

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

13x18 - "Especially the Lies"

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on characters from the series

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

and on the *Star Trek* tie-in novels
by Pocket Books

TNG 18x18 - "BRINKMANSHIP, pt 2"

As Starfleet and Tzenkethi ships amass on the Venette border, Alizome Tor Fel-A secretly offers Crusher advanced medical data to persuade her to call off the blockade; Akaar orders her to refuse the offer. Cardassian diplomat Detrek is banned from the conference for bad behaviour, so Ferengi negotiator Ilka makes her own deal to salvage the situation - Ferengi observers will join the Tzenkethi on the border stations to ensure everyone behaves themselves. With intel from a Starfleet spy on ab-Tzenketh, Picard is able to reveal that the Tzenkethi have been blackmailing the Venette Convention into alliance with them. Embarrassed, the Tzenkethi agree to the Ferengi observers and the safe medical alternatives, and withdraw. Picard and Crusher sadly realise the negotiations were never meant to succeed - the plan was always to sacrifice the Venette alliance so they could force the Tzenkethi back. It's a victory, of a sort.

TTN 2x18 - "BRAHMA-SHIVA"

Vale convinces the Hranrari that they are only trying to save the planet from destruction. Meanwhile Riker sends an away team to the ecosculptor device. S'syrix, who believes the device is sentient, joins Tuvok, Keru, Ra-Havreii and White-Blue, hoping to secure the device or destroy it. His plans foiled, Gog'resssh attacks - if he can't have the ecosculptor, no-one can, even if it means the entire warrior caste dying. He tries to ram the device, but *Titan* and Krassrr fight him off. Keru's attempts to blow it up don't work - the device is fighting back. White-Blue offers to download the device's intelligence so it won't "die", but the attempt crashes his systems. In desperation, Tuvok mind-melds with the device, but he is knocked unconscious. Finally Riker beams his team back to *Titan* and allows Gog'resssh to continue his collision course - and both he and the ecosculptor are destroyed. Riker exchanges data with Krassrr, and Hranrar is saved, but Tuvok and White-Blue are both still down...

VOY 11x18 - "PLAY FAIR"

While the rest of the fleet explores former Borg space, *Voyager* heads to the world of the Cooperative (VOY "Unity"), hoping to learn what happened to Riley's people. Seven has proposed an

"intimate relationship" with Cambridge, but he is leaving for his own mission aboard *Achilles*, spoiling their first official date. *Voyager* finds Riley's planet blockaded by Tarkan raiders, and is forced to flee. But Seven is contacted by Riley via their catoms. Like Seven, they rejected the Caeliar, and now they need *Voyager's* help to escape the Tarkans. Chakotay calls *Achilles* back in, using its fighter ships to battle the Tarkans long enough to beam all captives aboard and then slipstream to safety. *Voyager* takes the small community to the nearest thing they have to a home planet - the now-deserted first Borg world Arehaz (VOY "Dodo"). Elsewhere, *Quirinal*, *Esquiline*, *Hawking* and *Curie* investigate a strange, disquieting spatial anomaly...

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. AVENTINE - BRIG

Captain EZRI DAX stands staring sternly, disquieted, at...

...Commander PETER ALDEN, who sits on the bed in one of the security cells, looking back up at Dax. The force-field between them buzzes away quietly...

ALDEN

So... made your mind up yet what you're going to do?

DAX

Not yet.

ALDEN

Ah - so you still think I'm a potential saboteur.

DAX

You haven't said anything yet to convince me otherwise.

ALDEN

In that case, maybe you should hand me over.

DAX

It would prevent a war...

ALDEN

For the moment, anyway. It won't be the Venetans who interrogate me, you know, whatever Helgon tells you. The Tzenkethi will persuade her to hand me over to them. They're very persuasive.

Dax stands impassive, refusing to let him try to guilt her. He stands up and slowly approaches, until he is right in front of the force-field. He presses his palm against it, lets it BUZZ until discomfort is turning into pain...

ALDEN

Do you know how they treat enemy agents, Ezri? I do. They've no respect for anyone who is not Tzenkethi. Hell, they barely respect their own lower grades.

(beat)

Did you know there's a caste of Tzenkethi who are being bred not to speak? The scientists decided they didn't need to, they could do their job just as well without it. You think I'm sick? They're the sick ones. We're right to oppose them. We're right to hate them.

Dax also steps closer, refusing to be intimidated.

DAX

You are making a mistake, Peter, if you're still thinking of me as Ezri Tigan. I am Dax. I'm the sum of many parts. I've been a mother, a father, and a lover of both men and women. I've been a diplomat, a scientist, a pilot - and yes, a killer. I've watched countless friends die, and I've died eight times myself. I'm older than you think, and I'm much less patient than ever. If I can stop a war by handing you over, Peter Alden, you'd better believe I'll do it.

He blinks, genuinely surprised by that. Suddenly he seems so young, so innocent. Then the mask snaps back into place, and he turns away, collapses back on the bed dismissively.

ALDEN

Then go ahead and do it. It's only what I expected would happen one day anyway.

Dax turns and leaves him there. She EXITS out to...

2 **INT. AVENTINE - CORRIDOR**

...where Cmdr SAM BOWERS is waiting for her. They walk and talk on their way down the corridor together...

BOWERS

You have to make a decision about Alden. There's no more time. The Tzenkethi vessels are on their way to Venetan space, very possibly carrying ingredients for biogenic weapons. We've been ordered to leave V-4 and rendezvous with the *Enterprise* at the Venetan border - they're forming a blockade.

(beat)

He might have done it, Ezri.

DAX

He might. But I'm not leaving it to the Tzenkethi to find that out. Commander Alden stays where he is. Call it an executive decision.

BOWERS

Alright. I'm just glad I'm not the one who has to make it.

DAX

I think that's what the extra pip is for, Sam.

As they stride purposefully on down the corridor...

FADE OUT

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

3 EXT. AB-TZENKETH - SURFACE - DAY

We follow one of the WATER SHUTTLES as it scuds across the glittering crystal lagoon. But this one is not heading for the city or for the residential areas - it is on its way out much further, towards the exotic coral reefs beyond.

4 INT. WATER SHUTTLE - MAIN CARRIAGE - DAY

MAYAZAN, the Cardassian spy disguised as a Tzenkethi of the lowest grade, shares a semi-private booth with her friend, CORAZAME. The latter SINGS under her breath, the simple old work song that keeps such people docile and happy.

Mayazan looks further down the carriage, to where dozens of other similarly low-grade workers like them are enjoying this unusual day out from work. They roam back and forth, gossiping and giggling and sipping on cheap drinks.

Out of the window, the TWO MOONS can still be seen in the pale purple sky. Corazame peers up at them, and performs a simple GESTURE - touch heart, touch head, touch sky...

CORAZAME

Most exalted and beloved Rej...

Then the SHUTTERS start to rumble up, covering the windows bit by bit from bottom to top, so that the Royal Moon is the last thing seen. Once they are fully closed, a subtle SIGH OF RELIEF flutters between all the other Tzenkethi.

CORAZAME

That's better. It's beautiful, but
it makes me uncomfortable too.

