

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

9x18 - "Renegade."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novel

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: Warpath

by David Mack

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 DARKNESS

A heartbeat thumps... regular but anxious breaths hiss...

2 ON KIRA

Where we left things. KIRA lies on the floor, against the wall, her eyes staring up, the life bleeding out of her...

3 ON TARAN' ATAR

...as he holds KIRA's gaze, burning it into his memory...

TARAN' ATAR
Runabout pad A.

The turbolift's computer beeps, and the doors close.

We stay with TARAN' ATAR as the turbolift begins to move. Any confusion is gone - action has brought clarity. Tensing for what may come, Taran'atar SHROUDS and disappears...

4 INT. DS9 - OPS CENTRE

A normal day so far. DAX is in command, at the central Ops table. She taps a comm panel...

DAX
Lieutenant Dax to Ensign Tenmei.
How are things going, Prynn?

5 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

TENMEI sits in the pilot seat of a runabout, docked inside the station. She is alone, working the panels...

TENMEI
Nearly ready, Lieutenant. Just a couple more minutes.

She close the channel, turns at the sound of NOG entering from the rear of the runabout. He passes her a padd...

NOG
There you go - final specs.

TENMEI
Thanks, Nog. These engine upgrades
just better be as good as you said.

NOG
(mock offended)
Are you doubting my work, Ensign?

TENMEI
Never dream of it, Lieutenant.

NOG
Why'd you volunteer for this,
anyway? Most pilots would rather
scrub waste conduits than run a
boring test flight.

TENMEI
(more sombre)
No, it's good. I'm looking forward
to the quiet time.

On Tenmei as she remembers...

QUICK FLASH:

-- Tenmei and Shar, about to have a possibly romantic
moment in the *Defiant's* shuttlebay (9x08)

BACK TO SCENE

She pulls herself together, tries not to think about it...

TENMEI (cont)
The fact that you've souped the
ship up to go faster than ever
before is purely a coincidence.

NOG
Just remember this is a test. I
need you to make sure they work
without blowing up, not run them
until they blow up.

TENMEI
(grin)
Yeah yeah yeah.

As the two chuckle together...

CUT TO:

6 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

RO unconscious, twisted into a grotesque shape on the deck.

In the distance further down the corridor, KIRA lies with Taran'atar's knife in her chest, blood still spurting...

7 INT. DS9 - TURBOLIFT

POV shot - the walls rush by, then slow to a stop. Heavy BREATHS, a pulsing HEARTBEAT... the doors open... wait a moment to make sure no-one is entering...

TARAN'ATAR (o.s.)
Fusion core. Grid twenty-two.

...and just before the doors close again, our POV slips quickly out and into the corridor outside...

8 INT. DS9 - CORRIDOR

...and along the corridor, pulse still pounding, until we reach a circular AIRLOCK. Look through the glass... see the door to the runabout at the end of the short corridor.

A barely seen hand reaches out, taps the controls by the door - the screen shows a vid of the RUNABOUT sat on its platform, the airlock connected to its hatch.

A NOISE - and we move back to the airlock as Nog emerges from the runabout hatch and walks toward us. The door rolls open, and Nog walks out...

...step aside to let him pass. Nog pauses briefly... looks around... concentrates, as if hearing a tiny sound. We watch, holding our breath...

...until he lets it go and walks away. Watch him go...

...then we turn back and step into the airlock, the door rolling closed again behind us...

9 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Alone again in the pilot's seat, Tenmei taps one control to close the hatch, another to open the comm...

TENMEI

Ops, this is Tenmei on the
Euphrates, requesting liftoff
clearance at runabout pad A.

DAX (comm)

Clearance granted, Ensign. Your
flight plan is approved. Dropping
force field and raising platform
to launch position now. Stand by.

10 EXT. RUNABOUT

Stock footage - inside the dock, we see the platform rise up, carrying the runabout up towards space....

11 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

The platform locks into place...

12 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

DAX (comm)

Euphrates, you're clear for lift
off. Safe journey.

TENMEI

Acknowledged. See you in a few
hours. *Euphrates* out.

Tenmei taps the panels to close the comm channel, starts the runabout moving....

13 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

The runabout lifts, heads away from the station, slips carefully between the pylons and out of the area...

14 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Tenmei works the panels calmly, in control. The station falls away behind her as she reaches safe distance...

TENMEI

(to self)

Alrighty-then. Let's see what these babies can do.

She is about to hit the controls to jump to warp, when there is a WHISPER-RUSH of air behind her. She turns...

...and sees Taran'atar pointing a phaser in her face.

TARAN'ATAR

Do not reach for the comm. Set a new course.

Off Tenmei's sudden terror...

BLACK OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

15 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

BASHIR, RICHTER and ETANA beam into the corridor. They are in major crisis mode.

Ensign ALECO (9x16 "Olympus Descending, pt 1") crouches over the captain, trying to do something to stop the bleeding. He is the one who found the bodies and called the alert. He backs away as Bashir sprints towards Kira...

BASHIR

Move!

Bashir and Richter crouch by Kira, throwing pads over the bleeding. Etana, in her new medical Militia uniform, moves to Ro. She looks down at her former boss in shocked horror for a second, then hunkers down to assess her injuries.

Bashir scans Kira...

INSERT

The tricorder screen shows a diagram of Kira's heart, torn almost in two by Taran'atar's knife...

BACK TO SCENE

Bashir presses a hypospray against her neck. HISS... then he taps his combadge.

BASHIR

Bashir to Ops - emergency medical
transport! Five to infirmary, now!

The transporter takes them again, leaving only Aleco alone in the corridor...

16 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

The group all BEAM INTO the Infirmary - the three medical officers begin moving Kira and Ro to biobeds...

17 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

VAUGHN strolls the Promenade, steps over the threshold into Quark's, planning for a quiet beer at the end of his shift.

QUARK himself moves forward to greet him. But then --

TARSES (o.s.)
Out of the way!

-- Doctor TARSES and a new Bajoran Militia medical officer AYLAM (middle-aged woman) SPRINT down the Promenade, urgently pushing members of the public out of the way.

Instantly knowing something big is wrong, Vaughn abandons his plans, heads towards the Infirmary...

Quark watches him go, annoyed at the lost profit, worried about whatever the latest drama might be...

18 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

Tarses and Aylam rush into the room - find Bashir, Richter and Etana are desperately working to help Kira and Ro...

BASHIR
Tarses, over here. Doctor Aylam,
take Lieutenant Ro. Etana, you're
with Aylam.

Aylam helps Etana move Ro to one of the surgical suites...

As they settle Ro onto the biobed, Aylam pulls out her tricorder, begins scanning... the new doctor is shaken at such a big emergency on what's near enough her first day...

In the other room, Bashir and Tarses are doing the same to help Kira...

Vaughn steps into the doorway, unnoticed in the chaos...

...and sees Kira lying on the biobed, Taran'atar's knife poking straight up out of her chest.

