

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

9x19 - "Warpth."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novel

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: Warpth

by David Mack

NOTE: This episode features three different versions of Kira Nerys. For clarity, we will refer to them as follows:

KIRA - Captain Kira Nerys of Starfleet, currently in the infirmary after being attacked by Taran'atar.

INTENDANT KIRA - The Mirror Kira, Intendant of Bajor, on board a Klingon Alliance vessel, tracking rebels.

GENERAL KIRA - A mythical figure from Bajor's ancient past, leading her armies, a vision experienced by our Kira.

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 STAR FIELD

A calm, peaceful shot of the galaxy at large...

KURN (o.s.)

We have the strength to crush
them. We should be making a direct
assault on the rebels at Terok
Nor.

Pulling back slowly to show INTENDANT KIRA's face, gazing out over the starscape. She is only half paying attention.

MACET (o.s.)

I concur. We could retake the
station and break the back of the
rebellion.

Kira smiles, pitying their shortsightedness. She finally turns to them, indulgent.

2 INT. INTENDANT'S STATEROOM (CONTINUOUS)

We see MU-KURN, the Klingon general, boisterous and extravagant. He is dressed in heavy armour with many medals, drinking messily from a stein.

In contrast is MU-MACET (not Dukat), the Cardassian Gul - dark and smooth, sinister and economical. They sit side-by-

side in the Intendant's lavish quarters aboard the *Negh'var* (as seen in 9x07 "Saturn's Children").

As she turns to face them, we see the expansive picture window behind her, with the star field. She is in her full regalia - black catsuit and silver headdress.

INTENDANT KIRA

At what cost? The rebels have fortified it well, and they're poised to retaliate against Bajor itself. If we lay siege to Terok Nor, we lose Bajor. If they destroy Bajor, we annihilate them and their rebellion. Stalemate.

KURN

You mean to push into the Badlands then. A system-by-system cleansing of the rebel strongholds. That will be a glorious campaign.

Kira's stare conceals a sneer of contempt. Kurn is so far off the mark, Kira pities him. Macet shakes his head.

MACET

Madness. Most of those settlements are little more than lures. Bait meant to draw our ships into danger while the rebels fall back and regroup at Sindorin, where our sensors are all but useless.

INTENDANT KIRA

Quite right, Macet. That's why I deployed the Ninth Klingon Fleet in a sneak attack on Sindorin two hours ago.

An admiring smirk from Macet, and an appreciative growl from Kurn.

KURN

Regent Martok let you use his beloved Ninth Fleet, did he? What did that cost you?

INTENDANT KIRA

(stern)

More than you will ever know,
Kurn.

(lighter)

Once the Ninth Fleet regroups with
the *Negh'var*, we'll be ready to
move on to our next objective.

MACET

What is our next objective?

INTENDANT KIRA

All in due time, Macet.

KURN

If it's not Terok Nor, and the
Badlands have already been
cleared, then what are you
scheming, Intendant?

(grin)

Not planning to overthrow Martok,
I hope?

INTENDANT KIRA

(pause, then softly)

Control of the Alliance? That's
always been your weakness, Kurn.
You think too small.

On the Intendant's knowing smile...

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

3 EXT. SPACE

The NAHANAS COMET. The icy grey mass drifts along, a small cloud of debris leading to the nearby *Euphrates*. The runabout also drifts, rolling slightly, dark and powerless.

The *Defiant* uncloaks in space directly over the comet...

4 ON THE COMET

At the bottom of a deep crevice lie two MUNITIONS CANISTERS, wired up with components from an environment suit. A Starfleet combadge sits on top of the package. A TRANSPORTER EFFECT begins to take the package...

5 EXT. SPACE

The runabout suddenly comes to life - lights come on, engines surge with power.

6 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

A finger touches a control on the pilot's panel. The rest of the hand UNSHROUDS, moving quickly up to the rest of the body, revealing TARAN'ATAR alone in the cockpit.

7 EXT. SPACE

The runabout stabilises its position and immediately jumps to WARP, bursting away.

A split second later the comet EXPLODES, buffeting the *Defiant* with rock and ice. The ship is knocked backwards, rolling over and over on itself.

8 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

The ship is at warp. Taran'atar checks some readings, nods with satisfaction, then walks to the transporter station. He works the panels, the transporter cycles, materialising PRYNN TENMEI on the platform, without her combadge.

TENMEI

What happened?

TARAN'ATAR

You may resume your post. Do not
alter course.

Warily, she steps off the transporter platform and moves back towards the pilot station. On the way she steps over the remains of the empty environment suit. Sitting down, she reads various panels, and is taken aback.

TENMEI

You held me in the pattern buffer.
For more than fifteen minutes.

TARAN'ATAR

Yes.

TENMEI

You could have just beamed me into
space.

TARAN'ATAR

Yes. I still could.

TENMEI

So why haven't you?

TARAN'ATAR

You may yet prove useful. Until I
reach my destination, your
presence gives me... options.

TENMEI

I see. And then?

TARAN'ATAR

I do not hesitate to kill, but
neither do I kill without reason.
So it would be in your interest
not to give me a reason.

Prynn turns back to her panels. Taran'atar watches her, aware that he will have to keep a close eye on her.

9 **EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE**

Establishing, suggesting the tension of the situation...

10 **INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY**

KIRA NERYS lies in a coma on a biobed, dressed in hospital smocks. Out of visual range and almost out of earshot, the business of the Infirmary goes on around her.

Close on her unconscious face...

11 **FAST MONTAGE**

-- Kira in the white space of the Prophets...

-- Taran'atar's knife slices into Kira's chest...

-- The biobed sensors flatline...

-- The Opaka-Prophet cradles Kira's face...

12 **EXT. BAJOR - DAY**

GENERAL KIRA is the supreme military commander of the army of the Bajora. She wears formerly regal robes now dirty, with armour strategically placed. A deadly-looking SWORD hangs at her hip as she rides on a local animal.

Behind her on the long, dusty road rides a great army of soldiers, all either on the same type of animal or walking. In the distance are mountains, dark and misty.

All the generals in Kira's army are people we know. They are approaching the giant stone fort of PAREK TONN. Fires burn in its windows, figures move around its battlements.

A soldier comes up along side Kira, sharing her discomfort at this sight. It is SISKO, as a Bajoran general.

GENERAL KIRA
You see it too, Jamin?

SISKO
The fires are lit - the fortress
is occupied, and in numbers.

GENERAL KIRA

Could the Paqu have moved against
us while we were in the East?

SISKO

I doubt that.

They ride on, their disquiet growing. After a few moments,
the Bajoran army stands at the case of the fort - Kira and
Sisko right in front of the great wooden doors. They look
up at the walls of the fort, worried.

GENERAL KIRA

Hail!

A low, soft, rumbling voice echoes out from the fort.

EAV'OQ (o.s.)

Declare yourself.

GENERAL KIRA

I am General Kira Nerys of the
Bajora. This is Parek Tonn, my
people's fortress. Open the gates
and welcome us home.

EAV'OQ (o.s.)

This is not your fortress. It is
ours.

GENERAL KIRA

(stunned, furious)

Who dares to seize our home and
deny it to my face? Show yourself!

A figure emerges onto the battlements, high above them, and
looks down at the army. It is an EAV'OQ, as seen in 8x23
"Rising Son." Tall white tubular body, long pink ribbon-
like limbs, and one wide frowning eye in its face. Kira
looks up at it, horrified at its alien appearance.

EAV'OQ

We are the Eav'oq. We are the ones
who have defended this fortress
for millennia.

