

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

8x21 - "Lesser Evil."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novel

*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine
Mission Gamma Book 4 - Lesser Evil*

by Robert Simpson

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

A dead body lies flat, cold and stark on a biobed, covered and obscured by a pale blue sheet.

2 INT. DS9 - ASAREM'S QUARTERS

An ancient Bajoran book sits on a desk, somewhat rushed and dishevelled. A MAGISTRATE speaks with a shaking voice.

MAGISTRATE (o.s.)

Place both hands on the tome, and
speak as I do: I, Asarem Wadeen...

Shaking hands reach down and rest on the book, the skin flecked with spots of blood.

3 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

The chaos in the wardroom, after Shakaar has been shot.

Minister ASAREM crouches near the floor, Sergeant SHUL covering her body with his own. From her perspective she can only hear the other screams, and the transporter beam that takes the First Minister's assassin.

4 INT. DS9 - ASAREM'S QUARTERS

The shaking hands still rest delicately on the book.

MAGISTRATE (o.s.)

...to uphold the laws of Bajor and
to act honourably as custodian of
the Bajoran people...

5 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

Asarem finds herself grabbed by the arm and dragged to her feet, Bajoran security suddenly all around her and blocking her view of the bedlam. RO urgently slaps her combadge.

RO
Ro to Ops! Code black emergency!
Block all transporter signals!

Elsewhere in the room, General LENARIS is visually scanning the room for other potential villains. Admiral AKAAR is talking urgently into his combadge.

6 INT. DS9 - ASAREM'S QUARTERS

Moving up the shaking arms towards a shuddering body...

ASAREM (o.s.)
...that I will protect and defend
the Bajoran people from all foes,
within and without...

7 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

The shrouded dead body lies in the background. Somewhere in the room, instruments beep. In the foreground, a hand snaps a surgical glove into place.

8 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

As the Bajoran security, including Sergeant ETANA, forcibly usher Asarem out of the room, she just manages to catch sight of KIRA hovering over Shakaar's dismembered corpse.

KIRA
Kira to infirmary! I need an
emergency medical transport for
two, right now! Energise!

The transporter beam takes Kira and Shakaar, and then the doors close on Asarem's view.

9 INT. DS9 - ASAREM'S QUARTERS

Further up the shaking body, as we see the Magistrate reading from an official-looking book in his hands.

ASAREM (o.s.)
...that I will face the future
fearlessly...

10 **INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR**

A phalanx of Bajoran security walks with determined purpose and watchful eye down the corridor. They are pushing Minister Asarem along, almost manhandling her in their urgency to get her to safety.

They shove her to the side as yet more security, both Bajoran and Starfleet, pelt down the corridor in the direction of the wardroom. Asarem is plainly terrified - for all she knows, she is being taken to her death herself.

11 **INT. DS9 - ASAREM'S QUARTERS**

Finally rising up to Asarem's face, as she recites the words of the Magistrate by rote, too shocked to think clearly, just saying the words.

ASAREM

...And that I will conduct myself
with truth and honour, and with
faith in the guidance of the
Prophets...

As she continues, the actual depth of the words she is saying begins to get through to her.

ASAREM (cont)

...pledging my life and my *pagh* to
the service of Bajor.

MAGISTRATE

Walk with the Prophets, First
Minister Asarem.

The Magistrate closes the book he had been reading from, and on the SLAM of the pages, we

CUT TO:

12 **INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY**

The covered dead body on the biobed, with blood beginning to seep through from the head and throat area, blooming red flowers across the pale blue sheet.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

13 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING

From the outside, it looks calm and peaceful.

14 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

Inside there is chaos, as Ro's security tries to clear the room of panicking dignitaries. Akaar and ZH'THANE have cornered Ambassador GANDRES and are talking animatedly.

Gul MACET and Cleric EKOSHA stand to one side with a nauseous-looking Vedek YEVIR. Corporal HAVA is trying to hustle a protesting QUARK out of the room. Ro grabs Shul.

RO

Get the rest of these people out of here. I want the room sealed, and I want to start interviewing witnesses immediately. Have you heard from Etana yet?

SHUL

She checked in a minute ago. Asarem is secure in her quarters.

RO

The hell she is. Keep the habitat ring locked down but evacuate the sector with Asarem's quarters, I don't care who's living there. I want guards inside and outside her quarters at all times. Move.

As Shul moves off, TARAN'ATAR is suddenly by her side.

TARAN'ATAR

The assassin may still be aboard the station.

RO

Go.

With a single nod, he moves off, SHROUDing as he goes. Ro looks around, and Akaar is approaching with a growl.

AKAAR

Ro. How did this happen? You were supposed to have -

RO

I was supposed to be securing this ceremony from outside forces, not from one of the Federation's own security representatives! You want to blame me for this disaster, Admiral? Fine. But then maybe you need to ask why Gard would want to kill the First Minister of Bajor.

15 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

Kira stands numbly towards the back of the operating suite as Doctor GIRANI (last seen 8x18) leaves the bloody body of Shakaar on the biobed and walks over to her.

GIRANI

Shakaar died instantly. The weapon was... absurdly redundant. If the impact damage and the serrated blades hadn't been enough, there was actually a small phaser charge that activated on contact. It disintegrated the back of his lower skull and the first few vertebrae. There would have been no chance of resuscitation.

Kira cannot respond - she is in shock. She stares at the shrouded dead form across the room; this is her ex-lover.

GIRANI

I need to do a full autopsy. But I'll leave you alone for a few minutes first.

Girani leaves. Kira grimaces as she begins to get angry.

16 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

Councillor zh'Thane speaks via the wardroom viewscreen with Trill President LYRISSE MAZ (8x10 "Divided We Fall"), as security agents scan the room with tricorders behind her.

MAZ (screen)

What do you mean, he killed First Minister Shakaar?

ZH'THANE

I mean exactly that. I saw it with my own eyes, Madam President.

MAZ (screen)

Where is Ambassador Gandres? I want to speak with him.

ZH'THANE

He's being questioned by Deep Space Nine's chief of security. He may be a while.

MAZ (screen)

The Bajorans can't possibly believe this despicable act was sanctioned by my government.

ZH'THANE

They don't know what to believe, Madam President. Ambassador Gandres is conducting himself admirably. To his credit, he has chosen not to invoke diplomatic immunity. It might also help if Trill were to issue a statement condemning the murder, and a pledge of whatever cooperation Bajor may require.

MAZ (screen)

Yes, of course. We'll cooperate fully. I assure you, Councillor, an official statement will be released within the day.

(shakes her head)

In five lifetimes, I've never
faced anything like this. Does the
Federation Council -

ZH'THANE

They are aware of the situation. I
am acting on their behalf to try
to keep the political situation
from unravelling further.

MAZ (screen)

I don't envy you the task. Good
luck, Councillor.

ZH'THANE

To all of us, Madam President.

Maz disappears from the screen, replaced by the Federation
laurel-branch seal. zh'Thane takes a deep breath.

17 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE

Admiral Akaar stands behind the desk, closely watching the
wall screens. They show Ambassador Gandres sat at the
central table, upset and shaken, as Ro questions him MOS.

