FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

A sea of endless stars unfolds before us. Suddenly the BAJORAN WORMHOLE explodes into view. Amidst the blue and white swirls we find the U.S.S. ENTERPRISE.

The mighty ship passes by us. We swing around to see its destination: DEEP SPACE NINE.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM

We find ourselves in Captain Cross's Ready Room. He sits behind his desk, gazing ponderously out the window. One of Deep Space Nine's pylons hangs ominously outside of his window.

Cross thoughts are soon interrupted as the door chime rings out.

CROSS

Come in.

The doors swish open and we find DOCTOR ELRIS LEA. She steps through quickly, letting the doors shut behind her.

ELRIS

You wanted to see me?

CROSS

(glumly)

At least someone made it back in one piece.

ELRIS

(softly)

I heard about Dojar.

CROSS

Yeah.

ELRIS

I'm sure you did everything you could.

CROSS

I've been telling myself the same thing. It's not helping much.

(beat)

Have a seat.

Elris sits down. Cross gathers his thoughts.
CROSS (CONT'D)
Something's happened to Y'lan. I'm not sure what, but he's been acting strangely ever since he returned to the ship.

ELRIS
Returned...?

CROSS
We think he was in the wormhole.
(beat)
I know we're limited in what we can do for him. But I'd hate to lose another -

ELRIS
I'll do everything I can.

Cross smiles glumly and nods.

CROSS
I'm glad you made it back.

ELRIS
I only wish the Ambassador's friend could have come with us.

CROSS
How's he taking her death?

ELRIS
I don't know. He's been quiet.

CROSS
He's always been quiet.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- PROMENADE

Gazing through a window on the promenade's second level, we see the ENTERPRISE. We pull back to find AMBASSADOR ODO gazing out. His posture is familiar - arms crossed over his chest, with a hand just under his chin. He is still, but his eyes reveal a sea of pain flowing within him.

ELRIS (V.O.)
But it's different now. There's a loneliness about him. You can see it in his eyes. It's almost like they're sad...

Odo sighs and is about to leave when -

TALORA (O.S.)
Ambassador.
Odo glances up to find TALORA standing before him. He is startled slightly, but does well not to let it show.

ODO
Hello, Commander.

TALORA
I was sorry to hear about what happened on Bajor.

ODO
(uncomfortable)
Thank you.

TALORA
It could not have been easy for you.

ODO
Not, it wasn't. If you'll excuse me -

TALORA
I hope you'll be able to continue negotiations.

Talora motions to Morn's.

TALORA (CONT'D)
I realize the Federation can be difficult to deal with.

ODO
Difficult would be an understatement.

Odo stops, turns.

TALORA
I was about to have lunch. Would you care to join me?

(awkward beat)
We can review the details for the next round of talks.

Odo hesitates, considers, and finally relents. He turns back to Talora.

ODO
All right. It has been awhile since I've had a root beer.

Talora nods in acknowledgment and the two enter the bar.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- MORN'S BAR

The bar is busy as ever. Slinky dabo girls tempt customers to try their luck, Starfleet officers laugh as they play darts, and several Jem'Hadar occupy a few tables in the corner. They say little and drink less.
At one of their tables, we find the vorta REES conferring with several of his bodyguards. He glances away for a moment, and his eyes light up. He rises and quickly rushes to Odo and Talora, who are searching for a table.

REES
Founder. Your presence brings me untold joy.

He bows before Odo, who sighs.

ODO
I wish you'd stop doing that.

REES
Forgive me. It has been many days since your departure and I find I quite miss your guidance and wisdom. Please, I invite you both to share our table.

Odo turns to Talora, who simply nods - no objection there.

ODO
Oh, all right.

Rees again lights up.

REES
Splendid. You -

ODO
(half grumbling)
- honor you with my presence. Yes, I know.

Rees smiles graciously and leads them toward the table. Moments before they arrive, the wall just behind their table EXPLODES. Smoke fills the room immediately as debris rains down on the hapless patrons.

The crowd in the bar rushes out onto the promenade in a panicked frenzy. As the smoke begins to clear we find Talora struggling to her feet. Her uniform is ripped and her shoulder is bleeding, but she is otherwise unharmed.

TALORA
Ambassador! Ambassador!

ODO
Here.

Odo appears next to her, with nothing visibly wrong. The two rush to the table and find Rees on his knees, coughing.

ODO (CONT'D)
Rees.
The vorta struggles to his feet, but he has a large wound on his side and he stumbles. Odo grabs his arm.

ODO (CONT'D)
Easy.

Talora takes one look at him and taps her comm badge.

TALORA
Talora to the Infirmary. Medical emergency in Morn's.

ODO
Oh no...

Talora follows Rees' gaze to a fallen Jem'Hadar soldier. She rushes to him, kneels down. Several sharp pieces of debris are lodged in his chest and his throat. Blood trickles down onto the carpet from a gash in his throat.

Odo and Rees kneel beside her as she checks for a pulse. There is none. She shakes her head sadly. He's dead. OFF their reactions...

FADE OUT.
FADE IN:

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- INFIRMARY

Rees lies on one of the bio beds. His wound has been dressed already. Our focus moves to Talora, who has shed her uniform jacket. The right sleeve of her shirt is also missing. TORAN treats the gash with a dermal regenerator.

TORAN
The pain should be gone in a few minutes.
(to Odo)
Are you certain you're not hurt?

ODO
It takes more than an exploding bulkhead to injure me, Doctor.

The Infirmary doors slide open and a medic team enters with a gurney. The fallen Jem'Hadar lies under a covered sheet.

TORAN
(to the medics)
Put him in chamber L-four.

They nod and quickly rush off. Toran returns his attention to Talora.

TORAN (CONT'D)
Can you move your arm now?

Talora demonstrates full range of motion as once more the doors open. CAPTAIN KELSEN VORAL and ADMIRAL DELFUNE enter.

DELFUNE
What happened?

TALORA
We were in Morn's when the bulkhead behind our table suddenly exploded. It looked like an EPS conduit was to blame.

VORAL
My God. Was anyone hurt?

REES
(sadly)
One of my bodyguards was killed.

DELFUNE
That's all?
REES
Isn't it enough?

VORAL
I'll have an engineering team examine the conduit immediately.

Odo frowns.

ODO
You're not going to have security examine the scene?

VORAL
There's nothing to suggest it was intentional.

ODO
There's nothing to suggest it wasn't.

VORAL
With all due -

DELFUNE
(cutting in)
Captain Voral will have a security detail examine the scene immediately.

Odo nods.

DELFUNE (CONT'D)
It may be necessary to delay this evening's session as well.

Voral is about to object.

DELFUNE (CONT'D)
As a precautionary measure. We'll reschedule the talks for Oh-seven hundred. Is that acceptable?

ODO
I would have brought it up myself if you hadn't, Admiral.

DELFUNE
I'll inform Admiral Thel.

She turns and rushes off.

VORAL
My security chief may want to speak with you.

ODO
We'll make ourselves available to him.
Voral nods and exits.

TORAN
(to Rees)
I'd like to keep you here for a few hours.

REES
Is that really necessary?

TORAN
Your wound was deep. I want to make sure it's healing properly.

REES
But surely -

Odo steps forward.

ODO
I think it would be best if you remained here until the doctor releases you.

REES
As you wish. I serve the Founders in all things.

TORAN
You two are free to go.
(to Talora)
Let me know if you feel any irritation in your shoulder.

TALORA
Thank you, doctor.

Talora slides off the bed and she and Odo depart.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- BRIEFING ROOM

We find Talora, alone in the briefing room, going over numerous PADDs. She is lost in thought and doesn't hear the doors slide open or Captain Cross enter the room. After a moment, she looks up and sees the captain.

CROSS
Remember me? Ship's captain?

Talora rises but Cross halts her with a wave of his hand.

CROSS (CONT'D)
No need. I hear there was some excitement on the station earlier.

TALORA
An explosion in Morn's.
CROSS
Caused by?

TALORA
Unknown.

CROSS
Injuries?

TALORA
One Jem'Hadar soldier was killed.
Rees was injured but is recovering.
Ambassador Odo wasn't hurt.

CROSS
I suspect there's very little that
can hurt Ambassador Odo.

TALORA
I suspect you're right.

An awkward silence develops between them as Cross strolls to
the window and stares out.