Then the low murmur of the other Rets' conversation dies out, and Mayazan and Corazame both look up to see...

Two silver-skinned Tzenkethi, one male and one female, both wearing sleek black uniforms, entering the carriage and moving towards them. These are Mak enforcers - the police.

The other Rets automatically dip their heads and dim their skin-lights, shuffling out of the enforcers' way. No fear, just the deference of a lower social grade to a higher one.

But for Mayazan and Corazame, it is potential disaster. As the enforcers get closer, they too dip their heads and dim their lights, hoping not to draw any attention.

Closer... closer...

...and the enforcers walk right on past, not acknowledging the two terrified Rets at all. They both sigh with relief.

CORAZAME

Did you know there were enforcers
on board?

MAYAZAN

No...

Suddenly Corazame GASPS all over again...

...because HERTOME has approached them. Mayazan glares in silent fury, but Corazame giggles mischievously.

CORAZAME

Maymi, look who's here...

HERTOME

Mayazan Ret Ata-E. And Corazame
Ret Ata-E. What a... pleasant
surprise. I hope you are both
enjoying this unexpected rest
period you have been granted?

CORAZAME

(eyes down, amused)

Very much so, Ap-Rej. This one
offers her Ap-Rej thanks for his
kind interest.

MAYAZAN

(eyes up, defiant)

While this one gives assurances of
benefitting from her time here.

HERTOME

No doubt. Ret Mayazan... you must come with me.

Unable to refuse, Mayazan gets up and follows Hertome down the carriage, keeping her head low. The other Rets have definitely noticed, their gossipy murmurs returning...

...while Corazame worries for her friend.

5 INT. WATER SHUTTLE - HERTOME'S CABIN

Hertome enters the tiny box cabin he has been assigned, and Mayazan follows, closing the door, keeping her head down.

MAYAZAN

How might this one assist her Ap-Rej?

HERTOME

Will you drop this crap? We don't have time for these games anymore. Another agent has been arrested. I think the Tzenkethi are going to close our embassy. They've already expelled four diplomats. I can't stay here any longer, Mayazan!

Mayazan refuses to say anything, which drives Hertome mad.

HERTOME

You're leaving, aren't you? That's why you've come up here. You've got to take me with you! If they got one of us already, my cover could be blown any second.

Mayazan still won't say anything, just keeps her eyes on the deck. She shouldn't know any of this, it's dangerous.

HERTOME

But I can see that doesn't matter to you, does it? You'll do your duty and play by the book and damn the consequences to anyone else.

Hertome laughs darkly, his cover slipping all the time.

HERTOME

You know, I'm amazed that you even want to leave here. You've got no more initiative than that stupid little floor scrubber who's always dangling at your elbow. You fit right into this damned place.

He steps up close to her, takes her chin and forcibly drags her eyes up to face him.

HERTOME

Make no mistake about it, Mayazan - you are going to take me with you. Because if I go down, you go down with me. Isn't that what being allies is all about?

As Mayazan glares into the Federation spy's eyes...

6 INT. AVENTINE - CONFERENCE ROOM

Dax strides in from the bridge, Bowers at her elbow, to find Doctor TARSES and Lt Cmdr HELKARA perusing technical information via the HOLO-DISPLAY over the conference table.

DAX

Is this what we need? Simon, you're a marvel!

TARSES

I carried out some research into what kind of skin emollients would be suitable for Tzenkethi. Based on that, and what I learned from the samples we took from Outpost V-4, I've prepared six different options - all of which serve the Tzenkethi's stated needs without the side effect of being deadly to humans. If they're willing, we can supply them with everything, and this crisis can be defused.

DAX

And if they're not willing, we can only hope that to Venetan eyes, it will seem hostile and evasive.

HELKARA

Certainly accepting our offer is the most reasonable decision to make. That is of course, assuming the Tzenkethi do indeed wish to avoid a war.

BOWERS

Where did you get your information about Tzenkethi biology, Doctor? Did you speak to Commander Alden?

TARSES

Oh no, there was sufficient data in the Starfleet medical database thanks to Doctor Pulaski.

(awkward)

Besides, isn't Commander Alden...

DAX

(covering it)

An expert on Tzenkethi politics, not a doctor, yes.

HELKARA

Speaking of Commander Alden, will the Venetans even accept this from us now, given that we left V-4 without handing him over? Admiral Akaar might have something to say about that.

BOWERS

With all respect to the Admiral, if he wanted us to hand over Alden to the Tzenkethi, he should have issued some orders to that effect.

TARSES

Still, it's not likely to leave Helgon well-disposed towards us.

DAX

She was willing to give me time to investigate. And I've yet to see any evidence that unequivocally proves Peter did anything. It's all just as circumstantial as our evidence against the Tzenkethi.

TARSES

I'm no counsellor, but Commander Alden's psychological state has been clear to all of us.

HELKARA

And even if it weren't, Starfleet Intelligence may have ordered him to sabotage the Tzenkethi's operation here.

TARSES

Ezri... you know Commander Alden.

DAX

I used to. He's changed.

TARSES

Still... do you think he did this?

Dax steps away a moment, trying to order her thoughts.

DAX

I think it's possible. But it's also possible that the Tzenkethi are using him to set Starfleet up in the eyes of the Venetans.

HELKARA

You mean... they planted the bomb themselves?

DAX

It's just as possible as anything else, isn't it? That seems to be how they operate - keeping us off balance, never knowing for sure.

Off Dax's uncertainty...

7 **INT. WATER SHUTTLE - MAIN CARRIAGE**

...to Mayazan's. She is back sitting in the semi-private booth, no longer enjoying watching the other Tzenkethi's social interactions, distracted by her own situation.

CORAZAME

Maymi...? Can I sit down?

Mayazan looks up to see her friend, her only ally in this confusing place, hovering awkwardly.

MAYAZAN

Of course, Cory. Of course.

Corazame glances around anxiously, making sure they are not being overheard, then sits opposite Mayazan.

CORAZAME

The Ap-Rej is eating. I cannot offer advice to him, but I can offer it to you. You must have seen that the situation between you has been noticed. You are taking terrible risks.

(takes Mayazan's hand)

I don't want you to be sent for reconditioning. I've seen people afterward - they're emptied. They sing and they eat, but there's nothing else there. I don't want that to happen to you!

The pressure of the situation, the number of lies she has to keep straight, is getting to Mayazan. She begins to cry.

MAYAZAN

Cory, I'm so afraid. But this isn't my doing! I told Hertome before we left the city that our meetings could not continue, but he insists! He followed me here.

Mayazan looks up at her friend, sees that the plea for sympathy is working. She pushes her luck...

MAYAZAN

How am I supposed to refuse a superior? And I'm afraid that if I do try to refuse, he'll approach the enforcers and tell them I'm disobedient. I'm so frightened! I was flattered at first, to think that such a one would even notice one like me. But I've been a fool. Cory, what am I going to do?

CORAZAME

I think you already know what we have to do, Maymi.

MAYAZAN

If I knew, I'd do it.

CORAZAME

Hush. Everything will be fine. But we must be brave. If you're afraid he will approach the enforcers... then we must approach them first.

