

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

12x18 - "Last Chance Saloon."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on characters from the series

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

and on the *Star Trek* tie-in novels
by Pocket Books

TNG 17x18 - "CAESURA"

Feeling frustrated and powerless while *Aventine* is away exploring the subspace tunnels, Picard is annoyed that the calculations to open the apertures are taking so long, and that one ship must stay behind while the other explores. He presses his crew hard to be as ready as they can be. Are Worf's security troops suitably prepared? Is LaForge manufacturing enough transphasic torpedoes? While they wait, Kadhata calls her family on Cestus III - she cannot tell them much, but she manages to imply that they should run for their lives. *Aventine's* chief engineer Leishman hits on LaForge - she has a thing for fellow chief engineers under stress ([DS9 11x21 "Inferno"](#)). Worf and Choudhury stagger into sickbay clearly having just been violently intimate - Crusher smirks her way through treating them. When *Aventine* returns and it is finally *Enterprise's* turn to do something, they find themselves in the starless void between galaxies - complete darkness. Picard fears it is prophetic.

TTN 1x18 - "ONE BY ONE"

2381: Riker plans to send a strike team to rescue *Titan's* captive crew, but the attempt fails spectacularly, leaving the remaining crew disheartened. 1525: *Axion* settles in around its new homeworld, hidden from detection by the metal shell. 2381: In *Axion*, Vale and Tuvok quietly observe the Caeliar, trying to learn their patterns. 1573: *Columbia's* Dr Metzger throws herself off a building. Lt Valerian stops eating or talking, withering away. Inyx tries to save her by infusing Caeliar catoms into her system - the attempt fails and Valerian dies horribly. Once Fletcher dies of old age, Hernandez is alone. 2381: On *Titan*, Counsellor [Huilan](#) catches Pazlar wearing her holo-presence suit so much that she forgets she is still in the holotank. 1574: Hernandez is old and frail. Inyx begs to help her by infusing catoms - he has worked out the kinks. She accepts, and is reborn, revitalised and effectively immortal. She can also eavesdrop on the Caeliar gestalt...

VOY 10x18 - "THE CORRIDORS OF POWER"

At the Palais, President Bacco calls a meeting of all the foreign ambassadors - she wants to form an allied fleet to defend against the Borg. The Klingons, Gorn, [Talarians](#) and Donatra's IRS sign up, plus reluctantly Tal'Aura's RSE. Bacco offers Garak several resource-rich colony worlds in exchange for Cardassia's support, and gets the Ferengi to buy out the [Breen](#)'s services so that the [Tholians](#) cannot do the same. Learning of this, Tholian ambassador Tezrene vows revenge. At Starfleet Command, Seven of Nine and the admirals brainstorm. Seven suggests Shinzon's [thalaron weapon](#) (TNG "Nemesis"), but Admiral Jellico refuses on ethical grounds. Admiral Batiste suggests [Species 8472](#), but Seven has no way of contacting them. You cannot fight, you cannot survive - your only option is to run. She mock-attacks Jellico to make her point, which only gets her thrown out of the building. On *Voyager*, Chakotay receives reports about the planned allied fleet and insists on joining up.

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

Establishing the station...

2 INT. DS9 - COMMANDER'S OFFICE

Beginning on another padd, held in Commander RO's hands. It shows more Starfleet reports of the ongoing situation.

The office door opens and Major CENN steps into the room.

CENN

Commander...

(she doesn't look up)

It's nearly oh-one-hundred hours.

You shouldn't be here.

RO

(re padd)

Just... reading the reports.

Cenn takes a seat, not sure he wants to know.

CENN

To quote yourself... hit me.

RO

(shrug)

More attacks. More deaths.

(beat)

One small ray of light though. The reports from the *Enterprise* and the *Aventine* say they've found the point where the Borg are entering the Alpha Quadrant - the Azure Nebula. So I suppose strictly speaking that's the Beta Quadrant.

CENN

That's why the first few attacks were all in the Onias sector.

RO

Yep. Some kind of subspace tunnel from the Delta Quadrant. I've sent the technical details to Nog and John. Unfortunately... there are dozens of these tunnels leading all around the galaxy and all intersecting at the nebula, and they don't know exactly which one the Borg are coming through.

CENN

So what are they doing about it?

RO

Some good old-fashioned exploring. One ship goes through while the other stands guard at the nebula, then they swap over, until they find the right tunnel.

CENN

And when they do, then what?

RO

Ray of light number two. Admiral Akaar - he's the new liaison to the president since Ross retired, so congratulations to him...

Cenn smirks - he knows Ro and Akaar don't get along.

RO (cont)

...says that Bacco is talking to all the ambassadors and trying to pull together a unified fleet to blockade the nebula and stop the Borg getting through.

CENN

So we might have a chance.

RO

Maybe. Still a hell of a lot of people dying while we wait for that chance, though.

CENN

Do you want me to tell the crew?

RO

It can wait till morning. May as well let someone have a good night's sleep.

CENN

On that subject, I'm officially relieving you of duty. Go to bed.

RO

(sad smile)

I'm too tired to argue. Can't promise you I'll sleep, though.

Sluggishly, Ro gets up from her seat and follows Cenn out.

3 INT. DS9 - ETANA & RICHTER'S QUARTERS

ETANA KOL (Bajoran female) and KRISTEN RICHTER (human female) lie tastefully in bed together. Richter is at least trying to sleep, but Etana is just staring at the ceiling. Finally Richter turns over to look at her girlfriend.

RICHTER

What is it?

ETANA

Sorry, go back to sleep.

RICHTER

I wasn't sleeping anyway. And I can tell when you're thinking. There's kind of a whirring noise.

Etana gives her girlfriend a playfully withering look, but eventually also turns in bed so they are facing each other.

ETANA

Okay. It's just that we had a patient in the Infirmary this afternoon. Old man, must have been over a hundred. And he was dying.

Nothing we could do, he had a long-term chronic condition. We just had to help him go to the Prophets in peace and comfort.

RICHTER

I'm sorry.

ETANA

But he was alone. No friends. Never had any children. Nobody to be with him at the end but me and a couple of other strangers. And I just thought - I never want that to be us. Ever.