CROSS
I was a little disappointed when you
didn't check in after we got back.

TALORA
I've been very busy with the
negotiations.

CROSS
I know. As I recall, when Thel
ordered us to leave, you were ready
to stay behind.

A beat.

TALORA
Captain, I -

CROSS
We've lost a lot of people on this
assignment, Talora. Ozran and Dojar
are gone. Toran's staying on DS9.
Narv and Y'lan are both comatose.
(beat)
I don't want to lose my First Officer
too. Not now.
(beat)
Not now.

The silence returns for a few moments.
We're holding a little get-together in Ten Forward later, for Dojar. I hope you'll make an effort to attend.

Talora says nothing. Cross walks to the door. He pauses and turns as if to say something more, but thinks the better of it and exits.

EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

The mighty stations adrift in the sea of stars. A BAJORAN SHUTTLE passes over us, heading for the docking ring.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- DOCKING RING

Admiral Delfune waits impatiently outside the docking hatch. Two Starfleet security guards flank the doorway.

Finally the great circular door rolls to the side. THE KAI emerges, with two cloaked VEDEKS following her. Delfune turns and regards the new arrival.

   DELFUNE
   I'm relieved to see you've arrived safely.

   KAI
   This journey was more agreeable than my previous one.

   DELFUNE
   I'm sure it was.

Delfune motions for them to start walking.

   DELFUNE (CONT'D)
   I assume you found who you were looking for?

   KAI
   The Prophets.

   DELFUNE
   If you'd like.

   KAI
   Yes, I encountered the Prophets.

   DELFUNE
   And did your meeting prove insightful?

   KAI
   It was - enlightening, if confusing. The Prophets often speak in mysteries so that we may gain wisdom in trying to understand.
DELFUNE
And did they tell you to call off the strike and let your people return to work?

KAI
Not in so many words. I still have much to understand about my experience in the Celestial Temple. I hope you'll understand that I wish to mediate on it awhile longer.

DELFUNE
We don't have much of a choice, do we?

KAI
You did have a choice. You could have notified us of the negotiations and involved us from the beginning. Instead, you chose to ignore us. Do not blame me for the consequences of the Federation's actions.

Delfune stops, activates the next hatchway. The door rolls aside.

DELFUNE
After you.

The Kai steps through, and Delfune follows. We hold on the vedeks as they pass through the door as well. We catch a fleeting glimpse under the hood of one of them - it is TIMIN POL.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- SECURITY OFFICE

We find ourselves in an office that is both very familiar and very new - the security office of Deep Space Nine. It is little changed since we last saw it, save for some more advanced, Federation computers put in place.

We also see a large viewscreen on the wall, populated with smaller 'boxes' that are taken to be security monitoring posts throughout the station. They show several key structures, including the station's core, the docking ports and other points of entry, and many shops on the promenade.

The man behind the desk, JEREMY BRADFIELD, is surprisingly young. He is clean-cut and straight-laced, the kind of guy one expects to see on military ads.

His eyes dart about the large viewscreen as he takes in various happenings around the station with uncanny speed.

Just outside his own office, he notices Talora approaching. He frowns and activates a button on his desk.
The doors slide open before Talora can even ring the chime. The Romulan enters and takes in her surroundings. Bradfield's eyes scarcely leave the various viewscreens, except to look at his own computer terminal.

**BRADFIELD**

Can I help you?

**TALORA**

I'm Commander Talora, of the Enterprise.

**BRADFIELD**

Right, here for the talks. I'm Lieutenant Bradfield, or Chief Bradfield. Please, sit down.

Talora takes a seat across from him, raising a curious eyebrow at the myriad monitors.

**TALORA**

Your displays are very elaborate.

**BRADFIELD**

They have to be. I coordinate more than two dozen officers from this office.

**TALORA**

That must make manual security sweeps rather difficult.

**BRADFIELD**

I don't do manual sweeps. I don't believe in them. Or more accurately, I don't believe they are my job. I am the security chief - my role is to coordinate all efforts, activity, and team deployments. I can best achieve that right here. The people on this station know where I am. (nods at the video wall) And they know I'm watching.

**TALORA**

(unimpressed)

I see.

Bradfield sorts through some PADDs on his desk and then finally makes eye contact with Talora.

**BRADFIELD**

I'm going to go out on a limb and assume you're not just dropping by to chit chat.
TALORA
I was hoping you could tell me if your officers found anything during their security sweep of Morn's bar.

Bradfield again sifts through PADDs for a moment.

BRADFIELD
(checking)
The cause of the explosion was a faulty EPS conduit. There was a power surge. It overloaded and blew out.
(sits the PADD down)
If you'd like, I could make that report available to you.

TALORA
(nods)
You can have a copy sent to me aboard the Enterprise.

BRADFIELD
Happy to oblige. Will that be all?

TALORA
I believe so. Thank you for your time.

Bradfield nods as Talora rises and leaves.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- INFIRMARY

We find Rees, still lying in his bio bed but obviously getting restless. Toran goes about several tasks in the Infirmary.

REES
How much longer do you plan on keeping me here, doctor?

TORAN
Not long. Your tissue is healing well. Another few hours, maybe.

REES
I don't suppose I'm allowed food or drink.

TORAN
Water should be all right.

REES
A pity. I've been craving a tall glass of Rokassa Juice.

Toran stops, glances at Rees.
TORAN
I thought the Vorta didn't have taste buds.

REES
We didn't before Odo returned to his people. He graciously convinced the Founders that we were in need of some...genetic enhancements.

TORAN
You have a great deal of respect for Odo.

REES
Respect is a gross understatement. Adoration would be more appropriate.

TORAN
Just because he's a Changeling?

REES
(a bit put out)
A Changeling? He is a god. The first Founder I had the privilege of serving under as advisor.

TORAN
You don't find it difficult to worship a god who you can reach out and touch?

REES
Of course not. What an absurd notion.

TORAN
For many cultures, it's the intangibility of their gods that makes their faith worthwhile. Believing without seeing strengthens faith.

REES
It surprises me to hear that coming from a Bajoran. Your gods are quite literally outside the window. You have but to take a shuttle into the wormhole to see them face to face. Does that cheapen your faith?

TORAN
I guess not.

REES
Nor does walking with the Founders cheapen ours.
TORAN
Even though you know you're genetically engineered to obey and worship them?

REES
Every god creates out of a desire to be worshipped. Just as you feel drawn to your Prophets, so we feel drawn to the Founders. There is less of a difference than you realize, I think.

Toran lets it go as he once again begins moving about the Infirmary.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- GUEST QUARTERS

We find ourselves in a guest suite on Deep Space Nine. The room has a hastily built altar with some incense burning. We find THE KAI watching the monitor in her room. It's a news report, featuring Carter standing on the promenade near the bar.

CARTER
...outside of Morn's Bar on Deep Space Nine, where earlier today an explosion claimed the life of a Jem'Hadar soldier. Although the cause is being unofficially dubbed an accident, it has caused a number of ripples which lead this reporter to question that judgment. Foremost among those, the peace talks with the Dominion have been put on hold temporarily while a thorough investigation is conducted. If indeed this was an accident, an investigation would not be needed. It seems to be just another example of Feder...

She turns it off and sighs. Timin is revealed behind her, standing next to a window.

TIMIN
Our friend Mr. Carter wastes no time.

KAI
Such senseless loss of life. And to what purpose?

TIMIN
There is no purpose, Eminence. Only incompetence. Federation incompetence.
KAI
I don't expect the Council of Ministers to look upon this delay favorably. Bajor grows more restless every second the Dominion remains here.

TIMIN
We are caught in the middle. A rock and a hard place, as the humans say.

KAI
I feel as though I should speak out - say something to our people, give them some guidance.

TIMIN
Bajor would heed the words of her Kai.

KAI
I find it difficult to guide others when I myself am so conflicted.

TIMIN
Eminence, you have known for many years that the Federation has become unreliable. That they care nothing for Bajor.

The Kai seems hesitant.

KAI
I know that they are having difficulties, as we all do.

TIMIN
In times of trial, one comes to rely upon one's friends and are thusly relied upon in turn. The Federation has done nothing to aid us and everything to mock us. It is time we took a stand and showed them we will no longer be cast aside.

The Kai sighs.

KAI
It is a most difficult situation.

TIMIN
Times of importance always are.

