

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

8x08 - "Abyss."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novel

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: Abyss

by David Weddle & Jeffrey Lang

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 **EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST - EARLY DAY**

RO LAREN and TARAN'ATAR trudge through the forest in the dim dawn light. A small army of INGAVI swings through the trees alongside them.

RO

What is this place? It seems familiar.

The Ingavi KEL swings down and lands in front of them.

KEL

Do not speak loudly. The Jem'Hadar have claimed this area for their own. They do not come every day, but they come often enough.

TARAN'ATAR

If the Jem'Hadar come here, why are we going this way?

KEL

There is something here that you need to see.

Kel leads them both a little further. There is mist around, and the Ingavi in the trees begin to make a low HOOTing sound, sad and mournful. Eventually Kel stops and points the way for Ro and Taran'atar through a break in the trees.

RO

You won't come with us? Show us what you want us to see?

KEL

My people do not enter this place anymore.

TARAN'ATAR

Let us get this over with so we can continue our campaign.

RO
He wouldn't lead us into danger.

TARAN' ATAR
Not intentionally, perhaps.

They step through and into a clearing like the first, where the trees have been scorched by weapons fire. They loom up dark and ominous in the mist, and Ro can't clearly see them at first. Dead leaves and branches crunch under their feet.

RO
I don't understand. This used to be a special place for them, a sacred place. It's where they first landed on Sindorin. They always took such good care of it.

They step closer to the trees. The head of an iron nail glints in the low light. Ro touches it, sees that it pins a stick to the tree. She pulls it off, examines it closer. It's not a stick. It's a BONE.

She pulls out her palm beacon and shines it around. The entire clearing is blanketed with small bones.

Horrified, she looks back up at the trees, and her light shows other skeletons and small decayed bodies nailed to them. Everywhere she looks, more bones and bodies.

RO
(whisper)
Taran'atar?

TARAN' ATAR
Are you finished?

RO
Finished? Yes, I've seen what he wanted us to see. What about you?

TARAN' ATAR
I did not have to see anything. I could smell it.

RO
Smell what?

TARAN' ATAR
Fear. Uncomprehending dread. The trees are saturated with it.

RO
These were children, most of them. How can they do that to children?

TARAN' ATAR
They?

RO
The Jem'Hadar.

TARAN' ATAR
Jem'Hadar did not do this. It was not... orderly.

RO
Then who? The Section 31 agents? What would that prove?

By now they have reached the break back into the forest again - Kel is waiting for them sadly.

KEL
Isn't it obvious, Ro? It was the one you are here to find. Locken. The one they call their Khan.

RO
Locken? Why? It makes no sense. He was a paediatrician. He treated children from every world in the Federation... I don't understand.

KEL
What don't you understand? Why he would order his Jem'Hadar to kill the adults, but would tell them to save the children and bring them here? Why he would pin their limbs against the trees and then...

He stops, barely able to continue remembering the horror.

KEL

And then, he would sit on the ground and watch them. For hours sometimes. However long it would take. And sometimes it would take so very, very long. We tried to save them, every one of them, but the Jem'Hadar...

A hateful look at Taran'atar...

KEL (cont)

They ringed the place, faces pointed outward, not hearing the cries of parents or children.

RO

But why?

TARAN'ATAR

Why? Because he can. Because there was no-one who could tell him he should not. Because that is what unchecked power will always do.

RO

(angry)

You'd know, wouldn't you? Isn't unchecked power what the Dominion is all about? Don't the Founders do pretty much whatever they want? Isn't that -

(she points back)

- what they wanted to do to the entire Alpha Quadrant? Nail us all up to a tree?

TARAN'ATAR

You obviously know nothing of the Founders. They... This is not the place or the time. We still have much to do, if we can do anything at all.

(to Kel)

We have seen what you wanted us to
see. Now lead on.

Kel nods and leaps back up into the trees. Taran'atar shrouds and moves off. Ro feels very alone in the forest.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

2 EXT. LOCKEN'S BASE - MORNING

A couple of Jem'Hadar stand watch outside the compound.

3 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - PRISON CELL

JULIAN BASHIR is asleep, his back turned to EZRI DAX, who sits huddled on a separate bunk. They seem very far apart. Silence as she looks at him, upset, worried and angry. When they finally speak, it's strained and irritable.

DAX

Julian?

A long pause before he answers.

BASHIR

What is it?

DAX

I need to talk.

He sighs, rolls over, sits up looking tired, stressed.

BASHIR

Hold on, my arm's asleep.

(shakes it)

What do you want to talk about?

DAX

I want... I need to hear you say
that Locken was wrong...

BASHIR

About what?

DAX

About you. About... who you are.

BASHIR

Don't you mean, what I am?

DAX

That's not fair, Julian. That's not what I was thinking at all.

BASHIR

It's what I was thinking. It's what I would be thinking if I were you. Please don't pretend that it wasn't, because I really can't take it anymore. The pretending.

DAX

Julian, no-one has ever asked you to pretend...

BASHIR

Everyone has asked me to pretend. Even after you all discovered the truth about me, you all wanted me to keep being the same old Julian. Oh, it was alright for me to show off a bit, but that was all. Just as long as I didn't remind anyone of what I really am.

DAX

And that is?

BASHIR

I don't know exactly.

DAX

Or you don't want to say. Come on Julian, if you can think it, you can say it.

BASHIR

Have you ever read a paper on human physiology published a couple of hundred years ago by Tanok of Vulcan? He observed that human evolution had plateaued - that it had effectively reached its maximum, unless we begin to manipulate our genetic code.

DAX

Yes, I know about Tanok. He deliberately published his paper only on Vulcan, because he knew how the humans would react. It was less than two-hundred years after Khan was deposed, after all.

BASHIR

Tanok also said he thought the humans would eventually calm down and see that, while Khan's methods may have been extreme, his basic concept was sound. He posed the same question Locken did. What if Khan had won? What would humanity be today? And can we really be sure it wouldn't be better?

DAX

I can't believe I'm hearing this.

BASHIR

I can barely believe I'm finally saying it. Do you have any idea how many nights I've lain awake thinking these things? I could cure all of the Federation's ills. I have wasted my life pretending to be less than I am, because the society I live in considers my very existence to be illegal, even immoral. It's true, Ezri, every word, and I'm tired of lying.

Frustrated and angry, he kicks out at one of the supports of his bunk. It buckles. Ezri is about to go and embrace him when ETHAN LOCKEN is suddenly at the door again.

LOCKEN

Of course you are, Julian. And now the question is this - will you allow yourself to act on those thoughts, now that the opportunity has come to do something for the greater good?