Realises what has happened, he darkens...

19 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

Vaughn strides urgently down the Promenade towards the turbolift, plans already forming in his mind.

Quark watches the commander go... then looks back to the Infirmary, where security are already taking up position.

Quark begins to realise that something is very wrong...

20 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

The display over Kira's biobed lights up with data...

BASHIR

Near-total bifurcation of the cardiac muscle.

TARSES

Massive bleeding in the pericardium. Puncture runs from the aorta to the inferior vena cava, through both atriums.

BASHIR

We can't fix this. Let's stop the bleeding and stabilise her for full bypass.

(calls over shoulder)

Kristen, pull up the captain's last physical and use it to match an artificial heart.

(other way)

Doctor Aylam, report.

In the other surgical suite, Aylam reads off her tricorder while Etana fixes a SURGICAL ARCH over Ro's prone body...

AYLAM

Fracture of the tenth and eleventh thoracic vertebrae. Partial severing of the spinal cord between the tenth and eleventh thoracic. Rupture of the spleen, consistent with blunt force trauma. Internal haemorrhaging.

BASHIR
Stabilise her, then assist us.
(to Tarses)
Simon, get the surgical arch. We
need to start now.

Bashir turns back to Kira... takes a deep breath... grasps the handle of the knife... and slowly DRAGS it out of Kira's splintered breast bone. BLOOD drips off the tip of it... until he throws it into a medical tray by his side.

As it continues to drip blood, we see that one of its two jagged points has actually broken off...

21 INT. DS9 - TARAN'ATAR'S QUARTERS

Bajoran Major CENN, and a male Benzite Starfleet security officer, Lt jg CARDOK, poke their heads gingerly around the doorframe and into Taran'atar's quarters...

CENN
Clear.

They move in, phasers drawn...

...and see a room in RUINS. Furniture smashed, computer crunched and sparking, a starburst CRACK in the window.

They wander through, scanning everything with tricorder in one hand, phaser in the other. At a GLINT of light on the carpet, Cenn crouches - it's the broken tip of the knife...

CENN
No sign that anyone was in here
except the Jem'Hadar. I'm reading
his DNA on everything - the comm
panel, the furniture, the bulk-
head. If he was ambushed, I've got
nothing on whoever attacked him.

CARDOK
Sir, I'm detecting traces of fresh
Jem'Hadar blood on the carpet and
on some pieces of the furniture.

Cardok follows the tricorder BEEPS back towards the door...

CARDOK (cont)
And the blood trail seems to lead
outside these quarters.

CENN
Computer, locate Taran'atar.

COMPUTER
Taran'atar is not on the station.

In the circumstances, this does not point to Taran'atar's
innocence. Cenn taps his combadge...

CENN
Cenn to Ops.

DAX (comm)
Go ahead, Major.

CENN
Taran'atar's quarters are wrecked,
and the computer says he's not
aboard the station - which might
just mean he's shrouded.

DAX (comm)
Hang on - back-up's on the way.

A pause - then Dax's VOICE sounds from the speakers around
the room, as well as their combadges...

DAX (comm)
Attention, all decks - intruder
alert.

22 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

Quark looks up as he hears the announcement. Is this to do
with whatever's going on in the infirmary...?

DAX (cont)
All security personnel, report in
for new orders.

Around the bar, crew react at their tables -- then abandon
their food and drink to run to their stations...

23 INT. DS9 - TURBOLIFT

Vaughn is already on his way to Ops when he hears the announcement over his combadge...

DAX (cont)

Commander Vaughn, please report to
Ops immediately.

VAUGHN

(taps comm)

Already on my way, Lieutenant.

Plans and contingencies come and go through his mind...

24 INT. DS9 - OPS CENTRE

Moments later, the turbolift arrives in Ops, and Vaughn steps off. The room is in panic, crew running back and forth coordinating.

Stood at the central Ops table, Dax is the calm in the storm. Vaughn walks down the steps to her...

VAUGHN

Report.

DAX

Captain Kira and Lieutenant Ro
have been --

VAUGHN

Attacked, yes, I saw. Our
response?

DAX

Major Cenn is heading up the
investigation, starting in
Taran'atar's quarters, which is
where Kira and Ro were heading
when they were attacked. I've
ordered Nog to help Cenn direct
the forensic teams.

VAUGHN

What about Taran'atar himself?

DAX

The computer says he's not on the station, but if he's shrouded...

Vaughn nods, makes an impatient get-on-with-it gesture...

DAX

We've declared intruder alert and started a deck-by-deck sweep.

VAUGHN

If taking out Ro and Kira was his first move against the station, he'll go for the system controls in the lower core. From there he could overload the failsafes and initiate a core overload.

DAX

Just like Kitana'klan. So I sealed off the primary and auxiliary controls and put twenty security guards in an ambush deployment, near the primary heat exchangers.

VAUGHN

To mask their body heat and scent profiles. Well done. Have you deployed search teams?

DAX

Yes - I put Bowers in charge.

VAUGHN

Good choice.

Vaughn turns to the reports and readings on the table...

VAUGHN

So... the hunt is engaged.

DAX

Yes, sir. But who's hunting who?

Vaughn looks at her - he knows exactly what she means.

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

Aleco leads a team of security scanning everything in sight - carpet, walls, the pool of blood where Kira fell...

BOWERS (o.s.)
Ensign Aleco - report.

Aleco turns to see BOWERS jogging up - the tactical officer looks dishevelled and half-awake, like he was roused from sleep for this emergency, racing to catch up...

ALECO
Sir - we've got Jem'Hadar blood and microscopic DNA traces on the deck. There's a strong trail from Taran'atar's quarters to the turbolift.

(re turbolift)
This is the exact same turbolift that stopped here at the time of the attack. More blood and DNA traces inside.

BOWERS
You've confirmed that the trace began in his quarters? No chance he doubled back, maybe to set an ambush?

ALECO
Negative. Decay rates in all samples are consistent with continuous progress from the quarters to the turbolift.

BOWERS
Okay, who's got the activity logs for this thing?

ALECO
(holds up padd)
Right here, sir. First stop after leaving this deck was Runabout Pad A. Second was the fusion core, grid twenty-two.

BOWERS

Then we go to the runabout pad. If he went to the fusion core, then there are more than enough people waiting for him already. But we can't let him get off the station.

Off the tactical officer's worry at that possibility...

26 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

...to TENMEI in the pilot seat, TARAN'ATAR stood behind and pointing his phaser at her head. The STARS zoom by at maximum warp out the window.

Refusing to allow him the pleasure of seeing her scared, Tenmei is holding herself with dignity and quiet defiance. Taran'atar almost respects her for it...

TENMEI

Where are we going?

TARAN'ATAR

That is none of your concern.
Maintain your course and speed.

And that is all he has to say on the matter. She does as he says, but without the respect of an acknowledgement...