RICHTER

I don't think it will.

ETANA

Me either. But...

Etana suddenly sits up in bed, something on her mind.

ETANA

If I ask you something, will you promise not to take it the wrong way?

RICHTER

Of course. You can ask me whatever you want, you know that.

ETANA

Okay.

Etana suddenly jumps out of bed, dashes across the room to the wardrobe, digs inside and pulls something out. Without showing it, she comes back to the bed and sits facing her girlfriend. Richter sits upright as well.

ETANA

If... anything... should happen, I don't want to go to the Prophets an old, single woman... with no wife. Will you marry me?

Etana holds out a Bajoran PLEDGE BRACELET in both hands, offers it nervously to Richter.

ETANA

Now, just to be clear, I'm not asking you to marry me because I think we're all about to die and I just don't want to be alone. I'm asking you to marry me because I don't want to die - whenever that happens - without having stood before the Prophets and said that you, Kristen Richter, are the love of my life. The one I want to spend the rest of my life with - however long that is -

Richter reaches out and puts a finger over Etana's lips to stop her from babbling.

RICHTER

Yes. Yes, Etana Kol... I will marry you.

ETANA

You will?

RICHTER

Yes, of course!

ETANA

Oh, thank the Prophets!

The two women kiss, full of excitement and happiness and relief. PAN ACROSS to the window of stars...

FADE OUT

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN

4 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

A new morning...

5 INT. DS9 - COMMANDER'S OFFICE

Ro HUGS Etana in excitement.

RO

Congratulations! Of course I'll be in your wedding. But, ah... what does "give you away" mean?

ETANA

Oh, that's a human thing. We're going to do a mostly traditional Bajoran wedding, but I am marrying a human, so she gets to have some things her way too. It just means you have to hand me over to her.

RO

What, like - I don't own you anymore, now she owns you?

ETANA

Basically.

RO

Sometimes I don't think I'll ever understand humans.

Ro turns away, hiding an expression on her face.

ETANA

...What? I know that face. There's something you're not saying.

RO

It's nothing. I'm just happy for you, that's all.

ETANA

Laren, I thought we were friends.
Say it, for Prophets' sake.

RO

Okay, but don't hate me. I'm just
worried that you're doing this for
the wrong reasons.

ETANA

Like what?

RO

Like because there's a real-life
apocalypse bearing down on us.

ETANA

We talked about that. Spent most
of the night talking about it, in
fact. But we're not doing it just
because we might all die soon. We
would have got married eventually
anyway - we just didn't want to
miss our chance.

RO

Then I'd be honoured to "give you
away", Kol. Besides, a big party
might be just what the station
needs right now.

6 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

BASHIR regards Richter with delighted surprise.

BASHIR

Kristen, I'd be delighted! But...
shouldn't your parents be the ones
to give you away?

RICHTER

Well, they would. But given that
they live back on Proxima, and
that's a good two weeks away... I

mean, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying you're my second choice -

BASHIR

Kristen! I'm privileged to be any kind of choice at all. Although I was already feeling my age, and me acting as your father figure doesn't exactly help with that...

RICHTER

Then don't think of yourself as my father. You can be my cool younger uncle, or a fun boss, or -

BASHIR

Please stop, I'm begging you. I appreciate the honour. So you're having the ceremony straight away?

RICHTER

No time to waste, not to put too fine a point on it.

7 **INT. DS9 - CANDLEWOOD'S QUARTERS**

HETIK is making the bed in the morning. CANDLEWOOD shouts from off screen, his voice muffled as if mid-ablutions.

CANDLEWOOD (o.s.)

So I promised Nog I'd go through these readings the *Aventine* sent in with him. This isn't exactly the most science-heavy post in the fleet. I should take the chance to strut my stuff while I can.

HETIK

Sounds like a good idea.

Hetik pauses and looks at the freshly made bed, as if seeing it for the first time. He turns and looks around at his boyfriend's quarters - the books, the computers, the picture frame of the two of them, the *mezuzah* by the door.

When Candlewood comes out of the bathroom, he finds Hetik sitting on the bed and waiting for him.

CANDLEWOOD

Uh-oh. That's serious face.

HETIK

I was just thinking about how I do this every morning. Tidying up the place like it's my own quarters.

CANDLEWOOD

Well, you do spend practically every night here. You're just being a polite house guest. An admirable quality in a man.

HETIK

What if I were more than just a house guest? What if... what if these were my quarters too?

CANDLEWOOD

(taken aback)

You want to move in with me? Why?

HETIK

Because I love you, stupid.

Candlewood's confused amazement turns to bashful joy.

HETIK

What do you think?

CANDLEWOOD

I mean, we'd have to figure out the logistics, find somewhere to put your prayer mandala, but your work clothes don't exactly take up a lot of space in my closet...

HETIK

(laughs)

So is that a yes?

CANDLEWOOD

I've... never actually lived with anyone. Even my Academy roommate seemed to find any excuse to be out. And I kinda want you to keep liking me. So let's talk about it tonight, after work?

Hetik nods his agreement. After a quick kiss, Candlewood bounces back towards the bathroom, doing the "I am so awesome" dance and singing along tunelessly...

CANDLEWOOD

I've got a boyfriend, he wants to live with me, I am so awesome...

Hetik chuckles, glad that that went as well as it did.

8 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

QUARK brandishes a padd in Ro's face, as the morning set-up goes on around them.

QUARK

What the frinx is this, Laren? I host the weddings around here.

RO

Etana wanted a traditional Bajoran ceremony, Quark. It's going to be in the shrine, and Kira's going to officiate. Besides, you should be glad - seven hours is no time to pull a wedding together.

QUARK

Laren... this is all I can do.

RO

Look further down the list.

Quark pauses, reads the padd further. Then he sees what she wanted him to see. He keeps a dignified air, not wanting to seem relieved. Ro sees right through him.

QUARK

Well, okay then. You'd just better get ready for the best afterparty this station has ever seen.

RO
Are you sure? It's not much time.

QUARK
Are you doubting my last-minute catering skills?

RO
Perish the thought.

QUARK
(faux casual)
Heard anything from Dax?

RO
We heard from her this morning.