DAX

What would you know about the greater good?

But Bashir and Locken are both ignoring her, engaged purely in each other.

BASHIR

What about Ezri?

LOCKEN

She may join us if she likes, but she has to cooperate.

DAX

Cooperate? I would never join your new order, your elite minority...

LOCKEN

What a very amusing attitude, coming from a joined Trill.

(back to Julian)

So what's it going to be? What's your answer?

BASHIR

My answer is yes.

Locken smiles and drops the forcefield. Bashir is halfway out, but half-turns back to Dax.

BASHIR

Ezri, you'll understand someday -

But her FIST is already colliding with his chin. It's a weak shot - he easily grabs her arm twists it behind her back, and clamps his hand over her mouth. She struggles...

DAX

You son of a -

BASHIR

Don't fight me, Ezri. You'll see I'm right, soon.

He shoves her back to her bunk. She collapses onto it and stares back with loathing. He calmly walks back to Locken.

LOCKEN

It's alright, Julian. Maybe she'll come around. She's bright, and spirited. That counts for a lot.

BASHIR

Yes... it does.

They leave together, and the forcefield goes back up. Ezri turns to the wall, curls up on the bunk and begins to cry.

4 EXT. SINDORIN RAINFOREST - MORNING

Ro Laren hides in the hollows of a dead tree. She peers out, and sees the crashed RUNABOUT, mostly intact, on a bed of crushed trees. Five Jem'Hadar in Locken's red-and-silver uniforms stand guard. Taran'atar UNSHROUDS beside Ro.

TARAN'ATAR

(whisper)

Five here, but a larger encampment several hundred meters north-west.

RO

Then the ship's still viable. You don't post guards around something that's useless. How do you think we should do this?

He holsters his phaser and grabs his throwing knives.

RO

Seriously? We could just pick them all off from here before they knew what hit them.

TARAN'ATAR

Possibly. But even if we got them all before they could respond, the sound of the phasers alone would bring the others.

RO

And they won't shoot at you while
you're throwing knives at them?

TARAN' ATAR
Watch and learn.

RO
I thought that was your job.

He almost smiles at that, then SHROUDS again. She settles in to watch. Nothing seems to happen for a while. These Jem'Hadar seem young, untrained, perhaps even nervous.

Suddenly, Taran'atar UNSHROUDS right in the middle of them, in their blind spot. In a blur of motion, he THROWS knives to his left and right. One lands in a skull, one through an eye - they both collapse. The others are too slow to react.

As one raises his rifle, Taran'atar is already running at him with a ROAR, planting his *kar'takin* in his skull. He spirals mid-air, throws the *kar'takin* into another's chest.

Taran'atar lands and points his phaser at the final guard, who is motionless and terrified. It's all over in seconds.

TARAN' ATAR
Leave. Or die. It makes no
difference to me.

The guard turns and runs. Taran'atar begins collecting the dead guards' weapons. Ro approaches.

RO
What the hell was that?

TARAN' ATAR
I told Kira I would not kill if I
didn't need to. That child was no
threat, and he will bear witness
so the others know what they face.
Leave the bodies. They will serve
as a warning.

RO
I almost shot him myself. You took
a big chance that I wouldn't.

TARAN' ATAR

You told me you were once in the Maquis. And you were one of the few that neither the Cardassians nor the Dominion could kill. That means you are a good soldier. I was not worried.

That's almost a compliment. Smiling despite herself, Ro opens the runabout hatch and steps in.

5 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

It is a mess, but there are some flickering lights. She kicks away some of the debris and sits in the pilot's seat.

RO

Alright then, let's spin the dabo wheel. Computer, this is Lieutenant Ro. This is a priority one command. Begin full restart sequence on my mark, authorisation Ro Epsilon-Seven-Five-One. Mark.

Some panels SPARK and EXPLODE, but power does come back on. Red blinkies, moving gradually through yellow to green.

RO

Good girl. Computer, how much time to complete restart sequence?

COMPUTER

Four minutes, fifty-five seconds.

RO

Are main thrusters functional?

COMPUTER

Affirmative.

RO

Antigravs?

COMPUTER

Damaged.

RO

Okay, main thrusters it is.

She taps more buttons, then heads back to the hatch, where Taran'atar looks through the hatch with a dark expression.

TARAN'ATAR

Discovered. At least twenty.

RO

We need four minutes.

TARAN'ATAR

Keep our link open. I will keep you apprised.

He shrouds and leaves again.

RO

Computer, time to completion?

COMPUTER

Two minutes, fifty-two seconds.

RO

Can we fire phasers?

COMPUTER

Negative.

RO

Can we raise shields?

COMPUTER

Negative.

With a sigh, she looks out and sees two Jem'Hadar FLYING through the air, landing with a CRUNCH.

TARAN'ATAR (comm)

Shield your eyes.

She does, just in time for an enormous FLASH to go off. Voices cry. She looks out and there are four more bodies.

RO
Computer, how much longer?

COMPUTER
Forty-five seconds.

With a nervous look back, she heads to the pilot's seat.

6 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST

Locken's Jem'Hadar FIRE indiscriminately. A small rock lands with a loud rustle at one of the soldiers' feet - three others immediately react and FIRE, vaporising him.

A KNIFE sails through the air and stops mid-air - a Jem'Hadar UNSHROUDS with the knife in his face, collapses dead. Another unshrouds and FIRES on the runabout.

7 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

The ship rocks with the impact.

COMPUTER
Damage to port bulkhead. Recommend raising shields.

RO
Raise shields!

She hits buttons, and the ship starts to vibrate, pulling up reluctantly from the ground.

8 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST

The runabout's rear end is lifting, but the nose is stuck. Still shrouded and hidden behind a tree stump, Taran'atar FIRES low and cuts two Jem'Hadar off at the knees. Others fire back, hitting the stump. Splinters make him unshroud.

9 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

The ship's not coming, so Ro taps more buttons. It settles.

RO
Didn't think that would work. Time for something a bit more dramatic.

10 **EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST**

The runabout surges up strongly. Taran'atar FIRES at random into the forest. He is a bit unfocused. He reaches up, and finds that he is BLEEDING amber blood from his head. He cringes back from the heat of the runabout's engines.

11 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

RO
Computer, activate transporter.
Lock onto Taran'atar's signal.

COMPUTER
Transporter is offline.

RO
What? Can you reroute power?

COMPUTER
Negative.

RO
Phasers?

COMPUTER
Not yet charged.

There is nothing she can do. She has to leave him behind.