27 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

In one of the suites, Aylam and Etana work on Ro - work the surgical arch, press controls, take readings...

AYLAM

Okay, her internal bleeding's under control. And the spleen's fused back together. Now for the hard part...

Then Ro's eyes open and she lets out a short, sharp SHRIEK. Aylam jerks back, letting out a surprised shout of her own. Ro is panicked, confused - and can't move...

RO

What...? Where...? The captain?

Etana steps forward, tries to calm her friend -- all while trying to control her own shock at this turn of events...

ETANA

Relax, boss. The captain's in surgery. You're in the infirmary with her. We're patching you up. Lie still.

RO

Why can't I move?

AYLAM

(evasive)

When I've finished my examination, I'll make a diagnosis. Not before. Just let us make you comfortable.

(to Etana)

Ten cc of adozine.

Etana presses a hypospray gently against Ro's throat...

...and the lieutenant drifts off. Aylam takes a deep breath - she is only delaying telling Ro the bad news.

In the other room, Kira has been stripped of her upper uniform, the surgical arch concealing her modesty. Bashir, Tarses and Richter work feverishly around her...

...until Kira's readings FLATLINE. Bashir jumps into action - grabs a cortical stimulator, presses it to her head...

BASHIR

Push thirty cc of tri-ox. Setting autonomic bypass.

Kira's readings flutter briefly... but do not come back to life. Bashir works the cortical stimulator again - Kira JERKS - and her readings return, albeit weakly. Bashir is relieved, but has no time to pause...

BASHIR

Hook up the ventilator. I'll get the rapid infuser going. Nurse! We need type and cross, twenty units of whole blood, stat!

Richter runs off to the stores... Tarses gently guides breathing tubes down Kira's throat and nose...

...and Bashir works the delicate controls of the surgical arch. A sharp red LIGHT... the hissing, SIZZLING sound of a laser burning through Kira's sternum... Bashir winces as the smell of blood fills the air...

Richter runs back into the room, worried...

RICHTER

Doctor, we have only four units of Captain Kira's blood type on hand.

BASHIR

(still working)

Get a list of all Bajorans on the station with Captain Kira's blood type. Send them all a priority request for blood donors.

(to Tarses)

Push four units of plasma into the infuser to keep her pressure up. Let's keep going.

TARSES

Sir, with just four units of blood and four of plasma --

BASHIR

(understanding)

We can keep her alive for another twenty minutes at most.

Off Bashir's determination...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

28 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

VAUGHN paces back and forth behind Kira's desk, impatiently waiting for something...

29 INT. DS9 - TARAN'ATAR'S QUARTERS

NOG works at Taran'atar's comm panel, bypassing the smashed screen with cables, running to a series of other devices and tricorders. He knew all along Taran'atar would do this.

CENN stands behind him, others around the room...

CENN

Are you in?

NOG

Yes, sir. But there's not much to see. Doesn't look like Taran'atar used the replicator more than a dozen times. And the comm...

(drifts off,
confused)

That can't be right. There's a huge discrepancy between his comm logs and his power usage.

CENN

(suspicious)

Can you be any more specific?

NOG

Officially, he sent and received less than one quarter kiloquad of data since his arrival on Deep Space Nine. But the power logs for this comm node show a lot more than that - enough for thousands of kiloquads of data.

CENN

Are there any explanations?

NOG
(shrug)
A data error in the logs... mis-
wired node relays... damage to the
comm panel's memory buffer...

CENN
Alright - noted. Run a full
diagnostic and have your people
check out all the hardware. If
this is a glitch, I want it ruled
out. But if it's not...

NOG
I'll get Candlewood and his team
on it right away.

CENN
Keep me posted.

Nog nods, and Cenn steps away to confer with the others...

30 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

QUARK leans against his serving hatch, casually drying a
glass, not watching the crowd outside the infirmary...

CLOSE UP - he manoeuvres his enormous ears, trying to catch
the CHATTER of the Bajorans lining up anxiously outside...

His face drops... the glass falls from his hand, SMASHES to
the deck... he VAULTS directly up over the bar...

31 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE (CONTINUOUS)

...and RUNS across the Promenade, PUSHES through the crowd.

One of them is CAPRIL, the priest who runs the station's
shrine (8x20 "Twist of Faith"). He is leading the others in
an impromptu prayer, not paying attention to Quark...

...as he barges his way to the front, fishes inside his
jacket... and brings out a handful of ISOLINEAR RODS. Sorts
through them until he finds the right one... inserts the
rod into the door's locking mechanism... the door slides
open and he slips quietly in...

32 **INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY**

...and stops dead at the controlled chaos in the Infirmary.

Bashir, Tarses and Aylam confer in whispers over Kira's body. Agitated, worried... things are not going well...

Richter and Etana take a moment to comfort each other...

Unseen, he slips sideways into the other surgical suite...

...where he sees RO on the biobed - unconscious, pale and fragile. He creeps forward... her head lolls towards him, eyes flutter open. She's on some serious pain meds...

RO

Quark... what are you doing here?

QUARK

What does it look like?

He reaches out, takes her hand - she can't grip back.

QUARK

What happened?

RO

I don't know... the last thing I remember is...

(struggles)

I was in the turbolift with the Captain. We were responding to an alert in Taran'atar's quarters...

QUARK

I knew it. That monster was bound to snap sooner or later.

RO

I didn't see who attacked us...

QUARK

Of course not. He was probably doing that little invisibility trick of his. Too scared to face you head on.

RO
Yeah. I'm sure that was it.
(re other room)
I know you can hear what they're
saying. What's going on?

Quark pauses, focuses on listening into the conversation...

QUARK
She's bleeding out. They've run
out of blood for a transfusion,
and the gadgets aren't enough.

RO
Tap my combadge for me.

QUARK
Why?

RO
Just do it.

He reaches across, taps her badge - she calls out loud...

RO
Doctor Bashir! Doctor Tarses!
Etana! Anyone! Get in here!

Etana rushes into the room, worried for her friend...

ETANA
Laren, what's wrong?

RO
Is it true the captain needs a
blood transfusion?

ETANA
Yes, boss --

RO
Then take mine. We have the same
blood type.

ETANA
That's very generous, but --

RO

You're wasting time. Just do it --

ETANA

Laren - calm down. We've got the situation under control.

The outside doors OPEN, and the security allow the Bajorans outside to file calmly in. Etana turns to speak to them...

ETANA

Thank you for coming. Captain Kira has been seriously injured and has lost a lot of blood. Records show each of you has the same blood type as Captain Kira. We can't force any of you to donate blood, but we're asking for volunteers.

They mutter between themselves, more surprised than unwilling. But Capril steps forward with certainty...

CAPRIL

I will go first.

(to others)

In the name of the Prophets, I implore each of you to join me in helping Kira in her hour of need.

RO

Better late than never, right, Vedek? And with an audience too.

Capril turns to her, his face stony. The others hush...

