

Power Loss (Episode 32.5)

By

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TEASER

EXT. RUNABOUT

Establishing. Runabout moving at impulse speed.

INT. RUNABOUT

MAJOR KIRA sits in the pilot seat telling a story. COMMANDER DAX sits in the co-pilot seat staring into space.

KIRA

(laughing)

Then she tells me that the door was never locked at all, so this whole time I was making a long trip all the way around the building when I could have been going straight through. I was so worried about barging in somewhere I wasn't allowed, I didn't even check!

Dax says nothing. Kira looks at Dax and realizes she talking to a brick wall.

KIRA

Then she turned into a Tarkinian Newt and squirmed away.

DAX

What? Oh, sorry. I was just thinking.

KIRA

I can see that.

DAX

I was trying to figure out the best way to explain the situation to Commander Sisko.

KIRA

Explain what? First contact with the Nostarians went extremely well. I can't wait to introduce them to the Alpha Quadrant.

DAX

Agreed, but their social structure, although certainly not the first

(MORE)

DAX (cont'd)
we've encountered like it, is
still...unique in the Alpha
Quadrant.

KIRA
Every new species we encounter has
cultural differences from our
own. You and I have different
practices, different beliefs, but
it doesn't stop us from working
together.

DAX
True. I guess I should be thankful
they aren't hostile. I've heard
first contact stories where the
team barely made it back in one
piece.

Kira looks at the controls.

KIRA
We should reach the wormhole in
five minutes.

Dax checks conditions on the controls.

DAX
I just want to handle this as
delicately as possible so no one
feels unwelcome and simultaneously
no one's ego gets bruised.

KIRA
Is that Jadzia talking or Curzon?

Dax considers the question.

EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

Establishing. The station hangs in space.

INT. REPLIMAT

BASHIR sits at a cafe table looking over a PADD and sipping
a drink. A young BEJORAN WOMAN stands at the replicator
pushing buttons, but not getting it to work.

Bashir watches the woman for a moment before walking to her
side.

BASHIR
 May I? What are you trying to
 order?

BEJORAN WOMAN
 Anything at this point, nothing
 seems to be getting through.

Bashir smiles smugly.

BASHIR
 (to replicator)
 One raktajino.

Bashir waits, but nothing happens. He pushes a few buttons
 on the top of the terminal. He hits his com badge.

BASHIR
 Bashir to O'Brien.

O'BRIEN'S COM VOICE
 Yes, Doctor.

SISKO
 We seem to have a malfunctioning
 replicator here in-

O'BRIEN'S COM VOICE
 I'll add it to the list.

Bashir is momentarily taken aback by O'Brien's harshness. He
 just smiles at the Bejoran woman.

INT. DOCKING BAY

SISKO waits in the hall by the bay doors. Dax and Kira
 enter the hall.

SISKO
 Major, Lieutenant. Welcome back.

KIRA
 Thank you, sir.

The lights in the hallway flicker, then return to normal.

DAX
 What was that?

SISKO
 We've been experiencing minor power
 fluctuations all over the station
 the past day and a half.

DAX

Do we know what's causing it?

SISKO

Not yet. Chief O'Brien is working on it. So far, it hasn't been anything more than a minor nuisance.

Sisko waits patiently for information.

SISKO

Well? How did it go?

Sisko, Kira and Dax walk down the hall away from the bay.

KIRA

Very good. Nostos welcomed us with open arms.

SISKO

Outstanding. And they're planning a visit to our station?

DAX

Yes, next week. I'll have all the details in my report.

SISKO

I can't wait for that, this is first contact we're talking about. Tell me what I can expect from our new friends?

KIRA

Yes, what should the Commander expect?

The three stop walking. Kira looks delighted. Sisko looks confused.

DAX

I should start by telling you that there was some confusion during introductions and the Nostarians we met don't think you are the commander of this station.

SISKO

Oh?

DAX

They think that Major Kira is head of the station and that I am second in command, head of ops.

SISKO

What made them think that?

DAX

It was simply the logical conclusion to them. Any attempt we made to correct the miscommunication only confused them and caused them to defer to their original assessment even more.

SISKO

I think I might be missing something here.

KIRA

Let's just say you'd be more convincing as a leader if your name was Benjamina.

Dax and Kira walk off, leaving Sisko looking perplexed, but intrigued.

ACT 1

INT. PROMENADE

Major Kira escorts three Nostarian ambassadors, BENNIFIA, SORYA, and LELA, along with one FEMALE NOSTARIAN GUARD and one MALE NOSTARIAN GUARD down the Promenade. The Nostarians are humanoids with large pointed ears and markings on their necks. A few other people mill about.

KIRA

The Promenade is the main hub of activity for our guests here on the station. I remember when the federation first arrived here, I had doubts we could even get the station fully operational let alone attract vendors. Now, vacancies are filling up almost to the point of capacity. I would be happy to give you a full tour later, but I'm sure you're tired and would like to be shown to your quarters.

BENNIFIA

Oh no, I'd like to dive right in. There seems to be so much to learn and I've only seen a small part of the station.

Sisko approaches the group.

KIRA

Commander Sisko, allow me to introduce the three ambassadors from Nostos: Sorya Ree, Head of Central Security Forces, Dr. Lela Rendzalin, and Chief Minister Bennifia Zaldan.

Sisko puts his hand out to Bennifia.

