

= Heart of Stone ( Star Trek : Deep Space Nine ) =

" Heart of Stone " is the fourteenth episode of the third season of the American science fiction television series Star Trek : Deep Space Nine , and originally aired on February 6 , 1995 in broadcast syndication . The story was written by Ira Steven Behr and Robert Hewitt Wolfe , while the episode was directed by Alexander Singer and the score was created by David Bell .

Set in the 24th century , the series follows the adventures on Deep Space Nine , a space station located near a stable wormhole between the Alpha and Gamma quadrants of the Milky Way Galaxy . In this episode , Odo ( René Auberjonois ) and Major Kira Nerys ( Nana Visitor ) are trapped on a small moon near the Badlands , while on the station Nog ( Aron Eisenberg ) tries to get Commander Benjamin Sisko 's ( Avery Brooks ) support for his application to Starfleet Academy .

The idea behind the main plot was inspired by a scene from the novel Sometimes a Great Notion . However , the rock prop used was unpopular with the cast and crew , and post -@-@ production effects were required . The episode was the first of an ongoing plot thread with Nog entering Starfleet , which initially concerned Eisenberg as he thought he was being written out of the show . The episode was the fourth most watched episode of the third series , with 8 @. @ 3 million viewers . Critical response was mixed , with negative comments directed at the idea that the situation was created by the female Founder ( Salome Jens ) .

= = Plot = =

On board a Runabout , Odo ( René Auberjonois ) and Major Kira Nerys ( Nana Visitor ) are in pursuit of a Maquis vessel in the Badlands . They pursue the vessel to a small moon and land nearby . They find that the Maquis vessel is empty , and split up to search for the pilot . After a short while , Odo comes across Kira , whose foot is caught in an expanding crystal mass . Odo is unable to either remove the crystal from Kira , or transport Kira back to the Runabout .

Meanwhile , on Deep Space Nine , Nog ( Aron Eisenberg ) attempts to convince Commander Benjamin Sisko to endorse his application to join Starfleet Academy . Sisko gives the Ferengi the task of counting the inventory of a cargo bay , which he completes quickly but Sisko still has doubts . On the moon , Kira is slowly being covered by the crystal and insists that Odo leave her as there are increasing seismic tremors . He attempts to free her using an ultrasonic generator , and reveals some personal information to her as they wait for the crystal to shatter . As the crystal slowly swallows her whole after the generator fails to work , and the tremors become even worse , Odo confesses his love for Kira . To his surprise , she says that she is in love with him too .

On DS9 , Sisko informs Nog that he will not give him a recommendation as he has concerns that it is a scheme . Nog confesses that he wants to do it so that he doesn 't turn out like his father Rom ( Max Grodénchik ) , whom he describes as an engineering genius but his culture won 't let him pursue it . Sisko responds by agreeing to recommend Nog to the Academy . Odo is suspicious of Kira 's responses and points a phaser at her , demanding to know who she is . Kira and the crystal suddenly morph into the female Founder ( Salome Jens ) , who reveals that she was the Maquis all along and she was hoping to convince Odo to return to the Dominion . She reveals the location of the real Kira and transports away . Odo finds Kira and tells her of the Founder , but not of his feelings for her .

= = Production = =

Ira Steven Behr and Robert Hewitt Wolfe conceived the story and wrote the script for " Heart of Stone " , and intended the Odo / Kira storyline to be the A @-@ Plot . Behr later thought that the performances of Eisenberg and Brooks elevated the Nog / Sisko story to equal status and would result in a better reaction by fans . The idea of having a character trapped was taken from the Ken Kesey novel Sometimes a Great Notion in which a character is trapped under a log and drowned by rising water . Behr described the same scene in the 1971 film as " a great scene in a not so great movie " . The episode was intended to be low budget , but heavy on characterisation . At one point it

was intended for Odo to sing the 1955 Richard Berry song " Louie Louie " , which the character described as a sea shanty , but producers couldn't acquire the rights in time .