Ro wills him not to ask any further - some things she can't tell him. He understands. But at least Dax is still alive.

QUARK
Okay. Good to know.
(re padd)
I'll get to work on this.

He walks away to get to work. Ro watches him go.

9 INT. SUBSPACE TUNNEL

USS *Aventine* shoots through the blue-white vortex of energy, moving comparatively smoothly.

10 INT. AVENTINE - BRIDGE

Captain EZRI DAX instinctively grabs the armrests of her command chair as she watches the pulses of blue-white energy zoom past on the gigantic main viewscreen. They have no idea where they're going, or where they will end up.

Suddenly the curtain of blue-white BREAKS OPEN on the screen and normal space appears beyond...

11 **EXT. SPACE**

The subspace tunnel SPITS the Vesta-class ship out into space, the rip in space-time sealing itself up behind.

12 **INT. AVENTINE - BRIDGE**

The ship SHUDDERS around them as they slam back to normal speed from the impossible speeds of the subspace tunnel. Dax catches her breath and forces her hands to let go.

DAX
Confirm position.

The current helm officer, MAVROIDIS (Ullian female) works her consoles, and reads the results.

MAVROIDIS
Delta Quadrant, between the
Perseus and Carina arms.

First officer SAM BOWERS leans forward in his chair.

BOWERS
Distance from the Azure Nebula?

MAVROIDIS
Sixty-four thousand, five hundred
and ninety-two light years.

Restless, Dax gets up and approaches the science station, where HELKARA (Zakdorn male) works with singular focus.

DAX
Gruhn - what's the word on the
subspace tunnel? Do both ends open
to the same frequency?

HELKARA
Negative. It seems to need a
unique frequency pulse for each
aperture. That'll likely be true
for all the tunnels.

BOWERS

Any sign of the Borg out there?
This is the Delta Quadrant...

KEDAIR (Takaran female) replies from the tactical console.

KEDAIR

Also negative. But we're picking up a massive debris field bearing three-three-one mark one-five. Lots of refined metals - duranium, rodinium, terminium, and semi-rigid poly-duranide.

DAX

Enough mass to suggest a starship?

KEDAIR

More like a thousand starships. It's an entire ring of pulverised metal orbiting the nearest star.

DAX

Range?

KEDAIR

Just under a light year.

MAVROIDIS

At top speed, we could reach the ring in about an hour.

BOWERS

I don't think we can afford the distraction. We should hold station while Commander Helkara works out the aperture frequency for the return trip.

HELKARA

Don't hang around on my account. This'll take a few hours at least.

Decision made, Dax returns to her command chair.

DAX

Mavroidis, set a course for the debris field. I want to check it out.

BOWERS

(leans in, quiet)

Captain, if something did destroy thousands of ships, are they really somebody we want to meet right now?

DAX

Depends whose side they're on. Still, a little caution never hurts. Kedair, scan the region for subspace radio activity or any other artificial signals.

KEDAIR

Aye, Captain.

MAVROIDIS

Course laid in, Captain.

KEDAIR

No short-range signal activity, Captain. Minimal subspace radio traffic at long range. No sign of transwarp signatures or other vessels.

DAX

Glad to hear it. Helm, engage.

Mavroidis works her helm controls...

13 **EXT. SPACE**

...and the *Aventine* ramps up to warp, jumping away into the distance.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN

14 EXT. SPACE

Aventine flies at warp...

15 INT. AVENTINE - BRIDGE

Now the screen shows the much more familiar and comforting sight of stars at warp, as *Aventine* zooms through them. Dax looks to her side, where Bowers is still not happy.

DAX

Don't look so glum, Sam. Think of it as a chance to learn something while we're stuck out here.

BOWERS

It's not the learning that worries me. I just can't help wonder if any of that debris is from ships whose captains also wanted to learn something.

DAX

Y'know Sam, for someone who likes to think of himself as a man of action, you sure don't -

BEEP BEEP BEEP. Kedair reads her console...

KEDAIR

Long-range contacts. Multiple unidentified objects leaving the debris-ringed system.

BOWERS

Speed and heading?

KEDAIR

Warp two, intercept course. At that speed, they will reach the debris field the same time we do.

BOWERS

(to Dax)

I suppose this'll go in your log
as a coincidence.

DAX

Maybe.

MAVROIDIS

Captain, do I change course?

DAX

No. Whatever's on its way out to
meet us knows we're here. If it's
friendly, I want to make contact.

BOWERS

And if it's not?

DAX

Then we'll just have to hope we
can outsmart it, outrun it, or
outgun it - in that order. Steady
as she goes, helm.

MAVROIDIS

Aye, sir.

DAX

(aside to Bowers)

But it might not be a bad idea to
take the ship to yellow alert.

BOWERS

I thought you'd never ask.

Bowers works his own console, and the lights around the
ship begin to flash with YELLOW ALERT.

16 EXT. SPACE

Aventine continues on its way into the unknown...

17 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

Returning us home to the station...

18 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

The regular Bajor shuttle disgorges its EXTRAS into the corridor. Ro is there waiting, until the one she is waiting for finally emerges - KIRA NERYS. They smile at each other.

RO
Back so soon?

KIRA
You really don't have to greet me at the door every time. I do know my way around.

RO
Simply showing all due respect to an honoured member of the church, Prylar Kira.

KIRA
Wow - Major Cenn must be having a good effect on you.

RO
You mean you believed that? Great! Make sure you tell him.

They chuckle together, and head down the corridor.

RO
So how are things going down in the good old Vedek Assembly?

KIRA
Better. I think it was the right thing, bringing Opaka back from the Gamma Quadrant. Even Bellis has cut down on his complaining.

RO
That really is a miracle.

KIRA
He has mentioned repeatedly that you two had a "conversation"...

RO

Look, Nerys... you know I was just angry, and lashing out...

KIRA

Don't worry about it, Laren. We all handle stress in our own ways. I may or may not have had a couple of daydreams about punching Bellis over and over until he just stops talking... but I pause, I take a deep breath and I remember that he's under a lot of stress too.

(beat)

And then I just enjoy the fact that you got to punch him for me.

They laugh together again.

RO

Speaking of stress... thanks for doing this at the last minute.