Although this is exactly what Mayazan was leading Corazame towards, she performs shock and horror at the very idea.

MAYAZAN

Approach them? Cory, is that even possible? One of them is graded B! I'm not sure they even have any dialects in common with us.

CORAZAME

If they're graded so highly, they will certainly have the permission and ability to learn our dialect.

MAYAZAN

But won't it make us stand out? It's not permitted for Atas of our grade! We might end up censured -

CORAZAME

They're the only ones here with an Ap-Rej's authority over Hertome. We're not slaves, Maymi! And we're certainly not Hertome's slaves. You and I, all of us, we serve our beloved Rej.

(does touch heart-
-head-sky gesture)

But he cannot always be with us, so he allows others to speak and act on his behalf. Then we are all under his protection - even those of us who contribute so little to our world.

Corazame catches her breath, her impassioned rant having caught the attention of some of the other Rets sharing their carriage. But she does not care, she is brave and determined. Mayazan cannot help but admire that.

CORAZAME

We have to approach the enforcers. We'll beg permission to speak, and we'll hope in the name of our most beloved and exalted Rej that they grant us permission... and believe what we say.

Corazame stands and pulls Mayazan up by her hand, marching smartly down the carriage.

Mayazan follows, allowing a sly smile - this is all going exactly how she planned.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

8 EXT. AB-TZENKETH - CORAL CAVERNS

The water shuttle travels through the comparatively narrow passages created by the coral reefs. The vacationing citizens are now out on the open deck, more comfortable with the closed cavern walls than they were the open sea.

9 INT. WATER SHUTTLE - ENFORCERS' CABIN

A much larger room than that which was assigned to Hertome. Mayazan kneels on the inferior deck, eyes down but trying to absorb as much sociological information as she can from this moment. Corazame kneels beside her, shaking with fear.

Standing on the anterior deck (aka the wall) behind them - a signal of her superiority - is the female enforcer named INZEGIL. Her shining silver skin and black uniform make her look distinctly vampiric, but she is calm and serious.

INZEGIL

My colleague and I have already observed the Ter Hertome's odd behaviour towards you. We've been waiting for you to approach us, Ret Mayazan. If you had not done so, you would have been summoned before us and asked to account for why you had not called upon our superior judgment in this matter.

Inzegil walks down the wall to behind the two kneeling Rets and places her silver hands on each of their brown heads, a benediction from a superior. Corazame sobs with relief.

INZEGIL

You and the Ret Corazame have behaved appropriately. Your plea has been heard. I shall summon Hertome Ter Ata-C before me to answer my questions.

CUT TO:

The same room, later. Mayazan and Corazame have now been permitted to sit on actual chairs, in a corner out of the way. Hertome stands in the room, not kneeling but with head down and hands clasped behind his back, copper skin dimmed. Even he must show deference to the superior Mak echelon.

HERTOME

This one assures his Ap-Rej that his meetings with the Ret Mayazan were purely for the purpose of guiding her back to the proper path. He regrets his failure in this respect, and offers his humble apologies to the Ap-Rej.

Inzegil gazes down upon Hertome from her superior position, pondering the different stories she has heard.

INZEGIL

I have listened to all of your accounts with interest. I also consulted psychometric test scores and work assessments for all three of you. Both of these Rets have performed their assigned tasks in exemplary fashion. They show a clear understanding of the nature and limits of their function.

(beat)

But in your file, Hertome, I see occasional but worrying notes from superiors about overassertiveness. You will not be aware that on one occasion you were very close to being recalibrated down a grade. Only the efficiency of your unit prevented this. You may show them your thanks for their loyalty.

Hertome raises his eyes, and makes contact with Mayazan from across the room, each staring daggers into the other.

HERTOME

This one offers his gratitude for the Rets' efficiency and loyalty.

Inzegil alters her stance. She is about to give judgement.

INZEGIL

I am not inclined to believe your story, Hertome. And that concerns me deeply, since it means that you have lied to me. If I could prove that, I would be empowered to decommission you immediately.

She taps the weapon holstered at her hip to make her point.

INZEGIL

But since your file shows that you have been a hard worker, and so in your own way have served our Rej -
(heart head sky)
- I am prepared to be lenient. At the next port, you will leave this voyage, and will be taken to begin fifty sky-turns of reconditioning. I will not recommend recalibration but you should be aware that your C grade now carries a query along side it. What do you have to say?

HERTOME

(head down, quiet)

This one must thank his Ap-Rej for reminding him of his function, and providing him the opportunity to correct his faults. He assures his Ap-Rej of his eagerness to begin the work necessary to improve him.

INZEGIL

I hope so. You may go, Hertome. Return to your cabin, and remain there until we reach the port.

Head low, Hertome turns and heads to the door. But before he leaves, he turns back and makes eye contact with Mayazan again. She has signed his death warrant. Then he goes. With him gone, Inzegil turns back to Mayazan and Corazame.

INZEGIL

You too may go now. Turn your attentions back to your immediate duty of restoration. You need not think about this matter again.

Muttering thanks and invocations to their Ap-Rej, Mayazan and Corazame scuttle out of the door into the corridor.

10 INT. WATER SHUTTLE - CORRIDOR

Heading back towards their seats, Corazame suddenly stops.

CORAZAME

Oh Maymi... we've made a terrible mistake. With Hertome gone... we will now be forced to report to Karenzen Ter Ata-C instead!

She says this with such horror that Mayazan LAUGHS aloud. The sheer relief has got them both a bit giddy.

Then they see the other silver-skinned enforcer, ARTAMER, coming towards them down the corridor, and they immediately clam up, lowering their heads and dimming their lights. He passes without comment and heads into the enforcers' cabin, and the two Rets go back to giggling again.

11 INT. WATER SHUTTLE - ENFORCERS' CABIN

Artamer ENTERS to find Inzegil sat at the table on the wall and filling out the reports. He steps onto the wall...

...and our camera angle SHIFTS to follow him so that we are now on the wall as well. Artamer takes a spare seat...

ARTAMER

He's back in his cabin, and the door is sealed.

INZEGIL

Good. But I think we should keep an eye on him anyway. There was just something about his answers that didn't ring true to me.

ARTAMER

Of course not, he's a predatory creep. And anyway, reconditioning will sort that out for him.

INZEGIL

If he makes it to reconditioning.

ARTAMER

You think he'll try to go on the run? Where could he go? In the outside, he'll panic before long. In the city, the EE network will pick him up. Let him run if he wants - that's his problem.

INZEGIL

I'm not worried about him. He can drag himself all the way down to decommissioning for all I care. I'm more worried about what he might do to those two Rets.

ARTAMER

You think he'll try to hurt them?

INZEGIL

If he's the sort that doesn't understand the problem is with him, he'll blame the ones who reported him to the enforcers.

ARTAMER

Should we turn around and head back to the city?

INZEGIL

No... that would only confuse and upset the other Rets. Those poor girls are already unpopular enough as it is, no need to make them suffer any more. Don't worry, the collectors can handle Hertome.

Decision made, the two enforcers get back to their reports.

12 **EXT. SPACE - AVENTINE**

The Vesta-class *Aventine* flies at warp...