The cast and crew were unhappy with the rock prop used in the episode . Visual effects supervisor Glenn Neufeld strapped Visitor 's feet to the stage in order to ensure that the crystal didn't move . Different versions of the crystal were then applied for different scenes , with the larger versions incorporating a seat for the actress so that she could relax inside the prop between takes . The prop caused problems for Visitor due to her claustrophobia , which was the second time during season three that a Wolfe scripted episode had caused her these types of problems after " Second Skin " . She also didn't like how it appeared on screen : " I thought it was going to look like my body turning to stone . Instead I looked like a big old hot fudge sundae , and my head was the cherry on top . "

Director Alexander Singer admitted that the prop wasn't what they envisioned , and work was conducted on it post @-@ production to improve it . Post @-@ production was also problematic as there were several morphing scenes involving Odo and the female Founder , which required reactions by other actors . Neufeld said that none of what they were aiming for worked in post @-@ production , but it was saved by the visual effects company VisionArt who managed to salvage the work . Jens agreed to re @-@ appear as the female Founder she had previously appeared as in " The Search " , and for her credit to only appear in the closing credits so as to avoid spoiling the twist in the Odo / Kira plot . Eisenberg was initially panicked by the script that showed Nog going to Starfleet Academy as he thought the character was being written out of the show , but executive producer Rick Berman assured him that it wouldn't be the case . He later said that the scene where Nog talks to Sisko about his father was his favourite scene in the series .

= = Themes = =

Children had featured in Star Trek as major series characters since Wesley Crusher in Star Trek : The Next Generation . The character of Crusher had attended Starfleet Academy , but leaves Starfleet in the seventh season episode " Journey 's End " , aired in February 1994 . Jake Sisko was a major character in Deep Space Nine , but had expressed a desire to be a writer rather than join Starfleet in the sixth episode of the third season , " The Abandoned " . There was a desire to avoid the Crusher " chosen one " type storyline with Sisko , but after " The Abandoned " it was seen that there would no longer be a young character progressing through Starfleet as previously intended . Wolfe said that " Of Wesley , Jake , Alexander , and Nog , wouldn't it be funny if Nog were the one to end up as a Starfleet captain ? " . Ronald D. Moore agreed with the new character direction , saying that " Somehow , Captain Nog sounds cool " .

Nog 's progression through Starfleet was followed in later episodes , with the character promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Junior Grade by the time of the series finale , " What You Leave Behind " . Odo 's unrequited love for Kira had been hinted at throughout season three building up to the reveal in " Heart of Stone " , which would be a repeating plot device up until the final episode of the series when Odo departs the crew .

= = Reception and home media release = =

" Heart of Stone " was first broadcast on February 6 , 1995 in broadcast syndication . It received Nielsen ratings of 8 @.@ 3 million . This placed it in fourth place in the timeslot . This was an increase from the episode aired the previous week , as " Life Support " gained a rating of 8 @.@ 2 million . It was the fourth most viewed episode of the season on first broadcast after " The Search " , " Defiant " and " Meridian " .

Several reviewers re @-@ watched the episode after the end of the series . Zack Handlen reviewed the episode for the A.V. Club in October 2012 . He had reservations about the episode up until the twist involving the Founder , and thought that Visitor 's performance as Kira had been slightly off all episode . He thought that having Kira admit her feelings for Odo was rushed and was disappointed by it and felt it ruined what he had considered to be one of the best episodes of the season . However , he was pleased that Odo was as suspicious as he was , and the twist was made all the

more striking by the performances . He felt that the Nog / Sisko story was just as good , having felt that Nog had been " off @-@ putting " previously but the performance by Eisenberg in " Heart of Stone " was " amazing " . He particularly praised Nog 's monologue explaining his motives to join Starfleet , and said it was " terrific " as it was " exciting because it ? s unexpected " .

Jamahl Epsicokhan reviewed the episode for his website " Heart of Stone " . He felt that the main Odo / Kira plot was " contrived " in that the female Founder stole a Maquis ship and set up the entire situation simply to attempt to convince Odo to return to his people . He said that the Nog and Sisko plot was " lightweight but amiable " , and he gave the episode an overall score of 2 @.@ 5 out of 4 . Michelle Erica Green watched the episode for the website TrekNation , and also questioned the main plot . She wrote " what was the shapeshifter going to do if someone OTHER than Kira was in the runabout with Odo ? Did she sit around and wait for the two of them to leave the station together ? " She had further concerns about the direction of the Odo and Kira relationship , and described the romance as a " cop @-@ out " . She thought that Odo 's declaration of his feelings felt forced , but that the plot featuring a crystal creature attacking a crew member reminded her of something from Star Trek : The Original Series .

The first home media release of " Heart of Stone " was as a two episode VHS cassette alongside " Life Support " in the United Kingdom on June 12 , 1995 . This was followed in the United States and Canada with a single episode release on October 5 , 1999 . It was later released on DVD as part of the season three box set on June 3 , 2003 .