

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

8x24 - "Unity, pt 1."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novel

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: Unity

by SD Perry

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 MONTAGE FROM PREVIOUS EPS

-- HIZIKI GARD shoots and kills SHAKAAR (8x20)
-- TAULIN CYL shoots and kills VERAD (8x10)
-- JEAN-LUC PICARD shoots and kills REMMICK (TNG 1x25)
-- ELIAS VAUGHN shoots and kills RURIKO TENMEI (8x22)

2 EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT

The ship travels at impulse, within the Idran system...

3 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

VAUGHN sits in the centre chair, only moments after the end of 8x22 "Greater Good." Jake and his guests have gone below decks with Dax, leaving only Vaughn, SHAR, BOWERS and TENMEI, plus extras. They are all exhausted...

VAUGHN (v.o.)

Captain's log, supplemental. We discovered the loss of the Gamma Quadrant subspace communications relay at the same time we became aware of the massive shift of matter and space within the Idran system. Presumably, our relay was destroyed by said celestial event. Having maintained communication silence with DS-Nine during our recent encounter, we were unaware of our inability to communicate with the station. We are returning to Deep Space Nine after ninety-four days in the Gamma Quadrant. The successes and reversals of this mission... are on record.

And that's all he needs to say about that - or can bear to.

TENMEI
Approaching the wormhole, Commander.

VAUGHN
Take us in, Ensign.

Tenmei is back to the cool, unresponsive attitude of months ago - and Vaughn is very aware of it.

4 EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT

The Gamma entrance of the wormhole bursts into explosive colour, and the *Defiant* dives in...

5 INSIDE THE WORMHOLE

Inside the wormhole, there is the hint of a half-glimpsed pair of dark EYES somewhere behind the spatial effects.

As the *Defiant* slips smoothly between the currents and eddies, the eyes turn to watch its progress...

6 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN ENGINEERING

NOG and JAKE sat together in a quiet corner of engineering, chatting happily, laughing, telling tales, as the ship runs smoothly around them...

JAKE
...So there we were, flying away from Idran in the Tosk's ship, and it started to break down again, and you know me, I know nothing about how to fix a ship. I was sure we were all gonna blow up and get vaporised and the whole thing would end up a big waste of time. Then this Dominion ship turned up out of nowhere and I was convinced they were gonna kill us.
 (shrug)
But once Weyoun saw who it was he'd saved, he couldn't have been nicer. I guess they really are sticking to that peace treaty.

NOG

Well, we'll be back at the station in just a few minutes, and then you can go see Captain Yates. She missed you a lot. But I told her you were okay. I knew it.

JAKE

How?

NOG

Just did. I wish you'd told me, though. Where you were going.

JAKE

Me too. It was stupid, running off without saying anything. And I am sorry. If it's any consolation, you were the only one I seriously considered telling.

VAUGHN (comm)

Engineering. Update on the warp core diagnostic, Lieutenant.

Nogs looks up, confused - he already told Vaughn all this, why is he repeating himself? But orders are orders...

NOG

The initial specs are filed in the computer, sir.

7 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE (INTERCUT)

Watching the beautiful display on the screen, Vaughn is completely unmoved. All emotion is dead.

NOG (comm, cont)

I already... ah, everything is in proper condition, though we'll want to run a more extensive diagnostic once we --

As Vaughn listens, he too realises his mistake, and is embarrassed. He snaps at Nog instead --

VAUGHN

Fine.

-- and stabs the comm panel closed. Goes back to watching Tenmei, who is pointedly not watching him...

FLASHBACK

Vaughn raises his phaser, SHOOTS the Borgified Ruriko...

BACK TO SCENE

Vaughn closes his eyes and grits his teeth against the memory. The guilt is enormous, crippling.

On the screen, the crew sees...

...the wormhole's Alpha terminus open, revealing dark star-speckled space. The ship passes into normal space...

SHAR

Entering the Alpha Quadrant...

(sudden shock)

Commander!

Vaughn looks up sharply at Shar's tone...

8 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN ENGINEERING (INTERCUT)

Into the calm - RED ALERT lights flash, sirens blare...

VAUGHN (comm)

Nog, get to the bridge. Have your people standing by, and have someone secure the passengers in quarters. We've got a situation.

NOG

(eyes wide)

Acknowledged.

JAKE

I'll do it. I know the drill.

Instantly in action, they get up and head to the door...

9 **EXT. SPACE - WORMHOLE**

As the *Defiant* emerges from the wormhole's open mouth...

PAN AROUND to reveal...

...a fleet of Cardassian *Galor*-class warships waiting for them at the mouth of the wormhole, distinctly threatening.

With Deep Space Nine tantalisingly out of reach, and Bajor further away, the space between is blocked with vessels.

10 **INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE**

The crew reacts to this with shock, surprise, confusion...

SHAR

There are four Cardassian *Galor*-class warships holding position ten-thousand metres from the wormhole's event horizon. Seven more between us and the station. Sensors are showing at least nine others scattered throughout the system. Three of those are in orbit of Bajor.

As Vaughn tries to absorb that - is it a surprise invasion? a new occupation? - Shar becomes even more agitated...

SHAR

Commander... they've just armed.
All of them.

On Vaughn's reaction...

BLACK OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

11 EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT

Defiant holds position, with four Cardassian warships surrounding and bearing down upon it...

12 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

NOG enters - and the crew are already at action stations. BASHIR and DAX rush in behind him. All three take their stations. Vaughn is in all business mode...

BOWERS

...unable to contact the station.
The Cardassians are jamming all
frequencies. We're being hailed!
It's the *Trager*, sir. Gul Akellen
Macet in command.

VAUGHN

On screen.

MACET's face appears - Nog and Dax both suppress a sneer...

MACET (screen)

Commander Vaughn. Welcome home.

VAUGHN

Gul Macet. Your presence here is
unexpected. Not to mention quite
provocative. Care to explain?

MACET (screen)

We've been awaiting the *Defiant's*
return for several days now.

VAUGHN

How thoughtful. But the last time
I checked, the Cardassian military
- or what's left of it - had no
authority in this system. And yet
here you are, with what can only
be considered an occupation force.

MACET (screen)
(cold smile)
I have the *Defiant* surrounded and
targeted, Commander. You will
surrender your ship to me... or
I will destroy it.

