

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

13x17 - "It's All True"

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 18x17 - "BRINKMANSHIP, pt 1"

The neutral Venette Convention wanted to join the Federation, but the Dominion War derailed their application. Now they have allied with the Tzenkethi instead, bringing Typhon Pact agents worryingly close to Federation territory. *Enterprise* is sent to Venette to try to salvage the situation, with diplomatic agents from Cardassia and Ferenginar onboard. Picard and Crusher join the negotiating team, but matters are immediately derailed when Cardassian diplomat Detrek is openly hostile to the Tzenkethi representative, Alizome Tor Fel-A. Detrek even implies she has spies on ab-Tzenketh, horrifying the naive and trusting Venetan envoy. Alizome responds with accusations of Starfleet spies. Picard reports all this back to Admiral Akaar, but the admiral orders Picard to follow Cardassia's lead - anything to get them onside with the Khitomer Accords. With tensions rising, Picard calls in a fleet to blockade the Federation-Venette border - could this finally be war with the Typhon Pact?

TTN 2x17 - "THE BLACK CREST"

While *Titan*, Krassrr's science fleet and Gog'resssh's warship are all occupied with each other, Vale leads an away team down to Hranrar. They find that the world is warp-capable, they just choose not to use it - giving Starfleet the wiggle room they needed to interfere and save Hranrar. But Krassrr destroys Vale's shuttle, trapping the away team on the surface, where they are captured by the frog-like locals. *Titan* is attacked too, and performs a daring manoeuvre to hide over the planet's pole - only to discover that's where Gog'resssh is already hiding. Gog'resssh tries to form an alliance with Riker to get the ecosculptor away from Krassrr, but when Riker beams over to discuss it, Gog'resssh instantly takes him prisoner. Luckily Gog'resssh's science officer Shezhira is S'syrixx's mate, and she has been working against the tyrannical warrior. She helps Riker escape - they make it back to *Titan*, but Krassrr is still out there, and Vale's away team is about to be executed...

VOY 11x17 - "UNDERTOW"

Captain Afsarah Eden suffers a recurring nightmare - *Voyager* is running from the Darkness, and the sight of Admiral Kathryn

Janeway fills her not with comfort but terror. The fleet is at New Talax, where *Galen* and *Demeter* provide the Talaxians with supplies. Eden reveals the secret hidden aboard *Achilles* - two dozen one-man fighter ships. While Paris test-flies one, Torres confronts Eden. Since when does Starfleet field fighters? It was Batiste's idea, but to an extent Eden agrees, especially since the fleet's next mission is to explore former Borg space. Researching her mysterious origins, the Doctor concludes that Eden is somehow artificial - a perfect human genome, impossible in nature. Cambridge thinks a clue might be found on the world of the Mikhal Travellers (VOY "Darkling"). Eden is reluctant to devote the fleet to her personal quest - she would be no better than Batiste. But Chakotay convinces her it is worth a try...

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. AB-TZENKETH - SURFACE - DAY

A stunning landscape - rich coral coastlines leading out into crystal lagoons, advanced train tracks crossing the water to connect myriad islands and atolls and peninsulas, all under a purplish sky that features two large moons.

On the edge of this rests a perfectly planned and executed city, advanced and peaceful, shells and stones from the sea incorporated into the gleaming glass and metal constructs.

2 EXT. DEPARTMENT OF THE OUTSIDE - DAY

A large office building within this city, surrounded by pleasant parks and water features, part of the government complex. Distant TZENKETHI figures stroll the walkways. This building is equally attractive and functional.

3 INT. DEPARTMENT OF THE OUTSIDE

Five Tzenkethi WORKERS, their skin a dull brown colour, are on hands and knees on the floor, alternately dipping their cleaning cloths into a small tub of polish and then rubbing that polish onto the stones that make up the floor.

It is painstaking, backbreaking work, but these Ret workers SING quietly to themselves, a repetitive work song that helps them to keep rhythm and pass the time.

WORKERS

(singing)

Like the moons that hand-by-hand
traverse the sky
Like the waves that ebb and flow
upon the shore
These ones know, these ones know
There is an order and a purpose
for all things

The workers continue to sing, quite happy with their lot in life... all except for one, who we now focus upon.

This is MAYAZAN, a female Tzenkethi who scrubs and polishes like the rest but can't help lifting her eyes from the floor to look around, even knowing she shouldn't.

To the side, she sees her Ret colleagues doing their job, cleaning and polishing with a happy tune in their hearts.

To the other side, she sees pale-green skinned low-level Kre secretaries and record-keepers, sitting at their desks on the walls, likewise getting on with their work.

And above, walking on the ceiling and hanging upside down from Mayazan's perspective, are the important people, the Gar politicians and decision-makers. These are far brighter skinned - rich glowing greens and yellows and golds.

(Like all Tzenkethi rooms, this one has artificial gravity built into the walls and the ceilings for people to walk and work upon - no point wasting all that usable space.)

CORAZAME (o.s.)
(scared whisper)
Eyes down, Mayazan!

Mayazan looks to the worker nearest to her, also on her hands and knees - another Tzenkethi female and her closest friend, CORAZAME. Mayazan shares a quick and conspiratorial smile, then lowers her head and gets on with the polishing.

Focusing on Mayazan as she remembers...

FLASH

4 INT. LABORATORY

We are now Mayazan's POV, lying back in a reclining chair of some sort while an older Cardassian male, HOGUE, hovers over her, chatting away happily.

HOGUE
Now you understand, of course,
that this mission will last for
two full years. You must immerse
yourself in your role without a
hint of uncertainty.

FLASH

5 **BACK TO SCENE**

Accordingly, Mayazan rededicates herself to her polishing.

FLASH

6 **INT. LABORATORY**

Hogue continues to busy around over our reclined POV...

HOGUE

Tzenkethi society maintains strict boundaries between its echelons.