KIRA

Honestly, I'm just glad someone is trying to be happy. I think we could all do with a bit of that lately.

RO

You've been keeping up with the reports?

KIRA

Obviously not as much as I used to. But what I can.

RO

Entire planets, Nerys. Planets.

KIRA

I know, Laren. It's inconceivable. I just try to hold on to my faith that the Prophets have a plan for all of us.

RO

But this is what I was saying.
I don't understand how you can
possibly find the good in what's
happening. I mean, it's not even
as if the Borg are assimilating
people anymore, where you could
maybe make the argument that
at least they're still alive.
They're just killing everyone.

KIRA

I hear what you're saying, Laren.
I really do. And I don't know the
answer. I just think... there has
to be one. There has to be.

(beat)

And until I know what it is, I do
whatever is in my power to help
whoever I can.

They walk on down the corridor...

19 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

Hetik walks into the bar, preparing for his work shift. But
before he gets very far, he stops in surprise to see silver
banners being draped from the railings, flowers everywhere.

Meanwhile Quark yells directions at his Ferengi workers.

QUARK

Come on come on come on! Only
three hours to go till this show
is on the road, so get moving!

Confused, Hetik approaches TREIR, who is restocking the
bar. The Orion dabo girl is dispassionately getting on with
her job, not caught up in the excitement.

HETIK

Did I somehow sleep for two months
and miss that it was Gratitude
Festival time again already?

TREIR
You didn't hear?

HETIK
Didn't hear what?

TREIR
Ensign Richter and Sergeant Etana
are getting married.

HETIK
...Now?

TREIR
In a couple of hours, yeah.

HETIK
Okay... good for them. Kinda
standing in my sunlight, but...

TREIR
What do you mean?

HETIK
I was all excited 'cause I asked
John to move in with me. That's
kind of been eclipsed now. Still,
congrats to the happy couple.

Treir nods what she was doing, still neutral.

TREIR
You're moving in with John?

HETIK
It's not decided yet. I hope so.

Treir nods silently, absorbing that without reaction.

TREIR
Well then, congrats to you too.
Excuse me, I've got to grab the
spring wine from the store room.

She turns and walks towards the store room.

Quark turns and pinpoints Hetik with a finger and a shout.

QUARK

You! About time you got here.

HETIK

But I'm not -

QUARK

Don't wanna hear it. I hope those muscles are not just for show, because I've got eight crates of Kandora champagne in the store room and they need bringing out here and chilling. Move!

Quark is clearly in slave master mode, so Hetik just gets on with it. He heads towards the store room...

20 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR - STORE ROOM

The door to the store room opens and Hetik enters...

...to find Treir standing there among the crates, WIPING TEARS from her eyes. She instantly reacts, embarrassed and trying to cover, not wanting to be seen like this.

TREIR

What?

Stunned, Hetik approaches gently, not wanting to crowd her.

HETIK

Hey... what's wrong?

TREIR

Nothing. Nothing's wrong. What did you want?

HETIK

Quark sent me in here to get the champagne -

TREIR

(half-points)

It's over there.

HETIK

- but I think there's something more important I need to deal with first. Is it the wedding?

TREIR

(lying)

Yes. Yes, that's it, absolutely. I'm crying about the wedding.

Hetik comes closer, thinking he's on safe ground now.

HETIK

Never took you for the sentimental type. But I tend to get emotional at weddings too. I have done ever since the orphanage. I guess I'm just a hopeless romantic.

TREIR

(smile through the tears)

Yeah. Hopeless. That's me.

HETIK

It'll happen for you one day, Treir. Don't give up yet.

Hetik quickly gives Treir a half-hug and a chaste peck on the cheek. Then he turns and hefts up one of the crates she pointed out, carrying it effortlessly out of the room.

Treir stays where she was, watching him go...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN

21 INT. DS9 - SHRINE

Kira stands framed by the oval archway of the shrine apse, wearing a humble but beautiful version of her monk's robes. She smiles beneficently, filled with joy at the occasion. Candles adorn the walls, the room is packed with guests.

Starfleet officers stand in pure dress whites - EVIK, NOG, TENMEI and Candlewood. Bajoran Militia officers in their own lilac dress uniforms - Major CENN and Doctor AYLAM. Civilians, Bajorans and otherwise, in their Sunday best.

Clerics enter the room carrying twinkling chimes, swinging incense burners. The crowd makes a passage to allow these to move down the middle of the room towards Kira. Once there they move to each side, along the front wall.

A GONG sounds, and the crowd hushes in anticipation.

After a moment, Commander RO steps into the entry wearing her dress whites, guiding Sergeant ETANA by the arm. The Bajoran bride is wearing stunning golden robes, with an elaborate earring draping gracefully over her shoulder.

Both beaming with smiles, they walk down the centre of the room, everyone's eyes following their progress. Once at the front, they stand to Kira's right.

The GONG sounds again, and everyone's eyes turn...

Doctor BASHIR steps in, also in dress whites, nurse RICHTER on his arm. The human bride also wears Bajoran robes in a complementary shade of gold, and an elaborate earring. This pairing moves through the crowd, ending up at Kira's left.

The GONG sounds a third time, and all the Bajoran guests kneel silently onto cushions on the deck. The non-Bajoran guests follow their lead. Kira smiles to Ro and Bashir...

KIRA
Thank you both.

Taking their cue, Ro and Bashir let go of their charges' arms and step back, joining the crowd on their knees. Etana and Richter now stand alone, facing each other across Kira.

KIRA

Thank you all for joining us on this blessed occasion. Nothing so pleases the Prophets as to see two of their children share the love that is at the core of every *pagh*, and pledge to walk the same path.

(beat)

This is most true in the darkest of times - because the light that Etana Kol and Kristen Richter bring to each other's lives, and to the lives of everyone gathered here to witness it, banishes that darkness as surely as the light of the Prophets themselves.

(beat)

Who bears the dais?

The kneeling crowd looks around, and three PUPPIES enter. These are the three girl puppies - FETT, KETT and WETT.

Each of them wears a load-bearing harness, and they move in formation, because balanced across the three harnesses is a DAIS, and on the dais is a BOWL of water. Fett looks behind her, seeing her mother SETT encouraging them on.