12 **EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST**

Taran'atar watches the runabout rise. He turns around to find six weapons pointed directly in his face.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

13 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - JEM'HADAR BARRACKS

Taran'atar is unconscious, restrained in a nasty-looking standing device. A hand touches a panel, and Taran'atar's body JOLTS. He GRUNTS and opens his eyes, sees a nameless JEM'HADAR FIRST gazing at him with fascination.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Awake? Good. I was beginning to think we'd damaged you too much.

TARAN'ATAR

Not so damaged.

The First presses the panel again. Taran'atar JOLTS hard, shudders, lets out a HISS. He passes out briefly, brings himself round. The First is looking at him almost worried.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Impressive. I doubt any of my own men could take as much.

TARAN'ATAR

(with difficulty)

You are fools. And your Khan -

The First touches the panel again, making Taran'atar JOLT. As Taran'atar recovers, the First remains calm and curious.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

What are you?

TARAN'ATAR

You deny the evidence of your own eyes? Scan me, if you have the technology. You will see that I am exactly what I seem to be. A Jem'Hadar of twenty-two years.

The First GRABS Taran'atar's hair-knot and pulls in close.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Do you know who I am? I am First.
First among my men, and the first
born of the Khan. Whatever you may
be, you were not created by him.

TARAN' ATAR

Then how do you explain me? Either
I am lying, and so are all your
instruments. Or I am telling the
truth, in which case there must be
other Jem'Hadar not of your Khan.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

Earlier you spoke of the Founders.
Who are they?

TARAN' ATAR

The true creators of the
Jem'Hadar. The givers of life and
of purpose. Your Khan is not what
you think he is. He has only
corrupted the Founders' work.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

You seem very certain of this. How
can you be sure that what you have
been told is true? Perhaps these
Founders have lied to you. Perhaps
they fear the Khan. They should.

TARAN' ATAR

Do you truly believe that serving
this human is all there is?

JEM' HADAR FIRST

The Khan is not human. He is more
than human. He was born to rule
the other humans.

TARAN' ATAR

So he says. But the human I came
here with is the equal of your
Khan in every way, perhaps better.
I believe he could rule the
humans, but he chooses not to.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

Then he is clearly not the Khan's
equal. Perhaps he is the fool.

(ponders)

But what are the Founders? Giants?
Columns of shimmering light?

TARAN' ATAR

All of these things, and more.
They can be anything they wish.
They are not trapped by flesh.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

Are they immortal?

TARAN' ATAR

No. They are not immortal.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

The Khan is immortal.

TARAN' ATAR

What proof do you have of that?

JEM' HADAR FIRST

One does not ask a god for proof.

TARAN' ATAR

Even if you have doubts?

JEM' HADAR FIRST

I have no doubts. It rather sounds
as if you have reason to doubt,
but I do not. Your Founders do not
sound very godlike to me.

The First turns to leave, but has another thought.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

You are alone here. Whatever you
are, whatever you believe about
your origins... it seems your gods
have forsaken you.

And he leaves, leaving Taran'atar still restrained.

14 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - LOCKEN'S QUARTERS

Bashir sits at the table, admiring the artwork that adorns the walls while tucking into a sumptuous spread. Locken is pottering about in the kitchen, being all domestic.

BASHIR

Where did you get all these utensils? The Dominion couldn't have left them. Jem'Hadar don't eat and Vorta can barely taste.

LOCKEN

They're mine. I brought everything I could salvage from my home when I came here with Section 31. The plan was that I would cook for everyone, which I did. It's how I managed to take them prisoner. A little extra something in the morning omelettes.

BASHIR

So they're all still here?

LOCKEN

In stasis. Don't worry, I've worked out some of the kinks. They should be fine for a while yet.

BASHIR

I'm impressed. But there are still a few obstacles between...

(you)

...us and our goals.

LOCKEN

Would it make you feel better if we discussed some of them?

BASHIR

Yes, please. For a start, there's the problem of sheer numbers. The Dominion had the resources of all of Cardassia and the Breen and the entire Gamma Quadrant, and they

couldn't defeat the Federation.
You're only churning out a handful
of Jem'Hadar a week...

LOCKEN

Ah - I've been preparing for that.
We've got time. Come look at this.

He emerges from the kitchen wiping his hands on a towel,
and goes to his large COMPUTER TERMINAL. He taps lots of
keys inhumanly quickly, and the main SCREEN reveals a
complex chemical model, with streams of accompanying data.

BASHIR

A prion. Not like any I've seen.

LOCKEN (proud)

It gave me trouble, I admit. But
I'm a good cook.

BASHIR

If I understand this correctly -

LOCKEN

And you do, of course.

BASHIR

- Then this could infect almost
every known form of humanoid life.

LOCKEN

As long as it has a central
nervous system, yes. And then turn
that very system into mush.

BASHIR

How is it transmitted?

LOCKEN

Airborne, waterborne, sexual
contact. It's versatile.

BASHIR

But your Jem'Hadar are immune? And
you too, I presume?

LOCKEN

Of course. And I've made sure you are too. I've picked out a planet for the test already - the Romulan protectorate in the Orias system.

He taps more keys, and the screen changes to a mid-range shot of a missile-launch bay, with a big MISSILE ready to go, and others being constructed in the background.

LOCKEN

I cobbled the missile together from components my Jem'Hadar salvaged from that Romulan ship.

BASHIR

So you're going to launch their own missile back at them?

LOCKEN

Along with some minor evidence to make them suspect the Federation.

BASHIR

But not enough to make them act immediately.

LOCKEN

You have a flair for this sort of thing, Julian! No, there'll be just enough time for the prion to take effect on ninety percent of the population, and for the remaining ten percent to get home to Romulus and spread it around a bit. And then the war will begin.

BASHIR

A war between the Romulans and the Federation.

15 FLASHBACK - 7x16 "INTER ARMA ENIM SILENT LEGES"

Bashir and LUTHER SLOAN discuss his mission to Romulus.

SLOAN

That leaves two powers to vie for control of the quadrant - the Federation and the Romulans.

BASHIR

This war isn't even over and you're already planning for the next one.

16 BACK TO SCENE

Bashir remembers that conversation with a raised eyebrow, but doesn't mention it. He is still playing to Locken.

BASHIR

And before long, the Klingons will be drawn into it. And then, when they've all finished savaging each other, the genetically enhanced humans will step in and unite the quadrant at last.

LOCKEN

I couldn't have put it better myself.

BASHIR

What's the timetable for all this?

LOCKEN

Didn't I say? We launch the first missile tomorrow. Now you'll have to excuse me. I think the soup is over-boiling.