CAPRIL

Do you intend to tell me what I already know, Lieutenant? That I turned my back on Kira when Yevir had her Attainted? Abandoned her after years of spiritual fellowship? Perhaps you think I'm an opportunist - trying to curry favour or forgiveness now that the Attainder is lifted. Would you consider another explanation?

RO
Such as what?

CAPRIL
That I am ashamed of what I did -
even though I would do it again.
You serve something larger than
yourself, as I do. Sometimes you
obey, even if you do not agree.

RO
And sometimes you don't. You
betrayed her.

CAPRIL
And now I give my blood for her.
Make of that what you will.

His point made, he allows Etana to lead him away. The other
donors follow them. Left alone again, Quark turns back...

QUARK
You know, if you want to pick a
fight with people, you should at
least wait till you're back on
your feet.

RO
I may never be back on my feet,
Quark. I'm paralysed.

33 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

VAUGHN sits behind the desk, watching a video on the screen
- a high-angle security recording of Taran'atar's meeting
with the FEMALE FOUNDER from 9x17. This is exactly what he
was waiting for, and he is watching every detail closely...

FEMALE FOUNDER (screen)
...not just for weeks, but for as
long as Kira lives.

Just then, the office door opens and Dax strides in...

DAX
Commander --

VAUGHN
Lieutenant, listen to this.

He beckons her around the desk, points her to the screen...

DAX
The recordings from Ananke Alpha?

VAUGHN
Commander T'Kren was surprisingly forthcoming once I explained. And once I pointed out my security clearance is higher than hers.

He works the controls to rewind a moment, sets playback...

FEMALE FOUNDER (screen)
And when he fails, he will abandon the Great Link and return to Kira. Not just for weeks, but for as long as Kira lives.

Vaughn pauses the playback, and turns to Dax, expectant...

VAUGHN
Did you hear that?

DAX
I think so...

VAUGHN
Could that be it? Could Taran'atar have interpreted the Founder saying that Odo would leave the Dominion for Kira as an order to kill her, as a preemptive measure?

(Dax is unconvinced)
Think about it. We know that Odo told Taran'atar to obey Kira as if he were obeying Odo himself...

DAX
(catching on)
So what happens when a Jem'Hadar is given conflicting orders by two different Founders?

VAUGHN
I never thought to ask. Sorry,
what did you want?

DAX
We've got a situation. You should
see for yourself...

Vaughn gets up and follows Dax out of the office...

34 INT. DS9 - OPS CENTRE

Dax leads Vaughn out into Ops, down to the central table.
Bowers is already standing there, waiting for them...

DAX
There's no evidence Taran'atar
tried to reach the fusion core.
Sending the turbolift down there
looks like a diversionary tactic,
something to split our focus.

BOWERS
My team tracked the target to
Runabout Pad A. The blood trail
terminates there.

VAUGHN
Then he may already be off the
station? How?! Flight ops were
locked down from the moment you
sent out the alert.

Dax and Bowers both hesitate, neither wanting to give the
bad news. Vaughn is impatient. Dax takes a deep breath...

DAX
The *Euphrates* left on a short test
flight about two minutes before
the alert. Based on the turbolift
activity log... Taran'atar could
have reached the *Euphrates* almost
a minute before it took off.

Dax has already called up the *Euphrates'* filed flight plan.
Vaughn looks it over, and conceals his reaction...

INSERT

Clear in the report is an image of its pilot - TENMEI.

BACK TO SCENE

VAUGHN

Where is the *Euphrates* now?

DAX

Bearing one-nine-eight mark three-five. Way off her flight plan and cruising at warp eight-point-one.

VAUGHN

Eight-point-one? A runabout?

DAX

Lieutenant Nog's been toying with some engine upgrades, sir.

VAUGHN

Mister Bowers, hail the *Euphrates*, priority one. Put it on screen.

BOWERS

Aye, sir.

(works panels)

No response, sir.

VAUGHN

You're sure they're receiving us?

BOWERS

Yes, sir. I have a confirmed signal lock, but no response.

VAUGHN

Open a channel.

Bowers works his panels again, nods at Vaughn...

VAUGHN

Runabout *Euphrates* - this is Commander Vaughn on Deep Space Nine. Respond please.

35 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Tenmei reacts to her father's voice from the speakers...

 VAUGHN (comm)
We know that you're receiving us.
Respond immediately. That's an
order.

 TARAN'ATAR
Ignore him.

Tenmei grits her teeth, unable to do anything.

Keeping his phaser trained on her with one hand, Taran'atar
uses the other to enter a complex series of commands...

36 **INT. DS9 - OPS CENTRE**

Vaughn waits, hoping against hope to hear his daughter's
voice. But he can't afford to be optimistic...

 VAUGHN
Dax, access the transponder and
initiate a command override. I
want that ship back, now.

Dax works her panels quickly and silently... she can't get
any joy out of them. She looks up, dismayed...

 DAX
The transponder is offline. We
can't initiate an override.

 VAUGHN
Get a long-range sensor lock on
the *Euphrates* and track it as long
as you can. Taran'atar's on that
ship, and I'm going after him in
the *Defiant*. You're in command.
 (to Bowers)
Lieutenant, get to the *Defiant*
and prep her to ship out, on the
double. Round up a security team
that has combat experience against
Jem'Hadar.

BOWERS

Aye, sir.

Bowers heads hurriedly over to the turbolift. Vaughn turns and heads back up to the office. Dax calls after him...

DAX

Good luck, sir.

He doesn't reply, just shuts himself away in the office.

37 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Vaughn stands in the office, his back to Ops. His pulse is POUNDING, his fists are CLENCHING... but he works to bring himself under control...

VAUGHN

Breathe, Vaughn. Cool head. Don't
lose control. Calm.

(pause)

That bastard has my daughter.

Off Vaughn's absolute fury...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

38 EXT. RUNABOUT

The *Euphrates* flies at high warp...

39 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

TENMEI quietly, calmly pilots the ship. Taran'atar could kill her at any moment, but she refuses to act scared. She checks on him out of the corner of her eye...

TARAN'ATAR is across the cockpit, looking something up in the computer while keeping his phaser trained on Tenmei. While he is briefly distracted, she looks the other way at one of the instruments on her panels...

INSERT

Tenmei quietly, subtly, moves her hand over a control and dials it down, taking it down from full to zero. Then she covers the display, hiding it casually with her hand...

BACK TO SCENE

She checks out of the corner of her eye again. She notices him blink, screw his eyes up, shake his head as if he is tired. Interesting - that could be useful information...

TENMEI

He'll come after us, you know.

TARAN'ATAR

I know that.

TENMEI

And once he does, he'll overtake us in a matter of minutes.

TARAN'ATAR

I had not expected to escape the station alive. And yet now I am a billion kilometres away.

TENMEI

Won't make a difference. Even at
warp eight this ship can never
outrun the *Defiant*.