(chuckle)

Look who I'm telling. Neta Efheny, xeno-sociologist extraordinaire, writer of the acclaimed "Towards a Typology of Social Stratification Among the Tzenkethi."

FLASH

7 **BACK TO SCENE**

Mayazan smiles to herself at this memory, polishing away...

FLASH

8 **INT. LABORATORY**

Hogue smiles down at our POV, encouraging but sad...

HOGUE

I'm sorry, Neta. Of course you already know all that. I'm just going to miss you, that's all.

MAYAZAN (o.s.)

Don't worry, Hogue. I know what to do. In fact, after so many years of studying them from afar, I'm looking forward to seeing them up close. The Cardassian Intelligence Bureau need not be concerned.

FLASH

9 **BACK TO SCENE**

Mayazan's eyes flick towards Corazame, who smiles back, apparently unaware of the intruder right beside her.

FLASH

10 **INT. LABORATORY**

Hogue reaches in, tapping gently on Mayazan's left temple.

HOGUE

We've implanted your subcutaneous transponder just here, above your left temple. Easy to do while you were undergoing the reconstructive surgery. You don't even need to do anything - it will record whatever the ministers say or do, and then transmit it to our embassy on ab-Tzenketh at regular intervals.

MAYAZAN (o.s.)

I understand.

FLASH

11 **BACK TO SCENE**

Mayazan absently itches at that spot on her left temple, where the transponder is presumably doing its work.

FLASH

12 **INT. LABORATORY**

HOGUE

One last thing - when it's time to be extracted, we'll send a signal to the transponder with all the details of when and where to go. Good luck, Neta - or should I say, good luck Mayazan Ret Ata-E.

Hogue gazes at his pupil with fatherly affection...

FLASH

13 **BACK TO SCENE**

That's her - Mayazan Ret Ata-E, one of the lowest-level functionaries it is possible to be on ab-Tzenketh.

Wistful at these memories, Mayazan forgets herself and sits back on her haunches, glancing around again.

Against the wall and spraying its shell-like surface in preparation for the polishing, stands her supervisor, a male named HERTOME, whose slightly higher position provides him a richer, coppery colour skin than her dull brown.

But Hertome has paused in his work, trying to listen in on the conversations floating down from the people above.

Shocked at this breach, Mayazan stares at Hertome...

...and feeling her gaze, Hertome turns and stares back.

They lock eyes, and the realisation hits them both...

...neither of them belong here. They are *both* spies.

Hertome glances nervously around to be sure no-one else is looking at them, then steps forward, trying to recover.

HERTOME

Mayazan, am I to expect a request
of you?

Likewise scrabbling to reclaim her composure, Mayazan dips her head and deliberately dims the already-dull glow from her brown skin - a signal of supplication to a superior.

MAYAZAN

(holds up cloth)

Ap-Rej... this one must request a
replacement cloth in order to
continue to perform her function
satisfactorily.

Hertome pauses to consider - is she going to cause trouble?
Mayazan keeps her eyes lowered while she waits...

HERTOME

An acceptable request. Take a new
cloth and be quick about it. Lazy
hands serve no purpose, Mayazan.

MAYAZAN

This one's purpose is to serve.

Keeping her head down, Mayazan quickly gets to her feet,
scampers over to the supply trolley, grabs a new cloth and
rushes back to carry on her work with the rest of the Rets.

Corazame and the others continue singing...

WORKERS

(singing)

Like the moons that hand-by-hand
traverse the sky
Like the waves that ebb and flow
upon the shore
These ones know, these ones know
There is an order and a purpose
for all things

But Mayazan can feel Hertome's worried eyes upon her. Now
they both have a secret... now they are both in trouble.

FADE OUT

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

14 EXT. SPACE - STARBASE 261

A comparatively small Starfleet space station, near which the enormous USS *Aventine* is holding position...

15 INT. AVENTINE - TRANSPORTER ROOM

Captain EZRI DAX peers past transporter chief SPON to check the panel readings. She runs her finger across the edge of the console, checking for dust. She walks around the room, inspecting everything, adjusting her uniform, standing up straight. Everything has to be perfect. Under all this...

BOWERS (o.s.)

So... this friend of yours.

SAM BOWERS stands to the side, observing his captain...

DAX

Not really a friend. More a friend of a friend. I mean, Yetara dated him... twice, maybe? Three times at the most.

BOWERS

Alright, this passing acquaintance from your Academy days, then -

DAX

He was around a fair bit. I don't want you to think he was a total stranger or anything...

BOWERS

I get it. What I'm saying is - why exactly are you pulling out all the stops for this guy, Ezri?

DAX

I guess... because he was around during an important bit.

BOWERS

The bit before you were joined,
you mean. You want him to see how
far you've come.

DAX

No! Okay... maybe. He was the kind
of guy everyone wanted approval
from. Not pushy or self-important,
just the opposite - cool. Everyone
raised their game around him - he
was going to be something big.

BOWERS

And is he? Something big, I mean.

DAX

I lost track. You know how it is.
I imagine Starfleet Intelligence
hasn't been wasting his talents.

BOWERS

I imagine not. Your uniform is
perfectly straight, by the way.
Oh, and you're the captain of one
of Starfleet's most advanced
vessels, which you used to save
the entire galaxy from the Borg.

DAX

(stops, grins)

Where would I be without you, Sam?

BOWERS

Right here, probably. Now hush -
your guest is about to arrive.

Spon works the controls, and a figure TRANSPORTS in - Cmdr
PETER ALDEN, human male, 30s, tall and handsome but rather
intense. When he sees Dax, a smile softens the frown.

ALDEN

(steps down,
shakes hand)

Ezri... good to see you. It's
been, what - ten years? Twelve?

DAX

Must be...

ALDEN

And your ship - it's amazing!

DAX

I know. Wanna take a look around?

Dax hasn't let go of his hand, or stopped gazing into his eyes. Bowers realises with amusement - she has a crush.