As the group moves cautiously down the line, the crowd AWWWs. They reach the front, and Etana and Richter both crouch down, picking up the bowl of water between them. That done, the puppy-amalgam scuttles off to stand by Ro.

Tenmei whispers to Nog...

TENMEI

Nice work on the dais rig-up.

NOG

Considering I only had about two hours, and I nearly lost my lunch a couple of times attaching it to them, I'm quite proud of it.

As Etana and Richter both hold the bowl (revealing that they are now both wearing pledge bracelets) and gaze at each other across it, Kira speaks...

KIRA

Boray pree hadokee. Tolata impara
boresh. Preeya Kristen, preeya
Kol, abrem varo atel.

(beat)

For the non-Bajorans among us,
that means... May you drink from
the Tears of the Prophets, binding
Kristen and Kol, so that you walk
this path together, forever.

Without either letting go of the bowl, first Etana and then Richter both sip from it. Then they gently lower it to the deck. Then holding left hands, they simultaneously reach up with their right and gently grasp the other's left ear.

KIRA

Your *pagh* is one. You are joined
in the eyes of the Prophets, and
so in the eyes of everyone here.

(smirk)

You may both kiss the bride.

Etana and Richter lean in to KISS, and the room explodes in CHEERS and APPLAUSE. Kira beams with happiness. Eventually the brides separate with wide grins, and turn to the crowd.

ETANA

Thanks so much, everyone. It means
a lot to us both that you would
all be here with us.

RICHTER

Yes... thank you all.

KIRA

Congratulations to you both.
But... there's one last thing.

This is a surprise to both brides. Kira steps aside, and we see that hidden behind her all this time...

...is an ORB BOX. Etana and Richter had been so focused on each other that they hadn't even noticed it. The crowd hushes as Kira walks behind the Box.

KIRA

By special permission of the Kai herself...

(Etana's jaw drops)

...and with the help of DS-Nine's commander and chief of security...

(Kira nods thanks to Ro and Evik)

...I have brought the Orb of Destiny, so that the brides may begin their journey secure in the knowledge of all the joy to come.

Etana is overwhelmed. The chance for an Orb Experience is something an ordinary everyday Bajoran like her dreams of but never believes will actually happen.

On the other hand, Richter is hesitant. She doesn't want to make a scene or seem ungrateful, but she has questions.

Etana sees the look on her now-wife's face, and pulls her in close, touching foreheads so that the crowd might think they are whispering sweet romantic nothings.

ETANA

(whisper)

What is it? What's wrong?

RICHTER

Do we really want to know the future? I mean, what if...?

ETANA

Don't worry. The Prophets will take care of us. We're on their path now.

RICHTER

But... in front of everyone?

ETANA

It's with the blessings of the
Kai. I think we kind of have to.

After a moment's thought, Kristen nods subtly, still unsure but willing to go through with it. They step apart, turn back to Kira, and KNEEL before the Orb Box.

Kira reverently OPENS the box, revealing the slowly turning hourglass shape within, glowing with its ethereal light.

As Etana and Richter hold hands and gaze into the Orb, the ENERGY SWIRLS out of the box, filling the room and...

WHITE OUT

Then PULL BACK from the bright light to reveal...

22 DISCO BALL

Spinning in the air, lights and colours glinting off it as fun and light-hearted MUSIC plays.

Continue to PULL BACK...

23 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

The mirrored disco ball lights Quark's Bar, which is now half classy wedding reception hall and half nightclub. The streamers and flowers gleam in the reflected light.

PANNING DOWN to the main floor, where Etana and Richter dance together, happy and relaxed. Around them, the wedding guests and others all dance as well, in pairs or in groups.

Around the edges and on the balconies, small candles light every table, where more partiers sit with drinks and food.

Back on the dance floor, Candlewood is teaching Prynn and Nog how to do the STATUS QUO SHOULDER DANCE (google it), and they are all laughing and having a great time.

As the MUSIC changes to a new song, Candlewood leaves his friends to continue dancing on their own, and makes his way across the floor to the DABO TABLE. Hetik is busy guiding the game, but smiles wide at his boyfriend's arrival.

HETIK

That's two down for the lady in the blue, and a risky five over for the gentleman from Relliketh. Here we go, eyes down...

Hetik SPINS the wheel and THROWS the jack with a flourish. Everyone watches spellbound as the wheel spins and spins...

HETIK

Dabo!

Everyone CHEERS - the lady in blue has won. Even the man from Relliketh can't feel too bad - he is having fun too. Hetik hands over some modest winnings to the woman.

HETIK

Congratulations! Make sure to celebrate with a drink from the bar. Dealer takes a break, but don't go far - I'll be back in just a few minutes.

The crowd around the table moves away. Hetik turns to Candlewood with a grin, and takes him into his arms.

HETIK

You look amazing in that uniform.

CANDLEWOOD

Me? It's you they can't take their eyes off. And I can see why.

(kiss)

I love watching you work. It's like you have this magical hold over them.

As John gazes up into Hetik's eyes, it's clear that he feels the same way.

Across the room, Ro leans against the bar, flanked on one side by Quark and on the other by Kira. All three observe the happy dancing crowd - especially Etana and Richter at the centre of the floor.

RO
They seem happy.

QUARK
I should hope so.

RO
What I mean is, whatever they saw
in that Orb vision, it can't have
put them off too much.

QUARK
You think that's good news for the
rest of us?

KIRA
We can't ask. Orb experiences are
private. Even a prylar doesn't
have the right to intrude.

RO
But you wish you could?

KIRA
(evasive)
They're happy. That's all that
matters.

Ro's combadge CHIRPS.

ALECO (comm)
Ops to Commander Ro.

RO
(taps to receive)
Stand by, Ensign.
(to Quark and Kira)
If you'll excuse me.

Ro leaves them to find a quiet corner where she can talk
freely and without having to shout over the music. Once she
has, she TAPS her combadge again.

RO
Right, sorry about that, Vel.
What's up?

ALECO (comm)
Sorry to interrupt, Commander. I
just thought you might want to
know, we got the latest report
from Starfleet Command.

Ro's face drops - what horrors is she about to hear?