VAUGHN
I don't respond well to threats on
the best of days. So it's only
fair for me to warn you that this
isn't the best of days. I want to
speak to Colonel Kira.

MACET (screen)
That will not be possible. You are
trying my patience, Commander.

A pause as Vaughn considers his options... then he sags
back into his seat, giving up, no fight left in him.

Nog sees this, and is shocked and worried by it...

VAUGHN
Will you guarantee the safety of
my crew?

MACET (screen)
If they cooperate fully.

VAUGHN
Give me time to prepare them.

MACET (screen)
One minute.

The screen goes blank --

-- and Vaughn snaps back into action. Nog grins, relieved.
The defeat was all an act...

VAUGHN
Alright. The way I see it, we get
clear under cloak and try to
contact Starfleet.
(more)

VAUGHN (cont)
But, we do it making a run past
the station, try to get as much
intelligence as possible. Dax?

DAX
I agree. We can't let them take
the *Defiant*.

VAUGHN
Then let's do this. Ensign, we'll
need you at the top of your game.

Tenmei nods a resolute acknowledgment, turns to her helm...

13 EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT

Surrounded by Cardassian ships, the *Defiant* ripples and
disappears, the last moment showing it darting off away
from the Cardassians at full impulse...

14 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

Lights low, stealth mode.

On screen, the station grows nearer - but there are many
Cardassian ships to get past first. They are starting to
react, moving into attack formations...

BOWERS
Cardassian ships spreading into a
defensive pattern.

SHAR
They're sweeping - antiproton,
tachyon and chroniton. The *Trager*
has Dominion sensors, sir - the
cloak may not hide us for long.

NOG
I knew that Macet was no good.
He's no better than his cousin.

VAUGHN
Dax, try and boost our signal to
the station. Have a text ready.

BOWERS
They're hailing again.

VAUGHN
No. ch'Thane, feed whatever you've
got on the sweeps to navigation.
Tenmei, pick us a hole.

The starfield SWERVES as the ship banks sharply. Tenmei is in The Zone, working the console almost without thinking about it. It's instinct for her.

On screen, a trio of Cardassian ships grow closer - until their image DARTS sideways as the *Defiant* twists past them.

Getting closer to the station, we can see the USS *Gryphon* docked, battle-damaged, as well as Cyl's Trill transport. Other Cardassian ships swoop in to block their way...

VAUGHN
Tenmei -

TENMEI
There's a hole. I can get through.

VAUGHN
Then do it.

Tenmei smiles - she knows exactly what to do.

15 EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT

Almost on top of the station --

-- and the Cardassian ships suddenly change the formation, swoop around, surround what appears to be an empty area...

16 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

Tenmei struggles to turn the ship, hissing frustration...

SHAR
Detecting EMP generator readings.
All three cruisers have fixed
their disruptors on the *Defiant*.

BOWERS

Sir, signal from the station. It's
Colonel Kira. She's ordering us to
stand down.

VAUGHN

Cut the engines, full stop.

Tenmei does, annoyed that her escape plan didn't work out.

VAUGHN

What the hell's going on? Bowers,
are you sure it's the colonel?

BOWERS

Voiceprint confirmed, sir. The
Cardassians opened a comm window.

Vaughn stands, ready for an explanation. Dax comes to his
side, Bashir to hers. Everyone turns to the screen...

VAUGHN

Drop cloak and put her on screen.

The bridge lights return to normal, and the view screen
image changes --

-- to show KIRA standing at the central Ops table, Admiral
AKAAR next to her, dwarfing her...

VAUGHN

Colonel? Admiral? I hope you'll
pardon my bluntness, but -

AKAAR (screen)

Commander. Who is your daughter
named for?

VAUGHN

Excuse me?

AKAAR (screen)

Answer the question, Commander.

VAUGHN

T'Pol of Vulcan.

AKAAR (screen)
And have you spoken with T'Prynn
since becoming first officer of
Deep Space Nine?

VAUGHN
You know perfectly well T'Prynn
died almost thirty years ago.

AKAAR (screen)
Yes, at Raknal Five.

VAUGHN
(increasingly
annoyed)
No, during a mission against
renegade Ktarians. T'Prynn was
never at Raknal.

That appears to finally satisfy Akaar, who turns to Kira...

KIRA (screen)
Doctor, I don't think I've ever
thanked you properly for the care
you gave me during my pregnancy.

BASHIR
(bemused)
You're, ah, very welcome, Colonel.

KIRA (screen)
That was your first Bajoran
delivery, wasn't it?

Bashir folds his arms haughtily - he knows the nature of
the game now, if not the reason they're playing...

BASHIR
I didn't deliver Kirayoshi,
Colonel. He was delivered by a
Bajoran midwife, Y'Pora, in some
spare quarters made up like a
traditional Bajoran birthing room.

On the screen, Kira subtly nods to Akaar.

AKAAR (screen)
Doctor, please step directly
behind Lieutenant Dax.

Confused, Bashir does. The whole bridge watches them...

AKAAR (screen)
Examine the back of her neck,
please. Feel the skin.

Vaughn's head SNAPS around, making eye contact with Akaar via the screen. All of a sudden, he knows what is going on here. Akaar's stern look warns him not to say anything...

BASHIR
I don't see anything.

AKAAR (screen)
Be absolutely certain, Doctor.

CLOSE UP

Bashir's fingers gently brush the back of Dax's neck. The hairs stand up, tingling. What should be romantic, sensual, is anything but. They are both tense, not knowing why they are doing this. What the hell do they expect to find?

BASHIR
There's nothing unusual about
Lieutenant Dax's neck, Admiral.

BACK TO SCENE

On the screen, Kira and Akaar both relax at last...

KIRA (screen)
Thank you, Doctor. Sorry about the
precautions, but we had to be
sure. Welcome home, to all of you.

VAUGHN
(knowingly)
You'll need to examine the rest of
the crew.

KIRA (screen)
Once you dock, yes. Take port one.
The Cardassians will be handling
the examinations.

VAUGHN
That's interesting. I take it we
can expect a briefing?

KIRA (screen)
Definitely. Tell the crew not to
resist. I'll explain when I can.

Kira's face disappears, replaced immediately by Macet...

MACET (screen)
Well played, Commander. I have
ordered my ships to stand down.
You may dock at will.

He disappears, replaced by an image of the station. Even
though they are home, the crew do not feel very welcome...

