

Nerys and the Emissary

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Nerys and the Emissary

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Summary

Nerys had never dreamed of being allowed to see an Orb. And the Kai just gave one to this human, this Commander Sisko?

She hoped the Kai knew what she was doing.

Notes

I was watching the first episode of DS9 for the first time in years, and it struck me how white/colonialist the underlying assumptions are. It's the Civilized Foreigner Come To Help The Benighted Natives who can find the Temple! The Other Civilized Foreigner checking the historical databases for things the Benighted Natives have known for years is the one who notices the blatantly obvious pattern the Benighted Natives have never figured out and Solves The Mystery! The Civilized Foreigners go off (with no native people!) to find The Mystic Treasure! (At least there is some variety, in that the Civilized Foreigners are a black man and a white woman, instead of white men.) And I asked myself: why the HELL is Kira going along with all of this? Why is she just ... letting this happen?

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

"The Kai gave you *what*?" Nerys squawked.

"An orb she calls a tear of the prophets," Sisko repeated. "I take it you know what it is."

"Of course," Nerys said. "Any kid—any *Bajoran* kid—can name them all and tell you where they were kept before the Occupation. The Cardassians wanted them, *badly*. They slaughtered the whole city of Josar to get their hands on the Orb of Time. Millions of Bajorans died to keep them out of the hands of the Cardassians." She'd been out on a raid with Lupaza and Furel when they'd heard the news, and it had been the capstone to the worst year in Nerys's memory. A series of botched missions, almost supplies so low they almost starved, and then ... they'd heard the news. It was the closest Kira had ever come to giving up. She hadn't known there were any still in Bajoran hands.

"And she just ... she just *gave* it to you?" She couldn't quite ... why would Opaka *do* that? After all the people who'd died to keep it safe, Opaka just ... handed it over to the first strange alien to come along?

"She's worried about what the Cardassians might learn from the ones they captured," Sisko said.

"We've been studying the orbs for ten millennia," Nerys said skeptically. "The only thing the Cardassians could possibly do that we haven't is destroy them and study the pieces. And if you were going to do that, she wouldn't have given it to you."

"Thank you for trusting me," Sisko said, with what she suspected was irony.

Nerys snorted. "I don't trust you. I trust the Kai." Who, apparently, trusted this smooth-nosed foreigner. She eyed him speculatively, wondering what Opaka had sensed in his pagh.

"I don't know what we can find, either, but as soon as our science officer gets here I'll get her started on it," Sisko said. "In the meantime, talk with Constable Odo about keeping it secure. Discreetly. We don't want to give anyone ... ideas."

"Absolutely." Nerys would be much happier if nobody ever found out it had left Bajor.

She couldn't stop thinking about having an Orb, here, so close. She'd never been this close to one of the Prophet's Tears, before, never dreamed it would be possible. It was in secure lock-down, but she was the executive officer.

Could she get in to see it? Would Sisko let her? What kind of an excuse could she give him? Nerys thought of volunteering to work with the science officer when she arrived, but Nerys was no scientist. Maybe they could take some readings while Nerys tried to use it?

This was her one chance, while the Tear was here on the station. The privilege of seeing an Orb in person, getting to use it, was one that had been held close even before the Occupation. With only the one left, it would probably be held even more closely. Once Sisko and his officer were done with it and it went back to Bajor, that would be it. Kira was only an old Resistance member stationed on a backwater post to get her out of the way. She would never have the political or religious clout to see an orb.

Pah-wraith take them, she shouldn't have to think up an excuse to get a chance to see a Tear of the Prophets when an alien got it without even *understanding* what it was!

Kai Opaka was a great and wise woman. Surely she knew what she was doing.

The Prophets were beyond the ways of anyone's understanding, and they did not interfere in the affairs of mortals, outside of sending the occasional vision. If the Kai had had a vision ... Nerys could only trust that she had interpreted it correctly.

But she still wanted to see the Orb with her own eyes, and pray before it at least once.

Nerys resolutely did *not* look back as she led the new doctor away for a tour of the station. If Sisko wanted discretion, why did he announce in public that he had a special emergency project for their new science officer? Did he never stop to think the Cardassians might have left spies behind them?

Later, after Dukat showed up and she learned he knew about the Orb, she could only shake her head in disgust.

"You want to try for a vision?" Nerys said, frowning, as Lieutenant Dax explained what she wanted to do. "Why don't you just ask the orb you've been studying?" She marshalled her arguments and opened her mouth to suggest Dax scanning while Nerys prayed for a vision.

"I had a vision," Dax said, frowning. "I saw my joining. What's that have to do with the Denorios Belt?"