Back out on the dance floor, Etana and Richter still have
pride of place in the centre as the MUSIC plays.

ETANA
You okay?

RICHTER
Very, very okay. You?

In answer, Etana grabs her new wife by the waist and SPINS
them both around. The couple SWIRLS ecstatically beneath
the dappled lights of the mirror ball, and Richter THROWS
her head back, letting her long blonde hair fly free.

Around them, the crowd WHOOPS with delight. Nog and Prynn
punch the air in joy. Arms around each other, John and
Hetik CHEER at the sight. From the bar, Quark and Kira grin
wide to see the display.

Among all this, Ro returns from her quiet corner and stands
between Quark and Kira again. She is clearly putting a
brave face on it, for the sake of the party.

QUARK
Everything alright?

RO
Fine. Just a standard station
status update. Ensign Aleco's
running Ops by himself, I think
he's a bit nervous. Nothing to
worry about.

KIRA
You sure?

RO

Absolutely.

(re crowd)

They're happy. That's all that matters.

Ro feels guilty about lying to them, but she can't allow what is going on out there to spoil this happy occasion.

Kira can very easily guess what Ro is not telling them, but she knows the responsibilities of command, and empathises.

Quark knows that Ro is lying to them both, and feels sorry for Ro having to carry this. He wishes he could help more.

Etana and Richter bring their spiralling to a stop with a delighted laugh, all worries and sorrows forgotten.

Ro watches all of this, forcing her face to keep a happy smile that she does not feel inside...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

24 EXT. SPACE

A star system with what appears to be a massive asteroid belt - except that the belt is made up of dark and angular fragments of metal and artificial materials.

25 INT. AVENTINE - BRIDGE

Cmdr Bowers observes this image on the *Aventine's* giant viewscreen. The debris belt is growing larger the closer *Aventine* gets to it, Bowers' anxiety rising with it.

OPS manager MIRREN (human female) speaks up.

MIRREN

Two minutes until the alien craft enters optimal sensor range.

BOWERS

I want a detailed threat assessment as soon as possible.

KEDAIR

Aye sir.

Captain Dax stands over Mavroidis' shoulder at the helm, likewise spellbound by the view on the screen. Bowers gets up from his chair and stands with her.

DAX

Sam... do you notice anything unusual about that debris field?

BOWERS

It all looks the same to me.

DAX

That's what I mean. The colour, the composition - it's obviously a starship graveyard, but I've never seen one this uniform. Have you?

BOWERS

Could they all be from the same ship?

DAX

My guess is it's from thousands of identical ships.

BOWERS

Mirren - run a scan on the debris. See if you can identify it.

Mirren works her panels, and almost immediately looks up in mixed horror and amazement.

MIRREN

It's Borg. All of it. The entire ring.

KEDAIR

Thirty seconds to contact with alien craft.

BOWERS

(quiet)

Captain, please - we're clearly in Borg territory. Not to mention thirty seconds away from whatever managed to overpower and destroy several thousands of Borg ships. I strongly recommend we withdraw.

DAX

Sam, this could be just what we need. These people, whoever they are, they're clearly no fan of the Borg. They might help us.

BOWERS

And they might not.

KEDAIR

Visual contact.

DAX

On screen.

The main viewscreen refocuses, concentrating on the alien craft approaching them. Dax watches with fascination...

This object is not a starship, and not a normal space-going life-form. It appears to be a simple BALL OF ENERGY, a coruscation of colours with no obvious means of propulsion.

Mavroidis suddenly stands from her chair, catching Dax off guard so that she and Bowers back away. Mavroidis turns awkwardly to look at Dax and Bowers, acting like someone who is not familiar with operating a humanoid body.

The Ullian woman regards Dax with a blank stare, and her VOICE sounds doubled with an ethereal quality.

MAVROIDIS

You are not Borg.

Dax realises this is a first contact situation - and a very delicate one. Meanwhile Kedair subtly beckons Bowers over to her console. He goes, leaving Dax to handle this.

DAX

To whom am I speaking?

MAVROIDIS

We are the children of the storm.

DAX

I'm Captain Ezri Dax of the -

MAVROIDIS

You are trespassers. But you are not Borg, so you may live - if you depart now.

At the tactical console, Helkara and Bowers have joined Kedair, all looking over the computer's scan of the entity. They speak low so as not to interrupt Dax's talk with it.

KEDAIR

An energy shell, a spherical force-field with no apparent source of power or projection.

HELKARA

Surrounding an atmosphere of
incredibly dense, super-hot liquid
hydrogen laced with trace metals.

KEDAIR

And hundreds of individual energy
signatures that I would have to
characterise as life signs.

Dax is still talking with the entity inhabiting Mavroidis.

DAX

We only wish to establish peaceful
contact and communication, on
behalf of -

MAVROIDIS

Contact is not desired. It has
taken many centuries to purge this
space of Borg. We will not allow
it to be defiled again.

DAX

I understand. We are engaged in a
conflict with the Borg ourselves.
Perhaps if you could help us
understand -

MAVROIDIS

No. Reverse your course and make
no attempt to violate our space.

Helkara and Kedair continue to wrestle information out of
the computer, growing more amazed with every bit of data.

HELKARA

I'd posit this species evolved in
a gas giant. Their energy patterns
are also consistent with lifeforms
with a high level of telekinesis
and other psionic talents.

BOWERS

That's how they're talking through
Mavroidis - because she's Ullian.

HELKARA

Exactly. I think this species
might have mastered space travel -
even warp flight - through the
power of thought alone.

Dax is still trying to convince the entity. This could be a
life line to defeating the Borg...

DAX

Perhaps we could return at some
future time -

MAVROIDIS

We do not wish you to return.
Ever.

DAX

(sags, resigned)
Very well. We'll leave - as soon
as you release your hold on our
conn officer.

MAVROIDIS

It is done.

Mavroidis's eyes flutter and she staggers on the spot,
losing her balance. Dax rushes to support her. Clearing her
head, Mavroidis gets her body back under control.

MAVROIDIS

I'm alright, Captain.

DAX

Resume your post, Lieutenant. Then
reverse course to the subspace
aperture, maximum warp.

MAVROIDIS

Aye, sir.