KAI
I must rest. We begin discussions about the wormhole tomorrow.
TIMIN
Of course, Eminence. I will make sure you are not disturbed.

The Kai rises and departs silently.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- MORN'S BAR

The bar is completely empty. The gaping hole remains in the wall, and it is there we find Talora. She kneels next to the hole, scanning it with her tricorder. She examines the readings and frowns.

Talora rises and is about to leave when she notices a spot on the carpet. Curious, she kneels down. The area she's looking at is unremarkable. There is nothing of interest there, yet she gazes at it as though it should reveal the secrets of the universe.

Quickly she pulls out her tricorder and scans the area. The readings are returned, and she is deeply confused.

TALORA
Impossible.

She continues her scans.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- PROMENADE

We find Quinlan and Elris walking together on the Promenade, in the middle of a conversation.

QUINLAN
Is anyone going to be speaking?

ELRIS
I don't know.

QUINLAN
It just doesn't seem right. Everything we've been through and now it seems like we're all just -- falling apart.

ELRIS
Things change.

QUINLAN
Not like this. Not this much, not this fast.

The two pause at a small bench which sits opposite the Infirmary. Talora appears nearby, looking distracted. She examines the readings on her tricorder with surprise and confusion.
Quinlan tries to get her attention, but the Romulan walks with her head down, straight into the Infirmary.

QUINLAN (CONT'D)
Is it just me, or did she seem a little distracted?

ELRIS
(shrugs)
I thought she always looked like that.

Without warning, there is an enormous EXPLOSION from within the Infirmary. Smoke pours out onto the promenade as panic once again rules the day. People run in all directions.

Quinlan and Elris exchange concerned glances before they both rush headlong into the burning Infirmary.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
FADE IN:

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- INFIRMARY

Fire blazes and smoke fills the air as Elris and Quinlan make their way through the Infirmary. They are first met by Talora who, aside from a few bruises, appears to be all right.

TALORA
Rees and Toran are in here.

QUINLAN
We'll get them. Get out of here.

Quinlan finds Rees on the floor, underneath his overturned biobed. She kneels down and helps him up. He appears relatively uninjured, and is able to limp out with her.

Nearby, Elris almost trips over the fallen Toran. She kneels down quickly.

ELRIS
Toran!

TORAN
(gritting his teeth; dazed)
I'm fine.

Elris raises Toran to his feet.

ELRIS
Is there anyone else in her?

TORAN
Just Rees.

ELRIS
Jen got him. Come on!

They rush out of the smoke.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- PROMENADE -- CONTINUOUS

As Elris gets Toran out of the Infirmary, a disaster control team arrives on the scene. They dive into the flames and try to put them out.

Seconds later, Captain Voral and Chief Bradfield arrive as Elris and several DS9 nurses examine the three caught in the blast. ODO is there a second later.

VORAL
What happened?
TORAN
I was about to get Talora a blood sample from the Jem'Hadar. As soon as I stepped into the morgue there was a blast. It looked like it came from inside one of the morgue chambers.

VORAL
Was anyone hurt?

TORAN
Not critically.

ODO
I think there's enough evidence to warrant an investigation into both explosions.

VORAL
I agree. Bradfield, get a security detail down here to check things out.

BRADFIELD
Aye, sir.

Bradfield vanishes, barking orders into his comm badge as he goes. As Voral speaks to the survivors, Odo pulls Talora aside.

ODO
I'm beginning to see a common thread here.

TALORA
Common thread?

ODO
Both you and Rees were involved with both explosions. I somehow doubt that's a coincidence.

TALORA
An assassination attempt?

ODO
I think it's too soon to say for certain. But it would be foolish to rule out the possibility.

TALORA
I'm certain Lieutenant Bradfield will do everything he can to uncover the truth.
ODO
I'm afraid I don't share your confidence in his abilities. He's got his team doing all of the work for him. And I've never trusted a security chief who doesn't get involved with security matters personally.
(beat)
I'd feel a bit more at ease if you were to assist him.

Talora looks surprised.

TALORA
Me?

ODO
You do have a background in investigative work. And given your own personal stake in the matter, I would think you'd be well equipped and well motivated to figure out what's happening.

TALORA
Ambassador, I'm far too busy with the negotiations to -

ODO
I wouldn't worry about the negotiations. I suspect they'll be put on hold.
(beat)
If this IS intentional, you can be whoever's behind it will strike again.

Talora considers Odo's words for a moment.

TALORA
I'm willing to assist in the investigation. But I don't think Lieutenant Bradfield will approve.

ODO
Leave that to me.

Something approaching a grin crosses Odo's face for a moment, then vanishes.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- SECURITY OFFICE

We find Bradfield once again busy at his desk, going over various reports and PADDs. He barely glances up when Talora enters his office.
BRADFIELD
Have a seat, Commander.

She sits and patiently waits while Bradfield works. After a few moments he stops and looks up, gathering his thoughts.

BRADFIELD (CONT'D)
Look Commander, let me be blunt. I realize that you offered to help us because Ambassador Odo specifically asked for you. I also realize you're a command officer, not a security officer, so I'll endeavor to make this easy on you.

Talora frowns, clearly offended.

TALORA
There is no need for you to make it 'easy' on me. I am perfectly capable of assisting you in this investigation.

BRADFIELD
Of course you are. But I have a team of my most reliable officers already working on it. It would damage their morale to bring in someone from the outside.

TALORA
Lieutenant, my presence here is for the benefit of the peace talks. It is my intention to fulfill my promise to Ambassador Odo and do everything I can to assist you.

Bradfield sighs.

BRADFIELD
Look, Commander, I appreciate that. Really, I do. I simply don't need you right now. My team is on it. I trust them. They'll get the job done.

TALORA
Whether you need me or not is irrelevant. The fact is I am here, and I am not going to leave until I am given a role in this investigation.

Bradfield looks like he's about to press the issue, but holds back and sighs. He grabs a PADD, glances at it, then offers it to Talora.
BRADFIELD
All right, fine. It's standard procedure to investigate the living quarters of the victim, to see if there's anything pointing to a possible motive -

TALORA
I understand the necessity of this procedure.

BRADFIELD
(annoyed)
Good. Then it's all yours.

Talora glances over the PADD and frowns.

TALORA
This is not what I was expecting.

BRADFIELD
At the moment, it's all I've got. File a report on the ship and as soon as I get it, I'll contact you and we'll figure out what to do next.

TALORA
Very well.

Talora rises and leaves Bradfield, who immediately returns to monitoring his video wall.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- TEN FORWARD

We find a number of Enterprise officers - Cross, Quinlan, Elris, Toran, and ERIK GREY - gathered in a dimly light, unusually quiet Ten Forward. Each carries a tall glass and a somber visage.

Cross looks at the door several times, as if expecting it to open. It doesn't.

ELRIS
(softly)
You told Talora, right?

CROSS
Of course I did. I suspect she's too wrapped up in her investigation to bother.

ELRIS
Should we wait?

CROSS
No. She's not coming.

(MORE)
CROSS (CONT'D)
(steps forward)
We're here to pay tribute to a fallen colleague. A shipmate. A friend.
We're here to honor Gril Dojar.

Cross raises his glass. The others follow suit.

INT. JEM'HADAR SHIP -- CORRIDORS

Talora is escorted through the bland corridors of the Jem'Hadar vessel. Her escort looks particular unhappy about her presence.

JEM'HADAR THIRD
I do not see the need for this.

TALORA
It is a necessary part of the investigation.

JEM'HADAR THIRD
It is futile. The attack on the Second happened on your Federation starbase. Not on his own ship.

TALORA
I don't recall mentioning that it was an attack.

JEM'HADAR THIRD
(scoffs)
Starfleet can call it whatever they want. It does not change the truth.

TALORA
Some would say truth is subjective.

JEM'HADAR THIRD
Do not twist my words. What happened on your station is as much an accident as the events on the Majestic.

TALORA
Those events have been dealt with. I suggest you accept that.

JEM'HADAR THIRD
I do not take orders from Romulans.

TALORA
No, but you do take orders from the Vorta. And in case you have forgotten, I am here at their request. Unless you intend to openly question their judgment, I would advise you to keep such thoughts to yourself.
The Jem'Hadar stops and glares at Talora. We get the impression he'd like nothing more than to remove her head from her neck. Instead, he reaches behind him and punches a button on the wall. The door slides open.