Taran'atar has found what he was looking for in the
computer. He straightens, satisfied...

TARAN'ATAR

It does not need to. Adjust our
course as indicated and maintain
speed.

Tenmei receives co-ordinates on her panel - she reads them,
frowns in confusion, looks askance at him...

He points his phaser at her again - she takes the hint and
does as she is told.

40 INT. DS9 - TARAN'ATAR'S QUARTERS

NOG is still working on the comm panel, its smashed screen
dark but cables leading to tricorders and devices. The more
he finds, the less he likes it. CENN approaches...

CENN

Anything to report, Lieutenant?

(no response)

Lieutenant.

NOG

Sorry, sir. Just thinking about
the *Defiant*. I just don't like the
idea of her shipping out without
me. Feels wrong.

CENN

Lieutenant Leishman is capable, or
you wouldn't have made her your
deputy. Now, what have you found?

NOG

I'm getting closer to reversing
the data shredding.

Cenn leans in, peers over Nog's shoulder at the displays...

CENN

Is that sort of thing standard in
Starfleet comm terminals?

NOG

No, sir. Not standard at all. Even
garbled, it's obvious there's a
lot more data in this buffer than
there should be. Taran'atar either
received a lot of information from
somewhere, or he transmitted a lot
of information to somewhere. Or
both. Either way, he did an expert
job of covering his tracks.

CENN

How soon do you think you can
recover the data?

NOG

A few hours. But this is a real
hatchet job. It won't be perfect.

CENN

But then you'll be able to tell me
where Taran'atar was transmitting?

NOG

Ask me again in a few hours.

41 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

RO lies on her biobed, still paralysed. QUARK sits by her
side, holding her numb, unresponsive hand. Tarses enters,
Etana by his side...

RO

How's the captain?

TARSES

Too soon to tell. There's still
much to be done. But we're about
ready here. Is there anyone you'd
like us to contact before we
anaesthetise you for surgery?

Ro looks at Quark; he squeezes her hand. She has no family left, and all her friends are in this room. She sighs...

RO

No. I'm all set here.

Tarses nods, and he and Etana get to work preparing the equipment they will need. Ro turns to Quark, holding back tears, terrified but grateful for his support...

RO

Keep a secret?

QUARK

Have so far.

RO

I'm scared.

QUARK

That makes two of us.

Etana returns, preparing more equipment and settings...

ETANA

Ambassador Quark - I'm sorry,
but regulations prohibit any
unnecessary persons from being
in the surgical suite during an
operation.

RO

It'll be okay, Quark. Lockdown's
over. You should get back to the
bar...

QUARK

Good idea. No telling what Treir's
done to the place while I've been
gone. But I'll be right here when
you wake up. That's a promise.

Quark stands and slowly retreats to the doorway, both of them keeping a brave face for the other's sake. He hovers there, at the periphery, as Tarses and Etana begin...

TARSES

Okay, Lieutenant. Repairing the damage in your neck shouldn't be difficult, but the damage in your back is much more serious. We're going to do everything we can, but it's important for you to know that we can't make any promises.

RO

I understand. Just do your best.

TARSES

We will.

Etana leans in, presses a device to Ro's forehead, switches it on. Ro drifts into unconsciousness. Quark takes a deep breath and leaves.

On his way out, he walks past Bashir and Aylam still busily working on Kira. Medical devices BEEP with her life signs.

Quark pauses a moment, watches them work, then moves on and exits to the Promenade.

BASHIR

Okay, Doctor Aylam... I'm ready to begin. You're sure the artificial heart is ready?

AYLAM

Yes, Doctor.

BASHIR

Alright then. Activate the bypass, and let's begin.

Aylam reaches across the surgical arch, presses buttons, and the beat of the BEEPS slows right down - barely a step above flatline. Bashir begins to work.

ZOOM IN to ECU on Kira's unconscious face...

The image going to **WHITE OUT** as we get closer, until...

42 WHITE SPACE

Shapeless white space, overexposed and blown out. We are in a Prophets vision, like in 1x01 "Emissary." A slow, steady, thumping HEARTBEAT, and breathing...

CLOSE ON

A hand, stretching the fingers, testing their existence...

Move up the arm... until we see KIRA, the truth gradually dawning on her - she is with the Prophets. She is awed and terrified to be in the presence of her gods...

FAST MONTAGE

- Kira's father dying on the cave floor (5x19)
- Bareil dying on the biobed in sickbay (3x13)
- Marritza dying on the deck of the Promenade (1x19)
- Kira cradling Shakaar's body in the Wardroom (8x20)
- Kira looking at Taran'atar's knife in her chest (9x17)

Back to the white space - Kira thinks she got the message.

KIRA

I'm dead...

The light changes, and Kira turns...

43 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR

Kira looks around - she is in the corridor, meeting Opaka as she first returns from the Gamma Quadrant in 8x24. OPAKA is there, but it is a Prophet. She smiles up at Kira...

OPAKA PROPHET

Our hand.

Kira turns - Ro is there...

RO PROPHET

Our hand is closed.

KIRA

I don't understand. Are you saying
I'm not welcome?

44 INT. DS9 - QUARTERS

Kira sits on the couches with SHAKAAR, in his temporary guest quarters, as they did in 8x16...

SHAKAAR PROPHET
Our hand is not ready.

45 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

Kira sits behind her desk, as Vaughn-as-Prophet walks back and forth in front of her like in 8x14...

VAUGHN PROPHET
Our hand must reach out to our children.

She really doesn't understand. She is still getting her head around the idea that she is talking to her gods...

46 EXT. SISKO'S HOUSE - DAY

Kira and SISKO stand on his property, under the shade of the tree in his garden, as they did in 9x10. But this is not a Prophet - this is really Sisko...

SISKO
I'm glad you've come. It was time.

KIRA
Benjamin? Is it really you?

SISKO
It's part of me. I'm not really sure which part. I exist now in linear time, on Bajor... but part of me also exists here. It wasn't always this way... until it was.

KIRA
I don't really follow...

SISKO
It's not important. Not yet.

Sisko looks across the garden. Kira follows his eye-line...

47 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

...and Taran'atar THROWS his knife straight into Kira's chest. She is thrown against the wall, blood spattering...

White lights bleeds over the image, until...

48 WHITE SPACE

Kira GASPS, her hand going to her chest instinctively. She turns - Sisko is standing beside her in the white space...

KIRA
What's going to happen? Is this death?

SISKO
That's up to you.

KIRA
Is that why I'm here?

SISKO
No.

KIRA
Then why am I here?

A hand reaches in to grasp her ear, turning her head gently - until we see Opaka gazing softly up at Kira...

OPAKA PROPHET
To set our hand upon the path.

49 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

Close on Kira's face, restful in unconsciousness as Bashir and Aylam work busily around her, just out of sight...

50 INT. DS9 - OPS CENTRE

DAX stands at the central Ops table as her crew buzz around her. The station has resumed normal operations, but the crew are still all on edge over what has happened.

