrated, more confident.
I've started to realise that I'm
not limited to the life goals Ezri
Tigan set for herself. Not that
those were bad things. It's just
that I can be so much more.

VIC

And you don't know if Julian can
handle it.

DAX

Being joined ruined my last
relationship before it got started.
What if the same thing's happening
again, Vic? Some things can't be
fixed, you said it yourself.

VIC

Give the poor boy a little credit,
sweetheart.

DAX

No, seriously. You saw how he
reacted after I let Jadzia out for
just a split second by accident.
They're all in me.

VIC

You just caught him off guard,
that's all.

DAX

But it's going to happen again.

VIC

Relax. Loverboy is not a Trill, and
you're not one of his famous lost
causes. He doesn't have the same
issues as Brinner. He just wants to
know what's going on in your life.

She takes what he says on board, getting up and stretching.
She considers him silently for a moment.

DAX

It's weird... Dax has memories going all the way back to the earliest forms of hologram technology. Tobin even played around with the bulky encounter suits and those stupid, clumsy feedback gloves. Joran found a way to use it for an altogether different purpose. But they all understood perfectly well that it wasn't real. Not me. I grew up with holo-technology. Norvo and I used to play in the holo-room all the time when we needed a break from my mother. I always felt like holograms were real.

(beat)

But you... you're something else. I never could have sat down with any of them and spilled my heart like this. Are you sure you're a hologram?

He doesn't answer - just smiles enigmatically. She waits, and shakes her head with amusement when he doesn't answer.

DAX

So. I told you what I was doing up here. But tell me, what were you doing in the middle of nowhere at night?

VIC

It's my night off.

DAX

No, I mean really. Why were you out here?

VIC

Really? It's a big simulation, doll. I like to make sure my friends don't get... lost.

A nice moment between them, then he covers it with banter.

VIC

It's bad for business when tourists
start turning up in the sand dunes,
if you catch my drift.

DAX

Yeah. I suppose it is.

He stands up, picks up his coat, shakes the dust off it.

VIC

So how about it, doll? Need an
escort back to the bright lights
and big city? Maybe check up on
that boyfriend of yours.

Ezri looks up at the night sky, which is just starting to
brighten into dawn. She looks at the stars...

DAX

Emony was on Earth.

VIC

I believe I heard that somewhere.

She points up into the sky at various constellations.

DAX

Orion. Taurus. Ursa Major.

VIC

You sound like you're onto
something.

She turns and points into the desert...

DAX

Due East. The Strip is three
kilometres in that direction.

VIC

No holding you back, dollface.

DAX

No. No holding me back. Not now.

VIC
For my money, babe, not ever.

She smiles, then spontaneously leans in and kisses him on the cheek. He blushes. She straightens his tie.

VIC
Whoa, what was that for?

DAX
You know. I'd better be going.

VIC
Me too.

DAX
See you. And thanks.

She starts walking, passing all the various signs and objects that now seem to clearly form a path.

VIC
Hey! It's two miles to town. You could just say "end program."

She looks over her shoulder at him, smiles.

DAX
I know where I'm going.

Vic watches her go as she walks confidently over the rocks towards the city and into the growing dawn.

41 EXT. DS9 - ESTABLISHING

Nice gentle pull back from the station for credits.

FADE OUT:

THE END