17 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

The senior crew line up in the airlock. Vaughn at the head
of the queue, followed by Dax, Bashir, Bowers, Tenmei,
Shar. Nog stands with Jake in the next group, and more
officers lining up back into the ship.

Cardassian MEDICS, supported by armed Cardassian SOLDIERS,
scan each person and physically inspect their necks before
allowing them out of the airlock and into the corridor.

Vaughn allows the inspection with dignity. The others
follow his example, though still not understanding why.
Gradually, they move through the scans without incident.

Once out into the corridor, Jake sidles up to WEX, feeling
responsible for bringing the strange alien girl into this.
Her big black eyes are watchful of everything...

JAKE
So... how do you like the Alpha
Quadrant so far?

WEX

Everything is... different.

JAKE

Once this is all fixed, you'll be
able to go to Bajor, with Opaka.
And me, probably. I owe Kasidy a
visit. She must be almost ready to
have the baby by now.

But Wex is not paying attention - she is staring down the
corridor. Jake turns to see what grabbed her attention --

-- and sees KIRA looking back at him with astonishment.

KIRA

(whisper)

Jake?

They half-run into a relief-filled hug. Kira can hardly
believe it - such a wonderful surprise in a very bad time.

JAKE

Hi, Nerys.

KIRA

Where - how did they - oh, it's so
good to see you, you have no idea.

(lower)

You had me so worried, Jake. And
Kasidy, and your grandfather...
Jake, what happened?

JAKE

I had to give someone a ride.

He turns, directs her attention further down the corridor -
and there is OPAKA. Kira pales, letting out a short LAUGH
that is all she can manage through the surprise.

Opaka steps towards Kira, and they embrace warmly. Jake,
Vaughn, Dax and the others give them their space...

KIRA

Oh... oh thank the Prophets.

Opaka steps back, looks closely at Kira. She sees the stress, notices the lack of earring. But she smiles...

OPAKA

I am happy to see you again, Kira,
and I hope we'll have a chance to
talk soon. But you obviously have
business of some urgency to attend
to. And I should like to rest a
while. Perhaps we can meet later?

Amid the tension, Opaka is calm and tranquil and soothing.
Kira drinks in the sight of her, lost for what to say at
this miracle, then catches herself...

KIRA

Yes, of course.

Kira straightens and tries to drag herself back to business
after two of the biggest surprises of her life...

KIRA

Jake, I wish I could explain --

JAKE

Hey, remember who you're talking
to. You'll tell me about it when
you can.

He reaches out to squeeze her hand in friendship. She nods,
then turns to lead the group back down the corridor.

As they move off, Jake eyes their armed Cardassian escorts,
not quite as sanguine as he would like to pretend...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

18 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

Defiant, Gryphon, Trager and Cyl's Trill ship. Other Cardassian ships hover ominously nearby...

19 INT. DS9 - WARDROOM

Kira leads the apprehensive *Defiant* party in - Vaughn, Dax, Bashir. Admiral Akaar, Lt RO, Gul MACET, Dr GIRANI and General CYL (8x10 "Divided We Fall") are already there...

KIRA

Please, everyone, take a seat.

They do. Bashir recognises Cyl with confusion - what the hell does he have to do with this?

Kira takes the head of the crowded table. She is in charge here. She takes a deep breath, and begins...

KIRA

Thank you all for coming. I think you all know each other already, although some of you may not have met General Taulin Cyl of Trill Planetary Defence.

Dax tenses - she knows the Cyl symbiont of old. Bashir sees her reaction. Cyl just nods smartly to her - *not the time*.

KIRA

The situation is this. Ten days ago, First Minister Shakaar Edon was assassinated here on the station, just as he was about to sign Bajor into the Federation. The assassin was a member of the Trill Ambassador's entourage... a man named Hiziki Gard.

Dax - utter horror. She knows Gard as well...

KIRA

With Taran'atar's help, Lieutenant
Ro tracked Gard down, and between
his interrogation and the autopsy
data, we have a motive. Shakaar
had been taken over by a parasitic
alien. He was no longer Shakaar
Edon, and hadn't been for months.

Dax is becoming overwhelmed with all these revelations --

FLASHBACK - 8x05 "REFLECTIONS"

-- the alien creature LEAPS out of its frozen lair and
smashes through Audrid Dax's husband's spacesuit

-- the husband SCREAMS incoherently, chasing the terrified
Audrid through the caves

AUDRID

(v.o. from 8x19)

You've known about what's coming
for the past century, Dax.

BACK TO SCENE

Bashir and Cyl both watch Dax try to hide her reaction.

Kira works controls on the table, and they all turn to the
SCREEN - which shows the official Starfleet record of the
little purple parasite, many legs and sharp pincers...

VAUGHN

The Starfleet conspiracy...

Akaar nods solemnly - they are aware of those events...

AKAAR

We've been re-evaluating the data
from the parasites' last incursion
twelve years ago. Knowing what we
know now, we can see that their
redeployment of forces at that
time put a great deal of firepower
within striking distance of Trill.

KIRA

We believe this latest incursion
was initiated with the same goal.
Why they're so determined to
destroy Trill, we don't yet know.

Kira sends a pointed glance at Cyl - she bets he knows more
than he is telling. Cyl is blank, giving away nothing...

KIRA

General Cyl claims to represent a
group who have been preparing for
the parasite threat for some time.
For the moment, we are accepting
the general's word... that the
assassination was unavoidable.

Kira's tone and glance make it clear she accepts nothing of
the sort. Cyl clears his throat and prepares to speak...

CYL

Trill first became aware of the
parasites during a joint Trill-
Starfleet scientific expedition
nearly a century ago. That venture
resulted in several deaths.

Cyl looks Dax right in the eye - she stares back...

FLASHBACK - 8x05 "REFLECTIONS"

The screaming, parasite-possessed Trill man is shot down
from behind by a phaser, and collapses to the cave floor.

FLASH

An older and tearful AUDRID reaches out to hug an equally
distraught younger Trill woman - her daughter, NEEMA.

BACK TO SCENE

CYL

Most files from that time... have
been lost. I was sent to DS-Nine
to investigate on Trill's behalf
and assist in any way I can.

Neither Kira nor Ro believe for a second that that's all he knows. He has said everything he's going to, though...