As the Ullian woman follows her orders, and the view on the
screen swerves away from the debris field, Dax returns to
her command chair. Bowers takes his own seat next to her.

BOWERS

I'm sorry, Captain.

(she grunts
noncommittally)

Based on Kedair and Helkara's readings, I didn't see anything that looked like a conventional weapon. And one good shot from a phaser should have been enough to burst their bubble.

DAX

Then how did they manage to fight off that many Borg ships?

BOWERS

Captain... I think this is one of those times we should just be glad we didn't find out the hard way.

Dax is forced to agree, but still - she is disappointed.

26 **EXT. SPACE**

Aventine heads back the way it came, away from the debris ringed system and its offer of hope...

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

The evening has now moved on a bit. Etana and Richter are still dancing, but to slower, more romantic music. The disco ball spins more calmly, casting a pleasant twinkle.

Other couples slow-dance as well, Hetik and John included. Those who are not couples - like Kira, Bashir, Nog, Tenmei and Cenn - sit at tables around the edges of the floor.

Quark works urgently behind the bar, mixing and handing out drinks to his various Ferengi waiters before shooing them on their way. Ro stands out of the flow of traffic.

RO

Where's Treir?

QUARK

Damned if I know.

RO

Want me to track her down?

QUARK

She knows the penalty for not showing up to work. If she doesn't want to be here, she doesn't ever have to come back.

On the dance floor, Candlewood and Hetik are slow-dancing, both smiling comfortably, immersed in the romance.

HETIK

I wish I could have been at the ceremony with you.

CANDLEWOOD

It was nice. I've never been to a Bajoran wedding ceremony before. But why don't the couple actually say anything, though? It was all Kira - Richter and Etana didn't say a word.

HETIK

Why do they need to? The Prophets already know what's in their hearts. That's all that matters.

(beat)

John... about us living together.

CANDLEWOOD

Hetik, today's been such a rush, for both of us. I haven't had a second to think. It's not a no -

HETIK

No, wait. I was just thinking... why not skip that part altogether? Why don't we get married too?

CANDLEWOOD

(bark of laughter)

Ha! Yeah, right.

HETIK

I'm serious. I know what's in my heart. I'm pretty sure I know what's in yours. And look at how happy Kristen and Kol are. I want that for us.

Candlewood stops dancing, looks at Hetik in shock.

CANDLEWOOD

Wait... you actually are serious.

HETIK

Yes, I'm serious. I'm asking you to marry me, John. Will you?

Candlewood stutters and splutters, totally caught off guard, flustered and overwhelmed, no idea what to say.

CANDLEWOOD

But y-... wh... No!

HETIK

(jaw drops)

I'm sorry?

CANDLEWOOD

I... look, I s-... j-... No!
Hetik, are you insane? We are not getting married. We've been dating for less than a year, and -

HETIK

(steps back)

And that's enough for you to know you don't want to marry me?

CANDLEWOOD

(reaches for him)

What? No, that's not -

HETIK

(throws him off)

Then what? I'm just a bit of fun for you, is that it? A good time until you get bored?

Candlewood is very aware they're in public, and doesn't want to make a scene. But he's completely flustered...

CANDLEWOOD

Look, we're both tired and a bit drunk, let's just take a moment -

HETIK

I don't think I need a moment.

Hetik steps away from Candlewood and begins to walk off the dance floor. John reaches for him, tries to grab his arm...

CANDLEWOOD

Hetik, wait! Let me explain...

HETIK

Oh, I think you've said plenty.
I'm just glad you said it before I
wasted any more time on... this.
See you around, John.

Hetik tears his arm free of John's grip and heads off the dance floor, and out of the bar altogether.

John is left standing alone and abandoned on the dance floor, surrounded by happy romantic couples, watching the love of his life walk away in a fury...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN

28 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

It is down to the last few now. The music still plays, but no-one is dancing. They all sit at tables around the edge of an empty dance floor.

Etana and Richter are engaged completely in each other, talking quietly MOS over glasses of champagne.

Kira sits at a table with Evik and Cenn, swapping tales.

Candlewood sits gazing into the distance, dumbfounded and stunned, while Nog and Tenmei unsuccessfully offer comfort.

Ro sits on a stool at the bar, while Quark pours her one last drink. She takes it and goes to sit with Bashir.

Once she has gone, Quark puts away his cloth and pulls out his box of isolinear rods from under the counter. He selects one, turns and slots it into the computer on the back wall, and works the controls.

COMPUTER

Searching for Orion life signs.

(beat)

Life signs found.

QUARK

Display.

Quark reads the results. Then he removes the isolinear rod, stashes it away again, and looks around the bar. There is no Hetik or Treir, only his Ferengi waiters. But it's so quiet that that's probably enough.

Pausing to make sure no-one is watching him, Quark lays down his cleaning cloth and walks out of the bar.

29 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Quark walks along the corridor, worry creasing his brow.

He reaches a door, and presses the door CHIME. No response. Worried, he presses the CHIME again. Still no response.

Determined, he checks both directions down the corridor to be sure he is safe. Then he crouches, pulls a TOOL out of his jacket, and uses it to pop open a panel above the deck.

Pulling out another isolinear rod, he inserts it and works more controls. He hears the door UNLOCK, so he retrieves his tools and stands, entering...

30 **INT. DS9 - TREIR'S QUARTERS**

Not seen since DS9 10x08 "Property Values". The room is in low lighting, with clothes thrown haphazardly across every surface, half-finished plates of food left on the counters. There has been no break-in - this is just how she lives.

As Quark steps over the threshold, he spots Treir huddled in a corner, her knees drawn up to her chest. She wears a glamorous dabo dress, but with shoes off, hair unstyled, and her make-up running from the tears.

But she is all cried out now. She holds an ornate KNIFE in both hands, and her eyes are fixed upon it. She glances up unimpressed at Quark's arrival, then returns to the knife.

TREIR

Typical man. Can't take no for an answer.

QUARK

You weren't at the bar.

TREIR

So you came to find me - out of the goodness of your lobes.

QUARK

Well, I made sure the party was taken care of first. But then... yeah, I did. You're my employee. A happy employee is a productive employee. You taught me that yourself. And you're not happy.