**JEM'HADAR THIRD**
These were the Second's chambers. Complete your examination.

Talora slides past the Jem'Hadar and into the room.

**INT. JEM'HADAR SHIP -- SECOND'S CHAMBERS**

To say the chambers are small would be a gross understatement. Barely bigger than a closet, the chambers provide only room for a small bed and dresser.

**TALORA**
You're kidding.

**JEM'HADAR THIRD**
The Jem'Hadar do not 'kid'. We have no need of material trinkets. The Founders are our sustenance, and the Dominion is our life. We know no other pleasure than that of service in battle for our creators.

Talora pulls out some of the drawers, but they are all filled with military uniforms. She checks around for a moment, but finds nothing of interest.

**TALORA**
I believe I've seen enough.

She leaves, the Jem'Hadar but a step behind her.

**INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- CAPTAIN'S OFFICE**

The desktop monitor fills our view. Carter is once again standing outside of Morn's.

**CARTER**
With a second explosion on Deep Space Nine delaying the Dominion peace talks yet again, and no word from the Kai on when the Bajoran worker strike is going to end, people are left to speculate about what's going on. Some are claiming it's the work of terrorists, while others claim it is merely the Federation's incompetence that has allowed these events to get so far out of hand. One thing is for sure - the Bajoran people are becoming very restless.

(MORE)
CARTER (CONT'D)
It seems once again the Federation
is ignoring their...

Voral switches off the monitor, looking somewhat annoyed.

VORAL
This is not the kind of news I need.
You can bet your life I'll be getting
a hundred nastygrams from the Bajoran
Council of Ministers any time now.
(beat)
You'd think Bajorans would be a bit
more patient, what with their
spiritual heritage. But they're
just as jaded, impatient and irritable
as the rest of us. I've spoken to
more than a few council members who
don't even try to disguise their
anxiousness to get these talks over
with. They genuinely don't understand
the intricacies of diplomacy.

CROSS
They want to dance but they don't
want to know the steps.

VORAL
Exactly. The Occupation, for all
its atrocities, was a fairly
straightforward situation. Get rid
of the Cardassians. Make it happen
however you can. They don't
understand why we can't do the same
with these talks.

A beat.

CROSS
In all fairness, I think there's a
bit of paranoia among the Bajorans.
After the Q'tami incident, I think
they're a bit more fearful about
more violence developing. The fact
that it's the Dominion we're
negotiating with doesn't help matters.

Beat.

VORAL
Do you think things will turn violent
again, Captain?

CROSS
(sighs)
If you would have asked me two days
ago, I would have said no. But now...
Cross lets the thought hang there. Voral nods in agreement.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- MORN'S BAR

We find Elris and Talora hunkered down where the Jem'Hadar's body had been. They both stare blankly at a tricorder.

ELRIS
Are sure there was no blood here before?

TALORA
(annoyed)
Of course. I still have the tricorder readings on file.

ELRIS
What about the original readings? Didn't the responding physician take any tricorder readings?

TALORA
I spoke to Doctor Toran already. He scanned the Jem'Hadar upon his arrival, but maintained no records regarding his blood type. He made no scan of the blood on the carpet.

ELRIS
Well, it's here now. The dispersal pattern is consistent with the wounds he suffered. It looks legitimate to me.

TALORA
This is impossible. There was nothing here.

ELRIS
If that's true, you're suggesting...

TALORA
...that someone removed the blood from the carpet and then replaced it.

ELRIS
That doesn't make sense. And there's nothing that I know of that can remove a blood stain so completely. Even if it wasn't visible anymore, there would still be very small amounts of blood left. The tricorder would pick up on it.

Talora pauses, thinks for a moment.
TALORA
Is there any way to confirm that blood belongs to the Jem'Hadar that died?

ELRIS
Only with a blood sample that we know is his.

TALORA
The body was destroyed when the Infirmary exploded. I will speak to Ambassador Odo - they may have a sample on their vessel.

ELRIS
If they even keep things like that on file. 
(pulls out a hypo)
I'd better get a sample of this before it disappears too.

The doors slide open and Quinlan enters.

QUINLAN
I thought I saw people in here. I was hoping they'd opened up again.

ELRIS
Afraid not.

QUINLAN
What's going on?

TALORA
I am aiding Lieutenant Bradfield in his investigation. 
(beat)
And I may require your expertise.

QUINLAN
As Quinlan the Security Chief, or Quinlan the ex-pirate who knows way too much about things she shouldn't?

TALORA
The latter.

Quinlan smiles.

QUINLAN
Good. Always more fun that way.

She joins Elris and Talora on the floor.
TALORA
This is the spot where the Jem'Hadar died after the explosion. His wounds were deep, several were open.

QUINLAN
With you so far.

TALORA
I returned to the accident scene a day later, and the blood was gone. Completely.

QUINLAN
Did a maintenance crew remove it?

TALORA
No one ordered that the scene be cleaned. Such an order would have been signed by the lead investigator. Lieutenant Bradfield insists he did not sign one. Nor can I find any record of one.

ELRIS
Besides, there would still be trace amounts of blood even after it was cleaned. Too small to see, but they'd be detectable on the tricorder.

QUINLAN
But there's blood there now.

TALORA
We cannot explain it.

QUINLAN
So you think someone lifted the original blood and then put this here?

TALORA
It seems unlikely, but plausible.

QUINLAN
(thoughtful)
I remember hearing about a Rigellian device that was capable of completely removing any substance from any surface - no residuals, nothing to trace. It was popular with terrorists on the black market during the Eola War in the Beta Quadrant.
ELRIS
(sighs)
That means there's no way to know if something like that was used here.

QUINLAN
That's the idea.

Elris closes her tricorder, frustrated.

ELRIS
This doesn't make any sense.

TALORA
(beat)
Here is what we know thus far. A Jem'Hadar soldier is killed in an apparent accident. His body is taken to the Infirmary where it is subsequently incinerated in a second explosion. Meanwhile, all traces of his blood seem to vanish from the scene of the accident, only to be found again a day later.

QUINLAN
Then you're right. It's a plant. Someone removed the blood and replaced it.

ELRIS
But why?

TALORA
The question of the hour.

Off their concerned expressions.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- PROMENADE

Quinlan steps out of Morn's and is about the head down the corridor when she is hit by a passer-by not paying attention. The man wears dark clothing and walks quickly with his head down.

QUINLAN
Hey, jeez. I'm pretty sure your head can tilt upwards, y'know.

The man looks up – it is TIMIN. He recognizes Quinlan immediately, and tries to get away before she realizes who he is.

TIMIN
My apologies.
He quickly rushes off. Quinlan watches him go for a moment, but it sinks in quickly.

QUINLAN
Hey! Come back here!

Quinlan takes off in pursuit. Timin glances back and sees this. He immediately steers himself toward the largest crowd of people he can find. He pushes through them, knocking down several.

Quinlan follows but is slowed by the chaos Timin leaves in his wake.

QUINLAN (CONT'D)
Stop!

Timin only slows to round a corner and disappear into one of the hatchways that connects the promenade to the habitat ring. Quinlan moves to follow, but gets stuck behind the rolling hatch door. She quickly reopens it and rushes through.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- CORRIDORS

Quinlan charges through the hatch leading into the habitat ring. She looks left, then right. There is no sign of Timin. Slowly she moves, close to the wall, her phaser drawn. She hears movement around the next intersection. She takes a silent breath, readies her phaser, and turns —

— to find Carter about to walk into her. She stops short at the sight of a phaser pointed in his face.

CARTER
Whoa! Hey, easy.

QUINLAN
(disgusted)
Carter? What the hell are you doing here?

CARTER
Conducting an interview for my next broadcast.
(grins)
Care to be next?

Quinlan glances around, her phaser still drawn.

QUINLAN
Did you see anyone come this way?

CARTER
Anyone like who?
QUINLAN
Dark hair, scar on the face, looks like a vedek...

CARTER
(shrugs)
You're the only one I've seen. Sorry.

QUINLAN
(frustrated)
Damn it.

Quinlan frowns and rushes off, still keeping her eyes peeled. Timin appears from around the corner.

TIMIN
She saw my face.

CARTER
Maybe she doesn't recognize you.

TIMIN
Let us hope not. My presence here must remain a secret.

CARTER
I've never been good at keeping secrets.

TIMIN
I hope for your sake you can keep this one, Mr. Carter.