SISKO

It is a pleasure to meet you, Chief Minister Zaldan.

BENNIFIA

Chief Minister will do just fine, thank you.

Benni is to the point, but not unfriendly.

KIRA

Commander Sisko is the leader of this station.

BENNI

After you, of course.

KIRA

No, actually, I report to the Commander.

Benni looks between Sisko and Kira. A wave of comprehension rolls over her...she thinks.

BENNI

I see.

She pats Sisko on the shoulder.

BENNI

I'm sure you're doing a fine job. Please, carry on, I wouldn't want to keep you from your duties.

Sisko looks at the hand that pats him on the shoulder. He smiles, maintains composure.

SISKO

I would be happy to show you around
or answer any questions you might
have.

BENNI

That won't be necessary.

Sisko takes the hint.

SISKO

I'll be in ops if you need
me. Major.

Sisko walks away.

BENNI

Who's husband is he?

KIRA

Husband?

BENNI

It must be someone quite high up in
the government.

KIRA

I don't think I follow.

BENNI

On Nostos, occasionally one of the
husbands of our high ranking
officials will get it in his head
that he shares the office. We give
him a title and let him think it's
an important
responsibility. Really seems to
pacify them, doesn't it?

LELA

What's that?

Lela indicates Quark's and excitedly heads that direction.

KIRA

That would be Quark's. It's a
popular bar and... recreation
facility.

SORYA

Gambling?

Sorya seems more concerned than amused.

KIRA
Well, yes, but that's only...

LELA
I'm always willing to try my
luck. Benni?

BENNI
(to Kira)
Do you mind?

KIRA
Not at all.

Kira braces herself for what the Nostarians might make of Quark.

INT. QUARK'S

Lela heads in first and goes straight to the dabo tables where a small crowd has gathered to play. A Bejoran DABO GIRL greets her. Benni, Kira and the other Nostarians hang back, closer to the entrance at the bar, where MORN is the only other customer. Benni looks up the staircase.

BENNI
What's up there?

KIRA
Holosuites, mostly.

BENNI
Interesting. This place is much
bigger than it looks from the
outside. Do you come here often?

KIRA
Sometimes, it's a popular place. I
just tend not to linger, usually.

BENNI
Why's that?

QUARK walks over to Benni's group from behind the bar.

QUARK
Major, you're looking as radiant as
ever.

KIRA
Chief Minister, this is Quark, the
proprietor.

BENNI

A pleasure to meet you. This is quite the establishment you have.

QUARK

Yes it is. And it doesn't bother you that I'm the owner?

Kira gives Quark a warning glare. Benni doesn't understand Quark's question.

BENNI

Bother me? Should it?

QUARK

I'd assume you-

The crowd over by the tables shouts "dabo". Lela looks pleased as she heads back over to Benni.

LELA

I guess the Gods are on my side today.

QUARK

How much on your side?

KIRA

Why don't we move along? There's a lot more to see.

Benni and Kira head out, followed by the rest of the Nostarian crowd.

BENNI

I hope I didn't say something to offend Quark. She seemed awfully hostile.

Kira suppresses a laugh. Everyone exits except for Sorya, who stops and watches when she sees Quark stomp over to the dabo tables. Quark grabs the Dabo Girl who was talking to Lela by the arm.

AT DABO TABLES

QUARK

The Nostarian won, did she?

DABO GIRL

Yes, and?

QUARK

I didn't see her provide any latinum to play with.

DABO GIRL

First spins on the house, you always-

QUARK

Exactly, I say that. I can decide how to run the game. You're job is to look pretty and empty pockets, remember that.

BACK TO BAR

CLOSE ON Sorya, concerned over the interaction.

INT. PROMENADE

Kira leads Benni and the group of Nostarians, except for Sorya, down the Promenade in the direction they were headed before.

KIRA

I thought you might be interested to learn about your respective areas of expertise here on the station. Dax can show you around ops, Chief Minister.

Sorya quietly joins the group.

BENNI

Benni, please.

KIRA

Benni.

BENNI

I have been looking forward to getting to know Dax better. Now there's a woman's woman.

Kira just smiles and nods.

INT. INFIRMARY

Bashir stands in the infirmary alone, studying a test tube. Lela wanders in looking around at all the medical equipment.

BASHIR
Can I help you?

Lela looks Bashir up and down, likes what she sees.

LELA
I don't know, but I'm willing to find out.

Lela moves in closer. Bashir seems thoroughly confused.

BASHIR
Are you ill?

LELA
No, I'm quite well. I'm here to see the Doctor in an ambassadorial capacity, but you don't need to rush off to fetch her. You and I can get better acquainted first.

Bashir is startled by her forwardness. Then, he makes the connection.

BASHIR
You must be the doctor from Nostos.

LELA
(smug)
You've heard of me, then?

BASHIR
I've been expecting you.

LELA
Music to my ears. I must remember to thank the Doctor for that.

BASHIR
You just did. Dr. Julian Bashir.

Bashir extends his hand. Lela doesn't take it.

LELA
You are adorable, but I must not be communicating myself properly. I'm looking for the Doctor, the Chief Medical Officer for this station.

BASHIR
Yes, that would be me.

Lela stares at Bashir trying to comprehend. Bashir pulls out a chair at a nearby table.

BASHIR
Please, have a seat. I'd be happy to discuss anything you might be curious about.