Locken trots into the kitchen, quite pleased with himself.

17 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - JEM' HADAR BARRACKS

The First is back to talk to Taran'atar again, intrigued despite himself. Taran'atar is still restrained but less forcefully. There is a bit more respect between them.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

Do these Founders then not give you the white?

TARAN'ATAR

They created the white. Your Khan
merely stole the formula and
recreated it. Badly, I might add.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Badly?

TARAN'ATAR

Your soldiers, First, are either
weak or badly trained. Or both. I
killed ten of them myself. No
single soldier should be able to
kill ten Jem'Hadar.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

(grudging)

You killed thirteen. Your grenade
landed among three soldiers. None
of them had the sense to pick it
up and throw it back.

(back to topic)

But how do you take the white? You
have a shunt but no tube. And you
have been here for hours. Explain.

Taran'atar grinds his teeth. He doesn't want to admit it.

TARAN'ATAR

I am not like most Jem'Hadar. What
you obtain from the white, my body
can produce naturally.

Irritated, the First pulls his gun, presses it to
Taran'atar's head.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

I should kill you. You have no
useful information and the time I
waste speaking with you might be
better spent training the soldiers
who still remain under my command.

Taran'atar doesn't react. The First lowers his weapon.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

But you have courage, I'll grant
you that. And some of the things
you've said...

(re his own
white tube)

You say you do not need this. Is
that how Jem'Hadar are meant to
exist?

TARAN' ATAR

I don't know. A Jem'Hadar lives
only to serve the Founders, and I
have served them well. And yet...
as soon as they discovered my
flaw, they sent me here, to this
blighted corner of the galaxy,
where nothing makes sense! I am
unfit to live among my own kind,
and so I must die here among you
weaklings and traitors. I am a
deviant. It is what I deserve.

The First stands back to consider what Taran'atar has told
him. He has given him a lot to think about.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

You are correct about one thing.
Your Founders and my Khan are very
different. The Founders made you
hate the fact that you do not take
the white. Made you long for that
link to them. While my Khan... he
made me well enough that I will do
anything for him. But not so well
that I look at this -

(re tube again)
- as anything but a chain.

The First gets up close in Taran'atar's face, as if to
understand him better.

JEM' HADAR FIRST

I am not a soldier. I am not a
servant. I am a slave. But at
least I know it. Why don't you?

18 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - PRISON CELL

Ezri Dax lies where we left her, curled up on the bunk, facing the wall, motionless.

The forcefield at the door FLICKERS, stabilises, flickers again, FLARES bright and then goes dead.

Within seconds, a random JEM'HADAR minion approaches in the corridor outside, cautious and confused. Dax doesn't move.

Up CLOSE on her, we see that she has her lost combadge in her hands, its cover open, and is touching contacts.

Without looking or moving, she gauges the Jem'Hadar's movements, and just as he steps halfway over the threshold, she lets go of the contacts...

...and the forcefield BURSTS back into life. The Jem'Hadar is caught right in the middle of it and SPASMS in shock, his weapon FIRING wildly over Dax's head.

He drops unconscious to the floor, smoking somewhat, and the forcefield shorts out once and for all around him.

Quickly, rushing while she has the chance, Dax gets up and snatches the Jem'Hadar's weapon and communicator, and stealthily steps out into the corridor.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

19 EST. LOCKEN'S BASE - DAY

Same as before, only more obviously day now.

20 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - JEM' HADAR TRAINING ROOM

Troops of Jem'Hadar are going through training programs. We close in on a ventilation grate, ECU, and we see Ezri Dax's eyes watching the proceedings through it.

21 INT. VENTILATION SHAFT

Dax pulls away from the training room, continues crawling through the shaft. She's dirty and dusty, not exactly happy to be there. She just barely stifles a SNEEZE in time.

She reaches an intersection, not sure which way to go, not sure what she is trying to accomplish exactly. She picks herself up and starts down one of the connecting shafts.

She passes another grate, giving it a cursory look. Then she stops and goes back to it. She peers through, and sees numerous small lights blinking in the darkness.

She tests the grate, it moves easily enough, no creaks or alarms. She opens it gingerly and looks deeper into the room. Seeing no-one, she manoeuvres through and drops down.

22 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - LABORATORY (CONTINUOUS)

DAX
Lights? ...Computer?

Nothing. She pulls out a palm beacon and shines it around. She sees the lab equipment, computer panels, eventually a row of vertical stasis tubes. They are opaque so Dax can't see who is inside, but the lights indicate they are active.

DAX
Logs. There have to be log files.

She steps up to a computer and starts tapping buttons. It works for her with no problems. She goes through various sub-folders until she finds one labeled "STASIS."

She looks at the first entry - a recording of a naked HUMAN WOMAN, discoloured and disfigured, staring blankly, with associated data.

Next, an ANDORIAN male, sniffling with tears, hair falling out, antennae amputated down to stubs.

A ROMULAN male whose skin seems to be melting off. An INGAVI whose limbs are cut off at the joints. A CARDASSIAN screams into the camera until he passes out.

Dax grows more horrified with each one. She checks the computer - there are 724 more files to go through. Almost in tears, she backs away and climbs back into the air vent.

23 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST

Establishing...

24 INT. INGAVI CAVE HIDEOUT

Numerous Ingavi come and go, worried and afraid, carrying primitive weapons. Some sit quietly watching the others.

RO (v.o.)

Security Chief's log. I'm leaving this record in case I don't survive the assault on Locken's compound. We're planning to leave as soon as the Ingavi have made whatever preparations, physical or spiritual, that they need to.

(beat)

I'd guess the population is down to about fifteen hundred. Last night, we had an army of three hundred. This morning, I counted one-hundred-sixty, most of them armed with blowguns and spears. The rest have seen what was going to happen and melted away into the forest. They're the smart ones.

25 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST

More Ingavi move through the trees, either swinging above ground or crawling through the underbrush.

RO (v.o.)

It's not much. But if we can slow down Locken even a bit, it might give Bashir and Dax a chance. And if we can help them, maybe it will help the Ingavi. If anyone finds this, please tell Colonel Kira to search the security mainframe very carefully. I found some things in it that she might find useful. And if anyone finds my things, please give the fractal blade to Taran'atar. He's the only person I know who might appreciate it.

26 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT

Ro sits in the pilot's seat, dictating into the computer.

RO

If you're Starfleet, please try to find the Ingavi and help them. They might not make it easy. They certainly don't owe us any trust. But do what you can.

(pause)

This is Lieutenant Ro Laren, chief security officer of starbase Deep Space Nine, signing off.