13 **INT. AVENTINE - READY ROOM**

Dax sits behind her desk, talking to AKAAR on the screen.

DAX

I'm sorry, Admiral, I'm afraid I don't understand.

AKAAR (screen)

What is there not to understand, Captain? The *Aventine* is no longer required to rendezvous with the other Starfleet forces deployed on the Venetan border.

DAX

But... why Cardassian space? And why the *Aventine*?

AKAAR (screen)

That will be made clear once you rendezvous with the *Aklaren*, and take your new guest on board.

DAX

Wouldn't it be better to assist the *Enterprise*? We're the fastest ship, we're the closest ship... it's not much of a blockade with just the *Enterprise* there.

AKAAR (screen)

Picard will have all the support he needs. We need the *Aventine's* speed elsewhere. It will all make sense in time, Captain.

DAX

I do have one more question, sir. Peter Alden...? Is it wise to put him back on active duty?

AKAAR (screen)

I assume you are not seriously about to accuse an officer of Alden's calibre of such a hasty and ill-judged act as sabotage?

Dax hesitates to answer - honestly, she's not sure.

DAX

There is also the question mark over his state of mind, Admiral. Are we sure it's in Alden's best interest to expose him to further stress?

AKAAR (screen)

We're in the middle of a crisis, Captain. Once your counsellor has spoken to him at length, I'll read that report with interest. In the meantime, you have an experienced officer at your disposal. You'll be needing him soon. Akaar out.

The signal drops, and Dax is left more confused than ever.

14 EXT. AB-TZENKETH - VELENTUR ISLAND - NIGHT

The water shuttle has docked overnight at a pier that juts out into the lagoon from a remote rocky island.

15 INT. WATER SHUTTLE - MAYAZAN'S CABIN

In the dark of this even tinier and simpler cabin, Mayazan lifts her head from her basic cot and listens closely...

...for the steady breathing of her roommate Corazame. Sure that she is fast asleep, Mayazan gets out of bed as quietly as she can and creeps towards the door...

16 INT. WATER SHUTTLE - MAIN CARRIAGE

Creeping through the deserted carriage, her Cardassian eyes are able to pick through the darkness easy enough, but thin sleep clothes leave her shivering in the cool night air.

She reaches the same semi-private booth they have been sitting in all along, LIFTS the seat...

...and pulls out the backpack of supplies she had stashed inside ever since they left the city.

17 **EXT. WATER SHUTTLE - NIGHT**

Dressed in her dull cleaner's work suit, Mayazan silently climbs down a ladder off the side of the water shuttle...

18 **EXT. AB-TZENKETH - VELENTUR ISLAND - NIGHT**

...and JUMPS to the ground, just barely reaching the sandy beach and avoiding splashing noisily into the water's edge. She looks back up at the boat looming over her in the darkness - no sign that her escape has raised any alarms.

She takes a moment to crouch at the water's edge, runs her fingers through it in delight, splashes it on her face. Just the thought of so much free water, clear and fresh, is amazing to a Cardassian who grew up in drought and hunger.

She looks up at the boat again, thinking of Corazame, feels bad that her friend will be left to handle the fallout.

But enough of such personal indulgences - she is an agent with a mission. She secures her backpack and turns to head off into the woods and mountains of the island. She has to get as far as she can before anyone realises she is gone.

As she reaches the cover of the first trees, she REACTS...

...because a DARK SHAPE is flying through the sky. Another enforcer AIRCAR like the one that came to the tenements, but this one running quietly and without searchlights.

From the shadow of the trees, Mayazan sees the aircar land quietly on the ground at the end of the pier. She turns and puts an extra effort into climbing into the mountains...

19 **EXT. WATER SHUTTLE / PIER - NIGHT**

Two more Mak enforcers walk along the pier, greeted there by Inzegil where the pier meets the water shuttle's deck. These are GETIGER and ZEDENZIK, old friends of Inzegil's.

GETIGER

Inzegil Ter Mak-B. So... we've got an Ata-C who thinks too much of himself. What about the Rets - are we taking them too?

INZEGIL

No, I think they've learned their lesson. We'll take them back to the city, put them back to work. Too much restoration time can make Atas fretful and unsettled. It's not good for them.

ZEDENZIK

Where's Artamer? Avoiding spending any time outside, as usual?

INZEGIL

(smirk)

He's performing his function to the best of his capacity.

(pause, frown)

Although it shouldn't take this long to bring an Ata-C up from his cabin. Oh, here he comes...

Artamer comes dashing up to them, fluttering with worry...

ARTAMER

He's gone. Don't know where and don't know how... but Hertome Ter Ata-C is not in his cabin.

As all four enforcers realise that they are in trouble...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

20 EXT. SPACE - AVENTINE

The *Aventine* stands still next to a Cardassian Galor-class.

21 INT. AVENTINE - CONFERENCE ROOM

Dax awaits alone by the head of the table.

The far door opens, and KEDAIR leads their new guest in - HOGUE, the Cardassian agent seen in 13x17 "It's All True." He is dressed in smart dark clothes, totally professional.

KEDAIR

Captain Ezri Dax, this is Senior Agent Hogue of the Cardassian Intelligence Bureau.

DAX

Thank you, Lieutenant. Dismissed.

Kedair walks past them both back to the bridge, and EXITS.

HOGUE

Captain Dax, we have an undercover agent in need of extraction. Time is of the essence in this mission, therefore at the request of our ambassador to the Federation, your president has kindly offered the fastest ship at her disposal in order to assist us in this.

Dax blinks - that was a lot of information to drop at once.

DAX

A spy? Mister Hogue, does your ambassador realise that Starfleet is currently heading towards a war footing against the Typhon Pact? This ship has better things to do than a simple fetch-and-carry.

HOGUE

With respect, Captain, you are not on that footing just yet. The Tzenkethi ships are still on their way to the Venetan border. We have time. Besides, the information this agent can provide may help us stop that war before it starts.

DAX

May I at least ask where exactly this agent is right now?

HOGUE

(laugh)

Why, Captain, on ab-Tzenketh of course! Surely you didn't think we'd pull you away from the blockade for anything less?

DAX

Oh no, of course not. I'm just glad it's not anywhere heavily defended or on high alert.

HOGUE

Which reminds me, I really must speak to Commander Alden as soon as possible. I suspect we'll be needing him if we're hoping to get into Tzenkethi space, and out again, in one piece.

Dax seethes, while Hogue stands politely waiting for her...

22 **EXT. AB-TZENKETH - VELENTUR ISLAND - DAY**

Mayazan hides in the shadow of a large tree, watching as the two moons head towards the horizon and the sun rises instead. She looks down the slope, back towards the boat. She can't see anyone following, but she knows they are.

She looks up the hill, the direction she must go. There is cover from the trees, but her pursuers could be hiding in it too. She bends down and picks up a heavy fallen branch, hefts it. Not much of a weapon, but it will have to do.

CRACK - someone has trodden on a twig nearby. She calls...

MAYAZAN

Hey, Hertome! Weren't you meant to be going for reconditioning? Your escorts will probably be here by now. They'll be looking for you.

The human spy's voice calls out from the trees...