Lela sits, still eying Bashir like a piece of meat.

LELA
I'm sure I could think of something you could do for me.

BASHIR
Right.

Bashir gathers himself and sticks his hand out again.

BASHIR
I'm Julian.

Lela shakes Bashir's hand.

LELA
Dr. Lela Rendzalin.

BASHIR
Dr. Rendzalin, allow me to welcome-

LELA
Lela.

BASHIR
Of course.

The two stare at each other for an awkward beat. Lela rolls her eyes, Bashir's not being any fun.

LELA
I'd like to take a look at the medical data you gathered while studying the Athos virus. It is a common problem on Nostos.

BASHIR
(relieved)
I'd be happy to show that to you.

Bashir beckons Lela to a terminal by the wall. He pushes a few buttons to bring up a series of medical logs. Lela joins him by the terminal.

BASHIR

I hadn't actually encountered a patient with the virus until coming to DS9. What really fascinated me about-

LELA

I'll read the reports. Why don't you get me something to drink?

BASHIR

Um, certainly, what would you like?

LELA

Surprise me.

Bashir hangs back uncertain what to do as Lela reads.

INT. ODO'S OFFICE

Sorya enters Odo's office to find ODO furiously typing away at one screen while checking a tablet just off to the side.

ODO

I'll be with you in one moment.

Sorya says nothing, staring at Odo in mild shock. Odo finishes typing and picks up the tablet.

ODO

Just as I suspected. Two containers of duranium unaccounted for.

Odo finally looks up and stands. He notices the expression on Sorya's face.

ODO

Are you all right?

SORYA

Yes, I'm fine. You really are...you're not human.

ODO

No, I'm a shape-shifter.

SORYA

Yes.

Odo visibly radiates hope.

ODO

Have you met someone like me
before?

SORYA

No, I've just heard stories of
changelings.

Odo doesn't hide his disappointment. Sorya composes
herself.

SORYA

My name's Sorya Ree.

ODO

Chief Commander of Security on
Nostos.

SORYA

And you are Odo, but most people
just call you Constable.

ODO

You've done your homework, I see.

SORYA

That's our job, isn't it?

ODO

Yes, I suppose it is.

The lights flicker in the office.

SORYA

What was that?

ODO

A minor power fluctuation. One
thing you become accustomed to on
this station is that nothing ever
works as it should.

SORYA

We are fortunate enough not to have
that problem on Nostos.

Odo grunts in envy.

ODO

I can only imagine what that must be like.

SORYA

It comes at a price.

Sorya looks at Odo, surprised that she said that out loud.

SORYA

That's not to say...I'm very proud of Nostos. I don't want to give you the impression...

ODO

Why don't we start with standard security protocol for new ships waiting to dock?

SORYA

Very well.

Odo starts to pull something up on a wall panel and Sorya goes to the other side of the desk to join him.

CLOSE ON Odo puzzling Sorya out.

ACT 2

INT. OPS - DAY

Benni stands next to Dax at a terminal in the center of ops. The two Nostarian guards flank Dax and Benni. Other OFFICERS work in the background.

DAX

Having a stable wormhole is new territory to us. Although we have encountered only minor problems in energy discharges, we are vigilant about keeping track of any variations that might indicate a permanent change. I'm sure the scientists on Nostos are keeping a close watch on the wormhole as well.

BENNI

It's a fair distance from Nostos, but we still keep an eye on the activity of the wormhole.

The lights on one of the panel displays goes out.

BENNI

Was that supposed to happen?

The lights come back on.

DAX

No, but it doesn't seem to have impacted anything of importance.

BENNI

I'm not one for bragging, but I can't speak highly enough of my team of engineers at the capital. They know how to design things to really last. It's important to surround yourself with a group of people you can really rely on.

DAX

I know what you mean. Things may not always run as smoothly as we'd like on the station, but I know I can count on my colleagues.

The lights on the display go out again.

DAX

A perfect example. I might be disturbed by that malfunction if I didn't have complete faith in our Chief Engineer, Mr. O'Brien.

Benni looks unconvinced.

DAX

Lunch?

INT. COMMANDER'S OFFICE

Commander Sisko stands at the door to his office watching Dax lead Benni and her guards out of ops. He turns to face Kira, who sits in front of his desk.

SISKO

You feel that the visit is going well, then.

KIRA

I'd say so. I didn't get the impression that they were eager to leave.

Sisko sits behind his desk. The doors to his office open and shut for no reason whatsoever. Sisko taps his com badge.

SISKO

Sisko to Chief O'Brien.

O'BRIEN'S COM VOICE

O'Brien here.

SISKO

Either I've just been visited by a ghost or something is tripping the circuits to my office door.

A beat.

O'BRIEN'S COM VOICE

Maybe it's ghosts.

SISKO

Chief.

O'BRIEN'S COM VOICE

Yes, sir. I'll have a look at it.

SISKO

(to Kira)

Sometimes I feel like this station doesn't want us to make a good first impression.

KIRA

Maybe we do have ghosts, Cardassian ones.

Sisko looks through the window out into space.

SISKO

Just once I'd like to hit the ball on the screws.

KIRA

Commander?

SISKO

In baseball, when the bat and the ball meet at that perfect spot, the

(MORE)

SISKO (cont'd)
 cracking sound reverberates
 throughout the whole stadium and
 the ball arcs into the sky. It's
 not easy to do, but it is a sight
 to see. We can't wait on a pitch,
 though. We're slap hitters.