27 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST

Ro hides among the trees, her binoculars trained on the distant Dominion compound. Numerous Ingavi are around her. Kel appears, hanging upside-down from a branch near to Ro.

RO (v.o.)

Oh, one last request. If I'm found dead, take my bones back to Bajor.

RO

This is going too easy. How many soldiers have we killed so far?

KEL

Eight.

RO

Then we missed one. Either he's still on patrol or he went back for reinforcements.

KEL

Then why haven't we been attacked?

RO

I don't know. Something strange is going on. How many Jem'Hadar have you been able to kill in the past?

KEL

Two at most. We are as aware as you that something is wrong here. They fight as if in a dream... if Jem'Hadar dream, that is.

RO

They don't. They don't sleep.

There is a RUSTLE and another Ingavi appears. Kel goes to speak to him MOS, then returns to Ro.

KEL

We found him. The ninth Jem'Hadar. He was asleep.

RO

What?

KEL

Asleep. Standing guard, gun drawn, with his eyes closed. Even at the last, he did not seem to understand what was happening.

RO

We can't assume this good luck is going to last. They'll notice the missing guards soon enough. Tell your people we may still have a fight on our hands.

KEL

All right, I'll ask everyone to move up. See you soon.

He disappears back into the trees. Ro looks through her binoculars at the compound.

RO

What the hell is going on here?

28 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - CORRIDOR

Locken stalks down the corridor, furiously muttering. He reaches a checkpoint, guarded by two Jem'Hadar in red-and-silver outfits. One looks glazed and vacant, weaving on his feet. We don't really see the other's face.

LOCKEN

You. You're feeling alright?

JEM'HADAR

Ready to serve, my Khan.

LOCKEN

Come with me. We're going to my quarters. There will be a human there. Don't kill him until I order you to do so. Understood?

JEM'HADAR

Understood.

29 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - LOCKEN'S QUARTERS

Locken and the Jem'Hadar enter to find Bashir hunched over the computer terminal, his fingers flying over the panels.

LOCKEN

Stand away, Julian. Over against the wall.

(he doesn't)
Soldier, take aim. If he doesn't move in three seconds, shoot him.

The Jem'Hadar obeys, and Bashir steps back with a quick GLANCE at the Jem'Hadar. Locken rushes to the computer and presses keys. He sighs with relief - nothing is wrong.

LOCKEN

That was stupid, Julian. All you succeeded in doing is killing the inhabitants of the Orias system a little sooner. I was going to wait until after breakfast tomorrow, but maybe it's best to do things without ceremony after all.

He calls up the image of the missile silo on the screen.

30 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - MISSILE SILO

Inside the silo, we look up and see the launch bay doors OPENING onto the sky, with hints of rainforest beyond. The missile LAUNCHES, shooting up into the sky.

31 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST

From their hiding place in the trees, Ro, Kel and the Ingavi watch the missile soar into the air from behind the compound. They don't know what it is, but it can't be good.

32 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - LOCKEN'S QUARTERS

LOCKEN
Honestly, I expected better. If you insisted on being my enemy, the least you could have done was make it interesting. This was barely worth getting out of bed for. Well, at least we have the hunt for your little pet slug-girl to look forward to. She managed to accomplish more than you did just by poisoning my Jem'Hadar...

Julian smirks a little at that.

33 FLASHBACK - DAX AND BASHIR'S CELL

Curled up with his back to the room (and the surveillance device), Bashir slips Dax's combadge up his sleeve.

BASHIR

Hold on, my arm's asleep.

He shakes his arm - the combadge slips down into his fist. Dax PUNCHES him, he grabs her and CLAMPS his hand over her mouth, secretly pushing the combadge into her mouth.

Dax lies alone, her back to the surveillance, pretending to cry. Once she is sure she is alone, she pulls the combadge out of her mouth, finds a tiny piece of metal off the bunk.

34 BACK TO SCENE

BASHIR

I have to admit, the encryption on
the missile console was more than
I could handle... but it was
surprisingly easy to alter the
orbit of the weapons platform.

Locken's face drops in shock. He turns to the computer, hits more keys, and we see the missile approaching from out of the atmosphere, from the POV of the Cardassian weapons platform that attacked the runabout.

35 EXT. SPACE - SINDORIN ORBIT

The Cardassian weapons platform is moving through the sky, right into the path of the oncoming missile. The two COLLIDE in a huge but harmless explosion.

36 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - LOCKEN'S QUARTERS

Locken gapes at the screen that has now gone to static.

BASHIR

It's over, Locken.

Locken composes himself, turns off the monitor.

LOCKEN

You don't know what you're talking about, Julian. This was a bug bite. By the time I've scratched it, there'll be a new missile and a new payload. The Romulans on Orias Three will see a few more sunrises. But you won't.

BASHIR

Maybe. But I expect you won't be far behind. You really don't get it, do you? You think you're so bloody intelligent, you're always pulling everyone else's strings, but you haven't seen that you're really the puppet. This whole war, this decision to "unite the Alpha Quadrant," it wasn't your idea.

Locken just looks confused. Bashir grabs the GROUP PHOTO off the table. Bashir shows Locken the picture, points to the man standing next to him in the photo.

BASHIR

During your time with Section 31, did you meet a man named Cole?

LOCKEN

No. Who is he? Why should I care?

BASHIR

He's the man who sent me to stop you. And this is him right here.

LOCKEN

You're lying.

BASHIR

Am I? Consider this. The Dominion obtained erroneous intelligence to make them attack New Beijing. But where did that information come from? I've had a lot of time to think the last couple of days, and here's what I believe. Section

Thirty-One desperately wanted an enhanced agent, and since I'd already turned them down, they turned to you. And a war against the Romulans? They've been planning that for almost a year.

(pause)

They assigned Cole to New Beijing. He assessed you and conceived a plan. He fed information to the Dominion that would guarantee they come in blazing. Section Thirty-One sacrificed five thousand men, women and children just so they could convince you to join their team and kick-start their war for them. And all they had to do was let you think it was your idea.

LOCKEN

You don't... you can't know if any of this is true.

BASHIR

It all fits, though, doesn't it? You said it yourself - New Beijing changed everything. A disease-laden missile? You never would have done anything like that before. You were a doctor, Ethan. Now you're their creature, their monster. And I've been trying so hard to think like you so that I could stop you, I almost had myself convinced I was like you.

Bashir is genuinely upset himself by this point.

BASHIR

But I want you to listen now. It's not too late. You wanted us to work together, and we can still do that. We could stop them, the two of us. We could bring Section 31 to justice for what they did, for what they made you do.