HERTOME (o.s.)

One more reason for you to take me with you, Mayazan. Tell you what, why don't we both hurry along to your pick-up point? Then nobody gets caught and we're all happy.

MAYAZAN

Are you armed, Hertome?

HERTOME (o.s.)

Alex. My name is Alex.

MAYAZAN

I don't want to know your name!

HERTOME (o.s.)

Easier to kill someone that way, isn't it? I know all the tricks of the trade. But you won't get away with my murder so easily. My name is Alex Gardner, I'm twenty-seven years old, and my mother thinks I'm on a humanitarian mission.

MAYAZAN

What do you want from me?!

HERTOME (o.s.)

You know what I want. For you to take me with you!

MAYAZAN

I'm not authorised to do that.

HERTOME (o.s.)

Authorised?! Mayazan, this is life
or death!

MAYAZAN

You're the one who chose to break
cover. You kept following me. If
you'd just kept your head down,
you'd be safe in the city now.

HERTOME (o.s.)

No I wouldn't! I told you, they're
throwing all our diplomats out,
there's nobody left to extract me!
They've already got my colleagues,
they'll be after me now. I can't
let that happen, Mayazan. I just
can't! Surely you understand that.

Mayazan grits her teeth in fury - every word she wastes on
this idiot is another step closer by the enforcers, making
her escape all the less likely. She makes a decision...

...she places the branch back down on the ground, stands
straight with her hands up to show they are empty.

MAYAZAN

Come out, we'll talk.

A pause, as he ponders whether to believe her or not. Then
he steps out from behind a nearby tree and walks to her.

HERTOME

Thanks.

MAYAZAN

You're welcome.

And she LAUNCHES towards him, slamming his neck with the
blade of her hand and wrestling him to the ground. They
STRUGGLE desperately, neither getting the upper hand for a
good long while...

...until Hertome's greater physical strength finally gives
him the advantage and he ends up on top of her...

...until Hertome is knocked away from Mayazan by the branch WHACKED across his head. As the man is sent sprawling onto the rocky ground, groaning in pain, Mayazan looks up in shock at her unexpected saviour...

...it is CORAZAME.

23 EXT. SPACE - AVENTINE

The *Aventine* is back at highest possible warp...

24 INT. AVENTINE - CONFERENCE ROOM

Dax stands to one side, watching Alden and Hogue work at top speed across the holo-display over the conference table. They are two agents at the top of their game - she is really only there out of politeness to her position.

ALDEN

I assume we'll be modifying the warp field to present the *Aventine* as a Tzenkethi vessel?

HOGUE

Under normal circumstances I'd say Tzenkethi, yes, but they'll be on high alert, and they know their own ships too well.

ALDEN

(catching on)

Whereas if we appear Venetan, any inconsistencies in the sensor profile could just be a type of ship they're not familiar with.

HOGUE

Besides, it is remarkably easy to lay one's hands on information about Venetan spacecraft. One hardly knows what to do with such a wealth. What a strange little culture they are - one barely needs to spy on them at all.

DAX

Perhaps if we all did the same as the Venetans, all this subterfuge would be unnecessary. No secrets, everything out in the open...

ALDEN

It's a pleasant fantasy, Ezri, but there'll always be someone with something to hide.

HOGUE

And long may it continue! I'm far too old to think about embarking on a new career.

The two agents LAUGH together, and Dax marvels at how they have so quickly fallen into the same language. If only they weren't working on infiltrating a deadly enemy...

25 EXT. AB-TZENKETH - VELENTUR ISLAND - DAY

With Hertome still groaning on the ground from a branch to the head, Mayazan scrambles up and confronts her terrified, completely bewildered friend Corazame.

MAYAZAN

Cory! What are you doing here?

CORAZAME

I awoke in the night... and you'd gone. I was worried that he... the Ap-Rej... I was worried that he'd done something to hurt you. So I slipped out and saw you leaving the boat. Then I understood.

(cries)

Oh Maymi! You shouldn't have lied to me! I don't know what he's said to you, but it isn't true! You can't get away together, you'll never survive outside the city. Nobody can live out...

(shudder)

...out here, in the wild.

MAYAZAN

Cory, it's not like that -

CORAZAME

I know he's said he loves you, but he's lying! You have to stop this, Maymi, before it goes too far and you end up decommissioned.

MAYAZAN

Cory, we're not lovers. We were never lovers!

CORAZAME

Then why did you say you were?
What's going on here?

As Cory looks back and forth between Mayazan and Hertome in complete confusion, Hertome struggles back to his feet.

HERTOME

Are you going to tell her? Or shall I?

Mayazan picks up the heavy branch again, brandishes it for a moment...

...and then in a blast of frustration, SMASHES the branch against the nearby tree, smashing and smashing again until it is nothing but twigs, screaming all the while.

That done, she turns around. Corazame has her arms wrapped around her head, crying. Hertome is just watching her.

HERTOME

Finished?

She catches her breath, steadies herself. Yes, she's finished. Now she is just getting on with it.

HERTOME

We'll travel together from here on, Mayazan. Otherwise, you know what I'll do. I'll go back to the boat, and this one -

(re Corazame)

- will be coming with me. When the enforcers take me... they'll take her too.

MAYAZAN

(dark, threatening)

You're not going to lay one finger on her, Hertome.

HERTOME

Enforcers!

At the sound of the enforcers' AIRCAR whip-whip-whipping through the air somewhere nearby, Hertome dives for cover into the underbrush, dragging an utterly confused Corazame with him. Mayazan flattens herself against the tree.

The aircar comes close enough to rustle the leaves of the very tree they are hiding under, but does not seem to stop.

Once they are sure it has gone, Hertome and Mayazan emerge from hiding again, Corazame being dragged along blindly.

HERTOME

I imagine you know where the pick-up point is, so we'll follow you. What happens when we get there?

MAYAZAN

There's a portable transporter. I have to activate it by a certain time to be extracted.

HERTOME

Where's it hidden?

MAYAZAN

Further up the hill. Look, Hertome - you've got what you want. You can let her go. Send her back to the boat. She'll probably get in trouble for going off on her own, but she won't face more than a few extra work shifts, and you know Karenzen will make her life hard enough as it is. Just let her go.

HERTOME

She'll tell the enforcers where we are. She won't be able not to.

MAYAZAN

She will if I ask her not to. Come on, Hertome - Alex, whatever you want. This is between us. Besides, you know what she's like. One night out here in the wilderness and she'll start screaming loud enough to bring half the Tzenkethi secret service down on us.

Hertome ponders it for a moment, she thinks she has him...

HERTOME

No. This one is my insurance. You try anything, and I'll hurt her. You try to hand me over to the enforcers, and she comes with me. Once I go home, she can go home.

He points further up the mountain, and smiles mockingly...

HERTOME

Lead the way, Mayazan Ret Ata-E.

Still angry but more or less resigned, Mayazan begins trudging up the mountain. Hertome follows, dragging the weeping, whimpering Corazame with him...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

26 EXT. SPACE - AVENTINE

An unfamiliar ship, with a similar flowing organic design to the Venetan space station, drops out of warp, because...