There is a beep from Ensign SELZNER's panels...

SELZNER
Lieutenant, Commander Vaughn is
hailing us.

DAX
On screen.

Vaughn's face appears on the main screen - he sits in the
centre seat on the *Defiant's* bridge...

VAUGHN (screen)
We're almost ready. Do you still
have a fix on the *Euphrates*?

DAX
No, sir. Without the transponder
we couldn't keep a lock. We might
have a better chance if we could
triangulate our readings with
other ships in the area...?

VAUGHN (screen)
No. I don't want anyone else
involved in this unless absolutely
necessary. Even one stupid mistake
could get Prynn killed. I won't
take that chance.

DAX
I understand. Starfleet might not.

VAUGHN (screen)
(quick, sharp)
Then don't tell them.
(calmer)
At least, not yet. File no reports
until we can explain not only what
happened but why it happened.

DAX
(unconvinced)
Yes, sir.

VAUGHN (screen)
Any word on Ro or the captain?

DAX
They're both in surgery. Julian
is...

(not)
...hopeful.

VAUGHN (screen)
Alright then. We're all set over
here. *Defiant* requesting clearance
to depart.

DAX
(working panels)
Clearance granted. Docking clamps
released. You're free to navigate.
Good luck.

VAUGHN (screen)
Acknowledged. *Defiant* out.

Vaughn disappears from the screen.

Dax pulls up an exterior view of the station - they watch
the *Defiant* pull away from the station and leave the area.

Dax thinks for a moment, then turns and walks up the stairs
to Kira's office. She walks through the door...

51 **INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE (CONTINUOUS)**

...and looks down at Sisko's baseball, sitting in its
regular place on the desk. She makes a decision...

DAX
Computer, open a channel to Bajor.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

52 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

BASHIR and AYLAM work urgently over Kira. Aylam finishes a certain task, stands back to take a breather...

AYLAM
I'm ready for the next step,
Doctor.

BASHIR
(a touch indignant)
You can't be done already...

Aylam is a little taken aback by Bashir's sharp tone. He realises stress is getting the better of him, softens...

BASHIR
Please inspect the new bonds and
make certain there are no defects.
The captain's been through enough
trauma today... I don't want any
post-surgical complications.

AYLAM
Yes, Doctor.

She goes back to work. The pair of them work in silence for a while, with only the sounds of the medical instruments.

In the next room, Tarses and Etana work on Ro in the same way. Machines whirr and buzz, monitors beep and burble.

Finally, Bashir has done everything he can...

BASHIR
The moment of truth. Doctor Aylam,
prepare to deactivate the bypass
and unclamp the aorta.

Aylam reaches into the surgical arch, works the controls. The BEEPing monitors settle into a new, regular rhythm. Bashir is relieved - things are going well.

BASHIR
Alright, then. Let's remove the
bypass connections.

The pair of them go to work again, with the surgical arch
whirring and doing various things. After a long pause,
Bashir seems satisfied, steps back a bit...

BASHIR
Would you mind closing, Doctor?

AYLAM
Not at all, Doctor.

Aylam begins methodically disconnecting all the technology.

Bashir strips off his medical gloves and steps back. Gazes
with worry upon Kira's unconscious, restful face...

AYLAM
Her EEG readings are borderline,
but there doesn't seem to be any
indication of brain damage.

BASHIR
Brain damage isn't always obvious
in physical scans. The mind is a
subtle balance of electricity,
chemistry, and the intangible.
There's nothing to do but wait.

Zooming to **CLOSE UP** on Kira, and **WHITE OUT** as we go...

53 INT. WHITE SPACE

Kira is surrounded by Prophets in the shape of friends...

KIRA
What path?

OPAKA PROPHET
The path.

SHAKAAR PROPHET
We must offer our hand to our
children.

OPAKA PROPHET
In peace...

JAKE PROPHET (o.s.)
...and in war.

Kira turns at the voice, and the scene changes again to...

54 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

...JAKE stands there, appearing as he did when possessed by a *pagh-Wraith* in 6x21 "The Reckoning." Eyes glowing, power crackling around him. But it is a Prophet speaking...

EVIL JAKE PROPHET
It is the Vessel.

FLASHBACK - 6x21 "THE RECKONING"

-- Kira possessed by a Prophet, standing in the doorway of the station's shrine, power crackling around her

BACK TO SCENE

KIRA
You mean me? Yes, I was.

EVIL JAKE PROPHET
What was... is still.

KIRA
But why? Why was I worthy?

Sisko steps up beside her. She turns to him, and suddenly they are...

55 EXT. SISKO'S HOUSE - DAY

...beneath the tree again on Sisko's property...

SISKO
Why was I?

KIRA
But... you're the Emissary!

SISK0

So? The Prophets set in motion
a chain of events to ensure my
existence. But they were surprised
to meet me in the present. They
didn't know until they'd met me
that they needed to create me.
But does that mean I was worthy?
Or simply that I... was?

Kira is confused by all the riddles and paradoxes. WHITE
LIGHT bleeds over everything again, and they are back in...

56 WHITE SPACE

...and the Prophets are there, trying their best to explain
something to her in their lateral way...

SHAKAAR PROPHET

Our hand must be opened.

VAUGHN PROPHET

Our hand must touch the linear.

EVIL JAKE PROPHET

This our hand has done before - as
the Vessel.

KIRA

I don't understand! What do you
want from me?

Opaka reaches up and grasps Kira's ear again...

OPAKA PROPHET

Walk the path, and you will know.

On Kira's face, as the LIGHT around her subtly changes...

MATCH CUT to:

57 EXT. PAREK TONN - DAY

Kira's face... but as we PULL BACK, we see she is dressed
in ancient Bajoran armour, as in 8x13 "Horn and Ivory".

General KIRA of the Bajora Army rides a long, straight road at the head of a large phalanx of SOLDIERS. Rocky land lies all around, misty MOUNTAINS in the distance. Far ahead is a giant CASTLE, the grandest stone fort climbing to the sky.

Kira looks around herself for a moment, orienting herself to her new existence... but then the role takes over, and she cries a loud "Hai!" to her soldiers to head on...

58 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

From Kira's still unconscious, dreaming form...

...to Bashir, Tarses and Aylam all gathered round a large screen studying a full-body scan of RO...

AYLAM

It's very impressive work, Doctor.

TARSES

Thank you. It occurred to me to combine the genetronic replication with Doctor Crusher's previous work on cybernetic regeneration...

BASHIR

Medical nanites - to limit the genetronic matrix's activity and prevent accidental metastasis. Fascinating. I hope you plan on publishing your findings, Doctor.

The door from the Promenade opens... QUARK enters, glares at them agitated and impatient...

QUARK

Where is she?

(no response)

I see the three of you standing here gabbing, so I know she's not in surgery. So where is she?