GENERAL KIRA
You've defended? But this is -

EAV'OQ
Our fortress.

Kira is getting increasingly incensed at this monster's ludicrous claims. She is tired and in no mood for this.

GENERAL KIRA
And against whom, exactly, have
you defended this fortress?

EAV'OQ
Against them.

The Eav'og reaches out a limb, pointing into the distance. Kira and Sisko turn and look behind them, in the direction where they have come from. Far in the distance, way out at the horizon, something is kicking up a huge amount of dust.

SISKO
(dismayed)
Another army is approaching.

Off Kira and Sisko's disquiet...

13 **FAST MONTAGE**

-- Taran'atar's knife lodges in Kira's chest...

-- The real Kira screaming and crying as flames lick all around her (taken from later in the episode)...

-- The Opaka-Prophet's face gazing up at her...

14 **INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY**

Kira still lies on her biobed, the vision going on inside her unconscious mind.

15 **EXT. RUNABOUT**

The *Euphrates* still running at high warp.

16 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Tenmei pilots the ship. Taran'atar stands slightly behind her, splitting his attention between her and his computer scans. The vessel is starting to VIBRATE around them as it is pushed to speeds it was never designed for.

TENMEI

Aren't you going to sit down?

TARAN'ATAR

On Jem'Hadar vessels, there are no seats. Comfort breeds weakness.

TENMEI

You could have just said no.

TARAN'ATAR

I have noticed that humans tend to understand Jem'Hadar ways better when they are explained in context.

TENMEI

I don't really give a damn about you or your context. If you like talking about yourself, go ahead, but I'm not looking at our time together as a learning experience.

TARAN'ATAR

Fair enough.

Taran'atar turns back to his scans. Taking a chance, Prynn moves one hand subtly towards a certain control. She taps it... and the ship JERKS with massive deceleration.

Tenmei braces herself against the panels, but Taran'atar is THROWN violently forward, knocking the other seat straight off its moorings and CRASHing him into the forward window.

17 **EXT. SPACE**

The *Euphrates* drops out of warp unexpectedly and DRIFTS to a halt, the nacelles sparking and smoking with venting gas.

18 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Consoles are dark or showing red warning lights. Taran'atar gathers his wits quickly and looks around himself. He glares at Prynn, sneering, but she is defiant.

TARAN'ATAR

Report. What has happened to the engines?

TENMEI

They were experimental. They weren't ready for a prolonged flight, especially not at full speed for this long.

TARAN'ATAR

You sabotaged the ship.

TENMEI

I didn't need to. This was bound to happen sooner or later. All I had to do was not tell you.

TARAN'ATAR

How convenient for you, then, that it failed now.

On cue, the computer BEEPS as an emergency comm signal comes in. As Prynn wonders what to do, it beeps repeatedly, demanding attention. Taran'atar steps close up behind her and disappears into his SHROUD, whispering in her ear.

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)

Do not tell them you have been hijacked or that I am aboard. Do not attempt to send any coded messages. Do you understand?

TENMEI

(scared)

Yes, I understand.

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)

Open the channel.

Prynn taps the keys, and the screen at her side changes to show the face of QURAG, a fairly minor Klingon captain.

QURAG (screen)
This is Captain Qurag of the
Klingon patrol vessel *noH'pach*.
Identify yourself.

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)
Answer him.

TENMEI
This is Ensign Prynn Tenmei aboard
the Starfleet runabout *Euphrates*.

QURAG (screen)
We detected your engine failure.
Do you require assistance?

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)
Yes.

TENMEI
Yes, Captain.

QURAG (screen)
We will change course to intercept
you. Stand ready to receive a
repair crew in two minutes.

TENMEI
Thank you, Captain.

QURAG (screen)
noH'pach out.

The Klingon's face disappears from the screen. Prynn speaks to the empty space beside her.

TENMEI
Now what?

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)
Now you remain seated and still,
or else I will kill you.

19 **EXT. SPACE**

A new vessel drops out of warp near the drifting runabout. It is small, the Klingon equivalent of a runabout. Similar size, but sleeker, and suitably battle-ready.

The Klingon ship snags the Starfleet vessel in a red sparkling TRACTOR BEAM, slowing the ship's erratic flight.

20 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Prynn turns in her seat to watch two Klingon transporter signatures deliver two Klingon males - KOTH and ORRUK.

KOTH

I am Koth, chief mechanic of the IKS *noH'pach*. This is my assistant, Orruk.

ORRUK

I am not your assistant. I am the chief scientist.

KOTH

(menacing)

Captain Qurag sent you to assist me. At this time, in this place, you are my assistant.

TENMEI

(nervous)

Can this wait until after you fix my ship?

Koth turns back to Prynn, becoming as charming as a Klingon can be. It is creepy and unpleasant in the circumstances. She knows Taran'atar is lurking somewhere in the room.

KOTH

Of course.

The two Klingons turn to the consoles and tap at them.

ORRUK

Mains are offline.

KOTH

Reserves are intact but unable to deliver the power. We're going to check your ship's nacelles.

Orruk sniffs the air, and suddenly draws his disruptor.

KOTH

What in the name of *Fek'lh*r are you doing?

ORRUK

There's someone else here. I can smell him.

Taran'atar UNSHROUDS behind Orruk - the Klingon spins and levels his disruptor. Taran'atar KNOCKS it away, PUNCHES Orruk right under the chin, breaking his neck in one shot.

Koth ROARS and charges with dagger out, but stops with a GURGLE, and looks down to find Orruk's own *dk'tahg* in his chest. The two bodies slump to the ground, dead.

Prynn stands from her chair, enraged and horrified.

TENMEI

You didn't have to kill them!

TARAN'ATAR

They acted with lethal force. I defended myself.

TENMEI

Defended yourself? You butchered -

Taran'atar SMACKS Prynn backhand across the face, hard enough to knock her unconscious against the consoles.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

21 INT. NOH' PACH - COCKPIT

The small bridge of the Klingon ship, tight and pokey but with all the usual Klingon signifiers. Through its forward viewport we can see the *Euphrates* sitting powerless nearby.

Captain Qurag sits in a central seat with two other officers at other positions, awaiting reports from the away team. Then, one of the others reacts to a readout.

KLINGON

Unauthorised transport. Aft compartment. One human life sign.

QURAG

Go handle it.

The officer gets up from his seat, draws his dagger, and walks towards the hatch to the aft compartment.

22 INT. NOH' PACH - REAR CABIN

The room is a mess. Benches around the edge serve as both dinner tables and engineering workshops. Half-eaten legs of meat and jugs of bloodwine sit around.

The officer enters, and stops when he sees Prynn lying on the floor, bruised and unconscious, wrists and ankles tied.

As his eyes widen in surprise, the tip of a dagger ERUPTS from his throat. He splutters as his blood SPURTS out, and then he collapses, revealing Taran'atar holding the dagger.

Taran'atar turns towards the cockpit...

23 INT. NOH' PACH - COCKPIT

Taran'atar marches straight into the cockpit, and SHOOTs Qurag and the last officer dead in a second, before they can even react. Hauling their bodies out of the way, he moves to the pilot's console and presses buttons.

24 **EXT. SPACE**

The Klingon ship FIRES on the defenceless runabout - it EXPLODES, leaving only a cloud of debris. The Klingon ship turns and heads off, cloaking and jumping to warp.

MATCH CUT the jump to warp with...