...it is approaching a network of satellites in open space.

27 INT. AVENTINE - BRIDGE

Darkened for tension. Dax sits in her command chair, Bowers at her side, all the senior staff in their usual positions, with Commander Alden and Agent Hogue standing nearby.

They all observe this network of probes they are flying into. On the gigantic VIEWSCREEN, one of the probes pulls out of formation and approaches...

BOWERS

Increase magnification.

The viewscreen ZOOMS IN, revealing a silver teardrop like a smaller version of the harriers seen in 13x11 "New Life". A BLACK EYE irises open on its unblemished surface, scanning.

ALDEN

Unmanned probe. They'll ask for identification in a moment, and probably visual confirmation.

DAX

Alright, Agent Hogue. Time to find out if your holo-filters work.

HOGUE

Not to mention Commander Alden's ability to reprogram schedules into the Tzenkethi system.

Dax glances at the human and the Cardassian, who both seem perfectly relaxed and confident, a far cry from the anxious intensity of Alden's previous behaviour. He notices her questioning look, and speaks confidentially...

ALDEN

I know you don't trust me anymore, Ezri, and I understand why. But I want you to know... you can trust my experience and my expertise.

DAX

Peter... I'm trusting you with my ship and my crew.

ALDEN

Most of all, you can trust that I want to stop the Tzenkethi... more than I want anything in this life.

That doesn't really make her feel any better.

KEDAIR

The probe is requesting contact.

Dax nods to Kedair to open the channel, then to Alden.

ALDEN

I am Anzegar Tor Fel-A, requesting entry in the name of our exalted Autarch Korzenten Rej Tov-AA into our beloved home system, on behalf of myself and our friends from the Venette Convention.

A long pause as the probe seems to consider his words...

...then the black eye irises shut again, and the silver probe flies back into position in the satellite network. Dax nods to Tharp at helm to continue, then turns to Alden.

DAX

You make it look so easy.

ALDEN

It is easy... with practise.

DAX

How are we doing time-wise?

HOGUE

We're on schedule. It's all up to her now. Whether she's reached the pick-up point, or something has prevented her from reaching it.

28 **EXT. AB-TZENKETH - VELENTUR ISLAND - EVENING**

The RED LIGHT buried under the skin of Mayazan's temple is flashing repeatedly, rhythmically.

Hours have passed, the daylight around the three fugitives is dimming as the sun sets again and the two moons rise. Mayazan leads, Corazame in the middle, Hertome behind them.

Suddenly the red light stops, and Mayazan stops with it. She looks around - they have reached a clearing two-thirds the way up the mountain, with little cover. Nothing to hide them from the wide open sky and the large lagoon below.

CORAZAME

Maymi... I don't like it here.

MAYAZAN

Don't worry, Cory. We won't be out here for long.

HERTOME

Are you sure this is the pick-up point? It's not the place I would have chosen. Far too exposed.

MAYAZAN

I'm sure. Look, there are bushes over there, we can use them for cover. I'll show you how, Cory.

The poor frazzled office maid slumps along with the other two, still confused but with no spirit to fight anymore. They work to pull the bushes over a dip in the ground.

CORAZAME

Why are we doing this, Maymi? We shouldn't be hiding. We should go back, plead our case. I know Hertome must have forced you...

MAYAZAN

Hertome didn't force me out here,
Cory, and we're not going back.
We're stuck here for now, and we
have to make the best of it.

Just as they manage to finish pulling the bushes over the
hidey-hole, with the three of them crouching inside it...

...the sound of the enforcers' AIRCAR whips through the air
again, making the bushes tremble and Corazame whimper.

CORAZAME

Oh somebody help me! My beloved
Autarch, forgive me!

HERTOME

Don't worry, Corazame... I'm sure
the Ret Mayazan knows what she's
doing.

As Mayazan grimaces against the ridiculous situation she
has found herself in, and the aircar moves off...

29 INT. ENFORCERS' AIRCAR - EVENING

Inzegil gazes out of the window, down at the trees and
rocks of the mountainside below them, as their pilot flies
them on to continue searching. She looks to her side, where
Artamer's silver skin looks distinctly clammy, and sighs.

INZEGIL

I can't understand it. How have
three simple Atas managed to evade
us for an entire sky-turn?

ARTAMER

Hertome's a cunning one. Maybe
he's not really an Ata at all. If
he's been mis-classified, he must
have been bored out of his mind.

INZEGIL

Mis-classified? What do you mean?

ARTAMER

Look, Inzegil, you're first rate at this function, but I've been doing it longer than you. And it's my experience that every so often, some get stuck at the wrong grade.

INZEGIL

But that should be impossible. The Yai scientists are very skilled at what they do. They'd be picked up through testing and recalibration.

ARTAMER

But sometimes, just occasionally, they're not. And I think that must be intended. Part of the Autarch's design. I'm not a Yai, but maybe that kind of random element is necessary sometimes. Why else are there any irregularities? Why else does our Mak function even exist?

Inzegil sits back, gazing up at the Royal Moon, absolutely stunned at that idea. Artamer just holds his stomach.

ARTAMER

Anyway, there's nothing irregular about the Rets Corazame and Mayazan. They'll give themselves away soon. At least I hope so.

30 **EXT. AB-TZENKETH - VELENTUR ISLAND - NIGHT**

Dark now, and the fugitives have crept out of their hidey-hole. Corazame is on her knees on the ground, also gazing up into the sky at the Royal Moon. Then she stands...

CORAZAME

There's something I want to say.

HERTOME

And what makes you think you can speak without my permission, Ret Corazame?

CORAZAME

With respect, I do not believe
that you truly are my Ap-Rej.

MAYAZAN

Why do you say that, Cory?

CORAZAME

Oh, Maymi. It's obvious you are
not really an Ata-E. All those
odd questions and silly mistakes.
Pelenten thought you were an EE
who'd been recalibrated up, and
were struggling to cope. We felt
sorry for you, so we covered for
you, made sure you wouldn't get
recalibrated back down again.
And you had no idea, did you?

Mayazan gapes at Corazame. After all her criticism of
Hertome, she had no idea she had been so obvious as well.
Building in confidence, Corazame turns on Hertome now.

CORAZAME

And then there was you, Hertome.
Oh, we liked having you as our
Ter, certainly more than Karenzen.
But really, if anyone was heading
for recalibration, it was you.

Hertome is equally amazed - these two highly trained secret
agents, being outsmarted by a simple office maid.

CORAZAME

I know that I'm just an Ata-E, and
my knowledge is limited. But I've
overheard things at the Department
of the Outside. I've heard there
are other worlds in the sky...
worlds not under the protection of
our Rej. And that on these worlds,
there are people who are not like
us, who do things differently...

Corazame looks between them, sad to have to say this.

CORAZAME

...and where they can love who they want to love. I think you might be from one of those places, Hertome. And you too, Maymi.

MAYAZAN

(eyes down, quiet)
Cory... you should put such things out of your mind.

CORAZAME

But are they true, Maymi? Do you know? Do you know for sure?

MAYAZAN

It doesn't matter if they're true! It's not our business to know! So we should just put such questions out of our minds and perform our functions, for the sake of our Autarch who loves and protects us!