BOWERS

(clears throat)

Hmm-hmm.

DAX

Oh! Of course. Commander Peter Alden, meet my first officer, Commander Samaritan Bowers.

BOWERS

Commander. Welcome aboard.

Alden wrestles his hand free from Dax and shakes Bowers' instead. Then Dax after-you's for Alden...

DAX

Shall we?

With a smile, Alden heads out into the corridor. Bowers mutters teasingly to Dax, out of earshot...

BOWERS

Well, Captain... may I be the first to say that your ex-room-mate's ex-boyfriend is cute.

DAX

(blushes
furiously)

Shut up.

Bowers chuckles, and they follow Alden into the corridor...

16 **EXT. AB-TZENKETH - SURFACE - EARLY EVENING**

A WATER SHUTTLE cuts a straight line across the lagoon, heading away from the glitz of the city and towards the cheap and basic tenements where low-level workers live. Despite the beautiful view, this shuttle has no windows.

17 **INT. WATER SHUTTLE**

Tight and enclosed. MAYAZAN sits alone on the back seat - she can see fellow workers all chatting happily between themselves further up the carriage at the end of their long and tiring work day, but she wants to be alone.

She casually leans her face against her left hand, hiding what is about to happen. Closes her eyes, concentrates...

...and there is a single FLASH of red light under her skin, where the implant is. The device is now transmitting.

She sits there silently, letting it do its work, while her mind drifts. She is in big trouble. What will she do now?

18 **EXT. AB-TZENKETH - OPEN-AIR MARKET - EARLY EVENING**

Mayazan walks among the stalls which sell fish and stones and cheap clothes - nothing too fancy or expensive for the likes of these. She is just putting off the inevitable.

Eventually she comes to a tiny hole-in-the-wall eatery with a few tables outside on the pavement. Mayazan stops, takes a deep breath, because HERTOME is already sitting there. He is reading the evening NEWS flowing across the table top.

Reluctantly but knowing she has no choice, Mayazan takes the seat across from him, keeping her eyes down. The retina SCANNER reads her eye and displays her an appropriate MENU.

HERTOME

Not quite what you seem, are you,
Mayazan?

MAYAZAN

This one can only offer her
services to you, Ap-Rej.

HERTOME

Fine, stay in role if you want.
But I know what you really are.
We can talk freely - my audio-
disruption implant will hide it.

A SERVER approaches, the only kind of Tzenkethi even lower than Mayazan, with his grey flesh and tattooed arms. He is too low to speak or be spoken to, so Hertome and Mayazan perform a kind of sign-language to place their food order without even looking at him, and the server slinks away.

HERTOME

I acknowledge your willingness to serve, and I commend you on your readiness. But what I really want to know is if you're going to blow my damn cover.

MAYAZAN

This one acknowledges your commendation with gratitude. She assures you of her dutifulness.

Hertome sighs - she is not going to make this easy for him. The server returns with two bowls of steaming fish. Mayazan waits for Hertome to dig in first before she follows suit.

HERTOME

It's not so bad, you know. We're in this together. Maybe we should think about working as a team.

Mayazan keeps her head down and eats her food. But her eyes flick to the side, scared... is that server what he seems? Is that businessman watching them? What will she do?

19 EXT. SPACE - AVENTINE

The Vesta-class ship flies at warp...

20 INT. AVENTINE - DAX'S QUARTERS

Suitably impressive for the captain of this ship, facing forwards with the stars streaking past on either side. Dax lies in bed, lights down, dozing but not really asleep.

ALDEN (comm)
Commander Alden to Captain Dax.

DAX
(struggles awake)
Peter? What's going on? It's late.

ALDEN (comm)
Change of plans. We should meet in
your ready room. Now please, Ezri.

He sounds intense again - what's going on?

21 INT. AVENTINE - READY ROOM

Alden stands in the darkened room, closely inspecting a HOLO-DISPLAY projected above Dax's desk that shows an astro-political map of local space. The door opens...

Dax strides in with a cup of coffee, Bowers right behind her. Tired and frazzled, Alden glares at Bowers...

ALDEN
What are you doing here?

DAX
(warning)
Commander Bowers is my XO, Peter.

ALDEN
(clears head)
Of course. Yes. Well, I'm sure you
have clearance. Or we can get you
clearance.

BOWERS
I certainly hope so.

Bowers pointedly takes his usual seat, while Dax moves around the desk and relaxes into her chair, both making it clear that Alden is the guest here, so act like it. Dax taps a control on her desk, and the lights raise a bit.

DAX
That's better. What's going on?

ALDEN

(re map)

This is the Venette Convention. Their government is leasing three of their border stations to the Tzenkethi for - well, they say they'll be used for refitting and refuelling purposes only, but let me show you their locations, and maybe you'll see why Starfleet is less than convinced by that claim.

Alden reworks the map, bringing up three RED DOTS.

ALDEN

(points in turn)

This is Outpost V-27. You'll note its proximity to Ferengi space, much like Outpost V-15's proximity to the Cardassian border. And as for Outpost V-4...

BOWERS

Near to Starbase 261, right where we picked you up.

DAX

Certainly doesn't look good. But is there any proof the Tzenkethi intend to use those bases for any other reason than as advertised?

ALDEN

Don't be naive, Ezri. Why those three bases, eh? Why not, oh, these three, for example?

(points)

They're just as close to Tzenkethi trade routes, plus nowhere near any member or even prospective member of the Khitomer Accords.

BOWERS

It's circumstantial. Trying to accuse the Tzenkethi of planning

to militarise those bases without sufficient evidence could well start that militarisation.

DAX

Maybe that's the plan. Provoke us into provoking them.

(shakes head)

No, we can't think that way. We'll just end up with everyone blaming each other for every little thing.

ALDEN

These are complicated times. Not much in the way of trust going around. Hence my mission - I've been ordered to find out exactly what's going on at Outpost V-4.