GIRANI

The only visible sign of infection
is a small blue gill on the back
of the neck...

Girani presses a button on the table - the screen changes
to an IMAGE of the small blue gill in question...

GIRANI

Unjoined, they are small and
mobile, and use a bio-chemistry
similar to that of a Trill
symbiont to control their hosts.

RO

Joined, their ability to stimulate
the adrenal glands and neutralise
the pain receptors means that their
hosts become unnaturally strong and
resistant to injury. Our scans
uncovered six other cases on the
station, and subduing them was...
extremely difficult. But all six
are now in medical stasis.

GIRANI

There is also a marked change in
personality, due to lack of access
to - or possibly just interest in
- the host's long-term memory.
They seem to operate with one
central creature controlling the
others - a mother parasite, if you
will. She breeds a colony within
her host... then sends them out.

RO

The presence of so many soldier
parasites on the station strongly
suggests there's a mother out
there. We haven't found her yet.

Dax is pale with revulsion. Bashir is already caught up in the mystery, his brain busy working over all the facts...

BASHIR

Have you made any attempts to remove the parasites surgically?

GIRANI

We've been assured that to do so would kill the host. We do know if the mother is killed, the soldier parasites can be easily removed. Whoever hosts the mother, though, is beyond saving. The physical damage is simply too great.

RO

Another parasite attempted to take control of Gul Macet. For some reason, it was unable to maintain its hold. Preliminary evidence suggests that Cardassians may be somehow immune to infection.

VAUGHN

Which is why they're taking point in security procedures.

MACET

Indeed. It may also be why Shakaar was reluctant to forge ties with Cardassia during his last days.

Macet shares a look with Kira. On Kira as she remembers...

FLASHBACK - 8x21 "LESSER EVIL"

Parasite-Montenegro taunts Kira in *Gryphon's* engineering.

MONTENEGRO

The Cardassians? A more useless species of humanoids we've yet to encounter.

BACK TO SCENE

VAUGHN

Who else knows about this?

AKAAR

Very few. We attempted to contact *Defiant*, but when we learned the subspace relay had gone dark, we had to prepare for the possibility that one or more persons aboard the ship had been infected prior to its departure, and that it would return as an enemy vessel.

VAUGHN

No hard feelings, I hope, Gul.

Macet inclines his head but does not respond.

KIRA

Unfortunately, Shakaar had been under this parasite's control ever since his official tour of Federation worlds...

FLASHBACK - 8x06 "FALLOUT"

Shakaar harangues Kira over the comm screen in her office.

SHAKAAR (screen)

Nothing can be allowed to interfere with Bajor's admission to the Federation. Everything we've been working towards is coming to a head.

FLASHBACK - 8x16 "BABY STEPS"

Shakaar discusses Federation membership with Kira...

SHAKAAR

I've been working on this issue for months. Everything is proceeding exactly as I'd hoped.

BACK TO SCENE

KIRA (cont)

...which means he had months of unrestricted movement around Bajor to infect anyone he wanted. With the generous assistance of the Cardassian military -

(nod to Macet)

- we've instituted a system-wide quarantine. Except for the people in this room and certain other key personnel, the general populace believes these security measures are related only to Shakaar's assassination. The very nature of the threat means we don't know who can be trusted. So it's vital that the truth doesn't get out.

AKAAR

We're doing everything we can to locate anyone Shakaar came into contact with, on Bajor or on the station, since his return from Federation space. Several search-and-screen teams are working the surface under General Lenaris's supervision. Understandably, however, the assassination of their First Minister... followed by the appearance of armed Cardassians on their streets... is leading to substantial unrest among the Bajoran population.

KIRA

On the political front, Bajor's membership in the Federation is currently...

(massive euphemism)

... on hold. Minister Asarem is trying to keep everyone calm. But the net result is that we're getting a lot of resistance. There've been three... incidents on the Promenade already.

DAX
(sharp)
What about Gard?

RO
He still refuses to talk, beyond
the basics he's already told us.

Ro gives another suspicious glance to Cyl. Gard talks to
him, she'd bet...

KIRA
Here's where I think we should go
from here. Doctor Bashir, you take
over the medical research into the
parasite-host relationship. Doctor
Girani will continue to assist and
manage the Infirmary.

BASHIR
I'd like to start by looking into
the Cardassian immunity.

MACET
I will make sure you have as many
volunteers as you need, Doctor.

KIRA
Commander Vaughn, put Nog and Shar
on the *Defiant's* sensors - maybe
they can create a long-range scan.
Then take Bowers to join Lenaris
and coordinate detection teams.
Perhaps a Starfleet presence will
smooth things along.

VAUGHN
Understood, Colonel.

KIRA
Tenmei can coordinate between the
rest and keep everyone apprised of
new information.

Kira is too busy to see how Vaughn's face drops...

KIRA

Dax, perhaps you and the general could try talking to Gard again. He told Ro he interacted with one of your past hosts. In any case, you'll want to look into any historical connection between the parasites and the symbionts.

Dax nods, but she is not happy to remake this acquaintance. Bashir and Ro both see her reluctance, and wonder why...

KIRA

We're all going to have to work together closely on this. And we need to contain this information for as long as we can. Tell your people only what they need to know. It will get out, but even a day might make a difference.

(sigh)

Okay, dismissed.

Everyone stands up, all exhausted and more than a bit stunned at the sudden crisis that has fallen in their laps.

Vaughn and Akaar confer in one corner of the room. Cyl and Dax edgily approach each other. Kira and Macet talk to Bashir and Girani.

Ro... has no-one she needs to talk to right now. Feeling overwhelmed and guilty, she decides to focus on work, on doing what she can to fix this situation.

Keeping her head down as no-one pays her any attention, she threads her way out of the room...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

20 INT. DS9 - SHAR'S QUARTERS

The door opens, and Shar looks up blankly...

...to see his zhavey VRETHA waiting stiffly for him inside. No welcome, no sympathy, just parental told-you-so disdain. Unable to hold her gaze, he steps past her into the room.

Inside, DIZHEI and ANICHENT stand in their mourning robes, gaunt and unfed. They at least are glad to see him, gather him into an embrace. He bursts into TEARS...

SHAR

I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry that
she's gone.

ANICHENT

As are we, Thirishar.

DIZHEI

She couldn't wait any longer. She
was afraid you would stay away. Or
that you wouldn't go with us when
you did return.