And *another* alien got a vision from the Orb! Which Nerys had not, as yet, even *seen*! "There's only two reasons to go there. Mining, if you're after something exotic and don't mind a lot of risk, and visions. People go out there and meditate—sometimes the Prophets send visions, sometimes they don't. Sometimes they even send new Tears. If you don't have the kind of connections that will get you in to an Orb, that's the next best thing. It's a bit dangerous for ordinary travel."

"The Kai believes that in order to call for unity, she must first know that the Celestial Temple is safe from the Cardassians," Sisko said. "That's why she gave me the Orb."

"If it's anywhere we can find, it's somewhere in the Denorios Belt," Jadzia said.

"Where half the Orbs were found," Kira said, nodding. "Makes sense. Although, I don't know what you're going to find that we haven't in a few thousand years of space travel. Our spacecraft and sensors were pretty good, before the Cardassians came." If it was a place you could find on sensors, they would have found it. If it only revealed itself to Bajorans, why would the Kai send aliens?

"I know," Sisko said. "But Kai Opaka seemed sure we could do it ... and we have to at least be able to tell her we tried, if we want her to make a call for unity."

What did Kai Opaka know that nobody else did, Nerys wondered? She was a deeply spiritual woman who'd survived the Occupation by being smart and keeping a low profile and never, ever letting herself get trapped or committed unless she knew what was going to happen. Learning that she'd had one of the Prophets' Tears the whole time made so much sense, but they were notoriously difficult to interpret. "All right," Nerys said. "We need a way to get the Cardassians out of here so Dax and I can go check it out."

"Are you qualified to pilot a Starfleet Runabout?" Dax asked, surprised.

"I'm a decent pilot, and the Federation makes all their stuff as easy-to-use as possible," Nerys pointed out. "I'm sure I'll manage."

"I'm not sure that a pilot unfamiliar with her craft is the best choice for piloting into a charged plasma field that's caused as many wrecks over the years as the Denorios Belt has," Dax said. "And I'm going to have my hands full with the science."

"The problem is, we just don't have enough people," Sisko said. "Two-thirds of our complement of Starfleet personnel are still in transit, as are almost half of our Bajoran crew. And none of the Bajorans have even *begun* qualification on Starfleet equipment because getting the station operational is a much higher priority. The mission requires two officers, one to do the science—and that *has* to be Dax—and one to pilot the ship—and that *has* to be a Starfleet officer, because there's no one else qualified."

"Who did you have in mind?" Nerys asked, wishing she could argue with his logic.

"Me," Sisko said. "Given the need for secrecy. But that means you *can't* go, because you're needed to command the station and keep the Cardassians occupied."

They probably won't find anything, Nerys reminded herself. Bajorans had been travelling to, through, and around the belt for a long, long time. And the Cardassians had gotten their slimy fingers over every single thing in the whole *sector*. The chances of *this one expedition* being the one that found the Celestial Temple ... it wasn't like Dax had found anything new. They probably weren't going to find anything new in the

Denorios Belt, either. And while Sisko had handled Dukat better than she'd thought he would, Nerys would prefer not to have him facing Cardassians without her there to keep an eye on Bajor's interests.

And yet. And yet, the Kai seemed to think Sisko would find something. *All the more reason he has to go*, Nerys thought. Opaka knew what she was doing.

"If you're going looking for the Celestial Temple, there should be a Bajoran along," Nerys said.

"I agree," Sisko said. "And I imagine Kai Opaka would prefer having one of her own people involved. Unfortunately, I haven't had time to get to know my new crew as well as I would like. You've been here longer. Who would you suggest?"

Nerys opened her mouth. Closed it. Thought for a bit. "You know, in a week, we'll have at least three people I'd trust with this. But mostly what we have on the station now are repair crews." Given that the Cardassians had used up all the resources worth extracting, an ore processing station was ... pretty low on the list of places for the Provisional Government to spend resources and people on. Kira might find it inconvenient, but she couldn't disagree.

"Those repair crews know a lot about repairing Cardassian tech, but not Starfleet runabouts," Dax pointed out.

"If you're on a *religious* scouting mission, maybe a monk?" Nerys suggested. "They're all trained in interpreting visions. Not to mention, they'd know the history better than your computer, *and* they'd know how to interpret it."

"Given the dangers of the Denorios Belt, I'd prefer not bringing any civilians along," Sisko said.

"Not to mention the dangers of the Cardassians figuring out what we're doing and shooting you down or capturing you," Nerys said. Sisko was better than she'd feared, but she wouldn't grieve much if he got himself shot by the Cardassians; but the Occupation had been particularly rough on religious leaders and they were desperately short of clerics of all types.