HERTOME

You damned hypocrite. She comes all this way to protect you, and you feed her a pack of lies.

MAYAZAN

Shut up!

CORAZAME

I only want to say one more thing. Whatever happens, I'm grateful to you both. I'm glad to have known there really are other worlds. I know these thoughts... they won't survive reconditioning. But I'm glad to have had them. Thank you.

Mayazan is in tears at her brave friend. But Hertome is staring at Mayazan with barely suppressed disgust.

HERTOME

You've been lying this whole time. There is no transporter, is there?

MAYAZAN

Calm down, Hertome! There are
enforcers everywhere -

But Hertome grabs her, starts searching her clothes...

MAYAZAN

Get your hands off me!

HERTOME

Where is it? Your implant? I'll
tear the damn thing out of you
with my bare hands if I have to.

Mayazan PUNCHES him away. Corazame WHIMPERS again, buries
her head in her arms. But as emotionally flayed open as she
is, Mayazan is now determined to end this once and for all.

She KICKS Hertome's legs out from under him. He DRAGS her
down to the ground with her. She ELBOWS him in the ribs. In
the brief window this gives her, she grabs a rock...

...and SMASHES it down on Hertome's head. Corazame SCREAMS,
but Mayazan keeps slamming the rock into Hertome's skull,
wet CRUNCH after CRUNCH, until Hertome stops twitching and
there are only Mayazan's grunts and Corazame's cries...

...and the distant whip-whip-whip of the enforcers' aircar.

CORAZAME

Oh Maymi, what have you done?
You've killed him, an Ap-Rej!

MAYAZAN

Quiet! He wasn't an Ap-Rej and you
know it! Now listen to me, Cory,
because this is important - more
important than you or me. You're
about to go on a long journey, and
there are some things I need to
tell you before you go.

Corazame shakes her head, doesn't want to hear. But as the
aircar grows closer, Mayazan grabs her, makes her listen.

MAYAZAN

Cory, listen! You're about to meet a man with ridges on his face. Do you understand?

CORAZAME

Ridges. Ridges on his face.

MAYAZAN

That's right. Ridges. Believe me, you'll know him when you see him. And you have to give him this.

She DIGS her fingers into her own temple, ripping into the flesh... and yanks out her IMPLANT - the small metal device blinking away. She shoves it in Corazame's hand, closes the fingers around it. Then begins to back away, suddenly free.

MAYAZAN

Hold on to that, Cory. Hold tight.

CORAZAME

I will. Ridges on his face.

MAYAZAN

(laughing, giddy)

Ridges on his face, Cory! Goodbye! You don't know how wonderful it's going to be! You'll be free, Cory! Free! Goodbye, Cory... you're in for the time of your life!

Corazame is terrified and confused, clinging to the implant her friend gave her. The WHIP-WHIP-WHIP of the aircar is getting closer, rustling the trees around them. Hertome's dead body is at their feet, and Mayazan is *laughing*.

A STARFLEET TRANSPORTER takes Corazame, as she SCREAMS...

...and Mayazan turns to the sky, waving her hands, calling as loud as she can for the enforcers' attention. The LIGHTS find her, and she falls to her knees and weeps in relief.

With the lights making her enforcer's silver skin gleam like a vampire, Inzegil Ter Mak-B strides out of the dark forest... and gently cradles the weeping Ret in her arms.

31 **INT. AVENTINE - TRANSPORTER ROOM**

...still SCREAMING, Corazame materialises onto the *Aventine's* transporter platform. A brief second to look around at this unfamiliar, impossible environment...

...and she SCREAMS anew and crouches down to the deck, arms around her head, shrieking in fear...

Triexian transporter chief SPON hits the comm panel...

SPON

Transporter room to bridge - she's on board, Captain.

32 **INT. AVENTINE - BRIDGE**

Dax in her command chair...

DAX

Thank you, Chief. Tharp, quantum slipstream to the Venetan border, now. We have a war to stop.

The Bolian male at helm works his panels...

33 **EXT. SPACE - AB-TZENKETH ORBIT**

As dozens of the silver teardrop probes zoom up from the surface, a SWIRL of energy forms in orbit of the planet...

The Venetan vessel is sucked into this swirling vortex, its image SHIMMERING away to reveal the *Aventine* as it goes...

And the Starfleet ship disappears into the slipstream.

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

34 EXT. SPACE - SLIPSTREAM CORRIDOR

Aventine zooms through the swirling blue energy tunnel...

35 INT. AVENTINE - TRANSPORTER ROOM

Corazame huddles on the transporter pad, brown skin-light pulsing erratically, curled into a ball and whimpering in terror. She peers around at the varied alien faces...

Captain Dax. Lt Kedair. Chief Spon. And the grey scales and ridged face of agent Hogue, who is looming over her.

HOGUE

Neta, you're back now. Don't worry if you feel disoriented, coming back suddenly can be like that. But everything's going to be fine. Did they hurt you? ...Neta?

CORAZAME

Please, somebody help me! Oh most beloved and exalted Rej, help me!

HOGUE

(darkening)

It's not her. This is not Neta Efheny! We have to go back!

DAX

We can't. It's too late. We're already out of Tzenkethi space, and while they can't detect us in the slipstream, their system will be swarming with ships trying to figure out where we went.

Hogue moves to grab Corazame, shake the truth out of her...

HOGUE

What have you done with her?!

But ALDEN is suddenly there to protect the girl, pushing the Cardassian back with a glare of "just dare me".

CORAZAME

You...

They all turn to look at Corazame, who is staring at Hogue.

CORAZAME

...Maymi said I'd meet the man with ridges on his face. Here - she told me to give you this.

She holds out a trembling hand, and lets Hogue pluck the implant from her with relief and wonderment.

HOGUE

This is it - the last data. We need to get this information to your government and mine as soon as possible, Captain.

CORAZAME

You're aliens, aren't you? You're all aliens. You all come from different worlds. Oh, this one begs for help! This one assures you of her gratitude, her loyalty, her devotion! Oh, please do not hurt her! Do not send her back!

Alden crouches down next to her and takes her trembling hands, not reacting to the electric BUZZ of skin contact.

ALDEN

Ret... everything's going to be fine. Look at me. Look right into my eyes. Everything's fine.

He gently takes her chin and tilts her head up to look at him, as Hertome did to Mayazan. And as she looks in his eyes, she is not afraid. This one, at least, looks kind.

ALDEN

My name is Peter. Do you hear that? Can you say it? Peter.

CORAZAME

...Pee-teh...

ALDEN

Good! Well done. Now tell me your name. Your full name.

CORAZAME

This one is Corazame... Corazame Ret Ata-E.

ALDEN

Corazame. It's okay, I'll look after you, Corazame. Trust me.

And it looks like Corazame will indeed trust Alden. Looking on, Dax smiles to see her friend again. But Hogue is sad...

HOGUE

Neta must be dead. Why else would she give the chip to this one?

CORAZAME

Her name is Maymi! She let me go! She saved me from the enforcers!

Off Corazame's determination to defend her friend...