25 **EXT. HARKOUM - NIGHT**

A fast-running FIGURE chases through a jungle of metal pipes. It DODGES half-finished constructs, BATS loose pipes aside with one hand, GRIPS a disruptor with the other.

CLOSER

We are watching a KLINGON WOMAN - not military, a civilian mercenary - chase her prey. She grins, relishing the chase.

POV

In the murk ahead is her target - another running figure. The Klingon is the hunter, this other figure is the prey.

WIDER

A disused open air factory-cum-warehouse on a dark, misty night. A dirty RAIN falls, and lightning CRACKS loudly.

The fleeing figure looks back, checking on the Klingon, then turns and disappears into the maze of pipes and metal.

ON KLINGON WOMAN

Annoyed, but enjoying the chase. Another bright FLASH and a loud BANG - the Klingon looks up, sees that the wall she runs past is toppling. She runs harder to try to escape.

The first metal pipe HITS, knocks her to the ground. She tries to crawl, but then the rest of the wall falls, and her lower body is pinned under a ton of metal and rubble.

Refusing to give up even as she is dying, she HOWLS in rage. reaches for the disruptor that was knocked from her grasp. Then she senses a figure approaching, and looks up.

KLINGON WOMAN'S POV

The one she was chasing approaches slowly, looming in the darkness. Lightning FLASHES, silhouetting the figure. We do not see her face in the darkness, only the bony shape of her facial ridges, enough to identify a CARDASSIAN WOMAN.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As the Cardassian Woman stands at a safe distance...

KLINGON WOMAN

I'm bleeding to death.

CARDASSIAN WOMAN

I know.

KLINGON WOMAN

You could give me a warrior's end.

CARDASSIAN WOMAN

I could.

Instead, the Cardassian Woman bends down and picks up the Klingon woman's disruptor, tucking it into her own belt.

KLINGON WOMAN

(furious)

Have you no honour?

CARDASSIAN WOMAN

I do. But I know better than to trust a Klingon who fights her battles for money. You're not a warrior, you're a mercenary. You have no honour.

KLINGON WOMAN

Do I know you?

CARDASSIAN WOMAN

No. You only think you do.

The Cardassian woman turns, walks away into the darkness. The Klingon woman SCREAMS her last breath out in fury.

26 **EXT. SPACE**

The damaged *Defiant* sits in a cloud of dust and ice - the remains of the Nahanas comet.

27 **INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE**

Vaughn enters - Bowers relinquishes the centre seat to him. Everyone else is treading on eggshells around Vaughn.

VAUGHN
Report, Mister Bowers.

BOWERS
Main power and sensors restored, port nacelle repaired. The cloak seemed like a lower priority, seeing as we'd already lost the element of surprise.

VAUGHN
I'm not sure we ever had it. Do we have a fix on the *Euphrates*?

BOWERS
No sir. But its warp field dragged some particles in its wake, giving us an idea of their last heading.

VAUGHN
Alright - helm, get us underway, maximum warp.

ZUCCA
Aye, sir.

BOWERS
I thought I'd head to engineering, sir - offer Leishman a hand.

VAUGHN
Dismissed.

Bowers nods acknowledgement and heads out. As the ship goes to warp, Ensign T'rb quietly gets up and follows him.

28 INT. DEFIANT - CORRIDOR (CONTINUOUS)

T'rb jogs to catch up with Bowers as they walk.

T'RB
Sir, could I speak with you?

BOWERS
What's this about?

T'rb looks around nervously, not wanting to be overheard.

T'RB
Is Vaughn alright to stay in
command?

BOWERS
Why? Because of Prynn?

T'RB
C'mon, Lieutenant. The guy just
blew up his own daughter. And now
he's going after the guy he blames
for it.

BOWERS
(unimpressed)
Are you a Betazoid now, T'rb,
instead of a Bolian?

T'RB
(bristling)
It doesn't take a telepath to know
he's got to be torn up inside. If
he's on a revenge mission, you
have a duty to -

BOWERS
I know my job. So does Commander
Vaughn. Has he displayed any lack
of control on the bridge? Has he
done anything irrational? We all
liked Prynn, and we're all
grieving in our own way. Does that
mean we're unfit for duty?

Bowers reaches a turbolift, which opens, and he stops.

BOWERS

(firm)

Return to your post, Mister T'rb.
Dismissed.

He steps into the turbolift and allows the doors to close, leaving T'rb alone in the corridor.

29 FAST MONTAGE

- Kira lying in a coma on the Infirmary biobed.
- Taran'atar's knife in Kira's chest.
- Kira in the white space of the Prophets.
- Kira looks at herself in the mirror (from 9x04).

30 EXT. PAREK TONN - DAY

The vision of Ancient Bajor. Kira and Sisko walk the short distance from the gates of Parek Tonn to where their army waits. Vaughn and RO, both as Bajoran soldiers, meet them.

VAUGHN

Who is barring us from our own
keep? Why won't they let us in?

SISKO

Because they don't have to.

GENERAL KIRA

Parek Tonn is occupied, but it is
still ours. I won't abandon it -
not to these Eav'oq, and not to
whatever army marches here from
the sea.

RO

We're not equipped for a siege.

SISKO

They told us they'd defended the
citadel before -

(re other army)
- against them. Do we want to be here when that army arrives? And if we do, what side do we want to be on?

VAUGHN
You're talking about an alliance.

SISKO
It makes sense. If our goal is to be inside the fortress, then we should make it the Eav'oq's goal to bring us inside. With their enemy approaching, it should be a tempting proposition.

RO
This is ridiculous! Why involve ourselves in their fight? We can move to the other side of Mount Kola and wait out the battle.

VAUGHN
And what happens if the Eav'oq lose control of the fortress to an even more hostile power? I should think we'd find our options far less palatable then.

GENERAL KIRA
Enough! We'll ride under colours back to the gate and propose an alliance.

The discussion is over, the decision made. Kira and Sisko mount their riding animals and guide them back towards the fort. Once they are back at the doors, they look up. The Eav'oq looks back down. Sisko calls out, loud and strong.

SISKO
Hear me, Eav'oq! On behalf of General Kira Nerys of the Bajora, we come to offer a pact of truce. Is there one among you whom you can give us your word of bond?

The Eav'og gatekeeper turns away for a moment, as if to confer with others. After several seconds he reappears. The Eav'og's voice echoes back eerily over the stone.

EAV'OQ

We have nominated our sister as
our representative in this matter.

The Eav'og steps back out of sight, and another figure steps out. A older Bajoran woman with white hair - OPAKA.

OPAKA

My name is Opaka Sulan, and I will
speak for the Eav'og.

From General Kira's surprised face...

31 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

To the real Kira's unconscious face in the infirmary...

In the next bed, Ro is also unconscious, with QUARK slumped across her, asleep. Quark's sensitive ears alert him to the SSHHH of doors opening and soft, slow FOOTSTEPS entering.

He lifts his head, and looks nervously towards the door. A figure has entered the Infirmary, dressed in a heavy cloak. Quark tenses, nervous and uncomfortable at this stranger.

But then the figure reaches up and pulls back its hood, and it is the real SISKO. He smiles gently, and Quark relaxes.

SISKO

Hello, Quark.

QUARK

Captain. Nice robe.

SISKO

I wanted to travel incognito.

Sisko turns towards Kira, all his attention now for her. He grabs a chair and places it next to her bed, sitting and taking one of her unresponsive hands in his.

Watching this, Quark takes one of Ro's hands likewise. He looks over at Sisko, and they share a nod of empathy and understanding. It's a nice moment of bonding between them.

Looking at Kira's face again...

