

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

9x02 - "Unjoined, pt 2."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novella

"Unjoined"

by Andy Mangels & Michael A Martin

appearing in

Star Trek: Worlds of Deep Space Nine
Book 2 - Trill / Bajor

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 UNDERWATER

EZRI DAX sinks down through the dark and spooky water, lit only by the tiny lights of her environment suit.

She looks around - a few SYMBIONTS are shadowing her along side. The swimming creatures "talk" to each other with their electrical discharges. Their presence reassures her.

One FLASHES a message to Ezri's belly - speaking directly to Dax. Ezri receives the communication with a smile. She reaches up to the neck of her suit, taps a comm circuit...

DAX

Dax to Cyl.

CYL (comm)

Cyl here. How's your descent going, Lieutenant?

2 INSIDE THE SUIT

Ezri glances at her heads-up display, on the inside of her helmet face-panel. With dark and murky water behind them, one display shows AIR SUPPLY, another SUIT TEMPERATURE, another WATER PRESSURE. All are currently at normal levels.

3 UNDERWATER

Ezri raises her arm - a tricorder screen is incorporated into the suit. She checks readings on it...

DAX

So far so good, as long as 'down' is the right general direction. But I'm not sure how long I'll be able to keep this channel open.

CYL (comm)

Understood. I guess I don't need to remind you to be careful.

DAX
No, you don't...

Dax reaches a ledge in the rock face, pauses on the edge, looks down into the dark and seemingly bottomless chasm.

As she pauses, her symbiont escorts do too. They gather, hovering. Dax looks at them, and understands...

DAX
You want me to go on alone? You
can't... or won't go any deeper.

Alright then. She STEPS OFF the ledge, lets herself fall deeper into the water. Deeper... deeper... Forces herself to breathe steady, keep it regular, not let herself panic.

Another LIGHT SOURCE gradually filters in - winding threads of bioluminescent matter in the rock faces. Not the sickly green of the parasites, but a warm and reassuring orange...

DAX
Maybe this is what they eat when
they're down here unjoined. Maybe
the symbionts don't share every-
thing with us when they join.

She carries on her descent. Further... further... finally Dax's boots TOUCH DOWN onto a solid surface, and she comes to rest. Looking around her, she still can't see much.

Then, far in the distance, she sees an elaborate electrical discharge, similar to how the symbionts communicate, but lasting longer. After a moment, another discharge replies.

Enchanted, Dax moves towards the lights, wading steadily along the rough cavern floor. Dim, indistinct shadows are creating the long-lasting flashes in a variety of colours.

Suddenly, Dax reacts to movement out of the corner of her eye. She turns to see a gigantic SYMBIONT GUIDE, the same overall shape as Dax itself but almost two metres long.

The creature swims slowly and inquisitively around her. It sends a long, continuous unbroken blue message to Dax's abdomen. A gentle, curious VOICE echoes through her head...

SYMBIONT GUIDE (v.o.)

The Annuated have been told to expect you. They understand the danger Trill faces. The Annuated have consented to interrupt their isolation in order to help.

DAX

Annuated...?

SYMBIONT GUIDE (v.o.)

The Annuated. The eldest of the Swimmers. The keepers of their most ancient memories.

While the connecting electric-blue filament continues, Dax tries to accept this larger version of a symbiont...

DAX

So... you can tell me the truth about Trill's relationship to the parasites? And to Kurl?

SYMBIONT GUIDE (v.o.)

I cannot.

DAX

(confused, frustrated)

You just said the Annuated are the keepers of the oldest memories.

SYMBIONT GUIDE (v.o.)

Yes. But I do not yet qualify as Annuated. That is for some aeon yet to come.

DAX

That makes no sense.

(re arm tricorder)

According to this you're at least five thousand years old. That makes you the oldest symbiont anyone's ever encountered.

The continuing blue discharge seems to FLASH brighter, the colours varying. The Guide's voice becomes light, amused...

SYMBIONT GUIDE (v.o.)

I am but young. I tend to the material needs of the Annuated. I ensure that their eggs reach the shallows. I assist the Annuated in assimilating the memories of those Swimmers who come here to perish. It is the memories kept by the Annuated that you seek.

Dax reels with all these revelations about the symbionts...

DAX

All right. So where are these... Annuated?

SYMBIONT GUIDE (v.o.)

You are among them already.

The Guide ends its connection to Dax...

...and sends a massive electrical discharge out towards the rock faces instead. The FLASH bounces from one wall to the next, moving around to every surface within sight.

Then the ground begins to move under Dax's boots. As she is tossed gently into the swaying water, the walls begin to MOVE, writhing like a gigantic fish.

More electrical discharges FLASH around her, surrounding her, and she realises -- the walls are not rock. They are made of humongous symbionts, just waking up. Each one is thirty feet long at least, and there are dozens of them, all beginning to swim grandly and majestically around her.

On Dax's utterly dumbfounded expression...

BLACK OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

4 EXT. MANEV HOSPITAL - DAY

A large and technologically advanced building, with many Trill moving about urgently - patients, doctors, police.

5 INT. HOSPITAL - RECEPTION

Very busy. Trill medical staff are just about coping with the rush of injured patients, either bloody from the fights or suffering breathing problems like the family from 9x01.

Into this chaos staggers BASHIR, using his sleeve to mop up blood from his head and nose. He spots a nurse and moves towards her, but gets woozy and collapses into a seat. Seeing him, nurse JENK approaches, nice but in a hurry...

JENK

Sir, can you hear me?

BASHIR

Of course I can hear you. I was just mugged, but I'm going to be fine. I'm a doctor -

JENK

Let me look at that.

She pulls away his hand and inspects the wound on his head. She grabs a cloth and starts quickly wiping the blood away.

JENK

You look worse than you are.

BASHIR

Thanks for the inspiration. You've got a great bedside manner.

The nurse grabs a hypo and injects his neck...

JENK

You may have noticed we're a bit busy. No time for sweetness.

BASHIR

I'm a doctor with Starfleet. I can help you here.

JENK

That's just what I was thinking.
I recognised the uniform.

BASHIR

Has there been any word from the police about the bombs?

Jenk pauses, stares at Bashir with horror - *what bombs?*

6 INT. TRILL SENATE SECURITY CENTRE

As before, packed with harried Trill Defence Force officers rushing from one monitor to another. GARD is speaking loudly over the clamour with Colonel RIANU...

RIANU

Two teams have found additional bombs in the vicinity. One at the Najana library, another at the shuttle station on Maran Avenue. They're trying to disarm them now.