DAX

Oh have you, indeed?

ALDEN

Look, this alliance between the Venetans and the Tzenkethi came out of nowhere. Starfleet was completely blindsided by it, and we've got a good intelligence network on ab-Tzenketh.

BOWERS

So how did you miss this?

ALDEN

I don't know, and I hate not knowing. But they've agreed to Federation observers, and they say they've got nothing to hide. I've been trying to get up to speed on Venetan politics and culture -

DAX

Peter, what's the upshot of all this for the *Aventine*? That being my primary area of responsibility.

ALDEN

You're to take me to Outpost V-4
and give me whatever support is
necessary.

DAX

And yet I haven't received any
such orders from Starfleet.

KEDAIR (comm)

Bridge to Captain Dax - there's a
subspace signal coming in, direct
from the office of Admiral Akaar.

Alden's expression is a sad told-you-so. Dax harrumphs.

DAX

Thanks, Lieutenant. I'll take it
in the ready room. Dax out.

(to Bowers and Alden)

Okay, you two are dismissed.

ALDEN

Ezri -

DAX

Dismissed, Peter. Go and get some
rest. You look like you need it.

Reluctantly, Alden joins Bowers on their way out back to
the bridge. Left alone, Dax taps her comm-screen...

DAX

Receive message.

(bleep)

Admiral...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

22 INT. DEPARTMENT OF THE OUTSIDE

Sweeping down from the "superior" deck with its movers and shakers, past the "anterior" deck with its record-keepers, and finally to the "inferior" deck where the cleaners work on a different portion of the floor from yesterday.

Corazame and the others scrub away, singing happily. But Mayazan is worried, unable to get her mind off her tough situation even as she polishes her own part of the floor.

She glances sideways - more subtly than before since it has already got her into trouble - and sees Hertome also going about his work, paying no attention to her.

23 EXT. AB-TZENKETH - OPEN-AIR MARKET - EARLY EVENING

Mayazan walks among the stalls again at the end of this day, hoping she won't find Hertome waiting for her. She reaches the small café...

...and breathes a sigh of relief. No sign of Hertome. She takes a seat alone and reads the menu, starting to believe that maybe her counterpart has got the message.

24 INT. DEPARTMENT OF THE OUTSIDE

Another day, another section of the floor getting polished by the dull brown-skinned workers. It is repetitive and mind-numbing work, but this is their purpose in life.

Mayazan glances quickly around again - no sign of Hertome at all this time. She looks back to Corazame, smiles, and joins in with SINGING the other Rets' traditional folk song. She even enjoys it - everything is going to be okay.

25 EXT. AB-TZENKETH - OPEN-AIR MARKET - EARLY EVENING

Approaching the café again, Mayazan's jaw drops in horror - Hertome is waiting for her. Furious, she dips her head in supplication, dims her formerly happy light, and joins him at the table. Hertome barely acknowledges her presence.

The SERVER comes to them again, takes their orders, moves off. Hertome nods towards his retreating back.

HERTOME

I saw on the bulletin the other day that the Ret Ata-EE genome is under revision. Some of the Yai scientists have suggested that the next generation of servers should be bred not to speak. They're not allowed to speak anyway to anyone above their own grade, which is everyone, so what's the point of being able to speak at all? What do you think of that, Mayazan? Or whatever your name is.

MAYAZAN

This one would not question the decisions of her superiors. Whatever is decided will be best for her.

HERTOME

(sigh)

Cardassian. You'd have to be. You didn't even blink. If you were Federation or Ferengi, definitely if you were Klingon, there'd have been a muscle twitch at least. But Cardassians... oh, you're made of colder stuff. I bet you love it here, don't you? Everyone's place in life planned out, nobody has to think for themselves because it's all been decided for them.

Mayazan finally looks up, making direct eye contact with Hertome in defiance of all cultural taboos between them.

MAYAZAN

This one suggests... that her training might simply be better than yours.

HERTOME

(chuckle)

I thought about that. Wondered if you were another Starfleet agent and nobody had bothered to brief me. Even wondered if you were from some other Typhon Pact power - no reason why they wouldn't all be spying on each other, after all. But when I woke up the morning after our first little tete-à-tete in this place and I wasn't dead, I figured you were an ally. Or a potential ally at least. You're Cardassian, and me... well, my name's not Hertome Ter Ata-C.

The server arrives with their fish bowls, then leaves again. They sip them quietly, wondering how to proceed.

HERTOME

So how did you know I wasn't a Tzenkethi?

MAYAZAN

That hardly matters. What matters is that we need to be careful. This meeting may have already attracted some attention. It's not illegal for a C to associate with an E outside of work, but it's not exactly common -

HERTOME

Hold my hand.

MAYAZAN

(jaw drops)

What did you say?

HERTOME

Hold my hand. If we're already marked, we might as well give them a reason to mark us, especially if it's nowhere near the truth.

Mayazan takes a long time to consider what to do... but eventually she reaches across the table and holds his hand. She gazes lovingly into his eyes...

MAYAZAN

If it becomes necessary... this one will kill you.

HERTOME

Mayazan, I think that might be the most romantic thing anyone has ever said to me.

As they smile and sip their fish soup...

25 EXT. SPACE - AVENTINE

The *Aventine* is still at warp...

26 INT. AVENTINE - CONFERENCE ROOM

The stars warp past the windows on both sides as Dax chairs a meeting with her senior staff - Bowers, KEDAIR, HELKARA, LEISHMAN, TARSES and HYATT - plus Commander Alden, who sits practically slumped over the far end of the table.

ALDEN

Our visit to Outpost V-4 will be highly stage-managed. The only consoles we'll get anywhere near are likely to have been tidied up for the occasion.

DAX

That's certainly a possibility. So I need strategies for identifying whether any Tzenkethi weapons are already on the station, have been, or are likely to be in future.