GENERAL KIRA (v.o.)

All we are asking for is to help
defend the fortress.

We **WHITE OUT**, fading into...

32 **EXT. PAREK TONN**

General Kira stands, Sisko by her side, calling up to Opaka on the battlements of the fort, trying to stay calm and control her temper. Opaka is the epitome of diplomacy.

OPAKA

Your aid is welcomed. But the
Eav'oq do not acknowledge your
claim to their fortress.

GENERAL KIRA

But it's been our fortress for
generations!

OPAKA

Are you so sure? Don't be fooled
by facades. Of this fortress, you
have seen only the outer walls.

GENERAL KIRA

What if we negotiate peace between
the Eav'oq and their foes? Will we
be granted shelter then?

OPAKA

The Ascendants will not negotiate.
For eons they have sought this
fortress, but it was hidden from
them, mantled in mist. Now the
road is open, and they are coming
to claim it. Their only aim is to
possess the fortress... or be
annihilated in the attempt.

GENERAL KIRA
If we turn away the Ascendants...
will the Eav'oq grant us haven?

OPAKA
Not until you arrive at the truth.

GENERAL KIRA
Which is...?

OPAKA
You will know it when you walk its
path.

On General Kira as the memory comes to her...

FLASHBACK

The Opaka-Prophet cradling Kira's face...

BACK TO SCENE

As General Kira ponders the confusing memory that is hers
and yet not hers, and looks up at Opaka...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

33 INSERT

Monitor image of a debris field - the *Euphrates*.

ALECO (o.s.)

The wreckage is definitely from
the *Euphrates*. It was destroyed
between five and six hours ago.

34 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

Vaughn and Bowers watch the monitor over ALECO's shoulder.
T'rb is next to them, and everyone is listening in.

VAUGHN

Any sign of Taran'atar?

T'RB

We're reading biological residue
from two humanoids - both Klingon.
No sign of Jem'Hadar DNA.

BOWERS

Is it possible the Klingons
captured Taran'atar, then
destroyed the runabout?

VAUGHN

Why would they do that? And even
if they did, why haven't they
notified Starfleet?

(sigh)

No, I'm afraid the most likely
scenario is that not only does
Taran'atar have a huge lead on us,
he now also has a cloaked ship
that's currently faster than us.

ALECO

Won't the Klingons notice that one
of their ships is missing? What
happens when they issue an alert?

VAUGHN

I doubt they will. As a point of pride, the loss of one of their ships isn't something they'd want known, especially not with most of Almatha sector under Romulan oversight.

Vaughn nods to himself, an idea occurring.

VAUGHN

Mister Bowers, continue analysing the debris. I have some research to do.

Vaughn turns and stalks out of the bridge, leaving the rest of the crew puzzled at being out of the loop.

35 INT. DEFIANT - READY ROOM

Vaughn enters, moves to the desk and presses buttons on the computer. It takes a while to enter the program he wants.

At last the screen changes to show the face of a grizzled Klingon veteran, LORGH. He looks groggily into the camera.

LORGH (screen)

Oh, it's you. If I'd known, I'd have gone back to bed.

VAUGHN

(all business)

No jokes, Lorgh. Prynn's dead, and the bastard who killed her has one of your ships.

LORGH (screen)

What do I need to know?

VAUGHN

I have reason to believe that a Jem'Hadar named Taran'atar has captured one of your ships in the Almatha sector.

LORGH (screen)
Taran'atar... that would be your
observer? The one sent by Odo?
(Vaughn nods)
What was Prynne's part in this?

VAUGHN
Taran'atar hijacked her runabout
to get off Deep Space Nine. We
found the runabout destroyed a
short while ago, and the remains
of two Klingon personnel.

LORGH (screen)
I see.
(checks records)
There is a scout ship on a regular
patrol near your coordinates - the
noH'pach... and it is overdue to
check in with sector command.

VAUGHN
I don't suppose you can tell me
where the *noH'pach* is now.

LORGH (screen)
No... but I can tell you that it's
a *Haqtaj*-class vessel. The rest
I'm sure you can do on your own.

VAUGHN
Thank you, Lorgh.

LORGH (screen)
If you find the *noH'pach*, I think
the Empire would be grateful if
you kept this incident out of any
official reports.

VAUGHN
Of course.

LORGH (screen)
It would also be wise to avoid any
Romulan involvement.

VAUGHN

I'll try - but I might need to
expose a few of your secrets -
schematics for the *Haqtaj*-class,
for example.

LORGH (screen)

Whatever is necessary.

(beat)

I hope your daughter had the
honour of dying in battle, Elias.
If so, I'm sure she's already
being hailed in Sto-Vo-Kor.

VAUGHN

(blank face)

No doubt.

With a short nod, Lorgh cuts the connection. Vaughn stands
for a moment, trying and failing to keep his grief reined
in. He won't go to pieces. He'll rely on anger instead.

36 INT. NOH' PACH - COCKPIT

On Taran'atar as he stands at the pilot's station...

JEM'HADAR FIRST (o.s.)

Curious... do you think this makes
you free?

Taran'atar does not turn, but we PAN sideways to reveal the
nameless JEM'HADAR FIRST from Sindorin (from 8x08 "Abyss")
standing at the rear of the cockpit, watching him.

QUICK FLASH

-- The First grabs Taran'atar's hair and pulls him close,
as he rests in the First's torture device (from 8x08).

BACK TO SCENE

Taran'atar rubs his eyes, refusing to acknowledge.

TARAN'ATAR

You are not real.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Who are you to judge what is real,
and what is not?

TARAN'ATAR

I am a Jem'Hadar.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

You don't know what that means.

TARAN'ATAR

It means "soldier."

JEM'HADAR FIRST

How can you be so old, and yet so
naive? Soldiers have value. You
and I are expendable, utterly
disposable. We are slaves.

Arguing despite himself, Taran'atar turns to the delusion.

TARAN'ATAR

I am not a slave. I serve
willingly.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Captain KIRA looks down at the bloody knife in her chest.

KIRA

Some service.

Instantly infuriated, Taran'atar LAUNCHES across the room,
his hands out to throttle Kira where she stands. But...

ANOTHER ANGLE

The delusion is now WEYOUN, who SLAPS Taran'atar roughly
across the face before he can attack him.

WEYOUN

Remember your place, First!

Momentarily cowed and ashamed, Taran'atar bows his head in
obedience. But then he looks angrily into Weyoun's face.

37 **INT. NOH' PACH - REAR CABIN**

Bruised and suffering, Tenmei sits on the deck near an open toolbox. She rubs the ties on her wrists against the rough metal edge of the toolbox, gradually wearing them down.

She looks up as she hears the SOUND of Taran'atar's voice through the walls. He is yelling, as if having an argument. We can only hear his side of it, muffled and unclear.

Prynn frowns, worried that he is going even more insane. It spurs her to work harder at breaking her bonds. Finally they SNAP; she begins untying the ones around her ankles.

38 **INT. NOH' PACH - COCKPIT**

Taran'atar's delusion still wears the shape of Weyoun...

WEYOUN

A Jem'Hadar is obedience! Without it you aren't a Jem'Hadar at all!

TARAN'ATAR

I know.

WEYOUN

What are you, then, now that you have failed as a Jem'Hadar?

TARAN'ATAR

I am dead. I must reclaim my life.

WEYOUN

So you have left your assignment to present yourself to the Vorta for correction, yes?

TARAN'ATAR

I have not. I cannot. I will not!

ANOTHER ANGLE

JEM'HADAR FIRST

You just don't want to. And why should you?