BASHIR

(sympathetic smile)

She's back in the ward. I set out a chair for you.

QUARK
(softening)
Thanks.

He quickly walks past them. Bashir turns back, but then...

NOG (comm)
Nog to Doctor Bashir.

BASHIR
Go ahead, Nog.

NOG (comm)
Sir, I've found something in
Taran'atar's comm logs that I
think you should look at.

BASHIR
What is it?

NOG (comm)
I'm not exactly sure. Let's say
I'm looking for a second opinion.

BASHIR
Okay, I'm on my way. Bashir out.
(to the others)
I'm sorry, if you'll excuse me.

Aylam is gazing worshipfully at Tarses. Bashir leaves...

59 EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT

Defiant at warp, rippling as the cloaking device engages...

60 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

Dark lighting - cloaked. Vaughn and Bowers stand together
at the rear of the bridge, by the large readout screens.

Ens T'RB is at sciences, Ens PERMENTER at engineering, Ens
ZUCCA (female human) at helm, and Ens Aleco at tactical...

ALECO
Commander, we have a sensor lock
on the *Euphrates*.

VAUGHN
Good work. Patch it to me here.
Helm, adjust course to intercept.

Vaughn turns to a GRAPHIC - a star chart with the *Euphrates* indicated. He and Bowers inspect the screen, confused...

BOWERS
I don't get it. What's his plan?

VAUGHN
We can ask him when we catch him.

61 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

Tenmei in the pilot's seat, Taran'atar's REFLECTION in the forward viewport, further back in the cockpit. She watches him crouch down, open the hatch in the floor...

Taking her chance, she reaches up, taps some keys on the panel above her head. A light goes from green to yellow.

She checks his reflection again - he didn't notice her.

Taran'atar disconnects two large canisters from inside the hatch - signage on them suggests weaponry.

Then a small BEEP from Tenmei's panels...

TENMEI
We're approaching the coordinates
you gave me. Scanning...

TARAN'ATAR
Stop. Initiate no action unless I
order it.

She stops. He steps up, holding the canisters, looks over her shoulder at her panels, apparently satisfied...

TARAN'ATAR
Drop out of warp and hold position
at the coordinates indicated. Then
set the helm to autopilot.

Again she frowns, confused. But she does as he says...

62 **INT. DS9 - TARAN'ATAR'S QUARTERS**

BASHIR walks into Taran'atar's quarters, picking his way over the smashed furniture and broken objects. CENN and the forensic crews work at various points...

He approaches NOG, who stands by the comm panel, frowning over the readings from one of the attached screens...

NOG

Thanks for coming, Doctor.

BASHIR

No problem. What have you found?

NOG

More than I know what to do with.
Massive data files, huge comm logs
- all of it scrambled. I've been
decrypting it one piece at a time
and putting it back together. All
the incoming signals I recovered
so far have one thing in common...

He brings up a new display - a moving waveform image...

NOG (cont)

...a repeating wave, embedded in
all the messages as a subcarrier.
I have my ideas, but I could be
totally wrong. Any guesses?

Bashir leans in closer, considers the wave pattern...

BASHIR

It looks... organic. Fairly long
frequency, more neuro-electric
than cardio-electric... I could be
mistaken, but I think this is a
brain wave.

NOG

That's what I thought too. It's
close to the kind of delta wave we
use for surgical anaesthesia.

BASHIR

It could have been modified to work on a Jem'Hadar. I could check it against Taran'atar's recent medical scans... but that would violate his medical privacy.

NOG

(shocked)

He stabbed the captain and broke Lieutenant Ro's back! I think he ought to be --

(gathers self)

He's a Jem'Hadar - I don't think privacy is high on his list.

Bashir is not happy with Nog's tone, but has to admit he has a point. He pulls out his own tricorder, accesses records, holds it up against Nog's display...

NOG

They're an exact match.

BASHIR

(dismayed)

This is Taran'atar's sleep cycle brain wave. This is why he's been falling asleep.

NOG

So it's some kind of mind control?

BASHIR

Basically. Something like this could produce a hypnogogic state in seconds...

(off Nog's look)

...susceptible to suggestion. And since Jem'Hadar are programmed to be obedient...

NOG

...suggestions to him would be like commands. But Jem'Hadar are only supposed to obey the Founders and the Vorta.

BASHIR

But if someone found a way to
circumvent that... Nog, we need to
know who's behind this. Have you
found any other clues?

NOG

Let me see...

Nog begins working hard on his devices again, biting his
lip with anxiety. Bashir waits, trying not to be impatient.
After a few moments, Nog reacts...

NOG

Hold on, what's this? This one
signal... it's not just data.
There's an image embedded...

BASHIR

Can you decrypt it?

NOG

Just give me a second here...

Nog works again for a few more moments. Then the computer
BEEPS as the file is recovered. They lean in...

We don't see the screen, but we see Bashir and Nog's
reaction. This is very, very bad news...

BASHIR

Oh my God...

On Bashir's dismayed expression...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

63 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

TARAN'ATAR at the back of the cabin, works on the munitions canisters - they now have cables attached.

TENMEI at the helm, wonders what the hell he's up to, and how she can get out of it. She slowly reaches one hand sideways towards a control, hoping he won't see her...

64 EXT. SPACE

A zooming fly-by as if we're watching the *Defiant* at warp - except there's nothing there, because it's cloaked.

65 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

VAUGHN in command, dark lighting for cloak all around him. The main VIEWER shows the central table in Ops - with Dax, Nog, Cenn and Bashir all looking tired and worried...

VAUGHN

Just give me the highlights...

CENN (screen)

The forensic investigation has confirmed that it was Taran'atar who attacked the captain and the lieutenant. Mister Nog retrieved and analysed several caches of data from the comm system in his quarters. And... they suggest that our Jem'Hadar guest may have been involved in the massacre of the Sidau village in Hedrikspool.

VAUGHN

Based on what, Major?

CENN (screen)

Logs from Doctor Bashir and Chief O'Brien - the same logs Lieutenant Ro uncovered in her investigation.

CENN (cont)

There were some obscure academic research articles on the Sidau Orb fragment. Even documents detailing the security protocols for foreign vessels visiting Bajoran space.

VAUGHN

Anything else?

CENN (screen)

Yes, something I'd never heard of before - an alternate universe, one that was previously visited by this station personnel.

Vaughn is dismayed - this just gets worse by the minute...

VAUGHN

Did anything in the data suggest a motive?

On screen, Bashir steps forward to answer that question...

BASHIR (screen)

Yes. Nog identified a subliminal signal embedded in all the messages Taran'atar received. The pattern is an identical match for Taran'atar's brain waves. I think whoever contacted him... is using the signal to control him.

VAUGHN

Are you saying someone bypassed his genetic conditioning? There's not many people who could do what you're suggesting, Doctor.

BASHIR (screen)

Actually, that's the thing - they didn't need to bypass it.