GARD

Do we know what kind of bombs they are yet?

RIANU

Negative. I'm told there are traces of some kind of radiation, but we can't analyse it on the spot. We can try beaming them out if we can get site-to-site transporter stanchions in place.

GARD

There's bound to be more of these things. We should try to evacuate as many people as possible from the central districts. Get all key officials to radiation-shielded facilities as quickly as possible.

RIANU
Yes, Mister Gard.

He is already walking away, back to the elevator doors...

7 **UNDERWATER**

Dax treads water inside her environment suit, deep in the pools of Mak'ala. The huge Annuated symbionts swim slowly around her in a circle, like a school of manatees.

The mid-sized SYMBIONT GUIDE floats inside the circle with Dax. She raises her sleeve-mounted tricorder again, taking readings, absorbing them with amazement...

DAX
Over twenty-thousand years old...

8 **INSIDE THE SUIT**

Ezri sighs in wonder as she looks out at the gigantic creatures. Unnoticed for now, the readings on her in-helmet display show her air supply beginning to lower, while the temperature and pressure are beginning to rise...

9 **UNDERWATER**

DAX
(wondering aloud)
Is this where the Dax symbiont
will eventually end up, centuries
from now?

The Guide sends a snaking blue finger of electricity out to touch Dax's stomach...

GUIDE (v.o.)
Perhaps. If you take care not to
get it killed in the meantime.

Sweat drips down Dax's face as the suit temperature crawls slightly higher. She can't wipe it away...

DAX
Speaking of not dying prematurely,
I think we had better get started.

GUIDE (v.o.)
Impatient youth.

DAX
Look, I don't have a lot of time.
Just how long -

One of the Annuated answers her with a powerful discharge of electricity that HITS Dax square in the faceplate. It knocks her rolling backwards, and we ZOOM IN on her face...

10 MEMORY MONTAGE

-- Dax, no enviro-suit, on a plain white background, turns with surprise, eyes opening wide as she sees...

-- A random Trill humanoid woman happily feeds a gurgling baby in its pram

-- White space, Dax again, a new memory coming at her...

-- A symbiont plunging deep into the water, heading down towards the home of the Annuated

-- A random Trill male uses some kind of blowtorch tool before sitting back to admire his handiwork

-- Dax again, turning to see another new memory...

-- A prehistoric caveman Trill crouches by a river, a woman laid on the ground before him. He raises a symbiont in his hands to the approval of the other gathered cavemen, then slowly lowers it towards the woman's abdomen

-- Dax in her enviro-suit, underwater, eyes scrunched shut and teeth gritted as she experiences...

-- A dog-like animal lies by a lake. A symbiont wriggles out of the water, squirms its way inside the abdominal pouch, and after a moment the animal gets up and trots off

-- Underwater, three filaments of bio-electricity are now connecting the enviro-suited Dax to the massive floating Annuated. One of the filaments suddenly pulses with extra power, a stronger message coming to her...

11 **INT. TRILL STARSHIP BRIDGE**

...Dax finds herself standing on the bridge of a starship of a fairly early design. All around are Trill humanoids in uniform, as is she - she is one of the ship's crew.

On the viewscreen, the crew gazes with awe and wonder at a beautiful blue-green world, growing slowly closer in space.

TRILL 1

There it is... The first other world we've ever found, that's capable of supporting both humanoid and symbiont throughout all of both species' life-cycles. Or so the surveys say.

TRILL 2

It took us long enough to find it. Let's hope we don't have to travel as far or search as long to locate the next one.

Dax turns around, sees a podium taking pride of place on the bridge. On the podium is a Kurlan *naiskos* (as in TNG 6x20 "The Chase"). She caresses it with affection, speaking some other person's words...

DAX

Imagine it... an exclusive society where everyone is joined. There will be no "unjoined underclass." No Trill need ever live without the immortality of joining again. It will be paradise... on this beautiful new world.

(with delight)

Everyone... welcome to Kurl.

Not-Dax smiles beatifically...

12 **UNDERWATER**

... while in her enviro-suit, the real Dax's jaw drops as she absorbs this revelation. On the display, the water pressure and suit temperature keep creeping higher...

13 **EXT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA - DAY**

RANUL KERU stands in the mouth of the caves. He sees the crowd of protesters, being held back by Trill Defence Force officers. They have woken up again now after their earlier phaser stunning, more agitated and boisterous than ever...

TAULIN CYL notices Keru standing there, and comes to him...

KERU

General. What's riling them now?

CYL

We don't know. But from the way they've been checking their chronometers, they're expecting something to happen soon.

KERU

Co-ordinated attacks? Could they be moving against other spawning grounds, or the Symbiosis Commission?

CYL

Unfortunately, all communications are still being jammed. We don't know what's happening elsewhere, and I doubt anyone outside is hearing our messages either.

Keru looks back out at the crowd. He sees their placards, carrying slogans like JOINED FOR UNJOINED RIGHTS and MY DAUGHTER DESERVES A SYMBIONT TOO! He is not pleased.

KERU

I don't see why they'd attack here. It's not the symbionts' fault that our society has flaws. It's ours.

CYL

The Neo-Purists don't agree.

On cue, one protestor PUNCHES a police officer - and it all boils over. Suddenly it's an open fight, fists flying...

Then a slight RUMBLING from above and behind, like falling rocks. Keru TURNS --

-- and sees figures clambering over the high rock faces above the cave entrance.

KERU
General, behind us! We're under
attack!

Keru dashes back into the cave, grabs a phaser he left on the cave floor. Then he is back beside Cyl --

-- and FIRES up the cliff face at the protesters.

One of them is HIT, tumbles down the rocks, falls to the ground with a THUMP. Keru takes cover, keeps firing...

KERU
General... if I can get down to
the *Rio Grande* I might be able to
do something about this.

CYL
Do whatever you need to, Mister
Keru. This is getting out of hand,
and my officers are severely
outnumbered. I'll cover you.

Keru readies himself -- and DASHES out from cover towards the runabout. Phaser shots come from above the cave... Cyl FIRES back... Keru keeps his head down and runs...

14 **INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM**

Emergency room bedlam - trauma cases are arriving apace and the Trill medics are struggling to cope. Into this comes a tired and bloody police woman - SAGADO - carrying a pre-teen boy unconscious in her arms...

SAGADO
I need help, please! Somebody...

BASHIR (o.s.)
In here!

Past the crowds - BASHIR beckoning her. Grateful, she hefts the boy into a semi-private cubicle, and Bashir takes the boy from her. Nurse Jenk is already there. Sagado turns to leave, wipes blood from her face - but he calls her back...