KIRA
 You lost me, again.

SISKO
 Slap hitters are important, very
 important. They get the job done
 and move players off the
 plates. That's what we do, we move
 things along and keep this station
 in the game.

KIRA
 More so now than ever. But I'm
 guessing you don't want to be
 a...slap hitter.

SISKO
 I don't mind for the most part, but
 I would love to know how it feels
 to...

Sisko swings his arms out like he's swinging a bat.

SISKO (CON'T)
 ...hit that sweet spot.

KIRA
 We'll get there.

Sisko's doors open and stay open.

SISKO
 Not today.

INT. REPLIMAT

Dax and Benni sit at a table on the edge of the Replimat finishing their food. Benni's two guards sit at a table near by.

BENNI

I had sailed through all the simulations, but when time came to actually fly the thing, I just froze. It was the oddest sensation.

DAX

What did you do?

BENNI

Oh, Rishta, my guard, stepped in for a moment, got us back to the ground.

Benni throws her hand back to indicate the male guard, but doesn't turn towards him.

DAX

Good thing he was there.

BENNI

I still never figured out what caused me to draw a blank like that.

Chief O'Brien hustles past carrying an equipment case, mumbling to himself.

DAX

Chief, is everything okay?

O'Brien comes over to the table.

O'BRIEN

I just got an ear-full from Quark about how the holosuites are flaking out. I can barely repair one thing before I'm running to look at something else. I don't know what's going on lately.

Benni bares a large, patronizing smile.

BENNI

These complex systems can be so overwhelming sometimes, can't they?

O'BRIEN

Yes, they can.

BENNI

It's not everyone that can hop from one machine to the next making repairs.

O'Brien takes the compliment sincerely.

O'BRIEN
No, it's not.

Benni pats him on the shoulder.

BENNI
Well, I see you working very hard.

O'BRIEN
At least somebody does.

O'Brien walks away.

BENNI
Poor thing. I could lend you a team of real engineers. They'd have this station running smoothly in a day.

Dax grips her mug, she is apprehensive about the conversation she is about to have.

DAX
Benni, I feel I should apologize to you. I don't think I have been completely forthcoming with you.

BENNI
Oh?

DAX
I haven't been intentionally deceptive of course, but...

BENNI
I'm listening.

DAX
May I ask you for your honest opinion of me?

BENNI
What do you mean?

DAX
What do you think of me? As an officer, as a person?

BENNI
Why, you're a delight! Smart, funny, strong. If you didn't seem
(MORE)

BENNI (cont'd)
so pleased working here, I'd steal
you away to Nostos.

DAX
Thank you, I really appreciate
that. There is something we should
talk about.

BENNI
What's that?

DAX
I used to be a man. A few,
actually.

BENNI
Pardon?

INT. QUARK'S

Odo and Sorya enter Quark's bar which bustles with activity
from a variety of different characters.

SORYA
And you get reliable information
here?

ODO
Sometimes it's good information,
though often it's the source of the
problem.

Sorya and Odo take a seat at a table. Quark wanders over
with a mischievous grin on his face.

QUARK
(to Sorya)
Can't stay away, I see. How would
you like-

ODO
No.

QUARK
You don't even know what I was
going to say.

ODO
No.

Quark throws his hands up and walks away.

SORYA
He is Ferengi?

ODO
Yes, and the top of my watch list.

SORYA
I have read a bit about Ferengi
culture. It repulses me.

ODO
I can't speak to the culture as a
whole, but if Quark is any
indication, I can see your point.

SORYA
You don't think I'm a hypocrite?

ODO
Why would that be?

SORYA
We would never do anything on
Nostos as debasing as deny our male
citizens the right to wear clothes
or refuse to let them partake in
basic business transactions, but we
do place certain... limitations on
them.

ODO
I admit I only have a surface
understanding of Nostarian
regulation.

SORYA
Maybe it's just my own
insecurities. I would hate to have
our proud culture compared to the
likes of the Ferengi. It's just,
there are things that are best left
to...a certain type of person.

ODO
I know too little about your people
to make any judgments, but if you
are worried about people comparing
you to the Ferengis, maybe it's
because you already are.

Sorya looks at Odo as if he can see right through her.

INT. REPLIMAT

Dax and Benni continue their conversation.

BENNI

But you don't look that old.

DAX

Jadzia isn't, but Dax has lived many lives.

BENNI

But your body, you are female.

DAX

It's not that simple. A joined Trill houses the memories and experiences of all her hosts. That line of male and female becomes superficial.

BENNI

Ridiculous. Genetically speaking, there are some things that only women are capable of understanding and performing. You may have male memories, but I'm willing to bet they are nothing more than a distraction.

DAX

Every prior hosts offers something valuable to Jadzia.

BENNI

I can't say I care much for this conversation.

INT. QUARK'S

Odo and Sorya continue their conversation.

SORYA

You have to understand the history of Nostos. We were at war for so much of our early history and when we finally quelled the outside invaders, we broke into civil war, which almost decimated our race. When the smoke cleared, we were left with only a few colonies. We rebuilt our society

(MORE)

SORYA (cont'd)
and restored order and prosperity
with the leadership of strong
women. Many people feel like we
shouldn't mess with a tried and
true method.

ODO
I can see a certain logic to that
way of thinking.