36 INT. ENFORCERS' AIRCAR - NIGHT

Inzegil gently guides Mayazan into a spare seat in the aircar, as Artamer passes her a cup of something to drink.

INZEGIL

Do not distress yourself further, Mayazan. You did all that could be done by one like you. We will take you back to the city, and find you a nice quiet place where you can rest for a while longer. You have earned it. You've been very brave.

As the aircar TAKES OFF, Mayazan slumps against the window, drugged and gazing dreamily up at the Royal Moon in the night sky. Inzegil and Artamer watch her with tenderness.

ARTAMER

I doubled the dose. You do know she won't be enjoying any more restoration, don't you? It's reconditioning for this one.

INZEGIL

Little fool. They never learn, do they? Never stop thinking they're somehow special. Still, I suppose you can't blame them. Such a drab little life they live.

ARTAMER

What, being kept warm and safe and happy? Not a care in the world? She should be grateful.

(beat)

What do you think about what she said? That Corazame killed Hertome and then disappeared into the air?

Inzegil leans against the opposite window, gazes up at the Royal Moon herself with a wistful smile, and philosophises.

INZEGIL

I'm sure there's lots of things in this world we know nothing about, Artamer, and that's fine. Not our function to know, is it? Like your theory of deliberate anomalies... I think that's a wondrous idea.

ARTAMER

You do?

INZEGIL

Oh yes. It means the Autarch is wiser and more far-thinking than I ever imagined. Why should we know his intentions? He's not bound to explain them to us. But the idea that our function has a greater meaning, greater than even we know... that moves me deeply.

Inzegil performs the same gesture that Corazame did earlier in the episode - touch heart, touch head, touch sky.

INZEGIL

Most exalted and beloved Rej...

Beside them, in a happy daze but conscious enough, Mayazan does the gesture too - touch heart, touch head, touch sky. And as she settles in, happy with her choice, she sings...

MAYAZAN

(singing)

Like the moons that hand-by-hand
traverse the sky
Like the waves that ebb and flow
upon the shore
This one knows, this one knows
There is an order and a purpose
for all things

Inzegil and Artamer chuckle at this silly little girl, and let her carry on singing as the aircar flies on...

37 **EXT. SPACE**

The *Aventine* has rendezvous'd with the *Aklaren* again...

38 **INT. AVENTINE - CORRIDOR**

Dax, Alden and Hogue walk together down the corridor.

DAX

So the information was useful?

HOGUE

Oh yes, Captain. Though she never knew it, Neta had all the answers. That flurry of comm traffic from the Tzenkethi to the Cardassians - they were trying to blackmail some of our embassy employees who had been, shall we say, enjoying their time on ab-Tzenketh a little too much.

DAX

(realising)

They were trying to steal the Cardassians away from joining the Khitomer Accords, force them to join the Typhon Pact instead.

HOGUE

(nods)

And our discovery of that was enough to embarrass the Tzenkethi into turning back their ships.

ALDEN

Allowing Starfleet to step down their blockade of Venetan space.

DAX

Whew... makes me wonder how many times we can keep just scraping through by the skin of our teeth. Our luck has to run out sometime.

As they reach a certain door and stop, Doctor Tarses is just coming the other way, and hails Dax down.

TARSES

Captain - glad I found you. The emollients for the Tzenkethi - they're all replicated and ready to be transported to Outpost V-4 as soon as we're done here.

Dax, Alden and Hogue all chuckle, to Tarses's confusion.

DAX

Thank you, Simon. We'll do that. I'm afraid it might have ended up being a waste of time, that's all. Still, we promised. Dismissed.

Tarses nods and heads off. The other turn to enter...

39 INT. AVENTINE - TRANSPORTER ROOM

...where Hogue heads straight for the transporter pad.

HOGUE

It's a very impressive ship you have here, Captain. I particularly enjoyed the... what did you call it... quantum slipstream drive?

DAX

(polite smile)

No, Agent Hogue, you still can't have a tour of the engine room.

HOGUE

(sly grin)

No harm asking. Farewell, Captain Dax, Commander Alden.

Dax nods to chief Spon, and Hogue TRANSPORTS away. Dax and Alden head back out into the corridor...

40 INT. AVENTINE - CORRIDOR

...where they continue to walk and talk.

DAX

How's the Tzenkethi woman?

ALDEN

Still very frightened. She didn't know aliens existed until today.

DAX

Hell of a crash course. I'm still surprised Hogue didn't insist on taking her back to Cardassia with him, as a replacement for Neta.

ALDEN

Wouldn't do him any good - she wouldn't even talk to him except through me. I've promised to share whatever information I learn.

(sigh)

My superiors are quite pleased about that. They think in time she'll be a valuable asset.

DAX

After all she's been through? We can't use her like that, Peter.

ALDEN

She's got tough times ahead either way. The Ret Ata-E's... they're damaged, Ezri, in specific ways. They're taught to be helpless. Who knows how she'll cope out here?

DAX

What about the agent who died on ab-Tzenketh? Did you know him?

ALDEN

Oh yes. I knew him very well. Alex Gardner. No partner or children, thank goodness.

DAX

What about the rest of them?

ALDEN

Lots of arrests. We've arrested lots of theirs in return. There'll be an exchange at some point.

He says it so coldly, so "it is what it is", that Dax has to stop. Alden walks on through the next door, into...

41 INT. AVENTINE - CONFERENCE ROOM

...which they have entered by the back door. The room is empty. As Alden stares out of the window, watching the Cardassian ship turn and move away, Dax steps close to him, finally getting to the question she has wanted to ask.

DAX

The bomb, Peter.

ALDEN

Ezri, do you really think I could do that?

DAX

I don't know! I got a message from Helgon, said they'd done some more tests while we were elsewhere. And apparently it's possible - only possible, mind you - that the bomb was of Tzenkethi origin after all.

ALDEN

And that doesn't answer your question?

DAX

No! I'm going to take a leaf out of the Venetans' book here, and be completely honest - I honestly don't know if you did it or not. Maybe they tried to set you up, or maybe you intended for me to think they did after a suitable time.

(sad laugh)

Gods, now I'm starting to think like you.

ALDEN

Ezri...

DAX

You're a spy, Peter! You're trained to do exactly this kind of thing. It's your function. So don't pretend like it's something you could never do.

ALDEN

I know what you're thinking - that I've changed. But you can trust me, Ezri, to have the Federation's best interests at heart.

DAX

Do you know that hearing you say that does not make me feel any better? It just makes me more afraid of you - of what you might be able to justify to yourself.

ALDEN

And do you understand, Ezri, that we are living in dangerous times? There are whole alliances of empires out there that hate us for what we are and what we have. Some of those people might even want to destroy what we have. And I will not let that happen.

Dax sighs, looks out of the window at the stars, as the *Aventine* also begins to move away...

DAX

You know... I can't even imagine what it must be like for her. To be confronted so suddenly with a universe so vast. It reminds you of why we're out here.

(turns back
to Alden)

At least, I hope it does.

As the two old friends stare each other down...

41 INT. AVENTINE - GUEST QUARTERS

Corazame is curled up on a sofa by the window, gazing out at the stars, wonder and fear in equal measure...

FADE OUT

END OF SHOW