HELKARA

Unobtrusive strategies, I assume?

DAX

Very much so.

HYATT

The Venetans value honesty - not to quite the same militant extent as our friends the Zaldans, but they won't like any insinuation that we don't trust them. So deal with them with frankness.

ALDEN

Whereas the Tzenkethi will know we're suspicious, and they'll be deliberately playing up to it. So deal with them cautiously.

DAX

Alright, you've all got your assignments, so be getting on with them. Dismissed, everyone.

Everyone but Dax and Alden get up and head out - Helkara and Leishman already conferring in hushed tones. Bowers hangs back with a silent questioning look, but Dax nods that it's okay for him to go, so he does.

Now alone, Dax gets up and takes the seat next to Alden. He looks haggard and exhausted, stressed and unrested.

DAX

You're convinced we're going to find something, aren't you? Some proof the Tzenkethi intend to use this base to threaten our borders.

ALDEN

Yes, I'm convinced.

DAX

But why would they do that? They must know none of the Khitomer Accords nations would allow them to put weapons so close to our borders, so why even try?

ALDEN

Why? Why do you think? Because they don't trust us, Ezri.

DAX

Why not? I've never understood.

ALDEN

You're the counsellor, you figure it out. Physically, the Tzenkethi appear humanoid, but that belies a fundamental fluidity of form. What do you think the psychological effects of that might be?

DAX

I don't know... anxiety about dissolution? Fear of collapse? I'm just guessing here. You can't extrapolate from physical form to psychological state. Nurture counts at least as much as nature.

ALDEN

Ah - not for the Tzenkethi. They have been working for as long as we've known about them to remove nurture from the equation. First it was by cultural means - every citizen's DNA is tested at birth to confirm what purpose they are most suited for in society, then they're locked in for life.

DAX

So it's a caste system.

ALDEN

(shakes head)

That implies unjustified bigotry. The Tzenkethi feel completely justified in what they do. After all, why take the chance that a starship captain, or a counsellor, or an intelligence agent might not be the best possible person to be in that position? Why risk it? So they make sure in advance.

DAX

Okay. But we have to prove we're the best candidate for the job too. We're not so different.

ALDEN

Aren't we?

DAX

(sigh, regather)

You said first by cultural means. Do they not do that anymore?

ALDEN

Well, it's the next logical step, isn't it? Eventually they decided that waiting until birth was too late. To be absolutely sure, they had to go back even earlier.

DAX

(realises)

They design their own citizens' genomes to fit societal roles?

ALDEN

(shrug)

All to fend off that fear of dissolution you mentioned. Their entire culture is designed around control, from the lowliest floor cleaner to the Autarch himself.

DAX

Alright. But I still don't get why that means they would hate us.

ALDEN

They don't just hate us, Ezri. They despise us. They're terrified of us. To the Tzenkethi, the Federation is chaos personified. What are we, after all? An unruly mish-mash of people, all shouting in our own voices, bringing our own unique cultures to the mix.

DAX

But we still have structures and rituals. We value the right person in the right place. The president wouldn't be president if people didn't think she was going to be the best at it.

ALDEN

And who gets to decide that, eh? Every citizen of the Federation, no matter how stupid or uneducated on the subject of politics, gets an equal say in who runs their society. How insanely chaotic is that? Anything could happen!

Alden takes a breath, calms himself, tries again.

ALDEN

For a people whose every waking moment is controlled - and they like it that way - we must be the monster under their beds. Even worse, that monster is right next door to them, and it has a fleet of warships at its disposal. They must live in terror of what such unstable people as we are might do with all that firepower.

Dax sits back, absorbing such a damning picture of her own culture. But Alden isn't finished...

ALDEN

I have to wonder just how long the Tzenkethi have been working within the Venette Convention. Reminding them why they shouldn't trust us, whispering about how dangerous we are, seeding doubt after doubt...

(sad laugh)

That's what I would have done in their place. And it's what I know they've been doing.

DAX

Peter, you can't talk this way.
You can't think this way. So much
suspicion! We've got to go to V-4
with an open mind.

(off his reaction)

No, I know what you're going to
say, but I'm not as naive as you
think. Sure, something might be
going on. But it might not. We've
got to leave room to be surprised,
Peter. We've got to hope.

Alden looks at her almost with pity. He is so weary, so
crushed with the weight of experience. It makes her sad.

ALDEN

Hope, Ezri? You'll have to handle
that. All I can do is watch.

He drags himself up from the table and slumps out of the
back door. Dax watches him go sadly, taps her combadge.

DAX

Counsellor Hyatt, please meet me
in my ready room. I need to talk
to you about a friend.

As Dax watches the stars warp by, worried about how this
could affect the upcoming mission...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

27 EXT. SPACE - OUTPOST V-4

A small starbase of a much more mellifluous design than Starfleet's utilitarian style. It seems organic, almost grown. *Aventine* is anchored via a docking umbilicus.

28 INT. OUTPOST V-4 - CORRIDOR

The inside looks much the same - rounded shapes and rippled surfaces that look as much grown as built. Dax leads the away team, followed by Kedair, Alden and Hyatt - the latter here specifically to keep an eye on Alden.

A Venetan female named HELGON - as small as a Ferengi, but covered in sleek silver fur - beckons them on impatiently. The Starfleet team is tolerated here, but hardly welcome.

HELGON

I suggest we begin with the docking circles.

As they progress on down the corridor, Kedair looks around enchanted, but Alden is just as sour and tense as ever.

KEDAIR

Is it just me, or has this place been knitted?

HYATT

Venetan design emphasises concord between the artificial and the natural. In fact they don't even acknowledge a distinction there.

Alden watches everything closely, and Hyatt watches Alden.

29 INT. OUTPOST V-4 - DOCKING AREA

The dock itself looks like a flower irising open. Several more Venetans work in environment suits that look like they are made out of tree bark, in order to work in the zero-G outside the airlock. Dax peers through a window to see...