BASHIR

I meant both of you. You can't go back out there in your condition.

Sagado is about to protest -- when she comes over all dizzy and has to sit. Bashir places the boy gently on the biobed, inspects the display readings...

BASHIR

There are severe fractures throughout this child's body.
(dismayed)
Oh... a fragment of a rib has entered his spinal column.

Sagado stands again, colour draining from her face...

SAGADO

I didn't make it worse, did I?

BASHIR

Sit! You're making it worse on yourself! Nurse Jenk, get some sterile instruments ready.

Jenk turns away to begin prep. Bashir begins to wash up...

BASHIR

Officer...

SAGADO

...Sagado. Rame Sagado.

BASHIR

Officer Sagado, I need you to get over here and wash up. I'm afraid it's just the three of us - and I'm going to need your help.

Sagado nods nervously and gets to her feet, walking to the sink. Bashir finishes washing, puts on sterile gloves...

BASHIR

Right. We'll begin by clearing the damage to his spine. We can go in through the symbiont pouch --

Out of the chaos outside the cubicle, Trill doctor TORVIN suddenly stops at their cubicle entrance, leading a gurney carrying an older Trill man...

TORVIN

We need this cubicle.

BASHIR

(doesn't look up)

It's in use. I'm trying to save the life of this child.

TORVIN

From the looks of those scans, that child is beyond saving. We have a very important doctor from the Symbiosis Commission who needs surgery right now. His symbiont takes priority.

BASHIR

(dark and angry)

This child will survive, because we will keep working until we save him. I suggest you find another cubicle. Before it's too late.

Bashir turns back to his patient, the conversation over. He is in no mood for playing first-among-equals...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

15 UNDERWATER

Ezri Dax, deep underwater, floating in her enviro-suit, seemingly held in place by the now half-dozen continuous bio-electrical communications from the Annuated...

Zooming in on her semi-conscious, far away face...

16 MEMORY MONTAGE

-- Dax in her white space, remembering others' memories...

-- Not-Dax caressing the *naiskos* on the starship bridge

17 INT. KURLAN LABORATORY

Another new memory - Dax is now another person, gazing out of a sealed window onto a placid blue lake. Pleasure boats scud gently across its surface. They are on Kurl itself.

She turns back to the room, sees a laboratory, sterile and white. A shallow bath carries a normal symbiont, two Trill humanoid SCIENTISTS lean over it, checking readings...

DAX

It's so peaceful out there.

SCIENTIST 1

It won't stay that way. Not unless we find a way to neutralise this damned virus, and quickly.

SCIENTIST 2

It's killed more than a million Kurlans already.

18 MEMORY FLASH

Whip-fast images of Trill humanoids BELCHING blood from their mouths, WRITHING on the floor holding their bellies, symbionts RUPTURED and oozing pus...

19 **BACK TO SCENE**

Not-Dax shudders at the thought. Scientist 1 INJECTS the symbiont with a hypo - it SQUIRMS in response. Scientist 2 inspects readings from a tricorder-like device...

SCIENTIST 2

The RDNAL sequences are repairing and strengthening themselves, just as we saw in the simulations. With a few more adjustments to their genome, I think the symbionts will be completely immune.

SCIENTIST 1

Let's hope so.

In a flash, the laboratory is gone...

20 **MEMORY FLASH**

The sun-and-moon time-elapse image...

21 **INT. KURLAN MEDICAL THEATRE**

Not-Dax stands in a medical smock in an operating theatre. Many DOCTORS stand around a bed, on which lies a young male Trill INITIATE, nervous but excited to undergo joining.

The doctors lift a wriggling SYMBIONT out of its bath, hold it up - but this one looks more like a PARASITE. Skin has become scaly and hard, its brown colour moving towards purple, and small pincers protruding from its head end...

DOCTOR

Observe. Our experiments led us to the conclusion that the symbionts would benefit from a more direct connection to their hosts. So we have added these small grasping limbs to its genome.

(re the pincers)

These will allow it to burrow gently and harmlessly through the host's throat, and attach itself directly to the brain-stem.

They nod, understanding. The doctor brings the symbiont to the nervous initiate - he leans back, opens his mouth wide. The symbiont takes over, crawling its way into the opening.

The initiate closes his eyes and mouth, gritting his teeth against the intrusion. A moment... he relaxes, goes slack. Sits up, eyes still closed, smiles... then his eyes open...

...and they glint with the madness of the parasites. Smile turns to a drooling GRIN. Not-Dax recoils in horror...

22 MEMORY MONTAGE

-- The sun-and-moon time elapse image...
-- More scientists working with increasing desperation...
-- Trill humanoid faces twisted by insanity and anger...
-- The Annuated sending ever stronger signals to Dax...
-- Dax's suit gauges moving closer to the red zone...
-- Violent, parasite-possessed humanoids attacking...
-- White-space Dax beginning to cry from the memories...

23 INT. TRILL STARSHIP BRIDGE

Not-Dax is back on the bridge of a starship, a century after the first - a military vessel, not a colony ship.

A stern female Trill CAPTAIN sits among her disciplined OFFICERS, gazing with sadness and horror at the screen...

...which shows the world of Kurl again, now blackened with the scars of warfare, plumes of smoke, visible explosions.

CAPTAIN

Have they launched their ships?

DAX

None since we got here, Captain.
But some could have broken the
quarantine before we arrived.
There's no way to know for sure.

CAPTAIN

How many still alive down there?

DAX

Almost four million. All infected.

(off console)

Captain... someone on the surface
is hailing us. It's coming from a
high-level official address.

CAPTAIN

Put it on screen.

Kurl's PRESIDENT appears on screen - a forty-ish Trill male
whose madness-filled eyes sneer hatefully at the captain...

PRESIDENT (screen)

So you've finally come to kill the
rest of us.

CAPTAIN

You've done a pretty thorough job
of that yourselves already. We've
been sent to maintain the medical
quarantine. By any means necessary.

PRESIDENT (screen)

You have failed to heal us. You
can no longer contain us. We have
vessels ready to launch even now.

CAPTAIN

Tell them they have to power down
and remain on the surface.

PRESIDENT (screen)

(laughing)

You do not command here.

DAX

Captain! I'm reading several
vessels leaving the surface.

CAPTAIN

Private Memh, can you target all
four of them simultaneously?

DAX
Yes, Captain.

On screen, they can all see spots of light growing closer, resolving into small escape shuttles. The captain is upset, but holding it together for the mission... and she nods.

Not-Dax takes a deep breath, closes herself off... presses the button. Torpedoes scream out on the screen...