TARAN' ATAR

Because it is the order of things.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

Surely you don't still cling to the outrageous idea that these Founders are the omnipotent and omniscient lords of all creation?

Taran'atar turns away, thinking, desperately trying to work out the confusion in his head.

TARAN' ATAR

The Founder herself denied it. She proclaimed reverence for another. I wondered if her confinement had harmed her... but how could any god succumb to such a trivial punishment?

(pause)

Perhaps she spoke the truth. She is not a god. And neither is Odo.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

Then why continue to bind yourself to their will?

TARAN' ATAR

Because...

(quiet, defeated)

Because I have no choice.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

The very definition of a slave.

TARAN' ATAR

I am not a slave!

JEM' HADAR FIRST

Then you've emancipated yourself!

TARAN' ATAR

No... I defied the will of the Founders... but neither do I obey my own.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Captain Kira is back, with the bloody knife in her chest.

KIRA

Then whom do you obey?

Again, Taran'atar is overcome with rage at the mere sight of Kira, and launches against her. But she pulls the knife out of her own chest and DRIVES it into Taran'atar's.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Taran'atar GASPS in shock and pain, his hands going to his chest. But there is no knife, only his black jumpsuit, and the delusion is gone. He is alone.

He stands, catching his breath, confused, disoriented. He closes his eyes, forces himself to calm through sheer will.

An insistent repeated BEEP issues from a console. He snaps back to attention, checking the console. He frowns, draws his disruptor, and turns towards the aft compartment. The hatch opens at his approach. He steps over the threshold...

39 INT. NOH' PACH - REAR CABIN (CONTINUOUS)

The moment Taran'atar's boot makes contact with the first deck plate on this side of the door, there is a FLASH-CRACK of white-hot energy all around him. He shudders, shaking on the spot, his body tense and spasming - being electrocuted.

A panel near the door has been ripped open and its innards pulled out - typical Starfleet improvised tech job. Cables lead from the panel to the deck plate, feeding the power.

Prynn huddles in a corner, crouched and hugging her knees, getting as far away as possible. She trembles in fear, but watching her handiwork with a small smile of satisfaction.

The panel EXPLODES, and the shock stops. Taran'atar slumps to the deck with a THUD, eyes open but no sign of life in them. His skin is smoking, his clothes burned.

Prynn shoots to her feet and runs forward. She dodges past Taran'atar's body and over the threshold into the cockpit.

40 INT. NOH' PACH - COCKPIT (CONTINUOUS)

Prynn rushes to the front consoles, desperately tries to work out which buttons to push. Finally she hits the right one - the hatch behind her begins to slowly rumble closed.

Slightly relieved, but knowing she is a long way from out of trouble yet, she inspects the panels, trying to figure them out with a professional pilot's eye.

TENMEI

(re various panels)

Communications... tactical...

helm... operations...

She glances behind, seeing that the door is still closing, not yet fully closed. No sign of movement from the back. Just as the door is about to close, a pair of hands DARTS through the gap and begins pushing the hatch back open.

Prynn SQUEAKS in fear. Terrified, she dashes back to the Communications panel and tries to figure it out.

Taran'atar's hands force the hatch further open, the gears GRINDING against his strength. He gives a rising GROWL as he pushes harder and harder.

TENMEI

(pushing buttons)

S.O.S.... please...

At about three-quarters open, the hatch's hydraulics give up and Taran'atar SLAMS the door open with a loud CLANG.

Prynn sets her feet into some kind of judo throw pose - she has no chance of beating him, but she has to do something.

Taran'atar barrels into the cockpit, ROARING in fury, his skin still smoking and burned. With two hands to her chest, he SLAMS her backward against the consoles, knocking the breath out of her.

She slumps to the deck. He reaches down and hooks a hot, smoking arm around her neck, hauls her to her feet and backwards to the aft compartment.

41 **INT. NOH' PACH - REAR CABIN (CONTINUOUS)**

Struggling against him and SCREAMING in rage, Prynn finds herself dragged across the deck to the centre of the room.

With his spare hand, Taran'atar finds Klingon wrist-manacles. He snaps them around one of Prynn's wrists, then drags her to a pipe that hangs out of the ceiling. He forces both of her arms in the air and snaps the other manacle into place, hanging it over the pipe.

Prynn is left dangling by her wrists, toes barely touching the deck, all her weight on her wrists. She is still kicking and screaming against him, but he ignores her.

He takes a moment to remove any objects from within her potential reach, then steps up close.

TARAN'ATAR

Don't do that again. Next time, I
will employ a more... thorough...
means of restraint. Is that clear?

She glares at him, not giving an inch. He doesn't care. He turns and leaves, heading back to the cockpit. Prynn is left alone, her fear beginning to break through her rage.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

42 INT. DS9 - SCIENCE LAB

The science lab from 9x13. NOG and BASHIR sit at the work bench, quietly working on various projects. Bashir is pensive, distracted. Finally he sighs and drops his padd.

BASHIR

I don't think I can continue.
This entire plan is unethical.

NOG

It was your idea!

BASHIR

And I think I was wrong for even suggesting it. We're trying to design a neuro-electric pulse to undo the Intendant's programming. But we have no idea what it could do to Taran'atar. What if it causes brain damage? What if it erases his entire personality?

NOG

Call it an improvement.

BASHIR

That's not funny. The first rule of medicine is 'Do no harm,' but I'm supposed to create a device to alter a sentient being's brain functions without his permission?

(re padd)

And what am I basing my work on? Something that looks like it was created by professional torturers.

NOG

What a load of grub-*fudu*.

BASHIR

Excuse me, Lieutenant?

NOG

You heard me, sir. If someone's using him as a slave, then they're hurting him. And if we let them use him as a weapon, then he'll hurt a lot of other people. What do your ethics say about that?

BASHIR

(sigh)

Maybe you're right. If Taran'atar has been forcibly altered... then he's very likely in a state of diminished capacity, unable to make an informed decision in his own best interest. But using this data, even for a noble purpose...

NOG

Are you making a profit from it? Is Starfleet? Or the Federation?

BASHIR

Of course not.

NOG

If you turn that research into a cure, who benefits?

Bashir slumps in his chair, finally accepting Nog's logic.

BASHIR

I just find that working with anything related to torture turns my stomach.

NOG

I understand that. But you can't let a little indigestion stop you from doing what's necessary. He needs our help, Doctor.

Bashir looks up at Nog, who pointedly gestures towards the padd. Bashir picks it up, and they both return to work.

43 **EXT. SPACE**

The starfield... then we angle down until a PLANET comes into view. At the same time a small and deadly-looking STEALTH VESSEL rises up to meet us, to just above the atmosphere. It is moving fast but cleanly and smoothly.

Moments later, a second ship pursues the first up from the surface - a weak CARGO VESSEL that rumbles and shudders as it goes beyond tolerances to keep up with the first ship.

44 **INT. CARGO VESSEL**

The cockpit of the second ship. A frustrated and furious male CHALNOTH (as seen in TNG 3x18 "Allegiance") is at the controls, driving the ship hard in pursuit of its prey.

CHALNOTH

That damned Cardassian bitch stole
my own damn ship!

Ahead, the first ship continues to smoothly evade.

The Chalnoth takes a moment to glance behind himself to the open cargo hold of the small vessel. In it are five dead aliens of various species - a Caitian, a Tiburonian, an Efrosian, others. All have phaser burns in their chests - the Chalnoth killed them to commandeer this vessel.