The security door opens, and from a Promenade under martial
law, General Lenaris enters. Akaar turns to him.

AKAAR

How bad is it?

LENARIS

Bad. The entire station saw it on
the cameras, of course. We managed
to implement an information
blackout beyond the station, but
once this gets out, shock will set
in, and accusations will start.

AKAAR

None of us wanted this, General.

LENARIS

I don't doubt it. But it happened
nevertheless. And if some Bajorans

had doubts about the Federation
before, then more will very soon.

Before Akaar can reply, Ro enters the room from the cell
area, leaving Gandres alone, as seen on the screens.

RO

He claims to know nothing
substantive about Gard or the
assassination, other than what we
all saw in the wardroom. I believe
him. But that doesn't necessarily
mean it was the rogue action he
seems to think it was.

LENARIS

What do you mean?

RO

Gandres didn't select Gard to be
on his staff. According to him,
Gard was assigned to him out of
the blue, specifically for the
Bajor assignment.

AKAAR

That proves nothing, Lieutenant.

RO

Not by itself, no. But Gard was
joined. From my understanding, the
screening process ensures that
joined Trills are always a stable
personality. Unless Gard is a rare
mismatch, then this murder could
not have been the rogue action of
a madman. It had to have purpose.

AKAAR

Have sensors revealed anything
about the transporter beam?

RO

Gard somehow managed to scramble
the sensors before he beamed out.

AKAAR

I've apprised Captain Mello of the situation. *Gryphon* is conducting its own sensor sweep of the Bajoran system as we speak.

With a sour nod to Lenaris, Akaar heads out of the office.

RO

Wait, where are you going?

AKAAR

To face the music, Lieutenant. And you're invited.

18 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

The usual table is back in the centre, with Kira, Akaar, Ro, zh'Thane and Lenaris sat around it.

Asarem ENTERS under heavy guard. The new First Minister takes her place at the head of the table. She sits, and she takes a moment to look each one of them in the eye. She is establishing her authority, being the strong leader.

ASAREM

In forty minutes, I am departing Deep Space Nine for Bajor for an emergency session of the Chamber of Ministers. Thereafter I will address the Bajoran people.

KIRA

What will you say, First Minister?

ASAREM

That after the assassination of First Minister Shakaar by a member of the Federation diplomatic delegation, Bajor cannot in good conscience accept membership at this time. I will order a full investigation into the murder, and I will ask the Chamber to re-evaluate the need for Starfleet's continued presence in the system.

Silence descends. Is this really going to be the end?

ZH'THANE

First Minister, please. Don't do this.

ASAREM

What would you have me do instead, Councillor? Is it really the Federation Council's position that the Bajoran people can just accept the bloody assassination of their leader as a minor inconvenience?

ZH'THANE

The Federation is Bajor's friend, First Minister. It is a friendship that has endured one crisis after another, and has always emerged stronger. Shakaar was murdered in the act of affirming that union. Will you now render his last work - and the work of Captain Sisko - meaningless?

Mentioning Sisko was a smart move - Asarem stops to think. She shares a glance with Kira - they know something more.

RO

(mostly to self)
It's all wrong.

KIRA

Ro?

RO

Forgive me, Colonel, but the more I think about it, the less certain I am. We had our shields up during the ceremony. The *Gryphon* was the only active ship in the system. And yet Gard beamed away. Maybe he could mask his weapon to the sensors, but beam through the shields? I don't buy it.

AKAAR

Superior transporter technology is not unheard of, Lieutenant.

KIRA

But assuming you're right, Ro, your conclusion would be...?

RO

He's still here. Biding his time, waiting for a chance to escape.

AKAAR

What steps have you taken to test this hypothesis?

RO

Internal sensors are sweeping the station section by section. My deputies are conducting on-site inspections. And Taran'atar is making his own enquiries. But on a station this size -

VOICE (comm)

Selzner to Admiral Akaar. I have Captain Mello calling from the *Gryphon*, sir.

AKAAR

Put it through to the wardroom, Ensign.

The face of Captain MELLO (human female, last seen in 8x10 "Gateways") appears on the wardroom screen.

AKAAR

Report, Captain.

MELLO (screen)

We've completed our sweep of the system, Admiral. The sensors picked up a faint energy trail, consistent with a cloaking device.

Ro sags, frustrated to have been proven wrong.

AKAAR

Can you tell where it leads?

MELLO (screen)

Assuming it flies straight, right to the Trill system.

AKAAR

Are you certain?

MELLO (screen)

My first officer reported the readings himself, Admiral. But they are dissipating. If we want to follow them, it has to be now.

AKAAR

First Minister?

ASAREM

Very well, but I want Bajoran representation on that ship. General Lenaris, prepare to beam aboard the *Gryphon*.

AKAAR

Respectfully, First Minister, I must disagree.

ASAREM

(quiet shock)

I beg your pardon, Admiral? Are you refusing my request?

AKAAR

Not at all. But with respect to the general, Colonel Kira is more experienced with starship operations. She is better equipped to participate in the mission, not just observe. In addition, she is still recognised by Starfleet as an active-duty commander, with all the authority thereof.

This is the first time Kira has heard this news. She passes a subtle, surprised look at Akaar - he almost lets out the tiniest smile for her benefit. Asarem considers his advice.

LENARIS

I'm forced to agree with the Admiral, First Minister. I will remain as senior Militia officer aboard the station, but Colonel Kira is the best choice.

Pause. Asarem makes her decision.

ASAREM

Captain Mello, prepare to receive Colonel Kira and ready the *Gryphon* to set out in fifteen minutes.

Asarem closes the link, and Mello's face disappears.

ASAREM

General, Admiral, head to Ops and work out whatever strategy of mutual cooperation you feel is necessary. Lieutenant Ro, coordinate with Doctor Girani. I want your incident report and the autopsy results within twenty-six hours. Councillor zh'Thane, I want you to come with me to Bajor.

ZH'THANE

It is my honour, First Minister.

ASAREM

Don't jump to conclusions. I'm still not certain anything will reverse my decision. But like you, I am not quite ready to give up on Shakaar's - or the Emissary's - dream just yet. That will be all. Colonel Kira, stay a moment.

Everyone gets up to leave and head to their assignments. Kira hovers until only she and Asarem are left.

ASAREM

We share a heavy secret, Colonel.

KIRA

Yes, we do.

ASAREM

Shakaar was up to something. We both know that. Something that was tied to his efforts to rush us into Federation membership. And yet he felt threatened by the Cardassian peace initiative, which could only have helped his cause. But now he's dead, with the result that Bajor and the Federation may never come together.

(beat)

So I find myself wondering... which is the lesser evil? To complete what Shakaar started, when I know he acted dishonestly in his pursuit of it? Or to reject it, even though I know a different evil may be attempting to pit Bajor and the Federation against each other?

KIRA

Put that way, you're right, it is a difficult choice. But then I remember that whatever plot Shakaar was hatching, he didn't start the process of Bajor joining the Federation. He only used it. It was the Emissary who started us on this path.

ASAREM

Yes, that was quite clever of Councillor zh'Thane, wasn't it? Her reputation is well earned.

KIRA

But she did have a point.