...and hit all four vessels. All around, the officers are almost in tears. Not-Dax won't let herself look away...

DAX
They can still launch a lot of ships, Captain. We can't possibly chase down every last one of them. The risk to Trill is too great.

CAPTAIN
You're right, Private. Gods help us all, but you're right.
(deep breath)
Private Memh... deploy biogenics, along with the incendiaries.

Dax/Memh forces her shaking hands to enter commands. More lights SHOOT out from the ship plummet to the planet...

...creating giant, circular detonations of white energy and radiation, followed by massive flames. Dax cries...

24 MEMORY MONTAGE

- A closed-door meeting between Trill officials...
- Pieces of paper being ripped up and thrown onto fires...
- Computer records being deleted wholesale...
- White-space Dax crying openly...

BASHIR (v.o., from 9x01)
Suppose you uncover some entirely new unknown horror from Trill's past. What will you do then?

25 **UNDERWATER**

Dax gradually re-adjusts to her surroundings. The bio-electric signals from the Annuated cease one by one, until she is left alone, crying. The Guide floats towards her...

GUIDE (v.o.)

You have found what you sought.

(she nods)

The Annuated are not accustomed to thinking at speeds compatible with youth. You must leave now, Ezri Dax, and allow them their rest.

From inside her enviro-suit, Dax stares back at the huge creatures as they swim away into the darkness...

DAX

You show me that ancient Trill committed genocide against its own people, and then just expect me to trot off like it's nothing?

GUIDE (v.o.)

Your ancestors did what they thought they had to do. You must try not to judge them too harshly. They discovered that our kind can be tampered with, perverted into a thing of horror. They sought to keep others from discovering this.

DAX

They killed four million people, then covered it up. That's a little hard for me to write off as mere youthful indiscretion.

GUIDE (v.o.)

Yes, they covered up their shame. Just as Audrid Dax did. And so many others both before and after. Both Swimmers and Walkers.

Before she can reply, there is a loud and worrying CLICK from inside her enviro-suit...

26 **INSIDE THE SUIT**

Shocked out of her anger, Dax checks the readings on her in-helmet display. All the gauges are deep into the red...

DAX

My suit... it's breaking down.
I'll never make it back to the
surface in time...

27 **EXT. RUNABOUT - DAY**

Keru reaches the runabout, flattens himself against the opposite side from the attackers. He quickly types a code into a recessed panel, the hatch opens with a HISS...

28 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

...and he rushes inside, immediately gives orders.

KERU

Computer, recognise Ranul Keru,
Lieutenant, USS *Enterprise-E*.
Authorisation seven-two-four-pi-
delta. Confirm.

COMPUTER VOICE

Authorisation confirmed.

Keru settles into the pilot seat, presses buttons...

29 **EXT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA - DAY**

The police battle increasingly desperately against the rioters. Cyl approaches Captain DOYOS...

CYL

Captain, when I give the command -
which I'm hoping to do any minute
now - I want all of our troops to
retreat by twenty metres.

DOYOS

Twenty metres? We'll be right up
against the cave entrance. We'll
lose all our manoeuvring room.

CYL
If what we have planned works, you
won't need it. If it doesn't work,
I won't give the signal. Just tell
the troops.

Nodding uncertainly, Doyos moves away to relay the order...

In background, we HEAR the runabout power up and lift off.

Cyl looks up -- the runabout rises into the sky from behind
the rock faces, moves slowly to position, high above...

30 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Keru sits in the pilot seat, looks out the windows at the
crowds, purposefully presses a series of controls...

KERU
Okay Sean... you were the pilot.
Help me out here, babe.

31 **EXT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA - DAY**

Seeing the emitters on the runabout's exterior flare into
life, CYL turns and shouts to Doyos...

CYL
Captain! Now!

Officers immediately FALL BACK towards the cave entrance...

The rioters are momentarily confused - *what changed?*

But they quickly regather their momentum and SURGE forward
en masse. But they get only about a foot --

-- when they BOUNCE off against an invisible forcefield.

32 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Keru smiles with relief, letting out a held breath...

Beside him, a panel shows a computer GRAPHIC of the ship
and its deflector shield bubble, extended out towards the
cave and the rioters...

33 EXT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA - DAY

Doyos looks to Cyl, a little confused. Cyl grins...

CYL

Our Guardian friend modified the
ship's forcefields to enclose
everything from the skirmish line
to the cave's entrance.

But now RUMBLING sound, and the crowd part to let something
through - a cargo skimmer being driven towards the caves...

DOYOS

Sir! The hostiles are driving a
vehicle towards us...

CYL

Don't worry. They can't get that
thing through the force-field.

But the skimmer comes to stop well outside the shield. Now
it's nearer, we can see it is carrying something...

...a BOMB, just like the one in the Senate elevator.

The driver climbs out of the vehicle's cab, clambers up
onto the roof... looks at Cyl... and presses a button.

WHITE OUT

The light recedes - Trill all over the place are SCREAMing,
collapsing in agony, holding their heads or their bellies.

The runabout forcefield sparks, fizzles, just about holds.

Cyl collapses to his knees, groaning and retching...

34 INT. ELEVATOR

Gard is in the elevator, talking to Rianu on his comm...

RIANU (comm)

They've now found three devices.
All within half a kilometre of the
Senate Tower.

GARD
Colonel, make certain the guard
units at the Commission are aware
that --

BOOM - the whole building ROCKS and the lights FLICKER...

35 **EXT. LERAN MANEV STREETS - DAY**

The plaza outside the Senate building, with the surging
crowds of protestors --

-- is suddenly filled with a massive **WHITE LIGHT**, expanding
in a circle. The exact same type of explosion that Dax saw
happening on ancient Kurl...

36 **INT. ELEVATOR**

The elevator grinds to a halt, THROWS Gard roughly to the
deck. He shakes it off, taps his ear-comm repeatedly -
nothing but static.

He realises with horror - *that was a bomb.*

37 **EXT. TRILL SENATE BUILDING - DAY**

The entire crowd are blinded, on their knees, SCREAMING...

38 **EXT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA - DAY**

Cyl lies writhing on the floor, among many (but not all) of
his officers doing the same. He groans like his insides are
being torn out, going pale... and he SCREAMS to the sky.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

39 ON THE BOMBER

Burned, boiled, skinned bloody by the radiation... his body gradually topples off the skimmer, THUDS to the ground...

40 EXT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA - DAY

...where the entire crowd has been knocked off their feet. Those closest to the flashpoint are as burned as him, but still alive and SCREAMing. The rest roll and grunt in pain.