Locken's world has been shaken, and he stops to consider Bashir's offer for a moment. But no.

LOCKEN

The quadrant, the galaxy, still needs order. When people see what I've been doing here, they'll flock to my side. I'll deal with Section 31 in my own good time.

BASHIR

(disappointed)

Maybe you're right. Maybe you are just like Khan after all. A deluded failure.

LOCKEN

(to Jem'Hadar)

Kill him.

(no response)

I gave you an order, guard!

JEM'HADAR

My name... is Taran'atar.

Taran'atar, disguised in one of the red-and-silver outfits and with a fake white tube, aims his weapon at Locken. Bashir smiles.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

37 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - CORRIDOR

Locken RUNS out of his quarters amazingly and inhumanly fast, with Taran'atar's weapon just barely missing him and breaking a sculpture. At the same instant, Bashir shouts.

BASHIR (o.s.)

No, don't!

38 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - LOCKEN'S QUARTERS

Taran'atar lifts his weapon, holding fire.

TARAN'ATAR

Why did you tell me to stop?

BASHIR

Because I want him alive.

TARAN'ATAR

But he's insane.

BASHIR

Yes, but it may be treatable. I owe it to him to try.

Panels in the ceiling open and two small WEAPONS DRONES emerge. Taran'atar sights and destroys them both instantly.

TARAN'ATAR

This will slow us down. I will have to check every corridor for traps. We could go faster if I knew his likely destination.

BASHIR

The barracks. No - the lab. He said Ezri poisoned the white.

TARAN'ATAR

Someone did. The other Jem'Hadar have become slow and sluggish.

BASHIR

He'll head to the distillery,
barricade himself in with the
Jem'Hadar and try to cure them.

TARAN'ATAR

Then we must hurry.

BASHIR

I agree. It won't take him long to
figure out what Ezri did.

TARAN'ATAR

You misunderstand. If you want him
alive, we must find him before the
other Jem'Hadar do, especially the
First.

39 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - CORRIDOR

Bashir and Taran'atar are running down the corridor. It's blocked by a large DOOR at a check point. But Taran'atar quickly enters a code into the panel, and the door opens. Bashir looks at him questioningly.

TARAN'ATAR

Inside information.

They step past, and another pair of WEAPONS DRONES appear. Taran'atar destroys one, but the other HITS the wall near him. The wall SHATTERS with shards of metal. Taran'atar goes down on one knee with a pained GRUNT. Bashir tries to help him up, and his hand comes away damp with amber fluid.

BASHIR

You're hurt.

TARAN'ATAR

It can wait. That way?

BASHIR

Yes, that way. One way or another,
let's end this.

Further down the corridor, they come across the big double doors to the training room. Across them are painted the word "FALSE" in large letters, in an amber paint.

TARAN'ATAR
The situation has deteriorated.

BASHIR
Is this blood?

TARAN'ATAR
Yes. Locken's Jem'Hadar are coming out of their stupor. They've begun to mutilate themselves. Soon they will fight. I've seen this before.

BASHIR
Then we'll have to hurry.

The doors open, and Taran'atar THROWS Bashir to the ground as multiple weapons SHOTS bolt out. Taran'atar drags Bashir out of the line of fire.

40 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - JEM'HADAR TRAINING ROOM

Inside, hordes of Jem'Hadar are tearing around. Some are fighting, others walking around in a daze and bouncing off walls, bellowing angrily. It could all explode any second.

JEM'HADAR
False! Faaaaalse!

Locken stands at the front on a platform, trying to calm and reassure them. The Jem'Hadar First stands calmly before him, staring at him, the only one who's not out of control.

LOCKEN
Listen to me! You must trust me! I created you. I am your Khan. I am your god!

JEM'HADAR FIRST
Yes, perhaps you are our god. But if you are, you must be a weak god, because you have had to use the white to keep us faithful. And

if you are weak, and you created us, then we are weak too. But we will not be weak now. We are Jem'Hadar. True Jem'Hadar!

A roar of agreement goes up. Locken starts to worry.

JEM'HADAR FIRST
We are strong. So you cannot be our god. You... are... false!

LOCKEN
I am your Khan...

Dozens of disrupters point at him in response.

41 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - CORRIDOR

Out in the corridor, Bashir and Taran'atar hear the sound of them all FIRING at once. Once he stops cringing, Bashir looks up to see that the First has emerged from the room.

TARAN'ATAR
He is dead?

JEM'HADAR FIRST
Yes.

TARAN'ATAR
Good.

Bashir surges to his feet about to rage at them, but when he sees the look of barely contained fury mixed with almost existential angst, he thinks better of it.

A panel falls from the ceiling. Taran'atar prepares to fire, but Ezri Dax appears and drops to the floor. She is filthy with grime. Bashir grabs her in a fierce hug.

BASHIR
I'm so sorry. Are you - ?

DAX
I'm fine, Julian. Don't worry. How are you? And what was all that

weapons fire? It sounded like it was right here.

BASHIR

Things haven't gone exactly...

He can barely form words. Ezri pulls him back into the hug.

DAX

I'm sorry. Truly... for you. But not for him, Julian. If you had seen some of the things he did...

BASHIR

It's alright, I understand. I don't think anyone could have helped him. Not even me.

RO (o.s.)

Hey, break it up you two. I'm embarrassed just watching you.

They turn and see Ro at the far end of the corridor. She is just as weary and grimy, but glad to see everyone alive.

DAX

Ro!

Dax runs to throw her arms around Ro's neck. Ro is a little surprised. A dozen Ingavi raise the weapons they plucked off the Jem'Hadar in response. Dax sees them and freezes.

BASHIR

Ro, please tell me these are friends of yours.

RO

Doctor, Lieutenant, these are my friends, the Ingavi.

She turns to them and makes some funny noises, clicks and hisses, and they back down.

RO

(to Dax, smiling)

Don't do that again.

DAX

Right. Noted. Sorry.

RO

This is Kel. He's the leader of these Ingavi. The others are outside, guarding the perimeter.

BASHIR

And the Ingavi are... natives?

RO

Sort of. It's a long story. But they deserve our help, if only because of what they've done for me today. So what's been going on here? By the time we got right up to the gate, all we found was dead Jem'Hadar, obviously shot by other Jem'Hadar. What did you do?

DAX

More than I intended, obviously. I just wanted to knock them out.

BASHIR

Ketrapel-white is a tricky bit of chemistry. If I can get Locken's records, I should be able to -

TARAN'ATAR

You will not have time to perform tests. We must leave here soon or we will die along with the Khan.