Timin pats Carter on the back and proceeds down the hall.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO
FADE IN:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDORS

Talora waits as the turbolift doors in front of her slide open. She enters.

TALORA
Transporter room 3.

CROSS (O.S.)
Hold the lift.

Talora quickly finds the hold button, giving Cross time to enter.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- TURBOLIFT -- CONTINUOUS

An awkward silence ensues between the captain and his first officer. After a few moments, Cross sighs.

CROSS
Hold lift.

The lift slows to a stop.

TALORA
Is there a problem, Captain?

CROSS
Yes, there is. You didn't come to the service last night.

TALORA
(realizes)
I'm sorry. I have been very involved with the investigation.
(louder)
Resume lift.

A few awkward moments pass.

CROSS
Hold lift.
(to Talora)
Have you even given him a second thought since we came back?

TALORA
Of course I have. And I have grieved for Dojar when I have been able. But I can't allow my personal feelings to interfere with the talks. Or with this investigation.
(MORE)
TALORA (CONT'D)

(louder)
Resume lift.

Cross is seething next to his first officer. He looks like he might erupt any second.

CROSS
Hold lift.

TALORA
Captain, this is -

CROSS
Are you trying to tell me my feelings are interfering with my job?

TALORA
I think you're proving that right now.

(louder)
Resume lift.

CROSS
Halt lift. My feelings are not getting in the way. But when one of my officers starts acting like she is no longer a member of my crew, then I have a problem.

TALORA
I did not ask to be made head of the Romulan negotiations. And I did not ask to be involved with this investigation. But this is where I am, and I will perform those duties to the best of my ability. Just as I have done for you.

CROSS
Until recently.

(beat)
Resume lift.

An awkward silence ensues as Talora glares hard at Cross. He returns her gaze. Finally, the lift comes to a halt. The doors part to reveal a very annoyed Quinlan, arms folded over her chest.

QUINLAN
Who's been holding up the damn turbolift?

Talora glares hard at Cross before storming off.
EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

The massive station against a sea of stars.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- SECURITY OFFICE

Bradfield walks into his office and stops short at the sight of Talora in his chair. He scowls.

BRADFIELD
What are you doing here?

TALORA
Attempting to further the investigation.

BRADFIELD
I told you I had my best people working on it.

TALORA
You also told me you would contact me after I filed my report on the Jem'Hadar ship. Since you didn't do that, I assumed that perhaps your word was - unreliable.

Bradfield is obviously offended.

BRADFIELD
Who the hell are you to come in here and -

TALORA
Spare me your outrage. It will not accomplish anything.

BRADFIELD
You've got a lot of -

Talora rises, offers Bradfield his chair.

TALORA
If you'd like, I would be happy to show what I've discovered.

Bradfield sits down, barely controlling his anger. Talora leans over his chair, working on his console. The technical schematic for a small device appears.

BRADFIELD
What is this?

TALORA
A nitrilin explosive device. The cause of the explosion in the Infirmary.
BRADFIELD
(surprised)
Nitrilin is supposed to be untraceable.

TALORA
Under normal circumstances. But the frigid temperatures of the morgue chamber somehow changed its consistency. There were trace amounts throughout the Infirmary. I would be more interested in knowing how your team could have missed it.

BRADFIELD
Nitrilin is rare, it's not something we scan for routinely.

TALORA
Two explosions in less than a day? I wouldn't call that routine.

BRADFIELD
(annoyed)
I'll have a word with them later.
(beat)
Any other insights? Like a motive?

TALORA
I believe the intent was to destroy the body of Jem'Hadar.

BRADFIELD
What would that accomplish?

TALORA
It would prevent us from obtaining a sample of his blood.

BRADFIELD
What's so important about his blood?

TALORA
(annoyed)
For a security chief who sees everything that goes on on this station, you seem to be missing a great deal.

BRADFIELD
Humor me. Pretend I don't know anything.
TALORA
(sighs)
After the explosion, I saw a blood stain on the carpet. When I went back later to examine it, it was gone. The next day, it had somehow reappeared. It is my opinion that the victim's blood was removed and replaced with another sample.

BRADFIELD
Do you realize how absurd that sounds? Why would someone go through all that trouble just to get rid of a blood sample?

TALORA
Why indeed?

Bradfield sighs.

BRADFIELD
This is turning out to be more trouble than it's worth. Everyone's nervous about how long we've been delaying the peace talks. Something has to give soon.

The door chime rings out. Bradfield glances out the window where we find Carter, apparently alone. Bradfield opens the doors.

Carter steps in part way.

CARTER
Do you have a moment, Lieutenant?

BRADFIELD
What do you want?

Carter enters, sits uninvited.

CARTER
I'm concerned.

BRADFIELD
Good for you.

CARTER
I'm serious, Lieutenant. These constant delays are making the Bajorans very nervous. They're beginning to doubt the talks will go forward. They're beginning to doubt the Federation's ability to help them.
TALORA
And why would they be feeling that way, Mr. Carter? Surely not because they've been watching your reports.

CARTER
I know where you're going, Talora. But the reports I made are based on Bajoran opinion, not influencing it. I conducted a great many interviews before I made my reports.

TALORA
Now why do I have a hard time believing that?

CARTER
It makes no difference to me if you believe it or not. (to Bradfield)
Do you have any leads at all? Any clue as to motive, any suspects?

BRADFIELD
I don't have time for this. Get out of here.

CARTER
(indignant)
Lieutenant Bradfield, this investigation is a very important turning point in these talks. Up until now the Bajorans have been nervous, their faith has been shaken. I'm offering you the opportunity to put all of that to rest. Give me something to take back to them, something to tell them you're doing what you can, something to restore what little faith they had in you.

Bradfield seems to ponder this for a moment, but he meets Carter's gaze with daggers in his eyes.

BRADFIELD
Get out of my office.

Carter shakes his head sadly.

CARTER
It's a shame you feel that way. I really wanted to help you. But you leave me no choice.

Carter stands, quickly withdraws. Talora looks after him, concern mounting in her eyes.
TALORA
I don't think that was wise.

BRADFIELD
I don't care what you think, Commander.

Talora quickly departs.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- PROMENADE

Talora quickly rushes to catch up with Carter.

TALORA
Mr. Carter.

The reporter stops when he sees Talora approaching.

CARTER
Yes, Commander?

TALORA
What was that about, exactly?

CARTER
I don't understand.

TALORA
If there is a headline to be found here, I somehow doubt it is to be found among the Bajoran populace. What interest could you possibly have in how the Bajorans feel?

CARTER
(beat; thoughtful)
A week ago I might have asked myself that same question. I guess things change.

TALORA
Yes, things change. And people change. But you, Mr. Carter, do not. What's really going on here? What story are you really after?

CARTER
As I told the rather stubborn Lieutenant, I'm interested in what the Bajorans think of this.

TALORA
Why?

CARTER
Because no one else is.
TALORA
Reporting on the Bajorans won't get you back into the FNN.

CARTER
(beat)
I know. But it's something I have to do. Excuse me, Commander.

Carter walks away, leaving Talora to ponder his words.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM

Cross sits at his desk, listening intently to Quinlan, who is seated across from him. We arrive mid-conversation.

CROSS
You're certain it was him?

QUINLAN
I nearly mauled the guy. I got a good look at him. It WAS Timin.

Cross considers this.

CROSS
This is one of those very unpleasant situations where no matter what we do, we look like the bad guys.

QUINLAN
Well we have to do something. He nearly killed Dojar. And he damn near blew up the Enterprise.

CROSS
I know that.
(beat)
Inform Talora. She might be able to explore it as a possible lead in her investigation.

QUINLAN
Yes, sir.

Quinlan rises and departs.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- TEN FORWARD

We find Talora sitting in the otherwise empty Ten Forward. The lights are dim; it is the night shift.

The doors slide open. Talora barely affords a glance up as Quinlan enters the room. Likewise, Quinlan doesn't notice Talora at first. She heads to the bar and reaches over, grabbing a bottle and a glass.
TALORA
I somehow doubt Hal will approve of that.

Quinlan jumps, startled, nearly dropping the bottle.

QUINLAN
Don't worry, it's my bottle. I just keep it here for special occasions.

Quinlan pours herself a drink.

QUINLAN (CONT'D)
Care for a glass?

TALORA
No thank you.