VRETHA

With good reason. In the current
climate, his responsibilities to
Starfleet will keep him here.

SHAR

Only for a short time.

DIZHEI

When? When, exactly?

SHAR

I... don't know. A matter of days.
Perhaps a few weeks at most.

Dizhei turns to Anichent, the anger coming through now...

DIZHEI

You see? *Zhadi* was right. Even after what's happened. Even now.

(back to Shar)

Do you care that we wait on your decision? On your insistence on chasing wishes and theories? That the waiting drove Thriss to her death? What is there to decide, if you love us as you say?

SHAR

But I may have found something. I encountered a people called the Yrythny, their unusual genetics may help us --

ANICHENT

That's wonderful, Shar. I'm proud of you.

And he genuinely is. But even through his drugged sadness, the accusation is clear - was it worth Thriss's life?

VRETHA

I've spoken to the clan elders. They've found three *zhen* who appear to be suitable. And two *chan* who would be willing to step in, if you still insist on...

Shar's face drops - they are ready to replace him. Vretha is not angry with him anymore, just tired and resigned...

VRETHA

Are you so surprised? You push so hard, Thirishar, and you've made it so very clear you will continue to resist... would you have your mates suffer the consequences?

(sad sigh)

Perhaps I've failed to teach you properly. But I've done what I can. It is for the three of you to decide now.

Vretha turns and walks out of the room. Shar turns to his bondmates in sadness, desperate for them to understand...

ANICHENT

Shar... *ch'te*... you could come
home with us, now. We love you.
We could still make it work.

How can he, now? Thriss is dead, and everyone blames him.

He reaches out to take a spare mourning robe and heads into the bedroom, into the blue glow of Thriss's stasis unit...

21 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

QUARK at the bar, miserable at the meagre crowd. Barely a half-dozen people, all Starfleet, tense, wolfing down food. TREIR and HETIK are at the dabo wheel, with no customers.

Quark brightens as Ro enters and heads towards him...

QUARK

Lieutenant. How nice of you to
drop by. Truly an honour.

RO

Gimme a break, Quark. You know
I've been busy.

QUARK

Busy at a job you're about to
quit. Plus, didn't you already
catch the charming Mister Gard?

RO

I already told you, Quark. There's
a conspiracy to keep Bajor out of
the Federation. Gard was only one
of them. We have to look for more.

QUARK

So you bring in Cardassians? Hey,
Bajor's First Minister has been
assassinated! Let's invite Bajor's
former oppressors to help out!

RO

Wasn't my decision. What are people saying, anyway?

QUARK

(shrug)

What you'd expect. The Cardassians are responsible, they brought back the Orbs as a distraction. Hiziki Gard is a spy for the Dominion, they want to start another war. Starfleet is just putting on a big show to cover up their bumbling incompetence for letting Shakaar -

(oops)

Sorry.

RO

It's alright. I think that's why I've been working so hard. To try to make up for it.

QUARK

Laren, when this is all over... are you still interested in the two of us, ah, working together?

RO

I've been thinking about that. And I think... we should both keep thinking about it. Or at least I should. There's too much going on right now for me to give your proposal the time it deserves.

QUARK

(smirk)

I didn't propose.

RO

The proposed transaction, then. Is that alright?

QUARK

I... yes, that's alright.

At a noise out on the Promenade, Quark looks up --

-- and sees NOG with his juniors - CANDLEWOOD, PERMENTER, LEISHMAN, CHAO etc - heading in. NOG is talking with WEX...

...until Wex stops, sneers at Quark with disgust, then turns and walks away. Nog approaches Quark and Ro...

NOG

Uncle! How have you been?

QUARK

Terrible, as if you couldn't tell.
Thanks to the Federation and their
grand plans. Who was that girl?
What were you laughing about? Have
you brought me anything?

NOG

Nice to see you too, Uncle.

RO

I'll leave you two to catch up.

QUARK

You don't have to. You just got
here. I'll - I'll buy you a drink.

Nog gasps aloud. Ro gets up, smiles indulgently...

RO

I'd like to, but I've got about a
thousand things to do. I'm glad
we talked. Welcome back, Nog.

She walks away. Quark watches her wiggle. Nog is amazed...

NOG

I had no idea it had gotten so
serious. Even Grilka had to pay
for her own bloodwine.

QUARK

Have you seen how much a Klingon
can drink?

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

Dax and Bashir walk along slowly, not touching each other, as Dax carefully relates her tale. Bashir is confused...

BASHIR

He's your daughter?

DAX

Audrid Dax was married to another joined Trill, Jayvin Vod. Had two children, Neema and Gran. Neema was joined to the Cyl symbiont.

BASHIR

Didn't you tell me that Neema and Audrid were estranged for a while?

DAX

Yes... That mission Cyl mentioned, the scientific expedition. That was me. Well, Audrid.

23 **EXT. SPACE - COMET**

An icy COMET tumbles through space. An old Constitution-class starship approaches in the distance...

DAX (v.o.)

Starfleet detected readings coming from a passing comet that matched a certain percentage of Trill. Stardate twelve... something.

A shuttlecraft launches from the starship and heads towards the comet, eventually landing on a flattish surface...

DAX (v.o.)

Starfleet didn't know about the symbionts then, but we recognised the readings, and we wondered if we might finally get some answers about how the symbiont-host link evolved, millennia ago.

Six mid-TOS-era space-suited bodies emerge from the ship and make their way into a crevice in the rocky surface.

CLOSER... and we can see that one is Audrid Dax, exchanging excited looks with another Trill male, JAYVIN VOD.

DAX (v.o.)

Audrid was on the Trill Symbiosis Commission. Jayvin was a professor of xenobiology... so we were the logical choices to join the party.

24 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Dax shivers quietly to herself as she remembers...

DAX

Even in the enviro-suits, it was cold. Cold and dark and airless.

25 INT. COMET - CAVE SET

The six figures tread through icy-cold channels in the rock, lit by threads of luminous sickly GREEN ICE.

A CHARGE passes through the ice. Dax and Vod are excited...

DAX (v.o.)

Jayvin and I detected a symbiont pulse. An electrical flash, like how the symbionts in the pools communicate with each other.

26 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Bashir puts the pieces together...

BASHIR

It was a parasite, wasn't it?

