

= Initiations (Star Trek : Voyager) =

" Initiations " is the second episode of the second season , and eighteenth episode overall of the American science fiction television program Star Trek : Voyager . The episode originally aired on September 4 , 1995 , and tells the story of Commander Chakotay 's capture at the hands of a young Kazon . Originally intended to open the second season , " Initiations " was bumped to second by " The 37 's " .

To better utilize the character , this is one of several second @-@ season episodes that focuses on Chakotay . It was written with a mind to recall the action story of Chakotay from the pilot . Writer Kenneth Biller extensively rewrote the episode after input from series co @-@ creators Jeri Taylor and Michael Piller ; whereas the Kazon originally came across as too much like the Klingons , Biller 's research helped emphasize their more street @-@ gang nature . This substantial rewrite of the episode required an overhaul of production work already invested in the episode .

Aron Eisenberg guest starred as Kar , the young Kazon warrior . Though his performance was lauded , he was deemed too recognizable from his recurring role on Star Trek : Deep Space Nine and was a regret of the executive producers . Mixed reviews noted the familiarity of both Eisenberg and the shooting location of Vasquez Rocks .

= = Plot = =

On stardate 49005 @.@ 3 , to commemorate the anniversary of his father 's death , Commander Chakotay takes a shuttlecraft to perform the pakra ceremony . Inadvertently straying into Kazon @-@ Ogla space , he is attacked by a young Kazon (Aron Eisenberg as Kar) on his first mission . Destroying the Kazon 's vessel , Chakotay beams the young Kar aboard .

Captured by a Kazon vessel soon thereafter , Chakotay learns from Kar that Kazon earn their titles through conquest or death , and he has robbed Kar of that opportunity by saving him . The vessel 's commander Razik (Patrick Kilpatrick) speaks with Chakotay , explaining his disservice to Kar and that the young Kazon is scheduled for execution . When later presented with a weapon to kill Kar as a lesson to other Kazon youth , Chakotay instead holds Razik hostage in exchange for his shuttle . Kar , seeing no future or opportunities with the Ogla , flees with Chakotay . Unable to elude the Kazon , Chakotay beams himself and Kar to a nearby Class @-@ M moon , a Kazon training ground . Kar , having eschewed an opportunity to kill Chakotay in his sleep , later explains how he has no options open to him and admits that Chakotay may be his only friend now .

Meanwhile , having tracked the shuttle 's probable course , Captain Janeway (Kate Mulgrew) , Lieutenant Tuvok (Tim Russ) , and Kes (Jennifer Lien) proceed to the moon 's surface to rescue Chakotay . On the moon , they meet up with Razik and his men who offer to lead the away team to Chakotay . When Chakotay and Kar detect their approach , Chakotay offers to help Kar earn his name by becoming his prisoner . Coordinating with Voyager to prepare for resuscitation , Chakotay allows Kar to shoot him ; Kar instead shoots Razik , earning his Ogla name and promoting his second @-@ in @-@ command , Haliz (Tim de Zarn) . The Ogla allow the Voyager crew to leave , with Kar 's promise that he will kill Chakotay if they meet again . Later , when performing his pakra ceremony aboard Voyager , Chakotay adds Kar to his prayers .

= = Writing = =

" Initiations " is Kenneth Biller 's first solo writing credit on Star Trek : Voyager ; he summarized the episode as " the Kazon put a hit out on Chakotay " . The Chakotay @-@ focused episode was meant to correct what co @-@ creator and executive producer Jeri Taylor felt was an underutilization of the character in the first season . Biller felt the character needed more action stories as shown in the pilot , and wrote " Initiations " to address that . Producer Winrich Kolbe did not care for the aspects of Chakotay 's character that the episode played up ; where the episode focused on his Native American heritage , Kolbe felt it should have emphasized his Maquis aspects .