Quinlan downs her drink then joins Talora at her table.

QUINLAN
Burning the midnight oil?

TALORA
I suppose.

QUINLAN
Any progress?

TALORA
Minimal.

QUINLAN
I may have a lead for you.

Talora puts down her PADD for the first time.

TALORA
Regarding the blood?

QUINLAN
Regarding someone with a motive.
(beat)
Timin Pol is here.

Talora fights through the familiar name until she matches it with someone.

TALORA
From Ionis.

QUINLAN
That's right.
TALORA
(considers)
As I recall, Timin was willing to do just about anything to make the Federation look bad. Do you know where he is?

QUINLAN
No. I ran into him on the promenade and chased him into the habitat ring. I lost him back there. All I found was Carter.

TALORA
(something clicks)
Carter. Have you seen his most recent reports?

QUINLAN
I didn't know he was broadcasting again.

TALORA
Not for the FNN. For the Bajorans. In fact, he has been extremely concerned for the Bajoran people, and his recent reports reflect that.

Quinlan realizes.

QUINLAN
To the point of making the Federation look bad?

TALORA
Precisely.
(rising quickly)
He has arranged for temporary quarters on Deep Space Nine. Would you care to assist me in an interrogation?

Quinlan lights up.

QUINLAN
Only if you let me bring the guest of honor.

The two are on their way out the doors, which slide open. Talora taps her badge.

TALORA
Talora to Ambassador Odo.

The doors slide shut.
INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- HABITAT RING

We're just outside Carter's door. Quinlan approaches, dressed in civilian clothing — and not much of it. She rings the chime once. Twice. Again.

Finally the doors slide open and Carter, half awake, is standing on the other side. When he sees Quinlan's garb, he suddenly finds himself very much awake.

CARTER
What are you doing here?

QUINLAN
(coyly)
Where's Sarah?

CARTER
She's asleep.

QUINLAN
Good. Come here.

She grabs him by his collar and leads him down the hall. She walks backwards, smiling suggestively the entire time. Carter is confused but obviously very excited.

CARTER
I've been waiting a long time for this.

They stop, and Quinlan opens a door leading into quarters.

QUINLAN
Believe me Lewis, I've been wanting to do this for a long time too.

She smiles and pulls him in.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- CONTINUOUS

Carter is THROWN into a very uncomfortable chair. The impact is jarring and his head is snapped back. Before he can get up, straps flip out of the chair's arms and legs and restrain him.

Taking in the room now, we see Talora sitting behind a desk, which is the only other piece of furniture in the room. Her hands are completely obstructed from his view. She hands Quinlan a robe.

TALORA
Mr. Carter, we need to talk.

CARTER
I take it Romulans aren't into menage a tois.
TALORA
(disgusted)
No. I am, however, interested in
learning some more about your sudden
interest in the Bajorans.

CARTER
(sighs)
This again?

TALORA
According to my records, you left
Deep Space Nine just prior to the
strike proclamation. Why?

CARTER
I wanted to do some sight seeing.

TALORA
On Bajor?

CARTER
No, on Risa. But Bajor was closer.
Ah!

Carter glances down at his wrist straps, which seem to have
tightened.

CARTER (CONT'D)
What the hell was that?

TALORA
What was what, Mr. Carter?

They tighten again.

CARTER
Ah! That!

TALORA
Is there something you want to tell
us, Mr. Carter?

Carter sighs.

CARTER
Fine, fine, I went to Bajor. It
seemed to me like for all the fuss
everyone was making about the
wormhole, no one bothered asking the
Bajorans what they thought.

TALORA
(glances down, then
up)
Excellent. And who did you speak
you while you were on Bajor?
CARTER
I don't remember. A lot of people.
(tightening)
Ah! What are you trying to do?

TALORA
I'm only trying to ask you a few questions. You say you met with a lot of people. Would you mind giving me an example?

CARTER
This is bullshit. You have no right to keep me here. I -

The restraints tighten again, this time much worse. The strap around his stomach tightens as well.

CARTER (CONT'D)
The Kai! I met with the Kai!

The straps loosen, and Carter gulps in the air.

TALORA
What was the nature of your meeting?

CARTER
I just wanted to ask her opinion about the wormhole issue.

TALORA
I see. And here I find that less than two hours after your alleged visit, the Kai requested that Bajorans everywhere lay down their occupations and stop working.

CARTER
So? She wasn't happy about being ignored. I don't blame her.

Talora glances down again, then makes eye contact with Carter.

TALORA
Did you make contact with anyone named Timin Pol?

CARTER
(awkward)
Timin who?

The straps tighten.

CARTER (CONT'D)
I swear, I don't know who he is! I've never even heard of him!
The straps tighten more.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Ah! All right, all right! Yes, I spoke with him!

TALORA
And is he on this station right now?

CARTER
I don't -

Again, the straps are pulled tighter.

CARTER (CONT'D)
He's here! He's here!

The straps loosen.

TALORA
Does he have anything to do with the recent explosions on this station?

CARTER
No.

TALORA
Mr. Carter, I am getting tired of this.

CARTER
No! He doesn't, I swear he doesn't!

Quinlan scans him with a tricorder.

QUINLAN
His bios are normal. I think he's telling the truth this time.

The straps relent.

TALORA
Why is Timin Pol here?

CARTER
Maybe he enjoys the -
(as the straps tighten)
Ah! All right, all right! I honestly don't know. He's here with the Kai, acting like some sort of advisor. That's all I know. He's asked me to cover this - struggle he perceives the Bajorans going through.
(off Talora's scowl)
What, was I supposed to say no? It's a good story.

(MORE)
CARTER (CONT'D)
And it's a good point. The Federation HAS been ignoring Bajor.

TALORA
I am not interested in discussing politics at the moment.

CARTER
Fine. Then I won't bother telling you that if the talks aren't back on by tomorrow evening, the Kai is going to announce Bajor's withdrawal from the peace accords. The strike will continue indefinitely. And I suspect Bajor will be less willing to compromise.
(beat)
Now will you shut this damn thing off, please?

Talora raises an eyebrow.

TALORA
Shut what off, Mr. Carter?

She reveals her hands have nothing in them. Carter stares in confusion.

CARTER
But the chair...

ODO (O.S.)
Excuse me.

Carter's eyes widen. He slowly turns his head and finds himself confronted with Odo's head, which seems to have grown from the back of the chair.

ODO (CONT'D)
Would you mind getting off of me?

Carter faints dead away and falls to the floor in a heap. Odo finishes morphing back into a humanoid. He smiles, insufferably pleased with himself.

TALORA
Well done, Ambassador.

ODO
Likewise, Commander.

QUINLAN
You think it's true, what he said about the Kai?
TALORA
We must assume it is.
(beat)
Unfortunately if Timin is not behind the attack - we are back to square one.

Off the three of them, standing over Carter...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE
FADE IN:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM

We enter mid-conversation as Cross and Quinlan are already in mid-conversation.

CROSS
You kidnapped and interrogated Lewis Carter?

QUINLAN
Yes, sir. I realize it may have been a bad idea -

CROSS
(chuckles)
Bad idea? You should both be put in for promotion.
(leans back in his chair)
I hope he had something interesting to say.

QUINLAN
Timin has nothing to do with the explosions. But he's planning on using them to his advantage. He's got the Kai talked into some kind of speech about Federation incompetence.

CROSS
Wonderful.

QUINLAN
We could move against him, prevent him from doing it.

CROSS
Not a good idea. If he's got the Kai's ear, any attempt to move against him would only deepen the rift between Bajor and the Federation. Things were bad before this accident business, but they're getting worse. Right now, gaining the Kai's support is more important than bringing him to justice.

QUINLAN
Despite what he did?

CROSS
Tried to do. He didn't succeed.
QUINLAN
What's the difference? It's just semantics.

CROSS
In a situation like this, semantics are everything. Especially when it comes to dealing with the Kai.

QUINLAN
So he goes free because he's got friends in high places?

CROSS
For now, it seems so.

QUINLAN
That's bullshit.
(beat)
Sir.

CROSS
To put it mildly, yes.
(thoughtful sigh)
Maybe I'll try and talk to the Kai. If I can warn her about him without outright arresting him -

QUINLAN
Captain Neil Cross taking the subtle approach? You sure about that?

CROSS
(shrugs)
We all have to play against type sometimes. Like an ex-pirate turned Security Chief for example.