Besides, surely dealing with the Cardassians wouldn't take *all* her time while Sisko was gone. And she would be in command, with the security codes to the science lab. She might even be able to get in to see it ... but how long did visions take? And did she *really* want to see the Orb when she was so distracted? Surely there would be time when the crisis was over.

They're probably not going to find anything, she reminded herself. "Okay. If I find a candidate, I'll let you know. But this whole thing is moot if we can't get the Cardassians off our necks ... and now that they know there's an Orb on the station," she shot Sisko a dirty look, "they're not going to leave until they get it."

After that, it was almost like being back in Shakaar's cell. Nothing like figuring out how to slip around Cardassians to make a girl feel at home.

The operation went smoothly, at first. Nerys allowed herself some pleasure in having the upper hand over the Cardassians, and ordering *them* around for a change. Odo was perfect, as always, and even Chief O'Brien wasn't bad. He picked up the essentials of dealing with Cardassian technology quickly, at any rate.

Then the runabout disappeared, and Nerys wasn't sure whether to mourn them as lost or kick herself for not insisting that they take a monk with them.

And *then—after* the Cardassians' sensors were back online—something appeared where the runabout had been, and when they beamed it aboard the station, it looked briefly like one of the Tears of the Prophets, before dissolving into Lieutenant Dax. And then Nerys *really* started kicking herself about the monk.

There *should* have been a Bajoran along. And who better than a monk to commune with the prophets?

Dax talked about the wormhole—and the Orbs—like they didn't know who'd created them. Which annoyed Nerys to no end. On the other hand, the Prophets had been there long before Bajor, and would be there long after, and if their temple was a *wormhole*, they were definitely powerful enough to take care of themselves.

Bajor, on the other hand, was vulnerable. A wormhole would be a valuable commodity, and that would bring the Cardassians back in force. All her dreams for an independent Bajor would be down the drain. And while the Prophets could protect themselves, they wouldn't protect Bajor. If they were going to, they'd have done it by now.

Not to mention, they needed to at least *try* to rescue Sisko.

She asked Chief O'Brien to figure out how to get the station there, and listened in dismay as O'Brien and Dax between them figured out ... something technical about how to move the station, and which Federation ship to call for help. Nerys *hated* having to rely on people she didn't trust to do things she didn't understand, but it wasn't like she had much choice. She'd told them what she needed; they'd figured out how to provide it. It would have to be enough.

(She was glad, though, to have Odo with her as they took a runabout to where Sisko's ship had vanished. Odo, she could trust to have her back and not underestimate the Cardassians.)

(Dukat was not fun to deal with, but at least he wasn't as smarmy as he could be. And she knew all his tricks. She couldn't stop him from going into the wormhole, but she could be prepared for when—if—he came out of it.)

Nerys was trying *very* hard not to think of what it might mean that the wormhole had collapsed (the Prophets could take care of themselves) as

the next Cardassians showed up. On the downside, she didn't know this Gul Jasad and couldn't predict what he'd do. On the upside, *he* didn't know *her* either.

It was something of a novelty to tell him the truth, and she had to laugh because the whole thing was so unbelievable. All the times she'd lied to Cardassians, and the time they were least likely to believe her was the first time she told the pure, unvarnished truth.

If Nerys could have thought up a believable enough lie, she'd have told it. But, alas, there weren't any that might keep the Cardassians at bay until the *Enterprise* could return.

At least the truth might confuse them.

Not confuse them enough, unfortunately.

And they had no shields. And no weapons.

And an hour to think of something before Gul Jasad destroyed them.

The bluff bought them a few minutes. Nerys took every minute she can get.

She would say one thing for Starfleet. They were *very* good at technical trickery—they made much better use of the Cardassian equipment than the Cardassians themselves ever could have.

(And damn Bashir for being in Ops where the excitement was and not in the infirmary where he was needed.)

And then the Prophets answered the prayers she hadn't made. And the wormhole opened again, and there was Sisko, *towing* Dukat's ship behind him. The irony of it was delicious.

That "wormhole" really was the Celestial Temple. Kai Opaka really did know what she was doing, setting all of this in motion. Sisko—outsider, alien, a man who didn't even believe the Prophets were anything but really powerful aliens—was the Emissary of the Prophets.

Nerys still didn't particularly like the Federation. She hated that they were necessary—and with the wormhole, they were *definitely* necessary.

She couldn't understand why it was Sisko and not one of their own people who was chosen by the Prophets.

Perhaps that understanding will come in time.

End Notes

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