DAX

(nods solemnly)

We found a pool, like the ones at Mak'ala, only smaller, and filled with that green ice.

27 INT. COMET - CAVE SET (STOCK 8x11 "REFLECTIONS")

A shape BURSTS out of the bowl of sickly green ice, breaks through Jayvin's faceplate. He JERKS back, then turns --

-- and his face is filled with a manic grin and wild eyes.

DAX (v.o.)

In a matter of seconds, he wasn't
Jayvin anymore.

28 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Dax is trembling, lost in memory while walking...

DAX

It came after me, saying terrible
things in Jayvin's voice... This
thing, this monster ripping him to
pieces, finding the anger and the
pain in each host's life and using
that rage to express itself...

BASHIR

What did it say?

DAX

...That it was coming.

29 INT. COMET - CAVE SET (STOCK 8x11 "REFLECTIONS")

Audrid clammers through the passages, CRYING and desperate.
She comes to a dead end in the caves -- and turns, scared
and horrified as the possessed Jayvin comes into view...

DAX (v.o.)

That it was leading the way for
its species, to find us, to find
Trill... it called us 'the weak
ones.' Finally, it cornered me.
But before it could act, Captain
Pike showed up and knocked it out.

A PHASER shot hits Jayvin from behind -- he falls forward,
revealing another figure in a space suit...

30 **EXT. SPACE**

The Constitution-class ship travels at high warp...

DAX (v.o.)

We managed to get Jayvin's body
back to the ship. We warped for
Trill immediately.

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

Still walking...

DAX

When we got home there was a
transplant team standing by. The
symbiosis between Jayvin and Vod
was lost, both were dying... but
knowing what I'd seen and heard on
that comet, I couldn't let Vod be
transplanted. So I let it die.

(pause)

They sent ships to destroy the
comet, disposed of the parasite
and Vod. I thought they'd want to
investigate, look into the genetic
connection, but I was wrong. We
had to keep our precious secrets.
They buried it, and I went along.

BASHIR

What about Cyl?

DAX

Right, that was the point of the
story to begin with, wasn't it? I
told the children their father had
been killed, but the Vod symbiont
was still living. Thought it would
help. But Neema found out. She
discovered Vod had been allowed to
die, at my recommendation.

BASHIR

And that's why you fell out.

DAX
Yes. We didn't talk for something
like eight years, during which
time Neema was joined to Cyl. But
when I retired - when Audrid
retired, she wrote Neema a letter.

FLASHBACK

The older Audrid Dax reaches out to hug her daughter...

DAX (v.o.)
She's the only one Dax ever told.

BACK TO SCENE

Bashir absorbs all of this new information about the woman
he loves. There's always something new. Tentatively...

BASHIR
May I ask... how do you know Gard?

Dax is stern and uncomfortable as she remembers...

FLASHBACK - 8x05 "REFLECTIONS"

JORAN DAX has his arm hooked around a woman's neck, jagged
glass held to her throat. An angry Trill POLICEMAN points a
weapon at him, shouts to let her go. The policeman FIRES...

BACK TO SCENE

DAX
He killed me.

On Bashir's reaction to that...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

32 INT. GUEST QUARTERS

OPAKA sits on the low couch, flicking through pages on a PADD - amazed, overwhelmed and dismayed.

CHIME - Opaka stretches her old bones, goes to the door, opens it -- and Kira stands there. Anxious, tired, covering it with a polite smile. Opaka guides her inside...

OPAKA

You look well, Colonel. Tired...
but well.

KIRA

Thank you, Kai.

OPAKA

I am no Kai. Call me Sulan. If I
may call you Nerys?

KIRA

Of course. I'm so happy to see
you, Sulan. And so soon after...

(beat)

But so much has happened while
you've been away, I'm not sure
where to start.

OPAKA

Jake was kind enough to fill me in
on much of it. Plus, Vedek Capril
visited me, and I have read some
of the station's reports. I know
about B'Hala, and the Reckoning,
about Winn and Bareil, about the
Emissary's path, and about Dukat.

(sad chuckle)

Our world has had a time of it.

KIRA

There's more...

Kira drifts off, unsure how to begin. Opaka rescues her...

OPAKA

I was sorry to hear about Shakaar.
He walks with the Prophets now.

KIRA

(not cheered)
I'm certain he does.

OPAKA

Capril talked about a book, too.
Thousands of years old. He seems
to believe it is dangerous.

KIRA

It has caused problems. There's a
small but growing community who
believe the book offers a choice,
a different kind of spirituality.

OPAKA

What do you think, Nerys? Do you
think this book is heresy?

Opaka's soothing, unjudgmental acceptance is just what Kira
needs. The stress and confusion breaks like a dam...

KIRA

I thought it was... at first. But
then the Assembly tried to destroy
it, so I... gave it to the people.
I really believed that our faith
was stronger, and I was just so
furious with Yevir...

(catches breath)

I was Attainted for it. I'm not
welcome in the shrine, forbidden
to share the faith with anyone.

(beat)

There were times I just felt like
giving up. The Prophets showed me
I couldn't do that... so I tried.
But I've got nothing left, Sulan.
And now there's so much going
wrong, and I feel so alone...

Overcome with emotion, Kira breaks into quiet SOBS. Opaka holds her, lets her get it out. Eventually Kira quiets and falls asleep from sheer exhaustion in Opaka's arms.

Opaka lays her down carefully on the couch, finds a blanket to cover her with, and sits watching her sleep, feeling very sorry for everything Kira has gone through....

33 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

Still tense and oppressive, but now with a note of hope for the new morning.

34 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

Dax stands outside the door to the security office. She watches the small groups of people walking the Promenade, looking tense and worried. The security presence is unusually high - Bajoran, Starfleet and Cardassian.

A turbolift opens and Taulin Cyl emerges, heading straight for Dax with a professional smile...

35 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE (CONTINUOUS)

No-one is behind the desk as Dax and Cyl enter. The wall screens show GARD in a cell, with armed security keeping an eye on him. They watch the screens in silence for a moment. It is awkward - neither is sure what to talk about...

CYL

You were trained as a psychologist?
And before that, you were in the
sciences, I gather. How many hosts
since Audrid?

DAX

Five. Jadzia Dax was the science
officer here, she was before me.
Before her there was Curzon, he
was a diplomat, of a sort...

CYL

(dry)
Yes, I know about Curzon.