QUINLAN
Fair enough. I just hope you can get her away from Timin.

CROSS
Let me worry about that. Dismissed.

Quinlan rises, heads for the door.

CROSS (CONT'D)
Oh, Quinlan...
(she turns)
Nice work.

Quinlan smiles and leaves Cross to his thoughts.
INT. ENTERPRISE -- SICKBAY

We find Elris at one of the various stations in Sickbay, running tests on the blood sample she took from Morn's. Toran enters as she works. Elris barely spares him a glance.

TORAN
Y'lan seems fine, as far as I can tell.
(silence)
The bio readings are normal, but ce's still not talking.
(silence)
Apparently ce's not the only one.

ELRIS
I'm in the middle of a blood analysis at the moment.

TORAN
Oh.

Toran walks over to a nearby biobed where Narv remains comatose. He checks on several things.

TORAN (CONT'D)
Narv is looking better.

Elris still says nothing.

TORAN (CONT'D)
I get the feeling you're upset with me.

More silence. Toran sighs.

TORAN (CONT'D)
Fine. I'm needed in the Infirmary anyway. They're supposed to have it completed by now.

ELRIS
Wouldn't want to keep you from your precious Bajoran station.

Toran hesitates, looks at Elris - whose attention is still on the tests she's running - and leaves.

The tests finish up, and Elris reads over the results. She taps her comm badge.

ELRIS (CONT'D)
Elris to Talora.

TALORA'S COMM VOICE
Yes, doctor?
ELRIS
I've finished the scans of the blood. It's definitely Jem'Hadar.

TALORA'S COMM VOICE
But we have no way of knowing which Jem'Hadar.

ELRIS
Not unless the Dominion keeps such records, no.

TALORA'S COMM VOICE
I've spoken to Ambassador Odo. They do not.
(beat)
Thank you for your efforts, Doctor.

The comm goes dead. Elris sets about other tasks.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- SECURITY OFFICE

We find Talora and Bradfield in the Security Office. One of his displays has a video feed from the station outside of Morn's. The other has a display from outside the Infirmary.

They watch them carefully, but nothing of interest happens prior to the explosions.

BRADFIELD
Just like I told you, Commander. The monitors picked up nothing unusual.

TALORA
I'd like to take these logs to the Enterprise to examine them further.

BRADFIELD
I don't see what good that will do.

TALORA
I can get permission from Captain Voral if necessary.

Bradfield sighs, hits a few buttons.

BRADFIELD
I've given you access to the logs. You can download them to the Enterprise computer.

TALORA
Thank you, Lieutenant.
BRADFIELD
You'll let me know if you find something, I hope.

TALORA
Of course.

Talora leaves the office.

INT. DS9 -- BAJORAN TEMPLE

We find the Kai alone, meditating in the Bajoran temple. Behind her, we see Cross enter. He clears his throat politely to get the Kai's attention. She rises and turns.

KAI
May I help you?

CROSS
I apologize for disturbing you, Madame Kai. I'm Captain Neil Cross, of the Enterprise.

The Kai smiles graciously.

KAI
Captain Cross, of course.

CROSS
I hope I'm not intruding.

KAI
I can spare a few moments for the man who tried to save my life. Come, sit with me.

Cross walks to the front of the temple and sits on the edge of the raised platform, next to the Kai.

CROSS
I hope you've recovered from your experience.

KAI
I have, thank you.

CROSS
It's fortunate that you were close enough to the wormhole that the - uh - Prophets were able to save you.

KAI
I believe it was their will for me to meet with them. But tell me, how is your officer? The Q'tami?
CROSS
Well, he's -
(debates, drops it)
He's doing well.

KAI
I'm pleased to hear it.
(beat)
If I may be so bold, Captain Cross,
I don't believe you came here just
to exchange pleasantries with me.

CROSS
You're very perceptive.

KAI
Perception is one of many virtues
the Kai must master.

Cross thinks for a moment, trying to decide the best approach.

CROSS
I'm concerned for your safety.

The Kai seems surprised to hear this.

KAI
My safety? Why?

CROSS
My officers have reported the presence
of a Bajoran man on the station,
someone whom we've had dealings with
before. His name is Timin Pol.

KAI
And why is it that I should be
concerned about this Timin?

CROSS
A few years ago, he abducted a member
of my crew with the intent to kill
him.

The Kai seems taken aback.

KAI
How terrible.

CROSS
He also intended to destroy the
Enterprise. Fortunately, my crew
was able to stop him before he
succeeded.

KAI
I'm relieved to hear that.
CROSS
I hope you understand, I am concerned only for your safety.

KAI
(rising)
I understand perfectly, Captain Cross.

Cross rises.

KAI (CONT'D)
I appreciate your word of caution. Rest assured, I will take it to heart.

CROSS
Thank you. I would hate to see any more tragedy follow these talks.

KAI
As would I. Good day to you, Captain.

CROSS
And to you.

Cross inclines his head respectfully and withdraws. As he exits the room, we see a shadow move to the left of the doorway. Timin steps out of the darkness which had hidden him so completely.

TIMIN
What did I tell you?

KAI
You were correct, it seems. Almost word for word, exactly as you predicted.

TIMIN
They will stop at nothing to keep Bajor from becoming independent. The nerve! Disrupting the Kai's time of prayer and meditation to spread propaganda!

KAI
The captain seemed to be genuinely concerned.

TIMIN
Cross is a trained lackey. He excels at wearing whatever mask the Federation wants us to see.

The Kai is thoughtful for a moment.

KAI
The things he said - were they true?
Timin seems distressed, but only for a moment. He strides to the Kai.

**TIMIN**

Eminence -
(he kneels, kisses her hand)
I promise you, any actions I have taken in my life have been for the good of my home. For the good of Bajor. Perhaps some have been more...drastic than others. But even such drastic actions, when taken for the good of Bajor, the ultimate and everlasting good, cannot be seen as wrong.

The Kai mulls this over and accepts it.

**KAI**

Perhaps you're right.

**TIMIN**

(rising)
I would not lead you astray, Eminence. Come, we have much to discuss.

Timin leads the Kai from the temple.

**INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- MORN'S**

Talora sits by herself, going over several PADDs. The door slides open and she glances up to find Odo. She puts down the PADD and rises.

**TALORA**

Ambassador.

**ODO**

No need for that. I've never felt comfortable with all of these political niceties.

Talora sits back down and Odo joins her.

**ODO (CONT'D)**

Have you made any progress?

**TALORA**

I've had our Chief Engineer examine the security logs in detail. There is nothing to indicate anyone entered Morn's Bar or the Infirmary with hostile intentions.

**ODO**

What about transporter logs?
TALORA
I've examined every log for the past three weeks. Nothing.

ODO
May I see that?

Odo glances at the PADD with the log file playing.

ODO (CONT'D)
Odd.

TALORA
What is it?

ODO
These are from the station's sensor logs?

TALORA
Yes. Lieutenant Bradfield utilizes a number of sensor stations throughout Deep Space Nine.

ODO
(grumbling)
I remember them. When the Cardassians controlled Deep Space Nine, they required me to use them. I deactivated them once Starfleet took over. But this log can't have been from one of those stations.

TALORA
Why not?

Odo puts the PADD on the table and points to the image.

ODO
The sensor logs on the promenade are designed to capture images at a fixed ratio of 1248 x 936. It's hardwired, it can't be changed. These logs have been captured at 1192 x 880.

TALORA
But the log signatures match those of the sensor stations.

Odo looks at the logs again.

ODO
Then somebody must have cropped the image.

A beat.
TALORA
We have to find out who.

ODO
I doubt Bradfield will give us free access to his computer.

TALORA
Are you certain?

ODO
I wouldn't.

TALORA
There may be another way.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- PROMENADE

Talora stands off by herself, a PADD in hand, looking carefully across the Promenade. We see Lieutenant Bradfield exit the security office and walk swiftly down the hall. As soon as he is out of sight, Talora heads for his office.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- SECURITY OFFICE

Talora enters the office. A young officer, Ensign WHIPPLE, sits behind the desk, casually examining the display wall. He glances up.

WHIPPLE
Commander?

TALORA
Lieutenant Bradfield requested I drop this report off.

Whipple takes the PADD, glances it over, and places it on the table.

WHIPPLE
I'll make sure he gets it.

TALORA
Thank you.