SORYA
Many Nostarians do.

INT. PROMANADE

Dax and Benni walk down the Promenade with the guards
following.

DAX
I'm sorry, I hope I didn't upset
you.

BENNI
I'll be fine. I just need a moment
to myself.

DAX
Let me show you to your quarters.

BENNI
No, I can find my way.

Benni and her guards walk off leaving Dax standing alone.

INT. QUARK'S

Odo and Sorya still at the table.

ODO
So you're married then?

SORYA
I was. He was killed in an
accident a couple years ago.

ODO
I'm sorry for your loss.

SORYA

Me too. We could talk about anything, he wasn't afraid to speak his mind to me. I'd never met anyone with such insatiable curiosity before. He challenged me to think about and explore new things that I don't suppose I would have on my own. Every time I would have to turn away a man from a closed hearing or throw one out of a restricted access building, I'd imagine I was doing it to my husband. Sometimes it made my job very difficult.

ODO

Have you ever tried voicing your opinion?

SORYA

I'm still not entirely sure what my opinion is.

Quark shows up again.

QUARK

(to Sorya)

Are you sure there's nothing I can get you?

SORYA

No, I'm fine.

QUARK

Maybe I can interest you in one of my holoprograms?

SORYA

Are you having difficulty understanding me? Go away.

Sorya quickly gets angry, balling her fists and raising her voice. Odo notices the tension.

ODO

Quark, leave.

QUARK

Now hold on a minute, this is after all my bar.

Quark moves closer to the table so that he stands next to Sorya.

QUARK

Can I help it if I'm drawn to this attractive female?

Quark places his hand on Sorya's. She looks at Odo before grabbing Quark by the ear and pinning him to the floor. He lets out high-pitched Ferengi wails. Odo stays calm and seated.

ODO

No, Sorya. Don't. This is a violation.

Odo smiles before rising to stop Sorya.

ACT 3

INT. INFIRMARY

Lela sits alone, wearily scanning a PADD screen. Bashir returns and makes a b-line for the opposite side of the infirmary. He sits, avoiding eye contact with Lela.

LELA

You're back.

BASHIR

Yes, sorry to rush off. I had to...tend to a sick crew member.

LELA

You make house calls? I'll have to remember that.

Bashir doesn't acknowledge Lela's comment. Lela walks up behind him and massages his shoulders.

LELA

I haven't felt this kind of tension in a nurse since my rotation in the Outlands.

Bashir jumps out of his seat, alarmed, but trying not to be rude.

BASHIR

Yes, I should make more of an effort to stretch. And, I am not a nurse, I'm a-

LELA
 Doctor, right. So sorry. Relax,
 sit back down.

Lela is amused. Bashir sits slowly, incredulously.

LELA
 So, what do you do for fun on this
 station?

BASHIR
 I think we should stick to
 discussing the medical sciences.

Lela is less amused.

LELA
 Fine, I guess I could help you with
 any problems you're stuck on.

BASHIR
 That's not quite what I had in
 mind, and I am not stuck on
 anything.

LELA
 All right, don't get so emotional.

BASHIR
 (yelling)
 I am not getting emotional!

Lela gratefully looks at Bashir for just proving her point.

BASHIR
 I'll have you know I graduated
 second in my class at the Starfleet
 Medical Academy.

LELA
 Second? Beaten by a woman no
 doubt.

BASHIR
 That's besides the point.

LELA
 That is entirely the point.

BASHIR
 Maybe you should talk to some of my
 former patients and see if they
 have any complaints.

LELA

Don't get so offended. I'm sure
you have... other talents.

Lela moves in closer to Bashir, who's having none of it.

BASHIR

If you'll excuse me, I have some
work I need to catch up on.

Bashir returns to his seat. Lela returns to the terminal
again, silently smiling to herself.

INT. HOLDING CELL

Sorya sits in a holding cell with Odo and Quark standing
outside it.

QUARK

I intend to press full charges. I
think a lobe is broken.

ODO

You seem fine to me.

QUARK

I was ruthlessly attacked in my own
place of business. I will not
stand for this.

ODO

I'm sure our guest is simply
unaware of our customs. It was
probably a logical assumption that
you needed to be physically
silenced. I have to say the
thought has crossed my mind before.

QUARK

Oh, that's comforting. Look, if
you won't do something, I'll take
this to Sisko.

SORYA

I'll pay you.

Quark and Odo turn to Sorya in surprise.

ODO

That's not really-

QUARK

How much? And in Alpha Quadrant money.

SORYA

Five strips of latinum.

QUARK

Fine. But I better not see you in my bar again...unless it's at the dabo tables.

Quark storms off. Odo turns the force field off the cell. Sorya remains seated.

SORYA

I am sorry. I don't know what came over me. I'm usually not an impulsive or violent person.

ODO

Quark can have that effect on people.

INT. OUTSIDE BENNI'S QUARTERS

Benni's two guards stand on either side of the door. The doors open, Benni enters the hall and looks at the guards.

BENNI

I'm going for a walk. I'll be back shortly.

Both guards make a motion to follow, but Benni stops them.

BENNI

I can go alone, I won't be going far.

The guards watch as she wanders down the corridor.

INT. CORRIDOR TO QUARTERS

Benni turns a corner down a corridor. She comes across Chief O'Brien at a panel trying to make repairs. Benni stops behind the Chief.