The Chalnoth turns back to front, and JUMPS as an enormous Romulan *D'Deridex*-class warbird suddenly decloaks, almost right on top of them. He grits his teeth and growls as he steers the ship sharply to avoid a collision.

VOICE (comm)

Romulan Warbird *Verithrax* to the
crews of the *Githzarai* and the
Otamawan. Cease your activities
and return to the surface at once.
If you do not comply, you will be
boarded by crew of this vessel and
placed under arrest.

The Chalnoth doesn't bother replying. He drives the shaking ship further forward, refusing to give up the chase.

45 **EXT. SPACE**

The escaping vessel swoops down into the atmosphere, glowing with the friction. The Romulan warbird rumbles slowly to hover in between it and the chasing cargo ship.

The Chalnoth swerves his vessel between the Romulan ship's large warp nacelles, and continues the pursuit. It dives after the first ship into the atmosphere and pulls closer. The dirty grey-yellow clouds rush up to meet them both.

46 **INT. CARGO VESSEL**

The Chalnoth pushes his small stolen ship almost to the breaking point. Finally he is right on top of his prey... and then literally on top.

CHALNOTH

You think I don't know my own
ship's shield harmonics, you idiot
woman?

47 **EXT. ATMOSPHERE**

The two ships continue to fly through the air together, the pursuing ship barely a metre above its target. It moves closer, and the shield bubbles of both ships FIZZLE and SPARK as they push against each other... and then cross.

48 **INT. CARGO VESSEL**

The Chalnoth stands from his seat in victory.

CHALNOTH

Ha! Not so smart now, are you?
Computer! One to transport to the
Githzarai!

An alien transporter signature takes him...

49 **INT. CHALNOTH SHIP**

The transporter deposits the Chalnoth into the rear hold of his own vessel. He looks around - there is a rack for holding weapons on the cabin wall, but it is empty.

CHALNOTH

(enraged)

First you steal my ship, then you take my knives? I'll use them on you first, you Cardassian whore!

VOICE (comm)

Verithrax to *Githzarai* and *Otamawan*. This is your final warning. Surrender immediately or face the consequences.

Growling, the Chalnoth marches forward. He wrenches the separating curtain aside, revealing the tall back of the pilot's seat in the advanced cockpit. He grabs the back of the chair and SPINS it angrily towards him.

But instead of the Cardassian Woman, there is a BOMB on the seat, and an auto-pilot device wired into the panels. The red lights on the bomb begin to flash quickly.

As they count down from three to zero, the Chalnoth gives a grim smile of respect for his opponent.

50 **EXT. ATMOSPHERE**

An EXPLOSION engulfs both of the small ships, destroying them both as they burn up in the atmosphere.

Nearby, the Romulan warbird pauses above the planet. Then it turns away, its image rippling as it returns to cloak, and we are left with the empty starfield again.

PULL BACK, and the edges of a window frame come in around the image, revealing...

51 **INT. INTENDANT'S STATEROOM (CONTINUOUS)**

Continuing to pull back from the star field, now viewed through the picture window of the Intendant's quarters.

Intendant Kira is draped lavishly upon her bed, propped up against a mound of plush pillows. She stretches seductively and reaches to where the Vulcan handmaiden from 9x07 holds a bowl of fruit. Kira takes one and sucks it provocatively.

MU-HOVATH (o.s.)
It's almost done, Intendant.
I apologise for the delay.

INTENDANT KIRA
No need. As long as it's ready
before we reach our destination.
You're doing wonderfully, Hovath.

MU-HOVATH
Thank you, Intendant.

Now we see that she is talking to the Mirror version of KE HOVATH (from 1x14 & 9x10), a Bajoran scientist working for the Alliance, with the traditional evil ominous goatee.

He is working amongst a mass of complex machinery, full of cables and connections. He wipes sweat off his forehead - she makes him nervous. He taps controls, changes settings.

The Intendant slinks off the bed and struts towards Hovath. She inspects the machinery, not really knowing what it all does but wanting to look interested. She seems to be happy.

Finally, Hovath steps back with a relieved sigh.

MU-HOVATH
It's ready. All the modifications
are made. It only needs power.

INTENDANT KIRA
Computer, activate the new power
circuit. Authorisation Kira-one-
eight-one *shakom doka*.

As power SURGES into the machine, we pan around and see a large round platform underneath a ceiling of targeting sensors - a transporter. Kira smiles with satisfaction.

MU-HOVATH
This machine, Intendant... it's a
dangerous invention. But the scope
of it, it's absolutely...

He drifts off, suddenly afraid that he has said too much.

INTENDANT KIRA

Go on, Hovath. I'm eager to hear your opinion as to what we - or rather what you've accomplished.

MU-HOVATH

If we can stabilise the system, we'd no longer be limited to the one alternate universe. They'd all be open to us. An infinity of universes! With unlimited worlds and resources, we could transform the Alliance! Whoever controls this would be all but unstoppable.

INTENDANT KIRA

Well said.

She strides back to her Vulcan handmaiden, and takes two goblets of wine. With a nod, the servant leaves the room silently. Then Kira hands one goblet over to Hovath.

INTENDANT KIRA

Have a drink with me, Hovath.

(chink goblets)

To your genius, Professor. And the historic service you've performed for the Alliance.

MU-HOVATH

My honour to serve, Intendant.

Kira takes a deep drink of the wine, and Hovath does the same. A few seconds later, the realisation hits him - the drink is poisoned. His breathing seizes, his knees buckle.

Kira deftly plucks the goblet from his shaking hand before he can drop it. He falls to his knees, and looks up at her.

INTENDANT KIRA

I'd offer you some of the antidote, but I drank the last dose an hour ago.

We hear his dead body slump to the ground...

52 **FAST MONTAGE**

- Kira in the white space of the Prophets.
- Kira screaming and crying in flames (from later).
- Unconscious on the biobed as Sisko holds her hand.
- Fighting hand-to-hand on Ancient Bajor (8x13).

MATCH CUT Intendant Kira's face to:

53 **EXT. PAREK TONN**

General Kira rides her animal away from the fortress and towards the approaching Ascendant army. Sisko, Vaughn and Ro are nearby, with their own Bajoran army riding behind.

The view of an enormous Ascendant army is ominous, powerful dangerous and numerous. Kira and Sisko are dismayed.

GENERAL KIRA

There must be at least twenty thousand troops.

SISKO

More than that, I think. Closer to thirty thousand.

GENERAL KIRA

We'll ride ahead and seek parley.

She nods Sisko, Vaughn and Ro to come with her. They ride on until the Ascendants fill their view with sheer numbers.

The lead Ascendants ride on enormous lizards, which ROAR and rear fiercely. Kira tries to remain confident, but the Ascendants' golden eyes seem to burn with fire - merciless.

GENERAL KIRA

Hail! I am General Kira Nerys of the Bajora. I come seeking parley.

ASCENDANT

Stand aside. We ride to the fortress.

SISKO

(*sotto*)

Nerys... we should fall back.

Kira hesitates, hoping some compromise can be made. But then the lizards rear up and ROAR, and further back in the Ascendant army's ranks, we see points of light - FLAMES being lit. Kira's eyes flare, and she rears her own animal.

GENERAL KIRA

Fall back! Fall back!

The four Bajorans turn their animals around as quickly as they can and force them to gallop back towards their army.

There is a deep MOANing sound, and Kira glances back to see hundreds of flaming ARROWS heading towards them. Kira urges her animal harder, harder...

Just as Kira and the others reach their army, the arrows hit. They cut into Bajoran and animal alike, stabbing and burning at once. They fall to the ground, SCREAMING.