She turns to leave, but catches something out of the corner of her. She moves to the video wall.

TALORA (CONT'D)
Did you see that, Ensign?

WHIPPLE
See what, ma'am?

Whipple rises from his desk and walks over to the video wall.
TALORA
This display. It malfunctioned.

As they talk, our focus returns to the desk. The PADD Talora brought in grows a small arm, which travels slowly, carefully down to the computer interface. Several finger-like protrusions emerge and work on the console. The display reads 'Dampening Field Established.'

The arm moves to another part of the interface and continues its work. After a few moments, half of the display screens go blank.

WHIPPLE
Oh, great.
(taps his badge)
Whipple to Chief Soltes.
(nothing; again)
Whipple to Chief Soltes.

Whipple sighs in frustration.

WHIPPLE (CONT'D)
This would happen on my first Security shift. I'm sorry commander, I have to go check this out.

Whipple rushes out of the room. Talora rushes to the desk and begins working, as the PADD she brought in slowly morphs into Odo.

TALORA
You must have been very effective as Chief of Security here.

ODO
Yes. I was. Have you found the original log files?

TALORA
I believe so.

We see the logs appear on the display screen. Both are larger than when we last saw them. More of the Promenade is visible. We first run through Morn's, which is basically the same file.

ODO
Nothing different about that. Try the other one.

Talora brings up the second log file and plays it. It looks much the same.

ODO (CONT'D)
They both look the same.
TALORA
(suspicious)
Yes, they do.

She backs up the Infirmary explosion log and plays it again. Suddenly she freeze-frames it.

TALORA (CONT'D)
There. Do you see that?

She works on the console. The bottom right corner of the screen is magnified. We find ourselves gazing at the top part of a human face.

ODO
Who is it?

Talora enhances the image further. We see the features of Lieutenant Bradfield come into focus.

TALORA
It is Lieutenant Bradfield.

ODO
Bradfield? I thought he never left his office?

TALORA
He doesn't.
(beat)
Where could he be going? What is on the Promenade in that direction?

ODO
Morn's, the Replimat, a few shops.

TALORA
The Replimat?

ODO
(nods)
A series of public access replicators.

TALORA
Replicators...
(rises quickly)
Come on.

Talora rushes out, with Odo a step behind her.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- REPLIMAT

We find Talora and Odo working on two different replicators.
TALORA
This terminal was accessed approximately five minutes before the explosion in the Infirmary.  
(beat)
By Lieutenant Bradfield.  It appears he modified the matter conversion matrix to run through the station's pattern buffers.

ODO  
(mildly impressed)
That wouldn't leave a traceable signature.

TALORA
Which is why I found nothing when I analyzed the transporter logs.

ODO
So he beamed the explosive directly into the morgue chamber.

TALORA
It would appear so.

ODO
But why?  What was his motive?

TALORA
I suspect we'll find that out when we arrest him.  Would you care to join me, Ambassador?

ODO
I wouldn't miss it.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- HABITAT RING

A hand fills our view.  We pull back to find Talora reaching for the door chime.  Odo is at her side, as well as several armed security officers.

The doors slide open and Bradfield emerges in his robe.

BRADFIELD
Commander.  I -

He notices the security contingent.

BRADFIELD (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

TALORA
Arresting the man who planted an explosive device in the Infirmary.  If you'll come with us, please.
Bradfield glances at the security officers, then at Odo, then at Talora.

Suddenly he bellows and leaps at Odo.

**BRADFIEL**
Dominion bastard!

Odo allows himself to morph temporarily into his gelatinous state. Bradfield plunges through him and runs into the wall. He turns to find several phasers leveled at him.

**TALORA**
If you'll come with us, please.

Bradfield sneers but makes no move.

**BRADFIEL**
This is your fault, Changeling.

**ODO**
My fault?

**BRADFIEL**
Your people murdered my parents in the war! They took everything I had! Everything!

Odo frowns. He's used to hearing this by now, but it does little to ease the impact.

**ODO**
I'm - sorry.

**BRADFIEL**
Sorry? Will that bring them back? Will it give me back my family?
WILL IT?

**ODO**
No, it won't.
(beat)
But neither will stopping the negotiations.

**TALORA**
Get him out of here.

The security team takes Bradfield away as he continues to hurl insults at Odo.

**TALORA (CONT'D)**
Are you all right, Ambassador?
ODO
(nods)
You'd be surprised how often I hear that. Even in the Gamma Quadrant. I don't hold myself responsible for the crimes of people during the war. I just wish there was something I could do to help close the rift.

TALORA
I'm sure the negotiations will be back on now. I think that's a good place to begin.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- DELFUNE'S OFFICE

We find Delfune and Talora together in the dimly lit office.

DELFUNE
You did a commendable job, Commander.

TALORA
I'm sure it pains you to say that.

DELFUNE
Not as much as you might think. Bradfield's arrest has calmed the Bajoran storm, so to speak.

TALORA
I assume I will be needed to bear witness at the trial?

DELFUNE
No. The trial is being held off the station. Bradfield has already left.

TALORA
I don't understand.

DELFUNE
You did well, Commander. You played your part. Now it's time to let it go.

TALORA
(upset)
My part? Admiral, I must object to this being taken out of my hands so quickly. I had expected to -

DELFUNE
There are forces at work here that are far beyond you, Commander. Beyond even me. You don't want to push this any further.
TALORA
Admiral, I -

DELFUNE
Trust me on this Commander. Let it go. Now.

Talora glares hard at Delfune for a few moments before rising and departing.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- TALORA'S QUARTERS

Talora sits in her bed with a single light on above her. She reviews information on a PADD. A quick look from her shoulder shows us she's reading up on Bradfield.

She slowly sits up, reading on in disbelief.

TALORA
Impossible.

She reaches over and activates her comm panel.

TALORA (CONT'D)
Talora to Captain Cross.

CROSS' COMM VOICE
(groggy)
What is, Commander?

TALORA
I need to see you at once, Sir.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM

Talora paces, PADD in hand.

TALORA
I thought it was strange that the matter was so quickly taken out of my hands. I checked into Bradfield's background.

CROSS
And?

TALORA
He claimed he planted the explosive to try and derail the peace talks. He didn't want peace with the Dominion because they killed his parents.

CROSS
The Dominion killed a lot of people, Commander. There are bound to be a few survivors who would like to return the favor.
TALORA
(holds up the PADD)
His parents are alive.

CROSS
What?

TALORA
They're alive. On Rigel VII.

Talora hands Cross the PADD. He looks it over as surprise washes over him.

CROSS
Talora...this says his parents were killed. By the Dominion.

Talora rips the PADD out of his hand.

TALORA
That's impossible.
(she hits a few buttons)
It was here five minutes ago.

Cross sighs.

CROSS
I think maybe you need to get some rest. You've been working yourself too hard.

TALORA
Captain, it was -

CROSS
That's an order, Commander.

Talora gives Cross a frustrated stare before turning and rushing off.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDORS

Talora storms down the Enterprise corridors, clearly preoccupied. She pauses for a moment, then taps her comm badge.

TALORA
Talora to Doctor Elris.

INT. DEEP SPACE NINE -- MORN'S BAR

The bar is still closed, but most of the damage from the blast has been repaired. We find Dr. Elris alone, examining the blast site with her tricorder. She is just as displeased with her findings this time as she was last time.
ELRIS
(to herself)
Honestly Talora, I don't know what you expected me to find.

She makes one more pass then closes the tricorder, ready to leave. But something catches her eye.

The corner of one of the nearby tables is slightly discolored. Elris moves to it, kneels down, looks it over. She quickly pulls out her tricorder and scans it. Her eyes widen.

ELRIS (CONT'D)
Oh my God...

She stares in silence for a few moments, then taps her comm badge.

ELRIS (CONT'D)
Elris to Talora.
(nothing)
Elris to Commander Talora, come in please.

A shadow falls over her. She freezes for a moment, then slowly turns to face the shadow. Before she (and we) can see who it belongs to, a fist LASHES OUT and hits Elris square in the temple. Her head bounces off the table and the tricorder falls to the ground.

We fall with it. The tricorder remains in the foreground as we hear the sounds of a vicious beating. Glass breaks, tables fall, and moments later, Elris falls to the ground before us in a heap.

We hear the whine of a phaser. Seconds later, a gloved hand takes the tricorder and walks away.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END