BENNI

You poor fool. What nonsense have they been filling your head with?

O'Brien turns to Benni.

O'BRIEN

What?

O'Brien's arm receives a huge shock when something in the panel blows. He yelps and cradles his arm.

BENNI

What was I just talking about?

Benni turns quickly and heads the direction she came from.

INT. INFIRMARY

Lela sits fiddling with a tricorder. Bashir finally breaks the uncomfortable silence.

BASHIR

I want to apologize for my outburst, earlier. I think you'll find I am usually a quite even-tempered person.

Lela is not phased in the slightest.

LELA

Apology accepted. I know you can't help it.

BASHIR

Can't help it? That's not what I-

O'Brien walks in babying his injured arm.

BASHIR

Chief, what happened? Are you all right?

Lela scoffs at this statement, drops the tricorder and approaches O'Brien.

LELA

Clearly, he's injured. I'll take care of him, you can watch if you wish.

Lela leads O'Brien, who looks very confused, to a bed.

BASHIR

I can see that he's hurt his arm. I merely meant...it's just something you say...never mind. Have a seat, Chief.

Lela holds out her hand without looking at Bashir.

LELA

Tricorder.

BASHIR

Now, just a moment, this is still my infirmary.

LELA

Then you should be able to find a tricorder quite easily. I may even allow you to assist me.

Bashir can't find the words and just stares at O'Brien who still looks confused.

INT. BENNI'S QUARTERS

Benni paces in her quarters. She sits at a table. She stands. Benni thinks for a moment, then opens her the doors to her quarters.

BENNI

Rishta, come in.

The male security guard steps inside and takes his post by the door.

BENNI

No, sit down. Here at the table.

The guard looks a little confused, but does as he's told. Benni sits as well, tries to think of what to say.

BENNI

This is absurd.

RISHTA

Should I go back outside, ma'am?

BENNI

Yes. No. Just sit there.

RISHTA

Yes ma'am.

Benni stands, then sits again.

BENNI

You have a good job.

RISHTA

Yes, ma'am I do.

BENNI

You like your job, don't you?

RISHTA

Yes, very much.

BENNI

See? Absurd.

An awkward silence hangs in the room.

INT. ODO'S OFFICE

Odo walks into the office from the back entrance to the holding area followed by Sorya.

ODO

Have you spent much time off Nostos?

SORYA

No, I haven't.

Odo sits at his desk, Sorya stands at the door, looking out onto the Promenade.

SORYA

I like to learn as much as I can about any new culture I hear about, but as far as physically leaving Nostos, the trips have been few and far between.

ODO

It is understandable then, why this trip has been a little disorienting to you.

Sorya sits across from Odo.

SORYA

Please don't misread the situation, I am not in completely foreign territory. I have several men on my team on Nostos. You might have seen one earlier today, he's one of the guards for Benni.

ODO

I did notice that, yes.

SORYA

That wasn't easy. It wasn't my intention to break with tradition or violate any laws. I was tasked with assembling the best security force I could find in the colonies. A group of men approached me about being tested for the job. Against the wishes of the council I allowed it, figuring they might just fail the test and I wouldn't have to hear anymore about it. A couple did fail, but a couple performed with such skill I couldn't refuse them.

ODO

Have they since proven to be valuable members of your team?

SORYA

Yes, even Benni feels that way, though she might never say it out loud.

ODO

Then you made the right choice.

Sorya studies Odo, trying to figure out how to say what she wants to say.

SORYA

Have you ever had doubts about your identity, Odo? About who you are?

ODO

Well, my origins are still a bit of a mystery to me, I have so many questions about where I came from. That is usually a large part of someone's identity, so yes, I guess I have had doubts.

SORYA

It's a miserable feeling, isn't it? To not really know where you fit in?

ODO

It can be at times.

SORYA

That feeling is what would be thrust upon all of my people if we were to redefine the limitations of the men on my planet. There is a certain comfort to having your goals and expectations defined for you.

ODO

You're worried that blurring the gender line would cause chaos.

SORYA

Yes.

ODO

That people would find it overwhelming to be tasked with determining their paths on their own.

SORYA

Yes.

ODO

I share your distaste for lack of order.

SORYA

Thank you, I knew you'd understand.

ODO

However, there is another name for the specific type of chaos you're talking about.

SORYA

What's that?

ODO

Freedom.

The lights flicker and then go out.

ACT 4

INT. ODO'S OFFICE

Odo and Sorya sit in the office in darkness. We can only see them slightly, though they cannot see each other.

ODO

Odo to Ops, what's going on?

DAX'S COM VOICE

Station wide system failure. It doesn't seem to be effecting life support or communication, but we'll try to get it sorted out. Sit tight.

ODO

Not likely.

Odo opens a drawer and pulls out an orb flashlight. He turns it on, hands it to Sorya.

ODO

I can assume this hasn't happened at the capital on Nostos.

Odo stands and Sorya follows. Sorya looks at the flashlight.

SORYA

Don't you need one?

ODO

No, I don't.

Sorya and Odo exit the office.

INT. INFIRMARY

In near darkness, Bashir and Lela stand on either side of the bed where O'Brien reclines.

LELA

What's happened?

O'BRIEN

It's probably just the lights again. I think I know what the problem is.

LELA

So this is your fault?

O'BRIEN

Well I didn't turn the light off myself.

LELA

You couldn't keep them on either.