She looks up as a moaning sound heralds another barrage of arrows. Kira forces her animal on, but the arrows come straight for them. Kira looks up as they come for her, and she GASPS in pain as they hit her.

54 **INT. WHITE SPACE**

Captain Kira GASPS in shock as she reacts to the attack. But the army is gone, and she is whole. She looks around, her senses coming back to her as she realises she is back in the Celestial Temple. The Prophets wear familiar faces.

KIRA

A vision. You showed me Parek
Tonn.

OPAKA PROPHET

The end of the journey. And the
beginning.

Kira turns her head...

...And she and the Opaka Prophet stand together on the blasted landscape outside the fortress.

KIRA

None of this is real. It's just an illusion. It never happened.

OPAKA PROPHET

Never.

SHAKAAR PROPHET

Yet.

EVIL JAKE PROPHET

Always.

VAUGHN PROPHET

Our hand must defend the fortress.

KIRA

But it isn't real!

SISKO (o.s.)

It's real.

Kira turns, and sees Sisko, who is dressed as his BENNY RUSSELL alter ego. She is confused to see him like this.

SISKO

It's as real as anything you've ever known. Look into your heart. The fortress is real - not just to you, but to the Eav'oq and the Ascendants as well.

As Kira looks up at the towers, understanding comes.

KIRA

The fortress... it's faith. And it's more than that. It's the Celestial Temple itself.

SISKO

Yes.

KIRA

It isn't Parek Tonn... it only looks like it, because the faith of Bajor and the faith of the Eav'oq are built on the same foundation.

VAUGHN PROPHET

Our hand is of Bajor. Our hand is of Idran.

Kira looks back the other way, along the long, empty road.

KIRA

Three roads. Three peoples.

OPAKA PROPHET

Our hand rises where the roads meet. This is where our message leads our hand.

KIRA

I still don't understand. Do you mean you're trying to bring the Eav'oq and Ascendants together? Even though the Ascendants might try to exterminate the Eav'oq?

VAUGHN PROPHET

All roads meet.

SHAKAAR PROPHET

Some cross.

EVIL JAKE PROPHET

Some end.

White light bleeds over everything again, until we are...

56 **INT. WHITE SPACE (CONTINUOUS)**

Kira is shocked to think that the Prophets are advocating war. She looks at them - their blank, unfeeling faces, and is horrified. She speaks to them in turn, disgusted.

KIRA

Is this what you want? Two races who worship you are on a path to war, and you're just going to let it happen? Is that your will?

VAUGHN PROPHET

Our hand must act of its own will.

OPAKA PROPHET

Our hand must shape the future.

Around Kira and the Prophets, other shapes begin to form and coalesce, surrounding them. Kira turns to look...

Some shapes form into Eav'oq - tall, tubular, a single eye that shines with peace and gentleness.

Other shapes form into Bajorans - some strangers, some that Kira knows. They are tearful, silently pleading with Kira.

The final group forms - Ascendants. Silver bio-armour, fiery merciless eyes, sneering superior attitude.

Kira reacts to the sight. Sisko steps from behind her...

SISKO

Not all the Prophets' children interpreted their message in the same way. The Eav'oq created a philosophy of unity and pacifism. Bajor developed a religion of empathy and reason.

KIRA

And the Ascendants... made it into a crusade.

FLAMES burst up in a circle around them, burning the Eav'oq and Bajorans. They SCREAM and cry and wail as they burn, while the Ascendants look down on them with satisfaction.

Kira, caught in the middle with Sisko and the Prophets, cries out in anguish and empathy, but there is nothing she can do. (This is the scene sampled earlier in the episode.)

OPAKA PROPHET
Our hand must not yield. The
fortress must not fall.

Kira nods with horrified understanding of what she must do.
The white light fades away like mist, revealing...

57 EXT. PAREK TONN (CONTINUOUS)

The real Kira stands in the shadow of Parek Tonn fortress,
looking down at the Ancient Bajoran version of herself, who
lies on a makeshift pallet as Bajoran Bashir gently tends
to her wounds, and Bajoran Sisko holds her hand.

OPAKA PROPHET
Follow the path. When you know
where it ends, you will know how
to begin.

ON GENERAL KIRA

...as she GASPS awake, her hands flying to her chest.
Bajoran Bashir soothes her back down. Real Kira is gone.

BASHIR
Relax, General. You've bled a
great deal. The night-mint I gave
you will help, but you need rest.

GENERAL KIRA
No. Help me up. Now.

Sighing, knowing there is no use arguing, Sisko and Bashir
help Kira up. Kira takes a deep breath and shouts up.

GENERAL KIRA
Gatekeeper! Opaka! Hear me!

Opaka and the Eav'oq gatekeeper peer over the battlements.

GENERAL KIRA
I was mistaken. This is not our
fortress. We built upon the same
bedrock, the same foundation, and
the towers we've built look much
alike... but this place is yours.

OPAKA

What is your wish, then? To return to your own fortress and leave the Eav'oq to defend theirs?

GENERAL KIRA

No. My army will make its stand here, against the Ascendants.

EAV'OQ

We have not asked this of you.

GENERAL KIRA

Nevertheless, it will be done. To defend your keep is to defend our own. And our passion to defend it might show you how truly precious it is. Let us stand with you.

Opaka and the Eav'oq turn away for a moment, conferring. Kira looks nervously back at her generals, unsure what will happen. Then there is a great groaning, and the gates open before them. Opaka and the Eav'oq stand in the gateway.

OPAKA

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

Kira sighs with relief... and leads her army through the gates. Sisko, Vaughn, Ro and Bashir all follow.

Inside the fortress is entirely peaceful. Grassy areas with gentle pools of water, bridges leading between gleaming marble buildings, and numerous Eav'oq lolloping peacefully.

The gentle, serene singing sound heard in 8x23 "Rising Son" fills the space. There is nothing vaguely military here. General Kira turns to Opaka, shocked.

GENERAL KIRA

Where are the armaments?

OPAKA

What armaments?

GENERAL KIRA

The catapults, the cannons, the archers, the pikemen. How do the Eav'oq plan to repel the Ascendant siege without weapons?

OPAKA

They don't. The Eav'oq are pacifists. They will not end sentient life, for any reason.

GENERAL KIRA

They said they'd defended this place against Ascendants before!

OPAKA

And so they had - by hiding it. By concealing the road that led here. But now that road is exposed, and the Eav'oq cannot hide the fortress any longer.

Panicked at what she has got her soldiers into, Kira looks at her tired, damaged troops, and their meagre armaments.

She runs to a stone stairway that runs up the inside of the fortress walls, the point from where Opaka and the Eav'oq spoke to them earlier. Sisko follows her up the steps.

58 **EXT. PAREN TONN**

Looking out from the viewing platform, over the battlements and out along the road... Kira sees the massive, well-armed Ascendant army growing ever closer. She turns to Sisko, and they share a worried look. This is going to be very bad.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

59 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

The real Kira lies still, in her coma. Sisko remains by her bedside, holding her hand, silently praying for her.

60 INT. NOH' PACH - COCKPIT

Taran'atar stands at the controls, tense and on edge, piloting the small Klingon ship.

61 INT. NOH' PACH - REAR CABIN

Prynn hangs from her wrists, dangling from the pipe in the Klingon ship's ceiling. She is deathly scared, unable to do anything, but definitely not ready to give up.

62 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

Vaughn is in the command chair, with Bowers and the other bridge crew at their positions. Bashir and Nog are on the view screen, talking from their laboratory. Nog is holding an unwieldy looking Cardassian disruptor-like device.