DAX

Yeah, a lot of people know about Curzon. Before him there was a musician, briefly, and a test pilot. What about you?

CYL

Three, since Neema. A professor in forensic science, and a xenobiologist. And as you know, I'm in the military now.

DAX

Neema... did she do well?

CYL

She lived to be very old and very wise. Two children - neither joined, but she was very proud of them. She missed Audrid for the rest of her days. She also spent a lot of time trying to research the parasite Audrid told her about. As did Reck, and Elista... and me. We've never stopped looking. Now my position with planetary defence makes it easy to spot suspicious activity - such as that involving your old friend Verad.

DAX

Yes, Julian told me you were instrumental in stopping him...

She drifts off as a horrible thought occurs to her...

FLASHBACK - 8x10 "DIVIDED WE FALL"

-- Verad is holding Dax prisoner at his basecamp

VERAD

Do you know what they really are, Ezri? They're vampires, taking us all over one by one.

-- Later, as the real personality breaks through

VERAD

Don't you understand, I'm trying
to help! They're winning, and I
have to stop them!

BACK TO SCENE

DAX

My gods, Verad... he knew.

CYL

He didn't just know, Dax. He was
one of them. How it managed to get
all the way to Trill undetected we
don't yet know...

DAX

He tried to kill the whole planet
with that damned drug of his!

CYL

That damned drug saved your life,
Dax. How else do you think he was
able to inform Kahn of the cure?

FLASHBACK - 810 "DIVIDED WE FALL"

-- Dax recounts to Bashir in their quarters

DAX

There's a lot of things don't add
up. It's like he was two different
people.

BACK TO SCENE

DAX

(realising)

He'd taken the drug himself.

CYL

And that's why he retained enough
control of himself to beg me to
kill him.

DAX

You...

She is stunned at his cold matter-of-factness...

DAX

Gard... did you send him to kill
Shakaar?

CYL

No. Once he'd ascertained that our
suspicions were correct, he made
that decision himself.

DAX

But you support that decision.

CYL

Don't you? You know what they're
capable of, Dax.

Dax is ashamed to agree with him, but she does anyway. She
looks at the image of Gard on the screen, in his cell...

DAX

What will happen to him?

CYL

President Maz has already promised
full cooperation with the Bajoran
government. Ambassador Gandres
refuses to lobby for leniency.

DAX

So Gard's left taking the fall.

Cyl doesn't respond...

36 INT. DS9 - SECURITY CELLS

Dax and Cyl walk solemnly into the cell area. Dax nods to
the security people, who quietly file out of the room.

Dax and Cyl approach Gard, who is lying on the cell's bed.
Gard stands, nodding politely to his new visitors. Dax and
Cyl grab seats - Gard sits back down too...

DAX

I remember you.

GARD

You remember Verjyl Gard. My symbiont has a very long history of, ah... seeking out criminal elements in Trill society.

CYL

Gard has never done anything else.

GARD

How much do you know?

DAX

All of it, I think. You've been watching for the parasites, they finally showed up, you came here to deal with it. But why kill Shakaar? Why not just turn him over to security?

GARD

Capturing Shakaar would have tipped them off. If the reason for the assassination remains unclear, there's a chance they might not realise we're onto them.

DAX

Do you really think the Commission aren't capable of handling this information? If you just told the President what we're up against --

CYL

We'd be met with hysteria and denial. Ambassador Gandres is a perfect example. I saw it in your eyes too, Dax. Something about the parasites inspires... an almost reflexive revulsion in our people. A fear so ingrained no-one wants to go near it.

DAX

You both did. And I admit there's something very disconcerting... but I'm not walking away either.

CYL

Audrid did. And all of Dax's hosts since then.

DAX

I should have pushed harder, I admit. But whatever mistakes I made before, I'm here now.

Gard smiles slightly. He admires her determination...

DAX

This isn't going to go away this time, you know. Even if we get past the current crisis without things getting any worse, Trill will have a lot to answer for... to Bajor and to the Federation.

Off all three Trills feeling daunted by what's ahead...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

37 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Kira sits going through padds, relaxed and refreshed after her cathartic meeting with Opaka. Her combadge BLEEPs --

-- through the office doors, she can see Ensign SELZNER look back to her. The colonel won't want to hear this...

SELZNER (comm)
Colonel, Gul Macet just called in.
He's intercepted a shuttle from
Bajor... and the passengers are
insisting they be let through.

KIRA
Who are the passengers?

SELZNER (comm)
Vedek Yevir. Gul Macet says he's
made it very clear you'll want to
speak to him.

Kira practically growls. She has enough on her plate...

KIRA
Ask Macet to stand by, and have
Yevir comm'd through to me.

Selzner nods, and Kira turns on her screen. YEVIR's face appears and begins talking without invitation...

YEVIR (screen)
Colonel. I understand that Opaka
Sulan and Jake Sisko are both on
the station. Is this true?

KIRA
Yes, Vedek. And I'm sure --

YEVIR (screen)
You must allow us to see them. We
have come to welcome them home.

Kira glowers...

38 INT. VAUGHN'S QUARTERS

Vaughn sits at his desk, nervously wondering if he should make the call or not. Behind him a packed bag and his field coat. He finally takes the plunge, presses the panel...

Tenmei's voice responds, perky and upbeat.

TENMEI (comm)
Hi, this is Ensign Prynn Tenmei.

Vaughn is briefly hopeful... until he realises it is a pre-recorded message. He sags with sad disappointment...

TENMEI (comm)
I'm probably on shift or out surfing or something. Leave me a message!

VAUGHN
Prynn... it's dad. Kira's assigned you to coordinate between Bashir, Nog, Shar and... me... regarding the current situation. Also... I'm going down to Bajor for a while, don't know how long. Just... call me if you need anything. Love you.

It is wholly inadequate, and he knows it. He grabs his bag and coat and heads out. As always, he has a mission...

39 INT. DS9 - SHAR'S QUARTERS

Shar sits alone, Thriss's stasis chamber glowing nearby. He stares aimlessly, unable to feel after a night of fights and tears.

Dizhei enters, barely able to meet his eyes...

DIZHEI
We can leave now. *Zhadi* has already discussed the matter with Admiral Akaar and Colonel Kira, and there will be no delay.

SHAR
And Thriss?