BASHIR

Actually, this is not typical and Chief O'Brien is anything but a typical engineer.

O'BRIEN

That's all right, doctor, you don't-

BASHIR

Yes I do. O'Brien has solved problems on this station that I couldn't even begin to tackle.

LELA

Is that high praise?

BASHIR

And as for me, I've treated more patients in the past year and a half, successfully, than you probably will in your entire career. I've seen more species and treated more diseases than I can count. I've solved medical mysteries so complex, it would make your head spin.

LELA

You don't know a thing about me.

BASHIR

The sentiment is mutual.

LELA

You know, being cute will only get you so far. Now that the lights are off and I'm really listening-

BASHIR

So you're finally listening to-

O'BRIEN
 Enough! Will the two of you please
 be quiet long enough for me to talk
 to Ops? After that, I would thank
 you very much to do something about
 this arm.

The pair go quiet. O'Brien hits his comm badge.

O'BRIEN
 Thank you. O'Brien to Ops.

INT. BENNI'S QUARTERS

Benni and Rishta sit at the table, lights out.

BENNI
 This place is coming apart at the
 seams.

RISHTA
 It might just be another power
 fluctuation. It seems they have
 been experiencing those lately.

BENNI
 Nothing to worry about, then.

RISHTA
 Not according to the engineer I
 spoke to. He seemed confident-

BENNI
 He, of course.

RISHTA
 I'm sorry, ma'am.

BENNI
 Don't be sorry, why should you be
 sorry for the state this place is
 in?

RISHTA
 Would you like me to wait outside?

Rishta rises.

BENNI
 No, sit down.

Benni and Rishta sit in silence for a beat.

BENNI

How long have you been with the
Central Security Forces, Rishta?

RISHTA

Four years, ma'am.

BENNI

And you've been a personal guard of
mine for...a year?

RISHTA

Almost two.

BENNI

We haven't seen much action in that
time, have we? Not that I'm
complaining. It's a comfort to
have body guards, but a greater
comfort not to need them.

RISHTA

True.

BENNI

Regardless, you've...not been a
total disappointment.

RISHTA

Thank you, ma'am.

Even in the near darkness, we can see Benni fidget
uncomfortably.

BENNI

You've done a fine job.

RISHTA

Thank you, ma'am.

INT. INFIRMARY

O'Brien lies on the bed surrounded by Bashir and Lela, still
without lights.

O'BRIEN

After you reroute the power
coupling there, turn off the backup
support for the last section. That
should do it.

DAX'S COM VOICE
Thanks Chief, we'll give it a try.

BASHIR
Now, let's have a look at that arm. Well, not a look so much as...never mind. Dr., there is a tray of hyposprays behind you and to the left.

LELA
Thank you, nurse, but I'm more than capable of handling this.

BASHIR
I know, but you are not familiar with how my infirmary is organized.

LELA
If you've done your job as well as you have claimed to, that shouldn't matter.

BASHIR
But-

Lela starts feeling around in the dark behind her.

LELA
Here is the tray. And here is the hypospray.

BASHIR
Careful you don't-

LELA
(to O'Brien)
This will help with the pain, then we'll treat your burns.

Lela injects the hypospray. O'Brien passes out.

LELA
Chief? Chief! What happened?

The lights come back on. Bashir takes the empty hypospray from Lela.

BASHIR
Oh, he'll be fine when he wakes up...tomorrow.

LELA
 Tomorrow?

BASHIR
 This is an emergency sedative, not
 the anti-inflammatory I assume you
 were looking for.

LELA
 Do you usually leave strong
 sedatives lying around haphazardly?

BASHIR
 Do you usually go around jabbing
 people with unidentified
 medications?

Lela considers this, relenting finally.

LELA
 No, I don't. He is going to be all
 right, though, yes?

BASHIR
 He'll be fine.

Lela looks mildly uncomfortable, Bashir relaxes.

ACT 5

INT. BENNI'S QUARTERS

Benni and Rishta stand in Benni's quarters.

BENNI
 I guess it wasn't anything to worry
 about.

Rishta just nods, waits for further instructions.

BENNI
 Return to your post.

RISHTA
 Yes, ma'am.

Rishta turns to go.

BENNI
 Actually, wait. I need...help with
 this replicator. I would like to
 (MORE)

BENNI (cont'd)
 program at least one Nostarian
 dish.

RISHTA
 I am not entirely familiar with the
 replicator systems, unfortunately.

BENNI
 Fortunetly, I am. Why don't tell
 me what your favorite recipe is?

RISHTA
 Ma'am?

Rishta hesitates. Benni's smile fades.

BENNI
 Forget I said anything. Back to
 your post.

Rishta turns to go. He stops and turns back.

RISHTA
 Fettle seed pasta.

BENNI
 Pardon?

RISHTA
 Fettle seed pasta, with Turnko
 sauce. It's my favorite.

The tension in the room eases.

BENNI
 Good choice. Not great, but it
 should be simple enough for this
 replicator to handle.

Rishta smiles.

EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

Visual of the station.

SISKO (V.O.)
 Commander's log stardate
 47432.1. We've managed to
 stabilize the power distribution
 grids and have not had a recurrence
 of the blackouts since. Our guests
 (MORE)

SISKO (V.O.) (cont'd)
 from Nostos are leaving the station
 today. Overall, I would say the
 visit was a success and the
 Federation is fortunate to have a
 new friend.