TREIR

Doctor Bashir better watch out -
we've got another genius on the
station. Leave me alone, Quark.

Once again not taking no for an answer, Quark instead
kneels on the deck in front of her, far enough away not to
spook her, as she is clearly in emotional turmoil.

QUARK

(re knife)

That looks valuable.

TREIR

It's not. It's an Orion *tejar-mas*
blade. Had it for years. It was
the only thing I had on me when
you took me from Malic's ship.

Quark remains silent. She is not really talking to him -
she is just talking, and he happens to be there.

TREIR (cont)

The slave girls always kept a
blade handy... in case the males
your master loaned you to got a
bit over-aggressive. It's coated
in cylanite. One cut is fatal.

And here Treir is, with this poison knife unsheathed, alone
in her room, tears on her face. The realisation comes to
Quark - she means to kill herself with it.

Absorbing that silently, he cautiously reaches out...

QUARK

Could I see it?

With the tiniest incremental movement of the knife and her
steely gaze, Treir makes it clear he should not do that. He
lowers his hand again, letting it go. Treir settles back.

QUARK

Treir... I don't want you to do
this.

TREIR

It's a long time since I've given a damn what any male wants me to do or not do, Quark.

QUARK

I don't understand. What happened?

TREIR

Are you really that blind? They're all up there, laughing and dancing and drinking... loving... and none of it matters. They're all lying to themselves.

(beat)

I've been a slave before, Quark. I'm never going back to that again. I will not be a slave to Malic, to you... or to the Borg.

She grips the knife tighter, as if preparing for her way out of that eventuality. Quark understands now.

QUARK

If it helps... I don't think the Borg are enslaving anyone these days. They're just killing them.

A small flare of anger - but it's enough to break the ice. He has got her to respond to him, engage with him.

QUARK

Treir... this is not the way.

TREIR

It's my way.

QUARK

Is it? Or were you just sitting here waiting for someone to come and talk you out of it?

TREIR

You think I won't do it? I'm too scared?

QUARK

I didn't say that.

TREIR

Because believe me, Quark - I am the most scared I have ever been. They're coming, and they won't stop, not until they've killed everyone and everything.

QUARK

Maybe not.

TREIR

Oh, please.

QUARK

I'm serious. If there's one thing I've learned from living on this profit-forsaken station, it's that Starfleet always finds a way. They will fight and fight, until they pull some ridiculous last-minute solution out of their ears. They don't even know what it is yet, but I guarantee you it's there.

TREIR

That's sweet, Quark. I don't have that faith.

QUARK

Didn't you say you're a chameleon? Whatever happens, you'll find a way to make it work, to survive?

TREIR

There is no surviving this, Quark!

QUARK

And what if there is? You do this now, you'd be dead anyway. You'll never know if you were right.

TREIR

That's your argument? Don't kill yourself, wait and see if someone else does it for you?

(brandishes knife)

This is my way out, Quark. This is how I escape all of this, and I am in control of it.

QUARK

Yes, yes you are. I won't take that away. I won't stop you if you decide to do this. I'm just really hoping to persuade you not to.

TREIR

Why?!

QUARK

Because you're a good dabo girl, a damn good assistant manager, way better than my idiot brother... and I don't want to lose you.

TREIR

So it's all about your profit.

QUARK

Would you believe me if I said anything else?

TREIR

(small chuckle)

Probably not.

Quark relaxes a little - these tiny displays of emotion are an encouraging sign. She is not completely out of reach.

QUARK

Those people up there... they're not lying to themselves. They're just doing what they need to do to get through it. We're all feeling it, believe me.

(emphatic)

All of us. We each have our own ways of handling it, that's all.

MONTAGE

31 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

Nog, Tenmei and Candlewood doing the Status Quo dance...

QUARK (v.o.)
Nog and his friends... they're
just getting on with their
everyday lives, acting like
nothing's wrong, because that's
how they cope.

32 INT. AVENTINE - BRIDGE

Dax sits in her command chair, keeping a tight lid on her disappointment as she watches the streaks of the subspace tunnel on the viewscreen, heading home empty-handed.

QUARK (v.o.)
Dax, Sisko, Vaughn, Bowers,
Shar... they're out there hunting
for that solution I mentioned. The
answer to the whole mess.

33 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

Etana and Richter slow-dancing under the twinkling lights of the disco ball, holding each other tight...

QUARK (v.o.)
Etana and Richter... they're
making this grand gesture of
defiance. Telling an uncaring
universe, "No, we will be happy,
no matter what you do to us."

34 INT. DS9 - SHRINE

Kira performs the wedding ceremony...

QUARK (v.o.)
Kira... she's doing whatever she
can to help... anyone. Everyone.

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

Ro stands between Kira and Quark, not telling either of them about the latest reports from Starfleet...

QUARK (v.o.)

Ro's keeping a brave face, for all the people who look up to her to be in charge, in control.

END MONTAGE

36 **INT. DS9 - TREIR'S QUARTERS**

During all this, Treir has been captured in Quark's eyes - she does not notice he has silently crept forwards.

QUARK

And me... I'm doing what I do. As long as they're in my bar, dancing and drinking... loving... they're not worrying about the rest of it. They all know it's there, they all know they're going to have to face it sooner or later. But if I can just give them a moment's respite, a moment's distraction... then that's how I cope with it.

TREIR

So why can't you accept that this
-

She looks down at the knife in her hands... finding to her surprise that Quark is now holding her hands in his own.

TREIR (cont)

...is how I cope with it?

QUARK

Because this isn't coping. It's running away.

TREIR

And don't I have the right to do that if I want?

QUARK

I guess. But I still think it's a bad idea. I think you should do what you've always done. Survive. Outsmart it. Just keep doing whatever you need to, to make it one more day. I'll be with you.

(beat)

And if it comes to it... I'll be here with you then too. Just promise me there's enough poison on there for two.

TREIR

(shocked)

Quark, no...

Quark shrugs sadly - why not? As if suddenly disgusted by it, Treir **THROWS** the knife away.

Then she throws her arms around Quark's shoulders, and he around hers. She lays her head on his shoulder, the tears starting to flow again.

And Quark holds her, letting her cry.

FADE OUT

END OF SHOW