ASAREM

Yes, she did. Unfortunately,
neither Shakaar nor the Emissary
will be taking responsibility for
what comes next. Report to the
Gryphon, Colonel. This
conversation never took place.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

19 INT. DS9 - RO'S QUARTERS

Ro STORMS into her still-undecorated quarters and THROWS a padd in frustration, pacing furiously around the room.

RO
They're wrong, all of them. I know
they are!

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)
Ro.

Caught unawares, she spins instantly to throw a PUNCH.
Taran'atar effortlessly catches her fist in his hand.

TARAN'ATAR
I followed you from the Promenade.
I need to speak with you alone.

RO
I don't give a damn what you think
you need! I'm getting a little
tired of you unshrouding right
next to me whenever you feel like
it. Get out.

TARAN'ATAR
I was monitoring communications
from the *Gryphon* -

RO
You were spying?

TARAN'ATAR
Call it what you will, but I grow
weary of everyone questioning my
actions. Do you want to hear what
I've learned, or are you too
offended by my methods to listen?

An angry pause as Ro realises she has no choice.

RO

Report.

TARAN'ATAR

During my search, I stopped to monitor communications from a back-up subspace transceiver.

RO

You shouldn't have been able to access that.

TARAN'ATAR

And yet I did. I learned nothing new, until Captain Mello contacted Admiral Akaar from the *Gryphon*. Then I detected a brief anomaly in the transmission. An echo.

RO

Meaning what?

TARAN'ATAR

Meaning someone else aboard the station was also listening in.

RO

It's Gard. It has to be. I knew it! He's still on the station.

TARAN'ATAR

I agree. He appears to have gone offline now. I was not able to determine where he was, but there are a finite number of places from which such a thing is possible.

Ro quickly turns to her computer station and brings up a schematic of the entire station. Then she gets an idea.

RO

Computer, display detail on section oh-oh-one mark oh-two-oh.

Stay on her - we hear the computer BLEEP but do not see where she is zooming in on. Taran'atar leans over to see.

RO
Enhance.
(computer sound)
Again.
(computer sound)
Again.
(whispers)
Got you.

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

Admiral Akaar stands over the master Ops table, looking over options with frustration. Kira's office door opens and General Lenaris walks out, descending the stairs to him.

LENARIS
The news is officially out.

AKAAR
The public reaction?

LENARIS
Grief, confusion, uncertainty... A lot of angry voices talking over each other. The First Minister has called for calm. zh'Thane's appearance before the Chamber of Ministers, and her interviews on the planetary news feeds, have gone over well. Marches are being organised, both for and against.

AKAAR
After all my years living in the Federation, I still marvel that democratic systems work at all.

LENARIS
Not something I ever thought I'd hear a Starfleet officer say.

AKAAR
Most Starfleet officers didn't grow up on Capella Four, General.

There, conflicting ideologies are resolved on the edge of a sword.

LENARIS

It can't have escaped your notice, or Councillor zh'Thane's, that a schism has developed among our faithful these past few months. Doesn't such disharmony work against Federation membership?

AKAAR

On the contrary. No world is a monolithic entity in all things, especially metaphysics. Besides, Federation science has yet to discover anything about the Orbs, the wormhole, or the entities within it, that is inconsistent with the Bajoran religious interpretation. So who are we to judge your internal debates on the nature of the Prophets?

Suddenly, the lights throughout Ops go out, plunging the room into darkness. The central Ops table and numerous monitors go dead. Low emergency lighting comes on. Ensign SELZNER at the science panel speaks up.

SELZNER

We've lost primary power in Ops. Auxiliary systems have kicked in, but most of our systems are down.

LENARIS

Can you get the primaries back?

SELZNER

Trying, sir... It looks like an override from somewhere...

(presses buttons)

I'm locked out. We no longer have control of the station.

AKAAR

Then who does?

Then the Ops transporter stage hums to life, and Ro Laren materialises, sternly pointing a PHASER right at Akaar. Lenaris and Akaar are shocked and furious. Ro surveys the room from her position, then urgently taps her combadge.

RO

Taran'atar. I'm in. Raise shields.

TARAN'ATAR (comm)

Acknowledged.

LENARIS

Lieutenant, you'd better have a damn good explanation for this.

She ignores him and steps cautiously down to the centre, looking closely at the arced ceiling over the Ops table.

RO

I'm trying to capture Minister Shakaar's assassin. He's right above your heads. For your own safety, clear the room. Now.

AKAAR

Lieutenant Costello! Place Lieutenant Ro under arrest!

LENARIS

Belay that order. All personnel, evacuate the operations centre.

AKAAR

General, what are you doing?

LENARIS

I'm giving the station's chief of security a little latitude. Unless you plan to challenge my authority as acting commander of DS-Nine?

Akaar grinds his teeth, but reluctantly has to give in.

AKAAR

You heard him. Clear the room.

All the other crew in the room hurry out of whatever door is nearby. Akaar and Lenaris both stay, staring Ro down, making it clear she should not push her luck. She shrugs.

RO

Suit yourselves. Taran'atar, I'm in position. Can you verify?

TARAN'ATAR (comm)

Negative. Security sensors still do not register the presence of any life form beneath the array.

RO

I'm talking about blowing a hole in Ops here! I need verification!

TARAN'ATAR (comm)

I have none to give.

Ro grits her teeth, checks her phaser and takes position. Akaar and Lenaris stand at the table, far from convinced.

RO

Gentlemen, if I were you, I'd find someplace else to stand.

Akaar and Lenaris step away to the upper level. Ro aims and FIRES her phaser at the ceiling over Ops. A power conduit BLOWS, and pieces of bulkhead and components shower down.

The three of them have to dive out of the way from the falling debris. But there is no body. Ro steps closer, looking up, horrified that she really was wrong after all. Akaar is ready to throw her out of an airlock right now.

TARAN'ATAR (comm)

Lieutenant. What happened?

AKAAR

Akaar to security. Send a team to Ops immediately.

There is a loud CRUNCH, and they turn to see a large dent in the central Ops table, as if something has fallen onto it from a great height. But there is nothing there.

Then something gradually FLICKERS into view as its power source dies - a FIGURE wearing a sealed orange spacesuit (as seen in "Star Trek: Insurrection").

Ro creeps closer to the inert body, looks in through the clear face panel and sees that it is GARD, unconscious. Lenaris and Akaar do likewise.

RO

Well, this just got a little more complicated, didn't it, Admiral?

LENARIS

What is it? Is it Gard?

RO

Oh, it's him. But what's really interesting is his choice in attire. This, General, is an isolation suit. It provides limited life support and a very localised cloaking field, small enough to hide a man. The problem is... Gard could only get such a suit from the manufacturer.

LENARIS

And who is that?

AKAAR

The Federation.

Off Akaar's frustrated glower...

21 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

Akaar, Lenaris, Ro and Ambassador Gandres are sat around the table, talking to Minister Asarem on the wall screen.

ASAREM (screen)

Have you questioned him yet?

RO

He's not cooperating. He's obviously been trained to resist interrogation.

AKAAR

Gard sustained injuries during Lieutenant Ro's... capture of him. He is currently confined to the isolation ward in the station's infirmary, under heavy guard.