INT. COMMANDER'S OFFICE

Sisko sits behind his desk across from Benni. Her two
 guards are stationed right outside the door.

SISKO
 Apparently, the system was being
 overloaded from the expansions in
 the station. Thanks to the
 wormhole, we are the busiest we've
 been since the Cardassians turned
 this place over.

BENNI
 A good problem to have, then.

SISKO
 A good problem to have.

BENNI
 I guess too much change too quickly
 can be a bad thing.

SISKO
 We'll just have to take it one step
 at a time.

BENNI
 Agreed. Give my regards to Dax and
 keep me apprised of your progress.

SISKO
 I will.

BENNI
 And I'd like to extend an
 invitation to you and your officers
 to visit Nostos. We have quite a
 bit to offer.

SISKO
 I have no doubt.

Benni rises to go. Sisko also stands.

BENNI

I've enjoyed our visit, Mr. Sisko. More than I thought I would.

SISKO

You are always welcome on the station, Chief Minister.

BENNI

Benni.

SISKO

Benni.

Benni pauses uncomfortably.

BENNI

Actually Chief Minister will do fine.

SISKO

Absolutely.

BENNI

Maybe I'll come back someday. Just don't expect us to sit around bonding over raktajinos and swapping recipes.

SISKO

That's a shame. I have a recipe for Cajun Catfish I just know you'd appreciate.

Benni smiles in a way that says, "I think you're being nice, but what the hell is catfish?"

INT. PROMENADE

Sorya and Lela walk down the Promenade. A few people pass them by as they walk and talk.

LELA

You, in a holding cell? I wish I could have seen that.

SORYA

I'm glad you didn't. It certainly wasn't my finest moment.

LELA

I always knew you were a bit of a rebel.

Lela says this jokingly, but Sorya is concerned.

SORYA

I wouldn't say a rebel.

LELA

No, you're right. You'd have to have a sense of humor for that.

Sorya relaxes.

SORYA

What do you make of this place?

LELA

It's interesting, I'll give them that. I can't say I'm sorry we're leaving today, though.

SORYA

In a hurry to get back home?

LELA

Let's just say I'm looking forward to getting back into the normal swing of things. You?

SORYA

I...have a lot to think about.

LELA

So you'll be sitting alone and thinking. How new and different for you.

SORYA

You're welcome to join me.

LELA

My dear, life is just too short. If you'll excuse me, I'm feeling lucky today.

SORYA

Headed to Quark's?

LELA

No, I have my eyes set on a different game.

Lela heads off in a different direction from Sorya.

INT. INFIRMARY

O'Brien rests on the table, awake but groggy. A NURSE treats a BEJORIAN MAN for a strained wrist in the background. Beshir hands Lela a crystal with information.

BASHIR

That should be the last of files. I do hope there is something here that will be of interest to you.

LELA

We'll see.

Bashir looks defeated. Lela looks happy and mischievous again.

LELA

If you find yourself on Nostos, Jullian, stop by my office.

Bashir nods and turns away. Lela slaps his butt before turning to leave. As she turns to go she almost runs into Keiko at the door.

LELA

Oh, pardon me.

KEIKO

My fault really.

LELA

Do you need medical attention?

Keiko looks at Bashir slightly puzzled.

KEIKO

No, I'm fine.

LELA

Oh.

KEIKO

I came to check on my husband, see if I could do anything for him.

Lela laughs loudly.

LELA

By the Gods, woman. Have some pride.

Lela saunters away. Bashir just shrugs.

INT. HALLWAY TO LAUNCH PAD

Odo walks Sorya to the launch pad.

SORYA

We only use it if we are expecting increased activity at the capital, but the split shifts seems to help keep the guards alert.

ODO

I will keep that in mind.

SORYA

I'll send you the full reports on previous events when I return home.

ODO

If things run as smoothly at the capital as you say they do, I'm sure I will find those reports illuminating.

SORYA

Much like this visit.

Sorya chuckles at her joke. Odo smiles politely.

SORYA

Listen, I appreciate you listening to my unfiltered ramblings, but I would be very grateful if you didn't share what I've said to you with anyone else.

ODO

I can be many things, Chief Commander, but a gossip is not among them.

SORYA

Change is slow and difficult. Safety has to be my number one priority.

ODO
That's our job, isn't it?

SORYA
Goodbye, Constable.

ODO
Goodbye.

Sorya heads into the vessel.

INT. QUARK'S

Quark stands behind his bar wiping down the counters. Only a couple people populate the area. Kira strolls in.

KIRA
The Nostarians just boarded, they should be heading to the wormhole any minute now.

QUARK
Good, the sooner the better.

KIRA
Come on, Quark, I heard you made a little profit on their visit.

QUARK
It came at a cost, trust me.

KIRA
I really liked them, I hope they come back again soon.

QUARK
You would. You know it just kills me, the pig-headed, entitled attitude of those people. They think their sex gives them the right to act however they please? To lord over everyone around them? To talk down to people or even attack them with no provocation whatsoever? Ha! Someday they'll get with the program, I just wish I could be there to see the looks on their smug faces.

KIRA
Are you quoting someone?

QUARK
No, I'm just talking. Why?

KIRA
Oh, it just sounded like something
a female Ferengi might say.

Kira smiles and walks off, leaving Quark speechless, but
angry.

FADE OUT.