BASHIR

Leave?! No, we have to download records, find evidence...

The SUNDs from inside the training room have been growing louder and angrier. The First appears in the doorway.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Close this door. Now.

Taran'atar helps him heave the door shut. A weapon fires.

JEM'HADAR FIRST
Jem'Hadar! Stand at attention!

Most manage to bring themselves under control for a moment, but just barely. They are still on the edge of crazy.

JEM'HADAR FIRST
The need grows strong in them...
in all of us.

BASHIR
But we can fix the white...

JEM'HADAR FIRST
No. It is too late for that.

He shudders - he's going too. Taran'atar reaches out and puts his hand on the First's shoulder, warrior to warrior.

TARAN'ATAR
Give them a good death.

The First nods, and turns back to the room. Taran'atar finishes closing the door. Within seconds, the sounds of disruptor fire and SCREAMS and ROARS come from inside.

TARAN'ATAR
We must go.

RO
The runabout is only about a half-hour from here on foot.

DAX
It survived the crash?

RO
She's tough. If we can get off planet, she'll get us home.

BASHIR
No. We're not finished. We have to get this data. It's the evidence we need to expose Section 31.

He turns and runs down the corridor. Taran'atar and Ro look to Dax for an explanation.

DAX

We have to stay with him. He's not armed.

RO

He's not thinking.

DAX

No, he's thinking too much. He almost can't help it.

She grabs a phaser and a tricorder from Ro and heads off.

42 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - LABORATORY

By the time Dax catches up, Bashir has already got back to the stasis lab and is furiously working at the computer. He starts urgently opening cabinets, looking for something. She lets him - he needs to get it out of his system.

DAX

You know, that was quite an act you put on back in the cell. You almost had me convinced. What are you looking for?

BASHIR

Tricorder. Memory solid. Something I can record this data on.

She throws him Ro's tricorder. He sets it to work next to the monitor, and keeps flicking through files.

BASHIR

I had you convinced... because I wasn't lying. Not entirely. I would never have joined him, Ezri. But those sleepless nights, they do happen - and they scare the hell out of me. I just don't know how narrow the line is between what I am... and what he was.

On the monitor, he's found the same biological tests that Dax did. The weeping Andorian. The screaming Cardassian. The limbless Ingavi. Dax knows exactly what he is seeing.

DAX
(quietly)
Now do you see the line?

Bashir steps back, horrified. He turns to the stasis tubes. Stunned, he holds his hand out for Dax's phaser with tears in his eyes. Understanding, she gives it to him.

DAX
You don't want the evidence?

BASHIR
This isn't evidence. It's
atrocious.

He FIRES on the stasis tubes, destroying them, YELLING.

43 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST

Trees are being shoved aside and broken as a dozen or more black-suited and masked FIGURES come through with phaser rifles. The Ingavi who are guarding the outside of the compound CHARGE at them, throwing spears. The black-suited figures FIRE, casually cutting them down without a thought.

44 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - CORRIDOR

The SCREAMS of the dying Ingavi come through. They all know who the new ones are. Kel reacts and begins to go to them.

RO
Kel! Wait! We can help!

TARAN'ATAR
No, we can't. This isn't a fight
we can win. This mission is over.

RO
I'm not talking about winning. I'm
talking about keeping a promise.

KEL

You have already kept your promise, Ro. You have freed us from the Jem'Hadar. It was more than we could have hoped for. Not everything is your responsibility.

He runs off towards the fight. Ro turns to Bashir in tears, tries to grab the phaser back from him. He won't let her.

RO

Doctor, I'm begging you...

BASHIR

No, Taran'atar's right. We have to go. If we stay -

RO

If we stay, we could die. But if we go, the Ingavi will die. We have to do something!

Taran'atar grabs her shoulder, so she can't go. She sags.

TARAN'ATAR

How do we get out of here?

DAX

I found a transporter earlier. We can use it to get to the ship.

Dax leads, Taran'atar drags Ro, and they all run for it.

45 INT. SECTION 31 BASE CAMP

A high-tech temporary base set among the forest. AGENT COLE sits watching monitors that show the Section 31 attack on the compound, the fires breaking out, the dying Ingavi, the already dead Jem'Hadar, even some of his own dead men. He watches it all dispassionately, neither happy nor sad.

A nondescript JUNIOR AGENT approaches from behind.

COLE

Yes?

AGENT

Sir, sensors report a Starfleet
runabout lifting off from the
planet. You gave orders to be
alerted if we picked anything up.

COLE

Right. I did, didn't I?

Cole just watches the screens. The agent is uncertain.

AGENT

Orders, sir?

COLE

Let it go.

AGENT

Sir?

COLE

Let it go.

The agent nods and leaves. Cole watches the screens.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

46 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

KIRA NERYS sits behind her desk. Bashir, Dax, Ro and Taran'atar are in front of the desk. Bashir and Ro are both rather agitated.

KIRA

That's a hell of a story. My only question is, how much of this can we tell to Starfleet Command?

BASHIR

I think we can tell Admiral Ross most of the tale. Though I expect he'll have to edit it heavily before Starfleet shares it with any other Federation worlds. I'd like to be able to tell the Romulans something about their missing ships. But the part about what happened on New Beijing...

KIRA

That will never come out.

RO

I can't help but notice that none of you has said a word about the Ingavi. What are we going to do about them? Colonel? Doctor? Any thoughts? Do you even care?

DAX

You're not being fair. Of course we care. But if we hadn't gone to Sindorin, most of the Ingavi would be dead by now.

RO

Most of the Ingavi probably are dead by now!

KIRA

That's enough. This is hard enough without everyone sniping at each other. You're welcome to make your thoughts clear in your formal report, Ro. We'll do what we can.

RO

(disgusted)

When things cool off. When the Romulans stop searching the area for their missing ships. When no-one will have any reason to suspect anything ever happened on Sindorin. When they're all dead.

(pause)

I'm going back to my office to check on some things. Sir.

KIRA

When you do, contact Commander Vaughn. He left me a message saying you should get in touch with him. He's on Empok Nor with one of the engineering teams.

BASHIR

Where is Empok Nor?

KIRA

Nog towed it into orbit of Cajara.

Ro picks up her grimy travel bag and leaves.

BASHIR

You'll have to excuse me too.

KIRA

No, you stay right here. I already know what you're thinking. One, you're thinking you failed because you didn't bring back the evidence you want to expose Section 31.

Bashir smiles thinly, unable to deny it.