DIZHEI
We'll have her transported aboard.
Have you... reconsidered your
position?

SHAR
(shakes head)
I think I should stay. You and
Anichent should start again. With
someone who feels as you do.

DIZHEI
If punishing yourself is your
reason, you punish us by it.
We've all lost Thriss.

SHAR
(no accusation)
Yes... and you will always blame
me for it.

CHIME - Shar moves slowly, expecting his mother. Instead
the door opens to reveal --

-- Tenmei, standing anxiously. She blurts her speech out,
as if she has to say it before losing her nerve...

TENMEI
I'm sorry to bother you, Shar,
but he -- my father's leaving for
Bajor, I ignored his messages...
and I know you've been having a
hard time lately, and I thought...

She finally realises that Dizhei is right there, and backs
up in shame and embarrassment...

TENMEI
I thought you might want to have
lunch with me. But maybe another
time would be better.

Shar can only stare blankly, all social skills gone...

SHAR
Maybe.

TENMEI
Never mind. Find me later if you
want. I'm sorry if I interrupted.

Tenmei steps away and lets the door close. Shar has no
reaction at all...

40 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

Tenmei walks down the corridor, disgusted with herself...

TENMEI
Good God, Prynn. At least wait
until his dead fiancée has left
the room.

41 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

Patiently waiting passengers, security officers watching.
Cardassian medics scan everyone before letting them board.

At one airlock, BOWERS waits for Vaughn, who approaches
with his bag and coat, looking emotionally exhausted.

At the next, Shar, Dizhei and Anichent are just as bad.
They exchange awkward acknowledgments and part in silence.

At the third is JAKE, trying to avoid YEVIR's star-struck
gaze as they both wait they turn.

Jake is relieved to see OPAKA approach. Yevir is even more
awed. As a Cardassian scans Yevir, Jake chats to Opaka...

JAKE
Are you excited to get back?

OPAKA
Oh my, yes. It sounds as though
there are many exciting changes
taking place. I look forward to
reading the Ohalu text --

Yevir overhears this, and looks surprised and worried...

OPAKA (cont)
-- and sharing what the Prophets
taught me in my years away...
(a little nervous)
...and telling the Assembly about
the Eav'oq.

JAKE
Where's Wex?

OPAKA
Wex elected to stay behind.

JAKE
But... isn't that why she came?
To spend time with you?

The Cardassians have finished with Yevir, and he can't hold his excited tongue a moment longer. Opaka reacts with her usual polite calm, but she doesn't like being fawned over.

YEVIR
Eminence, it is so blessed to have
you with us. I hope you will join
us at the Shikina monastery in
Ashalla. That is where the Tears
now rest. And your own chambers
have been reopened for you.

OPAKA
That would be lovely, thank you,
Vedek.

Under this, Kira has been approaching down the corridor. Jake goes to her while Yevir fawns more over Opaka...

JAKE
Wex isn't coming?

KIRA
No, she said that Sulan requested
some time to get settled before
taking on a student.

JAKE
But, Sulan just said --

YEVIR

(stiff)

Colonel Kira, I must thank you
for... promoting the spiritual
health of Bajor.

Kira nods stiffly back, knowing he hates to thank her for
anything. Jake turns back to Opaka...

JAKE

If you need to get settled, I'm
sure Kasidy would be happy to let
Wex stay with us for a few days.

OPAKA

I invited her to come, Jake. She
refused.

JAKE

(confused, wary)

She told Kira that you asked her
to wait.

OPAKA

Everything is fine, Jake. Wex is
no threat, I'm certain. She'll be
along when the time is right.

Jake nods reluctantly. Still beaming, Yevir leads Opaka and
Jake through onto the shuttle...

YEVIR

We're so glad you've come home,
Eminence. In such turbulent times,
the son of the Emissary returning
our former kai to us...

Before he disappears, Jake turns back to look at Kira. Her
face is full of conflicting emotions as she watches Yevir.

Then she looks at Jake, and her expression relaxes into a
warm, loving smile. Jake reflects it right back...

42 **EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE**

With Cardassian ships still in close proximity, two Bajoran transports and one Andorian personal flyer detach from the docking ring in turn, and head out of station space...

43 **INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY, RESEARCH LAB**

Bashir stands at one of his machines, working calmly but quickly on some project or other. Near him, the door opens and Dax and Cyl enter together, soon followed by Kira...

KIRA

How are things going?

BASHIR

Good and bad. Cardassian immunity is a dead end, I'm afraid. The enzyme that blocks the parasites' control over Cardassians is poisonous to almost every other species I could name. But it did help me better clarify how the parasites control their hosts.

KIRA

How?

BASHIR

Chemistry. They tap into the neurotransmitters in the host body and redirect them how they want.

KIRA

What about the time window? How long until joining is permanent?

BASHIR

It varies with the species. For the Bajorans that have already been infected, it would be about twenty to thirty days. The ones we've got in stasis were all detected well within the window, and the infection isn't advancing while they're in stasis.

KIRA

And what about the Trill?

Bashir glances at Dax, not wanting to upset her...

BASHIR

Because the Trill have evolved to host a similar life-form, I would hazard a guess it would be much shorter. Possibly even immediate. Plus, they can bond with both the host and the symbiont.

Everyone looks troubled at that news. Bashir knows that his next bit of news is even more troubling...

BASHIR

The other thing... is that I know the biological connection between the symbionts and the parasites.

DAX

What? What is it?

BASHIR

We already knew the DNA between the symbionts and the parasites were similar, from the same gene family. I've been collaborating with a cellular biologist on Unefra Three for some time, on a program that breaks down the satellite DNA... There's no question. The genetic linkage is beyond ancestral. We're looking at recombination. Everything points to site-specific mutagenesis.

Bashir notices the blank and slightly annoyed looks on the others' faces. He realises he has gone off to technobabble land, and pulls himself together...

BASHIR

(translated)

Genetic engineering.

Kira is quietly shocked. Cyl is intrigued. Dax sighs in dismay. Bashir catches her expression and shares it...

DAX
Genetic engineering.

BASHIR
Doesn't look like we're ever gonna
get away from it, does it?

KIRA
Doctor, if I'm understanding you
right...

BASHIR
Yes, Colonel. I'm saying that
someone created these parasites.
Specifically and deliberately.

On everyone's shocked reaction to that...

BLACK OUT:

THE END