41 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Keru slumps across his console, barely conscious, weak from the radiation. He fights through, forces himself to focus. Looks out the window, confused at first, then eyes wide...

42 EXT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA - DAY

The runabout gently settles to the ground. The hatch opens, Keru pushes himself out, towards the open cave entrance...

DOYOS and the police are just now coming around, clambering to their feet, trying to figure out what happened...

Except for Cyl - he lies on his back, making blood-curdling GROANS, abdomen moving violently under his jacket. Keru rips open his jacket, sees the writhing skin beneath...

KERU

Captain! Help me with Cyl! We've
got to get him into the caves!

Cyl SCREAMS again, holding his stomach in agony...

43 INT. ELEVATOR

Trapped inside the dark disabled elevator, Gard unholsters his phaser, FIRES it at the join in the door...

GARD

I am not going to die in the dark.

44 INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM

The hospital is overflowing with patients - either burned from the bombs, injured in the fighting, or SHRIEKing in agony as their symbionts react to the radiation...

Bashir stands at his cubicle, stunned at the scale of it...

BASHIR

What the hell happened out there?

45 UNDERWATER

The symbiont Guide hovers in the water near Dax, still sending its bioelectrical communication...

GUIDE (v.o.)

You require rescue. The Annuated cannot help you.

DAX

If I die down here, the Annuated will have shared their memories with me for nothing.

The Guide seems to consider its options. It swims closer to Dax and comes up along side her. Another message...

GUIDE (v.o.)

Hold fast to my tendrils, young one. I will conduct you to the surface.

She grabs hold of the stubby appendages on the symbiont's sides, lets it drag her upward through the water, swimming faster than she would ever be capable of...

GUIDE (v.o.)

Did you find the experiences the Annuated shared surprising?

DAX

More than you can imagine. I just hope that all the secrets I've dredged up will help to calm down the chaos going on on the surface.

GUIDE (v.o.)

It will be interesting to see the
Aboveworld again. My last Walker
chose to end her life after the
Kurlan civilisation was ended.

A stronger pulse along the electrical connection...

46 MEMORY FLASH

A young Trill woman kneels in a dark room, wearing a dark
robe, her wrists slit and bleeding freely onto the floor...

47 BACK TO SCENE

DAX

You... you're Memh.

GUIDE (v.o.)

That was five thousand years ago.
I have not joined with a Walker
since. I stayed below, tending to
those who preserve the memories of
my time. Perhaps now is the moment
to bring those memories forward
into your time.

In her suit, Dax is sweating and finding it increasingly
difficult to breathe. She checks her readings...

DAX

We need to go faster.

Instead the symbiont comes to a halt, seemingly troubled...

DAX

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to --

GUIDE (v.o.)

Something has happened above us.
Something terrible. Many voices
are raised, yet many more have
gone silent.

Dax looks up into the water in worry...

48 INT. CAVES OF MAK'ALA

Keru, Doyos and two officers carry the groaning Cyl down the stony passages - towards loud cries of shock, dismay and panic. They turn a corner, and see --

-- the other Guardians HOWL in despair, thrust their hands into milky water that is clotted with the floating bodies of dead symbionts, bobbing lifelessly. Keru stops...

KERU
They've killed the symbionts...

Cyl manages to grab Keru's arm, getting his attention. The Guardian leads his team towards the pools...

KERU
We need to extract his symbiont!
It's still alive!

Keru strips off his jacket, help Taulin into the water. But a silver FLASH of electricity comes from one of the bodies in the pool, touches Cyl's belly. And a moment later, a weaker, hesitant flash returns from Cyl to the pool...

KERU
They're communicating! They're not
dead - at least not all of them.

As the Guardians continue their efforts with renewed hope, Cyl manages to scratch words out for Keru...

CYL
I need to go down there. Dax is in
trouble. She needs my help. Fal
told me. Get me an enviro-suit.

KERU
What? General...

CYL
Get it now, Mister Keru. Please.
We haven't got much time.

Not at all sure this is a good idea, but convinced by Cyl's determination, Keru turns and runs back out of the caves...

49 INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM

Bashir's cubicle-for-one is packed with as many gurneys as will fit. His patients all SCREAM - the symbionts look like they will split right through the skin with their writhing.

Bashir injects a hypo into a woman's neck - she calms, but still whimpers under her breath. Officer Sagado re-enters, horrified at the traumatised patients, traumatised herself.

BASHIR

Officer Sagado, do they have any clue what happened? I know it was some kind of radiation bomb...

SAGADO

Neurogenic radiation, plus an electromagnetic pulse. The whole city's in chaos, they all are. Gheryzan, New Scirapo, Bana...

BASHIR

Anything about Mak'ala?

SAGADO

No. It must be the Neo-Purists. They hate the symbionts, and this radiation is only affecting joined Trills. They're all rejecting...

BASHIR

Yes, they are. And it's killing them all. Again. Just like Verad and his damn drugs...

Bashir trails off, mind spinning with possibilities...

BASHIR

Verad... Gheryzan...

(dropping tools)

Nurse, keep them comfortable and try to slow the rejections down. I'll be back as soon as I can.

And he rushes out of the cubicle, leaving Jenk and Sagado confused, worried and overwhelmed...

Keru runs back into the caves, struggling to carry two environment suits from the runabout with him. Cyl sits on the side of the pool, pale as death...

KERU

I haven't been affected, General.
I ought to go with you.

CYL

(grabbing a suit)

I'm perfectly capable of handling this on my own, Mister Keru. You have injured friends who need your help. More importantly, you have to tend to the symbionts. The ones who are still alive...

KERU

You're...
(dying)
...not well, General.

CYL

That's not as important as making sure that Lieutenant Dax fulfils her mission.

Keru finally nods, accepting Cyl's decision. He helps Cyl struggle against the pain to get into the suit.

Once ready, he steps into the water, careful to avoid the floating symbiont bodies. He turns back to Keru with an air of finality and grace in the face of death...

CYL

Thank you for everything you've done today. Neither Cyl nor I blame you for what has happened. Without your help, many more of us would be gone.

The slip of the tongue did not go unnoticed by Keru - Cyl's symbiosis is dissolving. Cyl turns, slips into the water, disappearing into its cloudy depths. Keru watches him go...

51 **INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM**

Chaos still reigns. Bashir re-enters the cubicle, carrying a large rack of hypos. But he stops in horror...

...at the sight of Doctor TORVIN operating on one of his patients with Jenk's help, removing the woman's symbiont. Bashir looks around - two other patients have already been operated on, their symbionts lying in porta-pools.