DAX

Why all this work? What's wrong with the docking facilities you already have? They look fine.

HELGON

Tzenkethi freighters are larger than anything we have previously had to accommodate.

Dax sighs, leans against the window with arms folded.

HELGON

I know what's on your mind, Dax. Why don't you ask?

DAX

Because I don't want to offend.

HELGON

At last! An honest response. I'll pay you the same compliment. We are not warmongers, whatever you may be telling yourselves. We are simply an old people, willing to share what we've learned with the wider galaxy. Now be honest, Dax - would you be bothering with us if we weren't drawing closer to your enemies? Would you be here now if the Tzenkethi were not here?

DAX

No... we probably wouldn't.

HELGON

Less than an hour in our company, and already you have a better sense of how to deal with us. Come! I believe we are scheduled to inspect the medical facilities - I think you'll be impressed!

Cheered, Helgon leads Dax back down the corridor...

30 INT. OUTPOST V-4 - MEDICAL AREA

Heavy containment doors HISS open, and a bright gleaming LIGHT streams out to hit Dax, Helgon and the away team in the face. For Helgon it is business as usual; for Dax, Hyatt and Kedair it is a fascinating new experience.

Dax steps in and looks around... and is quickly assaulted by a bout of space-sickness. Dozens of TZENKETHI work at machines on the floor, the walls and the ceiling, hanging upside down or sideways and making Dax sway on her feet.

These are the Yai scientist echelon - glowing blue skin, dressed not in the diaphanous robes of politicians or the jumpsuits of the workers, but rather lab suits that look like shells. Everything is peaceful, efficient, productive.

HELGON

And here we have the medical bay,
which as you can see we refitted
to suit the sensibilities of our
Tzenkethi guests.

DAX

It's...
(steadies herself)
...it's really something.

For Alden, it is a nightmare. He stands back, tight and alert, watching it all.

The people walking around on the walls or ceiling like it's nothing, a completely normal thing to do.

The medical machines, hissing and pumping and bleeping and bubbling their unknown substances.

The eerie blue glow of the Tzenkethi scientists themselves, drifting about like ghosts.

The walls closing in, every bit of space used so there is no room to breathe.

The blood thundering in his ears as his every breath gets tighter, quicker, shallower.

Finally he just has to get out of there, so he turns and dashes back out into the corridor.

DAX

Peter...?

(no response)

Helgon, if you'll excuse me...

HELGON

Of course.

Dax steps out...

31 INT. OUTPOST V-4 - CORRIDOR

...and finds Alden propped up against the wavy wall, bent double, hands on his thighs and head down as he tries to get himself back under control. She gently comforts him...

DAX

That's right, Peter. Deep breaths.

ALDEN

Don't know what came over me.

Hyatt appears in the doorway...

HYATT

Everything okay?

DAX

Just a spot of vertigo, I think.
Those gravity envelopes can play
merry hell with the inner ear.

Hyatt nods - she knows that's not true, and Dax knows she knows. That was no vertigo, but a full-blown panic attack. But they'll keep it quiet so as to not cause a scene.

LEISHMAN (comm)

Leishman to Dax.

DAX

(taps combadge)

Dax here.

LEISHMAN (comm)
Any chance of a quiet word in your
shell-like, Captain? Just there's
something you should know...

Dax, Hyatt and Alden all share a look of worry...

32 **EXT. DEPARTMENT OF THE OUTSIDE - DAY**

Back to the Tzenkethi government buildings...

33 **INT. DEPARTMENT OF THE OUTSIDE - CORRIDOR**

Mayazan scurries along the corridor, not wanting to be late
for another day of cleaning and polishing...

...but she is brought up short to see Corazame and the
other three Ret workers huddled together at the far end of
the corridor, muttering among themselves in confusion.

MAYAZAN
Cory? What's going on?

CORAZAME
Oh, Maymi! Nobody knows. We can't
get in - look at the door.

Mayazan looks at the door - and there is no door, nor any
sign there ever has been one. Just a smooth shell wall.

HERTOME (o.s.)
The Ret unit will listen!

Corazame gasps and immediately dips her head, dims her
light, as do all the other Ret cleaners, at the sight of
Hertome striding down the corridor towards them.

CORAZAME
These ones live to serve, Ap-Rej.

HERTOME
I am glad to hear it, Corazame.
Come with me, all of you.

The Rets all scamper after Hertome as he heads off down
another corridor, expecting them to follow.

HERTOME

The Department of the Outside is closed until further notice, to any citizen holding a rating lower than B. You will instead work on another part of the building.

They all bow their heads in obedience - he is a C, he must know better than mere Es. They are glad of instructions.

All except for Mayazan, who frowns in concentration and presses a hand against her left temple to hide the brief FLASH of red light that means her implant is transmitting.

34 INT. DEPARTMENT OF THE OUTSIDE - CONFERENCE ROOM

A much smaller room than the main hall, much less grand, a standard office meeting room.

Mayazan and Corazame tidy up the mess of food leftovers that have been abandoned, straighten the chairs that have been tipped over by anxious Kre administrators thanks to whatever urgent event took place here overnight.

35 INT. DEPARTMENT OF THE OUTSIDE - WASH ROOM

The room deep in the bowels of the building where low-level crew like the Rets keep their personal belongings. Even here the walls are blue as the sea, decorated with shells.

Mayazan is here alone, SHOWERING and glorying in the simple abundance of water, quite unfamiliar to a Cardassian. She emerges into the dressing area, dries off, slips on a basic green cotton dress that compliments her dull brown skin.

A hand GRABS her shoulder...

...she SPINS like the well-trained agent she is, twisting the offending arm behind her assailant's back and SLAMMING him against the wall.

HERTOME

Ow! Ow! Let go! Mayazan, it's me, let go!

Mayazan reluctantly does. Hertome turns to her, rubbing at his wrist where she twisted it.