ASAREM (screen)

But if you have the assassin there aboard the station... then what is the *Gryphon* chasing?

Lenaris and Akaar exchange a look, almost ashamed to admit.

AKAAR

We do not yet know. Perhaps an accomplice. If so, then *Gryphon's* mission is essentially unchanged.

ASAREM (screen)

And can you explain this isolation suit, Admiral? Or you, Ambassador?

AKAAR

Not conclusively. Starfleet uses those suits for conducting covert cultural observations of pre-warp societies only. I have contacted my colleagues at Starfleet Command to see what they can learn.

ASAREM (screen)

This is beginning to look more and more like a conspiracy from within the Federation, gentlemen.

AKAAR

I agree that it looks that way, First Minister. But I am not yet convinced that it actually is.

The doors open and Doctor Girani walks in, looking like she has just had a fairly big shock.

GIRANI

Pardon me, sirs, First Minister, but I've completed the autopsy report on Minister Shakaar.

ASAREM (screen)

And?

GIRANI

And I've discovered two anomalies that I cannot explain. Shakaar's brain and nervous system contained an alien biochemical, which I've now conclusively identified... as isoboramine.

Gandres GASPS - the others are not sure what that means.

GIRANI

I ran the tests four times. There's no mistake, Ambassador.

ASAREM (screen)

Doctor, what is isoboramine?

GIRANI

It's the unique neurotransmitter that integrates host and symbiont in a joined Trill.

ASAREM (screen)

Doctor, are you... are you saying Shakaar was joined?

GANDRES

He couldn't have been. Only Trill can be joined to symbionts.

AKAAR

Not entirely true, Ambassador. Starfleet is aware of at least two incidents in which Terrans served

as a host, at least temporarily.
Was a symbiont present, Doctor?

GIRANI

No, sir. And no indication there
ever was, despite the isoboramine.
But that's the other anomaly - a
microcellular scan of the wound
did reveal traces of symbiont DNA.
Or something very much like it.

GANDRES

But the wound was to his neck.

Akaar - who has been listening intently, trying to figure
it out, knowing there is something he can't put his finger
on - suddenly gets it. This is a DOLLY ZOOM moment.

He sits up straight, the blood draining, and looks around
at all the others, realising the whole situation has just
changed. Asarem sees his reaction.

ASAREM (screen)

Admiral, what is it? You know what
this is, don't you?

AKAAR

First Minister, I fear that I do.

22 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

Akaar urgently enters the sickbay, stalking towards Gard,
who lies on a biobed, with security in the background. Gard
does not acknowledge the admiral, staring at the ceiling.

AKAAR

I know why Shakaar was killed. We
found traces of foreign DNA in his
neck. We also found a match in the
database. Shakaar was host to a
parasite, one of the creatures who
infiltrated Starfleet twelve years
ago and attempted to take over the
Federation. Wasn't he?

FLASHBACK - TNG 1x25 "CONSPIRACY"

-- The parasite-infected Adm Quinn attacks Lt Worf.
-- The small, purple, insect-like creature scuttles along the floor, up Cmdr Remmick's arm and into his mouth.
-- Picard and Riker shoot the mother creature living in Cmdr Remmick's stomach.

BACK TO SCENE

Gard says nothing, just continues to stare at the ceiling.

AKAAR

What are you protecting? Why continue this subterfuge? If these creatures have indeed returned, then they threaten all of us. This is about more than just Trill!

GARD

(finally looks at him)
You're wrong, Akaar. This is all about Trill, from beginning to end.

AKAAR

Tell me how.

GARD

Why ask me? You seem to already have all the answers. You've seen the DNA records. Despite outward appearances, the symbionts of Trill and these parasites... are essentially the same species.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

23 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

Where we were, as Akaar absorbs Gard's revelation.

AKAAR

How long has this been going on?

GARD

Months. Unlike the symbionts, the parasites dominate their hosts. They don't even bother to access long-term memory. That's how your people detected them last time. There are also subtle indications in behaviour and body language, but you need to know what you're looking for. That's why I was brought in. I was sent to DS-Nine specifically to evaluate Shakaar, and if our suspicions were correct, deal with the problem.

AKAAR

What did the creature want with Shakaar? What was it trying to do?

GARD

Bring Bajor into the Federation. Isn't that obvious?

AKAAR

And why would it want that?

GARD

(shrug)

A new angle of attack? Infiltrate the Federation through a single species? It doesn't matter. I had to stop Shakaar from signing the agreement, and do it in such a public way that it ruined any chances of the plan going ahead.

AKAAR

But why did you need to kill him?

GARD

He'd been infected too long. There was no way to free him. To all intents and purposes, Shakaar Edon was already dead. That thing was just wearing his body.

Gard has been dismissive and indifferent all this time. Akaar finally snaps and grabs him by his clothes.

AKAAR

Do you think this is a game?

GARD

I'm bored with you, Akaar. You think you're old? I've died more times than I can remember. Next to me, you're a newborn. So don't think you can intimidate me.

AKAAR

Gryphon is on its way to Trill.

GARD

What? Why?

AKAAR

Captain Mello detected a cloaked vessel heading towards Trill. We assumed it was you, so she set out in pursuit.

GARD

Admiral, no - you've been duped. Captain Mello is being misled by the same kind of creature that was inside Shakaar. The *Gryphon* is going to Trill for one reason only - to retaliate. You have to stop that ship, Akaar. You can't allow it to reach Trill.

24 **EXT. GRYPHON - ESTABLISHING**

The aggressive, well-armed Akira-class USS *Gryphon* zooms through space at high warp, on its unwitting mission.

25 **INT. GRYPHON - OBSERVATION DECK**

A typical Starfleet-style room - a meeting of all the *Gryphon's* senior staff is in progress.

Cpt Mello sits at the head, with exec MONTENEGRO (human male, African), security chief SPILLANE (human female, Scandinavian), doctor XIANG (human female, Chinese), chief engineer BHATNAGAR (human female, Indian), and science officer CROTH (Tellarite male).

Kira stands apart from them, leaning against one of the large windows that show the stars at warp. She still wears her Bajoran uniform, and feels like she is among enemies. The crew is looking at a computer display on the wall.

CROTH

(Tellarite bluster)

It's obviously a distortion field created by a cloaking device. But the tell-tale signs that would identify it as Klingon or Romulan or whatever are absent. One might almost say it's generic.

BHATNAGAR

You tried a tachyon sweep?

SPILLANE

Hourly since we left. We can't even tell how far ahead it is.

MONTENEGRO

What about Starfleet ships in the Trill sector? Can they intercept?

MELLO

Admiral Akaar has already made arrangements for the three nearest ships to sweep the region. Our forces at Trill are on high alert.

XIANG

What if the Trill government tries
to protect the assassin?

A pause for deep breaths. It would be a big problem.

MELLO

Then this could become a major
interstellar incident. Perhaps
even lead to war. Which is why we
can't let it get that far. We'll
adjourn for now, and reconvene at
fourteen-hundred hours. Dismissed.
Colonel, will you stay a moment?

The crew stand and file out of the room. Once alone, Mello
stands and approaches Kira, trying to be soothing.

MELLO

Colonel... what can we do to help?