The hosts have been covered over with sheets - dead. Bashir sees all of this, and he is *furious*...

BASHIR

What the hell are you doing?

TORVIN

(still working)

I should think that was obvious, Doctor. These symbionts urgently need to be removed from their hosts before they expire. So I am saving their lives, instead of running off with no explanation.

BASHIR

And for every symbiont you save, you're perfectly happy to let a humanoid die, is that right?

TORVIN

You know perfectly well that a host must sometimes be sacrificed to save a symbiont.

BASHIR

Not when there are other options!

TORVIN

There are no other options, Doctor!

BASHIR

If you'd just waited, I could have brought you another option. But instead you've just wasted those people's lives for no reason.

TORVIN

What are you gibbering on about?
Once a symbiont is removed, the
host always dies regardless.

BASHIR

Not always. Last year, Verad Kalon
tried the same thing - forcing
every joined Trill to reject their
symbiont. Except he used a drug
instead of radiation - invented by
a Trill scientist named Bethan
Roa, at Gheryzan Hospital.

Torvin places this third symbiont into another porta-pool
held by Sagado, pulls another sheet over the dead host...

TORVIN

Gheryzan is a mental hospital. I
fail to see how that's relevant.

BASHIR

It's relevant because the drug's
effects dissolve the symbiosis
without killing the host. All of
these people would be alive right
now if you'd used it.

TORVIN

Doctor... I have never heard of
Bethan Roa, and Verad Kalon was a
terrorist psychopath. Even if he
weren't, he is dead.

BASHIR

I'm not surprised you've never
heard of Roa - there's no record
of his work at Gheryzan anywhere
in the Trill medical records. It
seems he's the victim of another
Symbiosis Commission whitewash.

TORVIN

We're not monsters, Doctor. If
such a drug did exist, why would
anyone want to suppress it?

BASHIR

Doctor, imagine what would happen if it became known that symbiosis could be undertaken on a temporary basis. That the bond could be made then broken, and remade again just as easily. The symbionts would become black market commodities, bought and sold. Join for a day, no strings attached!

Torvin is appalled at the thought. But he is beginning to believe Bashir may be right...

TORVIN

But you said there was no record of it. So this is all academic.

BASHIR

Luckily for these people, I happen to have a photographic memory.

(holds out the hypo)

This is the correct formula right here. I have enough for everyone.

Torvin takes the hypo from Bashir, considering it. But then he shakes his head, putting it firmly aside...

TORVIN

I'm sorry, Doctor, but I can't allow you to use it. Even if this drug can do what you claim - which I sincerely doubt - it is untested and experimental, and I will not use it on these patients without extensive testing. Which we obviously don't have time for.

BASHIR

Well, I'd rather take risks than stand by and do nothing. So if you don't mind, I have lives to save.

Bashir moves forward, getting ready to inject the remaining patients with his drug. But Torvin blocks him, determined. Jenk and Sagado stand by, unsure what to do...

TORVIN

Doctor Bashir, I will not allow you to endanger these symbionts with an experimental procedure. I must ask you to leave this room and let me get back to work. I've wasted enough time talking about this nonsense already.

Bashir stands his ground, fuming. Torvin stands his...

TORVIN

Very well. If you won't leave voluntarily, I'll have to have you removed. Officer Sagado, please escort Doctor Bashir off the premises immediately.

Putting down the porta-pool, Sagado approaches Bashir...

...and drags him to the door, struggling all the way...

BASHIR

You're making a mistake, Doctor Torvin. And all these people's lives will be on your head.

TORVIN

Get him out of here!

Torvin turns his back on Bashir, goes to a fourth patient, and switches on a LASER SCALPEL, ready to cut in...

BASHIR

Nooo!

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

52 INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM

Bashir is just at the threshold of the cubicle, about to be lost in the surging mass of panicked patients and staff...

BASHIR

Nooo!

Bashir breaks free, RUNS back into the room...

...quickly GRABS a hypo, DODGES past Torvin...

...and injects the patient right into her writhing belly.

Torvin furiously PUSHES Bashir away from the patients...

Sagado and Jenk grab him and hold him, struggling...

TORVIN

You'd better believe I'll be
telling your superiors about this,
Doctor Bashir. Your Starfleet
career is finished!

BASHIR

Maybe. But that hardly seems as
important as all the lives you're
willing to throw away for the sake
of expediency.

The patient's squirms start to calm, the symbiont settling. Eerily calm, in fact. Torvin goes to her, terrified...

TORVIN

Gods, what have you done?

...until the woman pulls in a shallow breath... another... and another. Torvin urgently runs tests to be certain...

TORVIN

(amazed)
Let him go...

Jenk and Sagado release Bashir - he steps closer to Torvin.

BASHIR

(gently)

I know you don't want these hosts
to die any more than I do, Doctor.

Still stunned at the patient's rapidly improving readings,
Torvin looks at Bashir, holds out his hand for a hypo...

TORVIN

We have a great deal of work ahead
of us, Doctor. Don't you agree?

Bashir smiles and hands Torvin a hypospray. Jenk and Sagado
relax, and they all dig in to begin operating...

53 UNDERWATER

Dax is still inside her enviro-suit, all gauges in the red.
She is unconscious, drenched in sweat and barely breathing.

CYL (comm)

Don't die, Dax... mama...

Taulin Cyl is in another suit, gently shaking Dax, trying
to get her back. He is in terrible pain, pale and sickly,
wracked with cramps, but grimacing past it.

The symbiont Guide floats nearby, observing the procession
of dead and dying symbionts sinking to the depths.

Dax's eyes finally flutter open, to Cyl's great relief...

CYL (comm)

You're awake.

DAX

Taulin... what's wrong?

Dax looks around, confused and semi-conscious. Her head is
beginning to clear, and she is breathing easier.

She sees Memh floating nearby, and all the dead symbionts.
One normal-sized symbiont circles Cyl protectively...

CYL (comm)

It was the bombs. The Neo-Purists set them off on the surface. They irradiated all the joined Trill up there, as well as the symbionts in the upper pools. Must have killed hundreds of them.

(re his symbiont protector)

Fal here was one of the lucky ones. He guided me to you.

DAX

(horrified)

How widespread was the damage?

CYL (comm)

It seemed to affect those nearest the surface the most.

GUIDE (v.o.)

Neurogenic radiation. The Kurlans of old died in the same way. That secret apparently did not remain concealed with all the others.

DAX

Is it safe to go back to the surface yet? I can't spend any longer down here.

Through his own pain, Cyl smiles at her knowingly...