HERTOME

Are you mad? Assaulting a superior is a serious crime, Mayazan. If you did that to any other Ter but me, you'd find yourself sent for reconditioning in a heartbeat.

MAYAZAN

(sneer)

No other Ter would be so indecent as to come to the Ret washroom.

HERTOME

(grin)

Indecent, eh? But enough of our games, as entertaining as they are. What do you know about what's been going on around here today?

MAYAZAN

Hertome - or whatever your name is - this is going too far. You shouldn't be in here. You're putting us both in danger.

HERTOME

We're already in danger, Mayazan. So let's share our information and try to lessen that danger if we can. What do you think's going on?

MAYAZAN

What do you think is going on?

HERTOME

(sigh)

Since you ask, there's been a flurry of communications with your lot today - between the Tzenkethi and the Cardassian Embassy. I overheard when I was washing the walls on level seven. So come on, spill it. What's happening?

MAYAZAN

I don't know.

HERTOME

I don't believe you. It's too much of a coincidence that whatever this was happened just after two spies discovered each other.

MAYAZAN

It's true - I don't have access to any information I may or may not have gathered. I am just a data transmission tool, nothing more.

HERTOME

What about your embassy contact? Do they not know anything?

MAYAZAN

(stunned)

You actually meet with a contact? In person? You humans really are pathetic at this - I swear you'll be the death of us all.

(pushes him away)

You are not to speak to me again, not outside the context of our covers. I'll obey you, as Ret must obey Ter, but you are to forget we ever spoke to each other in any other way. This one is here to serve her Ap-Rej and through him her beloved and exalted Rej, the beneficent Autarch himself. But that's all. So let her past.

Mayazan moves towards the door, wanting this over with. But Hertome moves to block her way...

MAYAZAN

(hiss)

Let her past, Hertome. Or shall this one finish what she started with her Ap-Rej's wrist?

FOOTSTEPS outside in the corridor - they both freeze. No time to escape or hide, they are trapped here. Is this it?

MAYAZAN

(whisper)

If that's the enforcers, then this one regrets to inform her Ap-Rej that she intends to tell them everything she knows about him.

The footsteps stop, the door swings open...

...and it is CORAZAME. At the sight of her colleague and her superior together where they should not be, she SQUEAKS in shock and frantically lowers her head, dims her light.

CORAZAME

This one... this one... *ai!*

She whimpers and immediately backs away, fleeing down the corridor in terror. Hertome sighs angrily...

HERTOME

Well, what now, Mayazan? What the hell do we do now?

Mayazan can't answer...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

36 EXT. SPACE - OUTPOST V-4

The Venetan starbase, with the *Aventine* connected to it...

37 INT. AVENTINE - CONFERENCE ROOM

Dax strides into the room, Alden right behind her, to find Leishman, Helkara and Tarses all waiting for them.

DAX

Talk quickly - I can't stay away too long without it looking like there's something serious going on. I assume there is something serious going on?

HELKARA

There is, but not what we thought.

Helkara gestures to the HOLO-DISPLAY already projected above the conference table, showing scientific readings.

HELKARA

Leishman and I performed scans designed to detect the movement or presence of Tzenkethi weapons. It's helpful to understand that most Tzenkethi weapons leave a faint but distinctive trail of... well, of sodium chloride.

DAX

(slumps into seat)
Sodium chloride? Salt? You have got to be kidding me.

ALDEN

Makes perfect sense if you've ever seen ab-Tzenketh.
(off looks)
Lots of water.

DAX

Fine. Salt. Good. So we're looking for what - too much salt nearby?

LEISHMAN

That's pretty much exactly what we've been looking for, yes. And we didn't find it.

DAX

Alright, let me get this straight. Outpost V-4, being insufficiently salty, is therefore unlikely to have played host to any Tzenkethi weaponry we are familiar with?

HELKARA

That's correct. However -

DAX

If you say anything about pepper, Commander, you're in the brig.

HELKARA

I have no data on pepper, Captain. What I would like to draw your attention to, however, is this - the chemical formula for P-96 solvents. Those, we found lots of.

DAX

A little interpretation goes a long way with me. Much like salt.

TARSES

P-96 solvents are usually used to stabilise certain other compounds including navithium resin - which is a bioweapon deadly to humans.

ALDEN

I knew it. I knew it!

DAX

Alright, Peter, hold on a minute -

ALDEN

It's obvious what's going on here!

DAX

(sharp)

Not to me, it's not! I will not
start a war without checking all
the possibilities.

Alden turns and walks away to stare out of the windows,
arms folded, his back to the rest. They all share looks of
surprise at the unprofessionalism. Dax pushes on...

DAX

So. We found nothing to suggest
Tzenkethi weapons in the vicinity.

LEISHMAN

That we know of. I guess there
could be some new weapon designs
we don't know how to detect, but
I imagine we have people on the
ground finding out about that kind
of thing, and that data would have
cascaded down to us by now.

DAX

Commander Alden - can you confirm
or deny that?

(no answer)

Commander, you are Starfleet's
best expert on Tzenkethi affairs,
here specifically to advise the
captain of this ship. Advise.

ALDEN

(turns slowly)

Yes, we do. And yes, it would.

DAX

Thank you, Commander. Okay, so no
weapons that we know about, but
there was a compound that is used
to stabilise navithium resin. Was
there any actual navithium resin?

HELKARA

No, although it's hard to detect.

DAX

Are P-96 solvents used for other things besides navithium resin?

TARSES

Oh, tons of things.

DAX

Alright, so no hard proof they're up to anything sinister, then.

ALDEN

Ezri... have we just been over to the same base? Did we see the same things? I saw docking facilities being expanded to handle warships. I saw Tzenkethi doctors working with compounds used in bioweapons. Do I have to remind you how close this base is to our borders?

DAX

You don't have to remind me of anything, Commander! You just have to show me proof.