KIRA

You're doing all you can, Captain.
The Bajoran people are grateful
for Starfleet's help in resolving
this matter. And I am personally
glad you're involved.

That's the stiff, official party line, and Mello knows it.

MELLO

Colonel, I know the crime that's
been committed can't be minimised.
Tensions are high. But right now
I'm only interested in one thing -
bringing this assassin to justice.
We're on this hunt together. We're
on the same side, Nerys. I hope
you believe that.

KIRA

(softening)

I do, Elaine. But no matter what
happens, my people will never be
the same after this. I'll never be

the same. This could be the last joint mission between Starfleet and Bajor... and I can't figure out whether to be sad or relieved.

MELLO

How long since you last slept?

KIRA

Probably too long.

MELLO

Get some rest. Nothing's likely to change for the next few hours.

(taps combadge)

Commander Montenegro to the briefing room.

The *Gryphon's* first officer re-appears in the doorway.

MELLO

The commander will escort you to your quarters. And I'll alert you immediately if anything new comes up. Now get out of here.

The two women smile at each other. Then Montenegro leads Kira out, down a short stretch of corridor, and into...

26 INT. GRYPHON - TURBOLIFT (CONTINUOUS)

MONTENEGRO

Deck five.

The turbolift whirs into life. Montenegro is passing nervous glances at Kira, which she notices. He is young and innocent, too young to be doing this job really.

KIRA

Something wrong, Commander?

MONTENEGRO

Uh, no, sir. I just wanted to say... I'm sorry about First Minister Shakaar. I liked him.

KIRA

What did you like about him?

MONTENEGRO

His enthusiasm, mostly. When he visited the ship, and he talked about Bajor joining us, his face would just light up.

KIRA

What else did he say?

MONTENEGRO

To be honest, I didn't get to speak with him much. He spent most of his time with Captain Mello.

Montenegro considers whether he should say more, and finally decides to go for it.

MONTENEGRO

Halt.

(turbolift stops)

Colonel, may I speak with you?

KIRA

What's on your mind?

MONTENEGRO

I realise we don't know each other well, and I probably shouldn't be discussing this at all. But it would be even less appropriate to bring it up with another member of the crew, and I could really use an outsider's perspective.

KIRA

(intrigued now)

What is it?

MONTENEGRO

It's about Captain Mello. She's become... I guess the word I'm looking for is... distant lately. I don't know how else to describe

it. And not just the occasional bad mood. I'm talking about a change in personality.

KIRA

Have you mentioned your concerns to Doctor Xiang?

MONTENEGRO

I'm afraid to. Mei doesn't like me very much because I keep skipping my physical. I really haven't been the *Gryphon's* XO very long. And it's not that I think she's become a bad captain. It's just that... when I first came aboard, she took me under her wing. Now I feel like I don't know her anymore.

Kira can certainly empathise with that, but she doesn't know about the parasites at this point.

KIRA

It's a difficult thing when a person close to you changes.

MONTENEGRO

You understand what I mean.

KIRA

I think I do. But unless you plan to bring this up to Captain Mello directly, this is something you'll have to work out for yourself.

MONTENEGRO

(nodding)

I guess so. Thanks anyway. Resume.

The turbolift starts moving again. Kira falls into silent thought while Montenegro seems slightly more settled.

27 **EXT. GRYPHON**

The *Gryphon* is still at warp, rushing headlong.

28 **INT. GRYPHON - KIRA'S QUARTERS**

Some standard guest quarters, without any personal effects. Kira lies asleep in the simple bed as the stars streak by. The comm system BEEPs loudly - she forces herself awake.

SPILLANE (comm)
Bridge to Colonel Kira.

KIRA
Kira. Go ahead.

SPILLANE (comm)
Sorry to wake you, Colonel, but you have a priority message from Deep Space Nine. It's encoded for your eyes only.

KIRA
Please put it through.

Kira drags herself over to the comm screen and taps the panel. A LASER BEAM scans her retina pattern, then the computer unlocks the message, which shows Admiral Akaar.

AKAAR (screen)
Colonel, I hope this has not reached you too late. We have captured Mister Gard here aboard the station, and we have verified that Shakaar was under the control of an alien parasite, an extremely dangerous species known to Trill and Starfleet. There should be a classified security file in the *Gryphon's* computer, xeno-oh-two-eight-eight-four-slash-one, that will tell you everything Starfleet knows. Colonel, we believe that another parasite has infiltrated the *Gryphon*. There is no cloaked ship. The creature is using you to attack Trill in retaliation for foiling its plans. You must stop the *Gryphon* from reaching Trill, Colonel. No matter the cost.

The message ends and Akaar's face disappears. Kira sits dumbstruck. Then she begins tapping away at the computer. Soon various Starfleet files appear on the screen.

One features the face of Captain Picard, another Admiral Quinn (TNG "Conspiracy"), another Christopher Pike (TOS "The Cage") and another Audrid Dax (8x19 "Cathedral").

There is also a picture of the back of someone's neck, with a small bluish barb sticking out. As Kira reads with growing astonishment, she remembers...

FLASHBACK - THE TURBOLIFT

MONTENEGRO

She's become... distant lately.
I'm talking about a change in
personality.

FLASHBACK - 8x18 "THIS GREY SPIRIT"

KIRA

I hope you enjoyed your tour on
the *Gryphon*.

FLASHBACK - THE TURBOLIFT

MONTENEGRO

He spent most of his time with
Captain Mello.

BACK TO SCENE

Kira's face falls as she realises - it's Captain Mello.

KIRA

Computer, locate Commander
Alejandro Montenegro.

29 INT. GRYPHON - CORRIDOR

Kira, Montenegro and Doctor Xiang pace down the corridor, all armed with phasers. Xiang is also carrying a tricorder.

XIANG

What should we expect?

KIRA

Like it said in Doctor Crusher's report, enhanced physical strength and extreme resistance to pain and injury. If you have to fire, set your weapon to kill.

XIANG

You said we wouldn't need to -

KIRA

I said we have to be prepared to fight for control of the ship.

They reach Captain Mello's quarters. Kira taps the panel.

MELLO (muffled)

Come in.

The door opens. Montenegro stays out in the corridor while Kira and Xiang step into...

30 **INT. GRYPHON - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS**

MELLO

Colonel, this is unex-

KIRA

(raising phaser)

Get up. Slowly.

MELLO

If this is a joke, it's in the poorest possible taste.

KIRA

I said get up! We know what you are, but it's all over. And I'm warning you, after what you did to Shakaar, I'm not looking far for an excuse.

Slow and dignified, Mello stands up and places her hands behind her head. At Kira's gesture, Xiang nervously walks up to the captain and lifts up the hair at the back of her neck, checking the skin.

XIANG

It's not here.

KIRA

Look again.

XIANG

I'm telling you, she's clean.
I... Alex, what are you - ?

Kira turns to see Montenegro outside in the corridor, smiling at them as the doors close between them. Kira realises - it was him all along. She runs to the door but a forcefield pops into place and knocks her back slightly.

THUMP - the sound of a body crumpling to the floor. Kira spins back, raising her phaser, and sees Xiang unconscious on the floor. Mello is holding the doctor's phaser and pointing it right back into Kira's face.