KIRA (cont)

And two, you're wondering how to slip back to Sindorin when I'm not looking and save the Ingavi. "It should be simple," you think. "I'm ever so much smarter than everyone else. And while I'm there I'll look around for more evidence on Section 31. And no, I don't need to tell the Colonel because she'll just tell me I'm an idiot."

BASHIR

That's pretty good, though I'm not nearly that humble.

KIRA

I've ordered Ops to keep a close eye on all outgoing traffic. I've already got one missing person. I don't need another.

Accepting defeat for now, Bashir and Dax start to leave.

KIRA

I know this must have been hard for you, Julian. If you have trouble sleeping tonight, think about how many people you saved on this mission.

BASHIR

You're getting good at this command thing, Nerys. That almost makes me feel better. Almost helps me forget the ones I didn't save.

KIRA

I don't want you to forget them. I want you to forgive yourself for not being the superhuman you sometimes think you are.

They go, leaving Kira and Taran'atar, who has been silent.

KIRA

Taran'atar, Doctor Bashir said the mission would have failed without your assistance. Thank you for that. It must have been difficult for you, fighting other Jem'Hadar.

TARAN'ATAR

This was not the first time Jem'Hadar has fought Jem'Hadar. It will not be the last.

KIRA

Is there anything we can do for you right now? Do you want to send a message back to the Dominion?

TARAN'ATAR

I was not ordered to make reports, so I will not. The Founders will contact me if they wish.

He wants to say something else - Kira senses it.

KIRA

What is it?

TARAN'ATAR

Ro told me she has never met anyone with as much faith in her gods as you. Is this so?

KIRA

It's hard to measure these things, but yes, I believe my faith is very strong.

TARAN'ATAR

How did it get to be so strong?
How can you... not doubt?

KIRA

I do doubt. Every day, I doubt everything. I doubt that I'm doing this job right. I doubt that I'm a good person. I doubt that we'll even be here tomorrow. But I draw

strength from the idea that the Prophets are weaving a tapestry, and my faith brings me closer to understanding how my own thread fits into it. I think the Prophets want us to question our beliefs every day, because the only way our faith can grow stronger is by having it challenged.

(pause)

Does any of this make sense?

TARAN' ATAR

It is all very paradoxical.

KIRA

At best, it's paradoxical. On its bad days, it's downright nonsense. If nothing else, have faith in Odo. I know I do.

TARAN' ATAR

Then perhaps, that will be our common ground.

47 EXT. EMPOK NOR - ESTABLISHING

DS9's sister station sits mostly dark in orbit of a gas giant. A runabout zooms towards it.

48 INT. EMPOK NOR - PROMENADE

ELIAS VAUGHN stands on the deserted and dark Promenade, looking out of a viewport into space. He's wearing one of the old Starfleet field coats from "The Wrath of Khan." He hears footsteps approaching. Without turning, he speaks.

VAUGHN

Doctor. What can I do for you?

BASHIR

(wary)

I need to ask you some questions. And I'd like some straight answers, please. For once.

VAUGHN

Of course, Doctor.

BASHIR

You knew what was going to happen.

VAUGHN

That's not a question.

(Bashir turns to leave)

Alright. Sorry. Evasion is a hard habit to break. The answer is no, I didn't know exactly what was going to happen. I had suspicions. I know how 31 works, Doctor, and there's always more than one meaning to anything they say.

Vaughn pulls off his combadge and holds it up to Bashir. He closes his fist, shakes it, opens it. The combadge is gone.

VAUGHN

Whatever they let you see, no matter how interesting, they're only letting you see it so you won't look at something else.

Vaughn holds out his other fist and reveals a combadge. He points to Bashir's chest - his own combadge is gone.

VAUGHN

I'm quite sure Section 31 could have mustered a force capable of reducing Locken, his Jem'Hadar and his hatchery to ashes, but they would have lost what they were really after all along.

BASHIR

His data.

VAUGHN

The only way to accomplish both goals - get rid of Locken but keep his data - was to put someone on the inside. Section 31 couldn't do it because Locken would know their

tricks. So Cole got you to do it.
They got what they wanted, and
they covered their tracks.

(pause)

Section 31's first principle is to
protect their existence. Anything
else they espouse is secondary.
It's their greatest strength and
their greatest weakness.

BASHIR

Are you telling me you aren't one
of them? Just another Starfleet
officer on a short leash -

VAUGHN

(dangerous)

I'm not on anyone's leash, Doctor.
And I've never worked for 31.

BASHIR

(realising)

You've been fighting them too.

VAUGHN

Longer than you've been alive. I
think, Doctor, that you've always
been a bit of a romantic. Your
latest fantasy is that you're the
solitary opponent to this gigantic
conspiracy. It feeds your ego.

Bashir begins to protest, but Vaughn placates him.

VAUGHN (cont)

The truth is there are only a few
of us, and we need to be patient,
and try to think even more moves
ahead than they do.

BASHIR

A lot of good that did the Ingavi.

Vaughn smiles, pulls out a device and presses it. On the
docking ring below, a large and blocky ship DECLOAKS.

49 EXT. EMPOK NOR

The large ship sits on the docking ring - it's the illegal Starfleet holoship from "Insurrection."

50 INT. EMPOK NOR - PROMENADE

BASHIR

What the hell is that?

VAUGHN

That is a mobile environment simulator. A holoship, built in secret and illegally equipped with a cloaking device for a failed Section 31 operation in the Briar Patch last year. They were never implicated, unfortunately. The blame went to a single admiral. But those of us who know these things knew perfectly well who was pulling the strings. The holoship was confiscated by Starfleet Command and destroyed. At least, that's what the paperwork says.

BASHIR

You stole it from Starfleet Command and Section 31? Why?

VAUGHN

For a rainy day. The idea of using one of Section 31's own inventions against them had a certain charm. This one was designed to relocate a small colony... in secret.

BASHIR

(catches on)

You got the Ingavi off Sindorin!

VAUGHN

Most of them. As many as we could find in the time we had. And I didn't do it personally. But as I said, you aren't alone.

BASHIR

But Ro! You have to tell her! She was devastated.

VAUGHN

She's already down there, trying to explain what happened.

BASHIR

I have to tell Ezri, I have to explain it to Kira...

VAUGHN

The colonel knows. We couldn't do this without her looking the other way at the proper time. As for Dax, I think you should wait.

BASHIR

Wait for what?

VAUGHN

Until you've gone over there and done some medical checks on our guests. Then you help me explain they're being resettled on their homeworld, which incidentally is a Federation protectorate these days. And then, you come back to DS-Nine with me and I'll make you a good cup of tea, and together - together - we'll make plans.

Bashir smiles, and they begin to walk together.

FADE OUT:

THE END