Executive producer Michael Piller was displeased with the depiction of the Kazon in Biller 's first draft of the episode ; where they were supposed to be analogous to street gangs in Los Angeles , they were instead " coming across as warmed @-@ over Klingons . " In addition to Jari Taylor 's already extensive notes on the draft , Piller suggested Biller get in touch with actual gang members or a police officer who could better clue the writer into street gang culture for the episode . Instead , Biller picked up a copy of Monsta , a book by convicted murderer and former gang member " Monsta " Cody . The book 's insight into gang life and culture was a guiding light for Biller 's second draft , which he worked up with Piller , endeavoring to set the Kazon apart " from Romulans , Cardassians , and Klingons . "

The final draft of the episode was submitted on July 10 , 1995 .

= = Casting = =

Playing a recurring character on sister series Star Trek : Deep Space Nine , guest star Aron Eisenberg (Kar) quelled rumors that he was given the part simply because of his Star Trek heritage . He emphasized that he read for the part like any other actor , and felt that he was chosen because the Voyager crew could not find a child actor who could meet muster , nor an adult actor who looked young enough for the part . In an interview with Star Trek : The Official Monthly Magazine , Eisenberg felt that he worked very hard on the episode , and that his musculature was a boon to playing " a warrior kid . " Fellow DS9 actor Max Grodénchik was his acting coach for " Initiations " . On Kar , Eisenberg played the character on the other end of the spectrum from his Nog character , so much so that he wasn 't worried about any of Nog 's characterizations or idiosyncrasies showing through .

Eisenberg fondly recalled working on " Initiations " both because of his familiarity with much of the crew who had previously worked on Deep Space Nine , as well as the opportunity to " goof around " with Robert Beltran (Chakotay) on set . He would later say to Cinefantastique that he " had a blast " working on the episode , especially the opportunity to play someone " really trying to kill someone . " Beltran would later compare the fun they had on set as akin to working with Don Rickles and that Eisenberg was " very quick @-@ witted and not afraid to cut you down . "

Co @-@ creator and executive producer Michael Piller called the casting of Eisenberg a " big mistake " . Because Eisenberg also played the recurring Ferengi character Nog on Star Trek : Deep Space Nine , and though he was under heavy prosthetics , his voice was too recognizable to fans of both shows . Piller praised his performance , but felt it was a casting mistake to crossover the actor in both shows . Fellow co @-@ creator and executive producer Jeri Taylor echoed Piller 's sentiments saying that though Eisenberg was the best actor that auditioned for the part , he was too recognizable as Nog and distracted the viewers . As for Eisenberg himself , he dismissed the people on the Internet saying he was too recognizable saying , " ' Come on people , it 's the same person . ' I was really proud of it . "

= = Production = =

Biller and Piller 's dramatic second draft changes required changes in the episode 's sets and shooting schedule , what Piller described as " [having] to change the whole thing overnight . " The chaos of the changes prompted a meeting with Piller and the production staff where he defended the upheaval as response to improving the script and overall episode .

In Robert Beltran 's portrayal of Chakotay in the episode , the actor bucked what he felt was viewers ' expectations . Instead of playing a " mad " Chakotay , he toned it down and made it more of about trying (and failing) to change Kar through kindness and tenderness .

= = Reception = =

Cinefantastique 's Dale Kutzera gave the episode 2 @.@ 5 out of 4 stars in his review , saying that the episode failed to define the Kazon as an enemy . Kutzera 's suspension of disbelief was rocked

by the casting of Aron Eisenberg (who Kutzera felt was too synonymous with his Star Trek : Deep Space Nine character , Nog) , and the reuse of the immediately identifiable Vasquez Rocks shooting location . In his book Delta Quadrant : The unofficial guide to Voyager , David McIntee also lamented Eisenberg 's recognizability from his other Star Trek series . For the episode itself , McIntee felt the first half has some interesting potential in the culture clashes presented , but that it fell too hard on the " enemies must team up to survive " cliché ; he gave the episode a 7 out of 10 , calling it " watchable , and occasionally quite strong . "

Robert Beltran (Chakotay) said that " Initiations " summed up in one episode basically what Chakotay is about as a person , " and that it was one of three Chakotay centric episodes (including " Tattoo " and " Maneuvers ") he really enjoyed . Jeri Taylor called the episode " reasonably successful . "