31 **INT. GRYPHON - CORRIDOR**

Montenegro struts down the corridor, smiling evilly.

MONTENEGRO

Computer, initiate program
Montenegro One, thirty second
delay.

COMPUTER VOICE

(affirmative bleep)
Program will initiate in thirty
seconds.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

32 INT. GRYPHON - MAIN ENGINEERING

RED ALERT alarms are sounding. Large pulsing warp core at one end, large main ship operations display table at the other. Chief engineer Lt Cmdr Bhatnagar stands over the table, inspecting readings.

BHATNAGAR

What the - ?

COMPUTER VOICE

Warning. Antimatter containment failing. Ejection system offline. Warp core breach in two minutes.

She urgently checks her instruments; there's nothing wrong.

MONTENEGRO (comm)

Montenegro to crew. Report to the escape pods. All hands abandon ship. I repeat, abandon ship.

Bhatnagar is still working; Ensign BENITEZ grabs her.

BENITEZ

Commander, we have to go now!

BHATNAGAR

This doesn't make any sense...

33 INT. GRYPHON - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Mello and Kira are still pointing phasers at each other. Without taking her eyes off Kira, Mello taps her combadge.

KIRA

Captain, listen to me -

MELLO

Shut up. Mello to bridge. Bridge, this is the captain. Respond.

KIRA

They can't hear you. Montenegro's put your quarters under security quarantine. Forcefields, signals jammed, phasers neutralised.

Mello fires at a spot just past Kira's head. Nothing.

MELLO

Dammit. Alright, Colonel. Start explaining to me what the hell is going on on my ship.

KIRA

He set me up, Captain, to get both of us out of the way and take over. Once the crew's gone he can do the whole thing by autopilot.

COMPUTER VOICE

Warning. Antimatter containment now at thirteen percent. Warp core breach in fifteen seconds.

Mello stares at Kira - is it real? Kira stares back - no.

MELLO

If you're wrong, we're dead.

The ship ROCKS slightly - out of the window, they can see dozens of escape pods being launched away from the ship. Kira and Mello continue staring, not sure what to do now.

34 **EXT. GRYPHON**

Gryphon continues at warp, escape pods streaming behind.

35 **INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR**

Quark eyes the constant security presence as he walks. They eye him right back. He reaches a door and taps the panel.

QUARK

Treir, it's Quark. Let me in, I need to talk to you.

TREIR (muffled)
Go away. It's my night off.
Besides, I've got company.

QUARK
Come on, Treir. Five minutes.
That's all I'm asking.

TREIR (muffled)
Sorry about this.

The doors open, and to Quark's big surprise, MORN walks out with a wink. TREIR stands in the doorway, looking totally un-dabo. Loose ponytail, dull grey sweatpants, flip-flops and a stretched old t-shirt that says KISS ME I'M IRISH. Quark gapes at the frumpy look. Treir's glare could kill.

QUARK
I'm sorry, it's just I've never
seen you so... relaxed.

TREIR
(dangerous)
Look closer. Do I seem relaxed?

QUARK
Umm... no. I just need to talk for
a minute. About Ro.

TREIR
Oh please, not this. Why me?

She turns and schleps back into...

36 INT. DS9 - TREIR'S QUARTERS (CONTINUOUS)

She collapses onto the sofa in her untidy, disorganized room. Quark follows and perches, unusually subdued.

QUARK
Because I need some objectivity.
You've seen me and Laren interact
more than anyone else. And I need
someone to talk to.
(pause)
I'm giving up the bar.

TREIR

You're not the first male to disappear into a midlife crisis.

QUARK

But Ro's supposed to come with me. She resigned her commission. Told Kira and everything.

TREIR

Huh. I got the impression Ro was starting to like it here. I'm surprised she'd want to leave.

QUARK

That's just it! I'm not convinced she does. We've been talking for weeks about what we'd do when the Federation came. When I suggested going into business together, she seemed all for it. Then Shakaar gets himself killed, and suddenly she's more driven than ever. It's like I don't exist!

TREIR

Quark, what did you expect? That she'd turn her back on her home world during what might be its worst crisis since the Occupation?

QUARK

(small)

I expected her to be honest.

TREIR

Quark, I don't pretend to know what's going on between you two. On the surface you seem as preposterous a couple as I've ever met. Yet against all the laws of probability you have actually made a connection. If you love her, then let her be who she really is. Whoever that turns out to be.

QUARK

I have to be who I am too.

TREIR

And who is that, exactly?

QUARK

I'm not even sure I know anymore. Maybe the only way she and I will ever get together is if one of us becomes something we're not. And that would kill it anyway, right?

TREIR

(gently, genuinely)

Have you ever considered that the person you think you're turning into is the person you've been all along, and just never realised it?

Suddenly there is a THUMP against Treir's door. They turn with a start. Treir gets up and goes to the door, opens it.

37 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Out in the corridor, Gul Macet is leaning heavily against the wall. He is in great distress, jerking his head around awkwardly, having trouble breathing. He claws at his own face with his fingers. Treir and Quark approach warily.

TREIR

Are you alright?

MACET

(hissing)

Hhheeeeelllllp mmmeeeeeee...

Macet collapses to his knees, looking up at Treir, trying to focus on her. A thin wisp of SMOKE comes from his mouth.

TREIR

Goddess, what's happening to him?

Quark runs to him, and sees the back of Macet's neck. A small blue barb is sticking out and wiggling in the air...

38 INT. GRYPHON - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Kira and Mello are both pacing, trying to figure out what to do. Xiang is now awake again, sitting and worrying. The forcefield blocking the door FRITZES out. Warily, the three women take aim with their probably useless phasers.

Multiple hands claw at the door. It slowly opens to reveal Bhatnagar, Croth and Spillane. Mello relaxes with relief.

SPILLANE

Captain, are you alright?

MELLO

Nothing kicking my first officer's ass wouldn't fix. Why didn't you evacuate with the others?

CROTH

Blame Commander Bhatnagar. She convinced us the ship wasn't about to blow up anytime soon.

SPILLANE

I had my suspicions. Montenegro turned up on the bridge just in time to order the evac. Thirty seconds to core breach, and it occurred to us to ask the computer where you were. Then the internal sensors went down.

BHATNAGAR

My tricorder detected bio-signs here in your quarters. So here we are. Sir, why is Commander Montenegro doing this?

MELLO

Colonel Kira will explain on the way. First the armoury, then the bridge. I'm taking back my ship.

Grabbing her phaser, in no mood to be trifled with, Mello leads the senior staff and Kira out into the corridor.

39 INT. GRYPHON - MAIN BRIDGE

PHASER FIRE lights up the seam in the turbolift door, then hands pry it open. The senior crew clamber out of the empty shaft onto the darkened bridge. They cautiously lead the way with phaser rifles, but find the bridge deserted.

Spillane rushes to her tactical console, checks readings.

SPILLANE

We're still on course for Trill.
Speed is constant at warp nine-point-five, and flight control is locked off.

MELLO

Computer, take the warp engines off-line. Authorisation Mello pi-four-six-two.

COMPUTER (comm)

Unable to comply. Warp power control only possible from main engineering.

MELLO

Can we send out a distress call?