BASHIR (screen)

We've sent you replicator specs for the prototype. We needed to use Cardassian parts to make it compatible with -

VAUGHN

Skip the tech - does it work?

NOG (screen)

We don't know. Probably.

VAUGHN

Gentlemen, if I'm going up against a Jem'Hadar elder, I want more than 'probably.'

BASHIR (screen)

I understand that, sir... but we have no way of conducting a test.

NOG (screen)
(cheerful)
But both our simulations worked.

VAUGHN
(deadpan)
That's tremendously reassuring. Please tell me there isn't some complicated ten-step process for using that thing.

NOG (screen)
No, sir. Point and shoot.

VAUGHN
And after I land the shot?

BASHIR (screen)
Whatever conditioning he was given by the Intendant should be undone. But what he might do then, there's no way to know.

VAUGHN
What about friendly fire?

BASHIR (screen)
It's calibrated specifically for Taran'atar's brainwaves. It should have no effect on anyone else.

VAUGHN
Good work, gentlemen. *Defiant* out.

The view screen returns to the warp star-field image. Firm and resolute, Vaughn turns to Bowers, Aleco and T'rb.

VAUGHN
Bowers - progress.

BOWERS
Using the specs your source gave us, we've been working on seeing

through the *noH'pach's* cloak.
Unfortunately, there's just no way
to run a powerful enough scan to
make up for its head start on us.
But I have an idea.

VAUGHN

I'm listening.

BOWERS

Until we lost Taran'atar's trail,
his course had been extremely
consistent. Almost single-minded,
in fact.

Bowers brings up a GRAPHIC on his screen. Vaughn comes over to look at it. It is a star chart, with a single line marking the *Euphrates'* flight path, to its wreckage. Bowers traces the line with his finger.

BOWERS

He deviated briefly to reach the comet and set a trap for us. But once we were taken care of, he returned to his original heading. I believe even if he's cloaked, he's still on that heading now.

VAUGHN

Then why bother cloaking?

BOWERS

To confuse us. Make us waste time debating his next move, when he's actually on the same move he's been making since the beginning. I don't think evading capture is his primary objective. That's just a means to an end. I think he's on a deadline for a rendezvous - presumably with his new master.

VAUGHN

Alright. So where's he going?

Bowers changes the display - it zooms in on a certain area.

BOWERS

Straight into Cardassian space.
The closest system on his current
heading is Harkoum.

VAUGHN

What do we know about Harkoum?

Bowers turns to Aleco and T'rb, who bring up a new report.

T'RB

Former Cardassian colony, used for
mining and manufacturing. Once
they bled it dry, they abandoned
it... or at least officially. Its
harsh terrain and distance from
the core Cardassian worlds made it
ideal for another purpose.

ALECO

Maximum security detention. Any
prisoners sent to Harkoum stood a
good chance of 'disappearing.'
Bajoran and Starfleet Intelligence
both believe the Obsidian Order
used the prisoners for scientific
testing. Everything from biogenic
weapons to trying out new torture
techniques.

VAUGHN

And then once the Obsidian Order
fell...

ALECO

(completing the thought)

It was abandoned all over again. I
would imagine any prisoners still
there were left to just die in the
darkness.

VAUGHN

Perfect location for a secret
base.

BOWERS

Long-range sensors picked up a Romulan warbird in orbit a few hours ago - the *Verithrax*. But even if they've left the system now, they won't have gone far.

VAUGHN

Then we'll make it a quick visit.
(to Zucca)
Ensign Zucca, what's our ETA relative to the *noH'pach*?

ZUCCA

Based on the last readings, we're closing the gap. We'll make orbit about six minutes behind her.

VAUGHN

As soon as we reach orbit, we need to pick up her trail. No matter how good its cloak works in space, in an atmosphere it'll make a ruckus. Ion trails, atmospheric disturbances, the works. I want a lock on that ship, as quickly as possible, the moment we're out of warp. Understood?

ALECO / T'RB

Aye, sir.

Vaughn returns to his seat, ready to get down to business. He hits the comm panel.

VAUGHN

Bridge to Engineering.

LEISHMAN (comm)

Leishman here.

VAUGHN

We've just received specs for a new piece of equipment. I want one ready by the time we reach Harkoum. Understood?

LEISHMAN (comm)
Yes, sir. You'll have it.

VAUGHN
Bridge out. Bowers, is my strike
team ready?

BOWERS
Yes, sir. But I'd like to ask -

VAUGHN
(doesn't look
at him)
No.

BOWERS
Sir, it's highly irregular for -

VAUGHN
I said no.

Bowers takes a deep breath, shares an uncomfortable glance
with T'rb. He gets up from his seat and approaches Vaughn.

BOWERS
(quietly)
Sir... we need to speak. In
private.

Vaughn's expression leaves little room for manoeuvre.

63 INT. DEFIANT - READY ROOM

Vaughn enters, followed by Bowers. As soon as the door is
closed, Vaughn turns to Bowers, in no mood to be disobeyed.

VAUGHN
Out with it.

BOWERS
You keep saying, "my team." "I'm
taking him on."

VAUGHN
I've made my decision.

BOWERS

What decision is that, exactly? To get yourself killed? Because if you've got a death wish, I'm scrubbing this op right now.

VAUGHN

The hell you are. I don't have time for this.

Vaughn moves to the door, the conversation over. But Bowers steps into his path, not letting him get away.

BOWERS

Make the time. Heins and Neeley are good field commanders. They can do this without you.

VAUGHN

Maybe. But they're not going to.

BOWERS

All due respect, sir, but that's not your decision. You command the ship, but as your first officer on this mission, I am responsible for the crew. Letting you lead the strike team is a bad call, and you know it.

VAUGHN

(getting angrier)

Why? Because I'm old? I'll slow them down? Or maybe you're afraid I'm in this for the wrong reasons?

BOWERS

All of those had occurred to me.

Vaughn is on the verge of losing his temper, but he makes an effort to pull himself under control.

VAUGHN

Sam, I'm the only one on this ship who's had any significant face

time with Taran'atar. More than anyone except Kira and Ro - and they're in no shape to help us right now. If Nog's gizmo works and snaps him out of the Intendant's control, our best chance of bringing him in without a fight is if he sees a familiar face, hears a voice he knows. Right here and now, that's me.

Bowers seethes for a moment. Sighing, he finally accepts Vaughn's explanation, though he is not happy about it.

BOWERS

Just tell me you'll let the team back you up all the way, and not run off and try to face him down one on one.

VAUGHN

Sam, believe me - I'm really not eager to face off against a rogue Jem'Hadar. And if you think this is all about avenging Prynn, I can assure it's not. This is not a suicide mission, or a revenge mission. I understand full well that Starfleet and Kira need an explanation for what happened, and either me or Taran'atar being dead won't help that.

(beat)

But an alliance between Taran'atar and the Intendant is one of the worst combinations I can think of. So we need to stop him, and this is the only way this'll work.

(beat)

You'll just have to trust me... when I tell you that I know what I'm doing.

Bowers grits his teeth a moment longer, but finally nods.

BOWERS

I'll get the crew ready. Just
remember what I said.

VAUGHN

I will.

Bowers turns and leaves. Vaughn hardens, staring at the
closed door.

VAUGHN

I'll remember... First I capture
Taran'atar alive... find out what
the Intendant is planning...

(beat)

...and then I'll kill him.

On Vaughn's stony face...

FADE OUT:

THE END