VAUGHN

(frustrated)

Doctor, did they or didn't they?

BASHIR (screen)
Well, Commander... Nog was able to
recover a single-frame image of
the one who sent these messages...

Bashir taps some buttons on the Ops table. An inset IMAGE
appears in the corner of the *Defiant's* main viewer. Dark
and grainy, but unmistakably KIRA. Vaughn understands...

VAUGHN
(grave)
The Intendant.

BASHIR
And because Odo told Taran'atar to
obey Captain Kira's every command,
and the Intendant is Kira...

VAUGHN
I understand the implications,
Doctor.

BASHIR (screen)
But it means he's not responsible
for his actions, sir. He may not
even consciously realise he's been
compromised.

VAUGHN
We need to move quickly. Is there
any way to break the Intendant's
new conditioning in the field?

BASHIR (screen)
I'm working on ideas. A neuro-
electric pulse might counteract --

VAUGHN
How long, Doctor?

BASHIR (screen)
A few hours.

VAUGHN
Get back to me when you know.
Vaughn out.

Vaughn slaps the armrest panel, cuts the signal, *fuming...*

VAUGHN

Bowers! How long till we intercept
the *Euphrates*?

BOWERS

(check panels,
surprised)

Actually sir, we'll intercept in
thirty seconds. The *Euphrates* is
holding position... correction,
the *Euphrates* is adrift.

Vaughn shifts forward - something about this instantly
strikes him as wrong. Fast, urgent exchanges...

VAUGHN

Helm, drop to impulse. Can we get
a visual?

As they drop out of warp, the screen shows a grey-white
COMET tumbling slowly, the runabout tiny alongside it...

VAUGHN

What the hell is that?

T'RB

The Nahanas comet, sir. It's a
rogue body on the border between
the Bajor and Almatha sectors.

BOWERS

Magnifying...

The image changes to a CLOSE UP of the *Euphrates*, adrift
and tumbling, all its running lights off. The rough grey
mass of the comet is in foreground...

VAUGHN

Tactical, report.

ALECO

Minimal power on the runabout.
Shields are down... no life signs.
They're not on board.

VAUGHN

Did it have a run-in with the comet?

BOWERS

Checking... affirmative. Reading small debris and pulverised rock and ice, scattered along a trajectory consistent with the runabout's position. Maybe she managed to get the drop on him.

T'RB

Sir, I've got an intermittent signal... a Starfleet SOS, from the surface of the comet. It's Ensign Tenmei's combadge, sir! She's on the comet!

VAUGHN

Beam her up.

T'RB

(working, frustrated)

She's deep in a crevasse with a lot of magnesite. It's hard to punch through.

VAUGHN

Helm, lock onto that signal and get us a clear line of sight for transport.

ZUCCA

Aye sir...

On the view screen, the comet grows closer as the *Defiant* surges forward. We lose sight of the runabout, focused on one deep crevasse in the grey, icy surface of the comet...

VAUGHN

Aleco?

ALECO

Still on the runabout, sir. No change.

ZUCCA
Directly above Tenmei's position.

VAUGHN
Drop cloak, arm phasers and stand
by to transport.

LIGHTS come up as the cloak drops...

BOWERS
Cloak disengaged. Phasers ready.

VAUGHN
(slaps panel)
Bridge to Chao. Lock onto Ensign
Tenmei's signal and energise.

CHAO (comm)
Aye, sir. Energising...

T'RB
(urgent)
One life sign on the runabout!
Jem'Hadar!

ALECO
Runabout's shields raising!

VAUGHN
Fire pha--

BOOM - the entire room SHAKES as the ship is physically hit
hard by something from the outside. The bridge goes dark.
Crew are TOSSED out of their seats, THUMPS and YELLS of
pain as bodies slam hard into bulkheads.

The ship's engines WHINE and struggle to right the ship,
inertial dampers tumbling the crew back to the deck. Every
screen and panel is either dark or flickering with static.

Vaughn DRAGS his bruised and aching body towards the centre
seat, collapses into it. Around him, the rest of the crew
are doing likewise...

VAUGHN
Damage report! What hit us?

BOWERS

Still trying to figure that out
myself... patching in the backup
sensors...

The main screen crackles back to life -- but all we see is
a CLOUD of pulverised ice and rock around the ship. Vaughn
is just confused right now, wondering what happened...

BOWERS

No sign of the *Euphrates*, sir...
Hang on - I've got her! Heading
for Cardassian space, warp eight.

T'RB

Shields and cloak offline.

ALECO

Weapons offline.

ZUCCA

Helm sluggish.

LEISHMAN (comm)

Engineering to bridge - we took a
beating down here, sir. Warp
core's down, and we've got damage
in the port nacelle.

VAUGHN

Everyone alright?

LEISHMAN (comm)

Nothing a week on Risa wouldn't fix.

VAUGHN

How long to get us back in the hunt?

LEISHMAN (comm)

Won't know till I get a look at that
nacelle, but a few hours at least.

VAUGHN

Economise where you can, and keep
me posted. Bridge out. Bowers, do
we still have a lock on Tenmei?

T'rb and Bowers look at each other, haunted and sickened.
Then they look up at Vaughn...

BOWERS

Sir, we know what hit us. It was
the comet. It exploded.

The bridge goes quiet as everyone realises what that means.
The blood drains from Vaughn's face...

T'RB

The comet was rich in ultritium.
Sensors indicate a high-powered
explosive on the comet's surface
was used as a detonator. We
suspect the explosives were from
the runabout's weapons package.

Nobody wants to say any more, so Vaughn fills in the last
details himself in a thin, dry, whispering voice. He stares
down at the deck, not focused on anything...

VAUGHN

And they were linked to her
combadge. So that our shields
would be down for transport.

BOWERS

(quiet)
Yes, sir.

Vaughn closes his eyes, clenches a fist...

VAUGHN

Should have boarded the runabout.
Shrouded. He was shrouded. He was
there all the time.

He stands, shaken and bloodless. On the verge of vomiting.

VAUGHN

Bowers, you have the bridge.

BOWERS

Aye, sir.

Vaughn tries to maintain composure, but he basically just staggers to the door and leaves the bridge.

The crew watch him go with silent shock and sympathy...

66 INT. DEFIANT - READY ROOM

Vaughn staggers into the room, almost walks into the desk. Holding himself tight, desperately trying - and failing - to hold the emotions in...

 VAUGHN
 Computer, lock the door.

A BEEP, a heavy *kerthunk* of locks. His pulse is pounding, his breath is short, tears are forcing their way out...

 VAUGHN
 Just like Ruriko. You killed Prynn
 just like you killed Ruriko.
 (pulls self
 together)
 No I didn't. He did. Tricked me...
 used her as bait... not my...
 (it's not
 working)
 Feeble excuses... stupid bastard.
 God forgive me... I killed my
 little girl.

On Vaughn's anguished, tearful face...

BLACK OUT:

THE END