CROTH

Communications are offline or disabled, I can't tell which.

BHATNAGAR

Transporters, turbolifts, internal sensors, they're all offline.

MELLO

But the ship still recognises my codes.

SPILLANE

Yep, he didn't bother to cancel them. Just took what he needed and disabled the rest.

MELLO

So he's in engineering.

CROTH

That's our best guess.

Kira hefts her rifle determinedly, checking its settings.

KIRA

I'm going after him.

MELLO

Not alone, you're not. Spillane,
you have the bridge. The colonel
and I are going hunting.

Mello and Kira head back to the still-open turbolift shaft.
Spillane watches them go with trepidation.

40 INT. GRYPHON - JEFFERIES TUBE

Kira and Mello crawl on hands and knees through the cramped
access tube, both holding phaser rifles, Kira taking point.
Mello is taking readings on a tricorder.

MELLO

I've found his combadge signal.
Starboard and down, close to the
navigational deflector.

KIRA

It's a ruse. He dumped it there so
we'd waste time going after it.

MELLO

I agree. Engineering is the only
place that makes sense.

KIRA

Captain, I want to apologise for
what happened in your quarters. I
really made a mess of things.

MELLO

Don't worry about it, Colonel. I
probably would have done the same

in your position. This thing inside Montenegro tried to pit us against each other, to divide and conquer. But it failed then, and it'll fail now.

(pause)

I have a confession of my own, Colonel. When you were first put in command of Deep Space Nine, I had my doubts. I didn't think it was right for Starfleet personnel to be taking orders from a non-Starfleet officer. I resented you even more when you were put in command of the Europa Nova situation. Because the bottom line was, you didn't wear the uniform, and your loyalties were always to Bajor first. Then I saw you in action, and I knew I was wrong. And if I've learned nothing else working with you the last few months, it's that we're stronger together than we'll ever be apart.

They reach an intersection, and open a shutter onto another section of access tube. As they pass through the hatch, phaser fire BURSTS out from the other end - can't see who.

MELLO

Colonel, get down!

Kira hits the deck. The phaser fire stops. Kira fires back blindly, but there is the sound of a hatch HISSing shut. She hasn't hit anybody. Then there is a MOAN behind her, and with horrible certainty, Kira looks back to see that Mello has a large phaser burn in her chest.

KIRA

Kira to bridge! Mello's been hit!
We're in port Jeffries tube 14-A.
Send down Doctor Xiang, now!

MELLO

Belay that, Spillane! You'll only expose Xiang to danger.

KIRA
Stop talking, save your strength.

MELLO
Bridge, bear witness... Computer,
this is Captain Elaine Mello...
commanding officer, USS *Gryphon*...
transfer all command codes... to
Commander Kira Nerys -

KIRA
Elaine, no...

MELLO
Authorisation Mello... seven-two-
nine... execute.

COMPUTER VOICE
Transfer executed. USS *Gryphon* now
under command of Kira Nerys.

Fading fast, Mello grabs her combadge and thrusts it
resolutely into a tearful Kira's hand.

MELLO
Stop him, Nerys. And take care of
my ship.

Kira looks down at the combadge in her hand. When she looks
back up at Mello, the captain is already dead.

KIRA
Kira to bridge. Captain Mello is
dead. I'm resuming pursuit of
Montenegro.

41 INT. GRYPHON - MAIN ENGINEERING

An obscure panel OPENS and Kira quietly crawls out. She
gets up cautiously, keeping an eye out for movement.

She creeps around a bit until she spots Montenegro working
near the warp core assembly, on the lower level. It is not
unlike when she was searching DS9's fusion core for the
Jem'Hadar saboteur (8x03 "Avatar, pt 3").

She takes aim with her phaser, but the instant before she fires, Montenegro is gone in a blur of motion. Kira curses.

MONTENEGRO (o.s.)

Well, well. So the gullible little Bajoran has made it to the end of the maze. You know, I think that's the thing we like most about your people, Colonel. As meat goes, you're so very easy to steer.

KIRA

(still creeping)

Is that all we are to you? Meat?

MONTENEGRO (o.s.)

What else? You're lower lifeforms, Colonel. Get used to the idea.

Kira tries another shot with her phaser rifle. It misses. She keeps creeping around, tracking his echoing voice.

MONTENEGRO (o.s.)

Careful, Colonel, you might shoot something important. Still, I'm not surprised. Humanoids think too much with their glands. That's why you're all so easy to conquer.

KIRA

My people have been conquered before. It didn't last.

MONTENEGRO (o.s.)

Please, the Cardassians? That only proves my point. A more useless species of humanoids we've yet to encounter. But you Bajorans, you're the biggest joke of all. There you are at the threshold of all of time and space, and you just squat on your mudball waiting for something to happen. One of many things we plan to correct.

That alarms Kira - they have plans for the wormhole?

KIRA

With such big plans, seems like
you're wasting a lot of effort
going after Trill.

MONTENEGRO (o.s.)

You still don't get it, Colonel.
You think the symbionts are benign
little creatures. You have no idea
what they did to us. Believe me,
they're far more dangerous to you
than we are.

Now Kira feels a breath in her ear.

MONTENEGRO

Boo.

Kira swings the rifle butt around, and hits Montenegro in the ribs. CRUNCH. He doesn't even flinch. He grabs Kira by the neck and TOSSES her over the railing. He SMASHES the rifle against the rail, shattering it. Then he LEAPS agilely over and lands effortlessly on the lower level.

Kira struggles up from the floor and pummels him with her fists. He smiles. It's like Taran'atar versus the Hirogen. She finally spins a KICK into his stomach, which sends him staggering backwards a little. She is winded, tired.

MONTENEGRO

My turn.

He spins a KICK at her stomach, and she goes FLYING back against the warp core assembly, crumpling to the floor. He walks to her calmly, GRABS her by the hair and YANKS her up to him. Unseen, her hand slips quietly towards her boot.

MONTENEGRO

Now, tell me something, Colonel.
Now that you have some small
indication of what you're up
against, do you really think any
Bajoran has the slightest chance
against my kind?

KIRA

Why don't you ask Shakaar?

She brings up a small palm-phaser and FIRES it point-blank right into Montenegro's face. His head snaps back as the beam BURNS most of his face off. He collapses to the floor, dead, and Kira grabs the wall to support herself.

She tentatively approaches the body, but JUMPS as the jaw starts moving. The small, insectile, blue-purple parasite emerges from the corpse's mouth, hesitates, then makes a bee-line right for her. She waits until it's close, then SLAMS down her heel. It smashes with a crunch and a splat.

She turns back to the engineering panels, hitting buttons but still having no success.

KIRA

Kira to bridge. Montenegro is dead, but whatever he's done to the engines, I can't stop it. Warp power is unchanged.

SPILLANE (comm)

We see it, Commander. But there's a new problem. We've got three Federation starships on attack vectors. They're ordering us to lower shields and power down, or be destroyed.

On Kira's dismayed reaction...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

42 EXT. GRYPHON

Still at high warp, the Akira-class *Gryphon* zooms away from us. It is soon pursued by two small, manoeuvrable Norway-class ships giving urgent chase. The Norways fire phasers on the running *Gryphon*, whose shields are holding for now.