CYL (comm)

You'll have as long as you need. I replaced your damaged cooling unit with the one from my suit.

DAX

But... how will you --

CYL (comm)

We won't, Dax.

Dax begins to realise what he means - he is dying, and he saved her while doing so. She begins to cry...

DAX
No! There's got to be some other
way... Some way to heal you...

CYL (comm)
(at peace)
There isn't, Ezri. I have lived a
long life, and my symbiont has
lived far longer. I think we've
served our people well.

DAX
(shocked)
You're both going to die?

CYL (comm)
We don't know. Taulin Kengro will
no longer live in this body. But
with luck, his memories will
remain. We will go to where you
have just been. To the Annuated.

With a new spasm of pain, Cyl prepares himself...

CYL (comm)
It has been an honour to know you,
Ezri Dax. Goodbye... mama.

He reaches up to his suit, twists a control. BUBBLES burst
up out of the suit and into the water, his air going.

He lets himself sink as the water comes rushing in. The
smaller symbiont, Fal, follows him down. Dax watches them
sink into the darkness, tears streaming down her face.

Her guide, Memh, sends her a gentle communication...

GUIDE (v.o.)
I regret your loss, young one.
Shall we continue to the surface?

As Dax continues to stare down into the dark water...

CROSS-FADE INTO:

54 **EXT. TRILL SENATE BUILDING - MORNING**

The morning after. The streets are comparatively quiet, the crowds mostly gone, the violence and horror having worn themselves out. The few people who remain now seem to realise what their rioting has led to - deaths uncounted.

The *Rio Grande* settles onto the shuttle plaza. The hatch opens and Dax steps out, deeply affected at the view.

Bashir is waiting for her, in a similar mood - sad, shaken, exhausted, just pleased to see she is alright. They didn't part on good terms. But for now, they just want to HUG...

55 **INT. TRILL SENATE OFFICE**

Dax and Bashir now stand together at the window, looking down at a more peaceful crowd. After their greeting, things have now gone back to stiff and uncertain between them.

Gard stands by the desk. His symbiont is safe, although he does look a bit scruffy after being trapped in the lift.

Trill President LYRISSE MAZ enters (from 8x10 "Divided We Fall"). She is tired, looking older, a little haggard. She nods to Dax and Bashir, and to Gard. Then she sits...

GARD

It's still a powder keg out there,
Madam President. It might not be
prudent to reveal absolutely
everything Lieutenant Dax
discovered at Mak'ala.

DAX

Madam President, the Federation
Council is going to expect your
government to answer some pointed
questions about the treatment of
the unjoined. And to offer redress
of their legitimate grievances.

GARD

I think the terrorists already
undermined whatever legitimacy
the unjoined masses may have had.

BASHIR

Rubbish. The extremists were a tiny minority. There's no question the people out there have been wronged, and that the injustice has gone on for centuries. They will no longer meekly accept second-class citizenship, no matter how its justified.

DAX

You owe the Trill people nothing less than the whole truth, Madam President. It's the best way to honour the memories of those people... and to help heal the damage we're suffering now as a result of what happened then.

GARD

Taking in too much truth too quickly is like trying to drink from a tidal wave, Lieutenant.

MAZ

(to no-one in particular)

Perhaps you're right.

Preparing herself with a deep breath, she presses a button. A RED LIGHT comes on, indicating a camera running.

She speaks with conviction, faking it at first, gradually coming to believe it more herself as she proceeds...

MAZ

Citizens of Trill... young, old, joined, unjoined... I come before you to address the accusations made against my government by the group known as the Neo-Purists. They claimed that we had concealed vital information from our own people... and they were right.

(beat)

MAZ (cont)

The parasites that threatened our world... and others... are a monster of our own making. They were created on the planet of Kurl, a Trill colony established during a previously hidden period of prehistoric space exploration.

(beat)

And this government has known the truth for over a hundred years, ever since our first discovery of the parasites by a joint Trill-Starfleet team.

Dax is shocked to realise that was her mission - Audrid's.

Maz continues to speak, admitting her guilt with dignity...

MAZ

I have continued the dishonest policies of my predecessors in this office... by concealing this from you. And my failure has led us all to a precipice.

56 EXT. TRILL SENATE BUILDING - DAY

A large SCREEN set into the building's wall broadcasts the president's message to the crowd in the plaza...

MAZ (screen)

We know the humanoid death toll is already in the thousands. The radiation casualties among the symbionts are even worse. As a result of the Neo-Purist bombings, the worldwide symbiont population has been reduced...

(can barely say it)

...by more than eighty percent.
There is no-one else to blame
- we did this to ourselves.

She pauses a moment to let the enormity of that sink in for the crowd, who look around themselves, astonished...

57 **INT. TRILL SENATE SECURITY CENTRE**

Colonel Rianu, Captain Doyos and their officers watch the monitors on their computers, which show the president...

MAZ (screen)

You may rest assured that those responsible for this atrocity will be found and punished. But their attacks were successful. It will take many years - perhaps decades - before the symbiont population has recovered enough to allow any to be spared for symbiosis.

58 **INT. TRILL SENATE OFFICE**

Maz sits at her desk...

MAZ

I therefore issue the following emergency proclamation - the Commission will authorise no new joinings until further notice. No existing joining will be terminated, but all symbionts will be returned to the breeding pools at the end of the lifetimes of their current hosts, and will not be reassigned at that time.

Dax and Gard both react to that with unease - they are both still joined - but they understand why it is necessary.

MAZ

As radical as this change is, it affords us a unique opportunity. While we wait for the symbiont population to recover, the lines our society has drawn between the joined and the unjoined will shrink and vanish. Because sooner or later, we will all be unjoined.

Now building to her conclusion, she pushes back from the table and stands up...

MAZ

I cannot issue such a sweeping proclamation without including myself. This morning I underwent an experimental medical procedure that successfully interrupted the symbiosis between myself and the symbiont to which I have been bonded for all my adult life.

She opens her jacket, lifts up the bottom of her blouse, and reveals a noticeably slackened abdominal pouch. The others are not surprised - they knew this had happened - but they recognise the significance of the gesture.

MAZ

I am no longer Lyrisse Maz. I am Lyrisse Durghan. The Maz symbiont has already been returned to Mak'ala, to help in the Guardians' efforts to restore the population. I am now, like you, unjoined. I stand with you, as one of you.

(imploring)

I call upon those of you who have taken your legitimate grievances to the streets to put violence aside now. We all stand together on this precipice. Let us face our common future together. A future of progress and equality for all of Trill. And let us start today.

She taps the button, switches off the camera. With a sigh, she settles back into the seat. It's done now, no taking it back. All they can do is wait and see how it turns out...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

59 EXT. TRILL SENATE BUILDING - DAY

The crowd is dispersing, the show is over. The doors of the Senate Tower open, and Dax, Bashir and Gard exit. There is still tension and awkwardness - she can't quite look him in the eye. Gard is aware of the tension but does not comment.

As they cross the plaza, Keru comes to meet them, tired but keeping a brave face - and Dax is glad to see him...

DAX

Ranul! What brings you to the
Senate Tower?

KERU

Just wanted to say goodbye before
you left Trill.

DAX

Julian, you remember Ranul Keru,
from the caves?

(to Keru, re Gard)

And this is Hiziki Gard, a special
agent for the Commission.

(to Bashir,
re Keru)

If not for Ranul, I'd never have
found what I needed.

KERU

I haven't seen so much action
since I left the *Enterprise*.
Didn't think I'd ever miss it.

BASHIR

Sounds like you're considering
going back to Starfleet.

KERU

Maybe, someday... if I thought
Starfleet needed me more than the
symbionts do.

KERU (cont)

And not just the younger ones. The ancient symbionts you contacted have been taking on a lot of memories. They'll need us too.

BASHIR

So little is known about that phase of the symbiont life cycle.

Dax tightens slightly, knowing that Bashir just said the wrong thing. Keru scowls a little, but remains polite...

KERU

I think maintaining the seclusion of the Annuated will be a higher priority than studying them.

BASHIR

I'm sorry, I didn't intend any offence.

GARD

(covering the awkwardness)

I believe the Senate has scheduled new hearings into the bombings.

KERU

Yes, I've been asked to testify. Maybe I'll see you again then, Lieutenant.

Keru nods polite goodbyes, and heads off into the Tower. Gard seems to take the hint...

GARD

Lieutenant, Doctor... thank you for everything.

Then he turns and walks back into the building too, leaving Dax and Bashir alone. They head to the runabout...

60 **EXT. SPACE - RUNABOUT**

Standard runabout at warp shot...

Dax and Bashir sit in the front seats, just keeping an eye on things, although there is nothing really to do. They are still not really talking. Dax's thoughts are miles away...

DAX

I was wondering... would I have the courage to give up my symbiont the way Maz did? I never wanted it in the first place. But now I get to keep mine, while the people who really want one can't have one.

BASHIR

I believe you're experiencing what's called survivor's guilt.

DAX

(exasperated)

Yes, thank you, Julian. But I am a trained counsellor.

BASHIR

Then you should understand that every joined Trill --

DAX

Every joined Trill is currently just running out the clock. And when they die, their symbionts will go back to the pools, with no chance of ever regaining their eyes and ears and arms and legs. And every humanoid will be cut off from everything the symbionts know. We might even forget why we joined in the first place. Even people who revere memories can forget what's important.

BASHIR

You've got probably a century of life left yet, Ezri. The symbiont crunch will be long over by then.

DAX

How can you be so sure?

BASHIR

Because I intend to help in any way I can.

She smiles, grateful for his support. But it does not relieve her thoughts all that much. Bashir hesitates - he has something else he needs to get off his chest...

BASHIR

Ezri... we have to talk. Before we get back to DS-Nine and get swept up into yet another crisis.

DAX

What do you want to talk about?

BASHIR

The mission, at least partially. But... it's really more about how you handled certain aspects of the mission.

She sits back, folding her arms in classic defensiveness...

DAX

My homeworld was attacked by a clandestine global terror network, Julian. Under the circumstances, I think the mission went as well as anyone could have hoped.

BASHIR

I certainly can't argue with that, at least in retrospect. But when I tried to point out that going to Mak'ala was risky, you just brushed me off. Dismissed me.

DAX

It was risky. I didn't need you to tell me that. But it was the right thing to do.

BASHIR

Again, in retrospect, yes. But at the time, it was as if you had no regard whatsoever for my input.

DAX

Ah. So it's not about the mission at all. It's about you being under me in the chain of command.

Frustrated by her defensiveness, he gets up and paces...

BASHIR

Dammit, Ezri, don't trivialise this! I'm not trying to defend my delicate ego. We both took wholly opposite approaches to the crisis. Doesn't that bother you?

DAX

Not especially. It was my call, and I made it. But if this isn't about me moving to command, then what is it about?

BASHIR

It's about whether or not my expertise is important to you. My advice. My experience, although I freely admit I don't have eight lifetimes to tap into.

(pause)

Whether I'm important to you.

Dax realises what he is saying, and the exasperation drops.

DAX

And you think you've become less important to me since I started wearing this red collar.

BASHIR

(quiet, withdrawn)

It seems that way, yes. We do nothing but fight, Ezri. It's not meant to be this hard... is it?

Stricken, tears in her eyes, she gets up and goes to him, hugging him tight. He clings on for hope's sake...

DAX

You were in love with Jadzia.

BASHIR

(pulling away)

I don't really see what that has to do with anything.

DAX

(patient)

You loved her, but you lost her to Worf. Then she died, and you lost her again. Then Ezri Dax blundered into your life, and suddenly you had a second chance.

BASHIR

I love you, Ezri. Not Jadzia's ghost. Don't you believe that?

DAX

I do believe you, Julian. But I've always wondered if the only reason for that is that you loved Jadzia first. We came together under some pretty intense circumstances. The emotional baggage with Jadzia and Worf. The Dominion War. The final attack on Cardassia Prime. We became a couple not even knowing if we'd survive the first day.

BASHIR

(nodding,

understanding)

And none of that bodes well for a stable relationship.

DAX

It isn't that you're not important to me, Julian. You're a dear, sweet man. A good man.

(more)

DAX (cont)

But the part of me that's just
plain old Ezri wonders if we'd be
together at all if I didn't see
you through Jadzia's eyes... and
you didn't see her in mine.

He begins to protest, but can't. Deep down, he knows she's
right. There's not really anything else to say.

Taking her by the hand, he leads her back to the seats, and
they sit, still holding hands, holding on to the comfort.

BASHIR

(gently, with
acceptance)

I suppose we're done now. As a
couple, I mean.

He gazes into her eyes, sees her gazing into his...

BASHIR

I hope you won't mind me telling
you that I still love you. I think
I always will.

DAX

I'll always love you too, Julian.

But now they're only friends, nothing more. They quietly
drop their hands, turn to watch the stars. It's over.

62 EXT. SPACE

The *Rio Grande* warps through space on its way home...

FADE OUT:

THE END