43 INT. GRYPHON - MAIN BRIDGE

Spillane, Croth, Bhatnagar and Xiang occupy various stations, insistently trying various panels. Kira clammers out of the empty turbolift shaft onto the bridge, just as the ship SHUDDERS from the Norways' attack. Kira settles into the chair naturally, without thinking about it.

SPILLANE

They're targeting our aft shields.

BHATNAGAR

Outgoing communications are still dead. We'll have to think of something else.

CROTH

Can we get helm control at least?

KIRA

Computer, this is Commander Kira.
Transfer flight control to bridge.

COMPUTER VOICE

Transfer executed.

KIRA

Croth, take evasive action!

The Tellarite runs to the helm and starts pushing buttons.

44 EXT. GRYPHON - THE BATTLE

The *Gryphon* swerves at high warp, just missing another phaser barrage from the chasing Norways. A new ship appears heading towards them - a large and heavy Nebula-class.

45 INT. GRYPHON - MAIN BRIDGE

Kira sits in the centre chair, tense and on edge...

KIRA
Show me a tactical display.

Spillane hits buttons, and the warp starfield on the main viewscreen changes to a tactical representation.

One icon is tagged USS GRYPHON NCC-65328 AKIRA CLASS. It is chased by two others, tagged USS SAGITTARIUS NCC-65227 NORWAY CLASS and USS POLARIS NCC-69801 NORWAY CLASS.

Approaching to intercept from the other direction is another icon tagged USS T'KUMBRA NCC-62100 NEBULA CLASS. Kira absorbs the information, knowing this is not good.

SPILLANE
Incoming fire! Hang on!

The display shows the *T'Kumbra* firing on the *Gryphon* - the ship SHUDDERS again in response. Kira grabs her armrests.

BHATNAGAR
Shields down to forty percent.

KIRA
T'Kumbra...

FLASHBACK - 7x04 "TAKE ME OUT TO THE HOLOSUITE"

The crew is gathered in Quark's bar, celebrating after their spectacular defeat at baseball. The arrogant Vulcan Captain SOLOK watches them, confused and indignant.

SOLOK
You are attempting to manufacture
a triumph where none exists.

BASHIR
Here's to manufactured triumphs!

The crew cheer as the confounded Vulcan turns in a huff.

BACK TO SCENE

KIRA

Captain Solok still commands the
T'Kumbra, doesn't he?

XIANG

I believe so, yes.

KIRA

We need to send Solok a message.
Something he'll know immediately
is from me. I need an alternative
to conventional communications.

CROTH

We could tap out a message using
the running lights on the hull.

KIRA

Too slow, assuming they notice it
at all. We need something now.
What about phasers?

SPILLANE

Sir, if we break out the phasers,
they won't hesitate to use deadly
force against us.

The ship ROCKS again, and a couple of panels blow out, as
the *Sagittarius* scores a solid hit.

KIRA

I don't think they've been holding
back so far, Ann. Reconfigure the
aft phasers to one one-hundredth
power and fire short bursts away
from the ships. Tap out a message
in Starfleet's most basic code.

SPILLANE

I can do that, but it better be
damn short. Sir.

KIRA
Just two words. "Manufactured
triumph."

The other officers glance at each other, clearly having no idea what that means, but they don't have time to argue.

SPILLANE
Firing phasers.

46 **EXT. GRYPHON**

Still running and trying to avoid fire from the other ships, the *Gryphon* sends out small phaser bursts. They are aimed nowhere near the pursuing ships, flashing harmlessly.

Unfortunately, the *Polaris* reacts reflexively and fires phasers at the *Gryphon* again. The Akira-class SHUDDERS under the assault and the shields SPARK visibly.

47 **INT. GRYPHON - MAIN BRIDGE**

As the ship ROCKS hard under the assault, more panels BLOW. Bhatnagar dodges some sparks then rushes back to her panel.

BHATNAGAR
Shields are gone.

Kira sags, thinking this is it, after all.

CROTH
Sir, the *T'Kumbra* is matching course and velocity alongside us. *Sagittarius* and *Polaris* are doing likewise above and below.

Kira stands as tension fills the room. Will they figure it out? Seconds go by.

Five TRANSPORTER signals form in front of the viewscreen, depositing Captain SOLOK and four other Vulcan officers in Starfleet uniforms, all holding out phasers just in case.

Solok recognises Kira and raises an eyebrow in that Vulcan way. Kira sighs with relief.

SOLOK
Colonel Kira. Permission to come
aboard.

KIRA
Granted, Captain. Thanks for
dropping in. We could use some
help getting the *Gryphon* back
under control.

Solok nods to his crew members, who holster their phasers
and head up to talk to the *Gryphon's* senior staff. Solok
holsters his own and approaches Kira.

SOLOK
Captain Mello?

KIRA
Dead. Killed by her first officer,
who engineered this mess to begin
with, and who is also dead.

SOLOK
You took quite a risk, gambling
that I would grasp the meaning of
your phaser barrage.

KIRA
I had nothing to lose.

SOLOK
What would you have done if you
had faced a different captain?

KIRA
I guess we'll never know.

SOLOK
Indeed. I am beginning to believe
I may have much to learn from
further study of... manufactured
triumphs.

KIRA
Good luck with that.

48 **EXT. GRYPHON**

The crisis is over for now. The *Gryphon* sits at rest in space, with the *T'Kumbra* alongside. A few escape pods are manoeuvring themselves with tiny thrusters back into the hull of their mother ship.

Further away, the *Sagittarius* and *Polaris* can both be seen dragging back more pods home with their tractor beams.

49 **INT. GRYPHON - MAIN BRIDGE**

Kira sits back in the command chair, with the senior staff back at their positions and the occasional Vulcan officer from the *T'Kumbra* helping out, plus various other extras shuttling about fixing stuff.

SPILLANE

Message coming in, Commander. It's from a Trill military transport, approaching us on an intercept course.

This could be very good or very bad. Kira isn't sure which.

KIRA

On screen.

At Spillane's command, the viewscreen fills with the lined, white-haired face of General TAULIN CYL, the Trill Security agent who worked with the *Defiant* crew (and killed Verad) in 8x10 "Divided We Fall."

CYL (screen)

Colonel Kira. I'm General Taulin Cyl of Trill Planetary Security. Request permission to come aboard.

Kira is not ready to give in just yet. Her eyes narrow.

KIRA

May I assume this is about the assassination of First Minister Shakaar?

CYL (screen)

It's about much more than that, Colonel. I'm aware of what you've been through during the past few days. And you deserve to know the truth. You need to know the truth, so we can work together to face what's coming.

KIRA

Which is what, precisely?

CYL (screen)

The parasites are waging a war, Colonel. It's a long way from over. And regardless of what you may think, it isn't a war for power. It's a war of revenge.

KIRA

Against what?

CYL (screen)

Against the symbionts. Humanoids are not the target of the parasites' war, and we never were. We're simply the battlefield.

50 **EXT. GRYPHON**

The four Starfleet ships have now been joined by another vessel, reminiscent of the deadly Trill defence drones from 8x10. Is this a good thing or bad?

FADE OUT:

THE END