The room goes quiet as Dax's outburst settles down.

DAX

Alright, here's what we're going to do. Gruhn, Mikaela, go back to those scans and check them again. Simon, any information you have on navithium resin, I'm sure I'll find useful. Commander Alden...?

ALDEN

Yes, Captain?

DAX

Contact Starfleet Intelligence. Tell them what we found, but that we're not sure yet if it means

anything. Ask if there is any thing they're not telling you... telling us. Have you got that?

ALDEN

Yes, sir. I'll get right on it.

DAX

Thank you. And while you're all doing that, I'm going to speak to Helgon. I want to give her every opportunity to explain what's going on here before anyone does anything they regret. Dismissed.

They all go their ways. Once she is alone, Dax slumps over the table, much as Alden was. It's hard enough handling everything else, but Alden is going to be trouble...

38 INT. OUTPOST V-4 - MEDICAL AREA

Helgon replies perfectly frankly as the Tzenkethi doctors continue to work in the background...

HELGON

Yes, we have a large stock of P-96 solvents on board. They are needed to stabilise certain resins the Tzenkethi intend to bring here.

DAX

Do you happen to know the purpose of those resins, Helgon?

HELGON

Of course. Nobody brings anything onto this base without disclosure. But my colleague Entrizar Ter Yai-A can explain better than I can.

The diminutive Venetan gestures towards a tall and elegant Tzenkethi male, one of the scientists, ENTRIZAR. The male drifts down from the wall to talk to the Starfleet team.

Out of the corner of her eye, Dax sees Alden tense again. Counsellor Hyatt also has her eyes on the troubled officer.

ENTRIZAR

You've seen us now, Captain Dax.
You've seen how complex an organ
our skin is.

To demonstrate, the Tzenkethi scientist deliberately raises
and lowers the light from his glowing blue skin.

DAX

It's part of how you communicate,
isn't it? A kind of body language.

ENTRIZAR

Yes. The resins are an emollient,
nothing more. A moisturiser. The
air aboard this station is rather
drier than we are accustomed to.

(to Alden)

You can confirm this, can you not
Commander? I understand we are
your... specialism.

That's it - Alden can't take any more. He *snaps*.

ALDEN

Do you think we're idiots? Ezri,
this is ridiculous! How much
longer are we going to carry on
with this bloody charade?

DAX

Commander, be quiet.

ALDEN

(at Entrizar)

And you. Don't think I don't know
exactly what your game is.

DAX

Commander Alden! Outside - now!

Dax grabs Alden by the arm and drags him out into the
corridor. Hyatt looks apologetically to Helgon, then
follows them. Entrizar just looks on enigmatically...

Dax and Alden are both on their feet as she chews him out.

ALDEN

What do I think I'm doing? Ezri, they're making biogenic weapons! They're refitting for warships! They're within striking distance of Federation space! Why are you doing nothing?

DAX

I am listening to everything they say before I start accusing them of unimaginable crimes against us!

ALDEN

They're feeding you a lie! A lie so transparent it's practically an insult. I'm warning you, Ezri, don't make me go over your head -

DAX

Over my head? You need to watch what you say, mister. You're not in command here.

ALDEN

I tried to warn you about them, Ezri. I thought I could trust you.

The sheer desperation in his voice makes Dax realise she has to calm this down. She backs off, softens her stance.

DAX

You can trust me. But I need to be able to trust you to stay cool. Entrizar is playing you, Peter. Don't give him the satisfaction.

ALDEN

(clears head)

You're right. Of course, you're right, Ezri, you're right.

DAX

We're all tired and stressed these days. But I'm going to need you to go back in there and apologise.

ALDEN

I will. Just... give me a minute to pull myself together.

Dax nods, so Alden turns and heads out to the bridge.

With the door still open, Dax peers out, catches the attention of Hyatt and Kedair, and beckons them both into her room. They enter, and the door closes behind them.

DAX

We have a problem. Well, several problems, but this particular one is that I need you, Lonnoc, to go back to V-4, complete the tour of the Tzenkethi medical facility, and come back with a sample of those P-96 solvents. Perhaps with a hard sample we can narrow down just what they're being used for.

KEDAIR

In secret, presumably.

DAX

Helgon won't just hand them over. The next problem is that I want Commander Alden to go with you.

HYATT

Captain, I really really don't think that's a good idea. In fact, I'd call it a terrible idea. Send Bowers instead, he's been itching to get off the ship.

DAX

It has to be Alden - he's the only one here with any experience of dealing with Tzenkethi technology.

HYATT

He's also been exhibiting signs of stress, exhaustion, paranoia - all in response to the Tzenkethi.

DAX

I don't have any choice, Susan.

HYATT

His reactions to the Tzenkethi are verging on phobic, and you want to send him straight back in there? He could suffer a full breakdown, Captain. He could even decide to take pre-emptive action.

KEDAIR

Pre-emptive action?

DAX

That's why I need you there. Look, Peter is my friend. But Sam picked up twelve Tzenkethi ships on their way towards Venetan space. Call me suspicious, but I have a feeling that's the navithium resin on its way. We need to know what's going on now, before it's too late.

HYATT

You're the captain. But if this comes at the cost of Peter Alden's sanity... I don't think you'll be able to forgive yourself, Ezri.

Dax is already well aware of that...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

40 EXT. AB-TZENKETH - RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT - EVENING

The two moons shine bright in a dark purple sky over the cheap part of town where Rets and their grade live. Box-like tenements crowd together around small courtyards.

41 INT. MAYAZAN'S APARTMENT

A very basic living space, no more than a studio apartment. Few luxuries or possessions, but it is all theirs and they are glad to have it, by the grace of their beloved Autarch.

Mayazan and Corazame curl up on the floor, their fluid legs relaxed and wrapped around them each like a blanket. Bowls of food and a steaming teapot sit on the floor between them - this is Friday night takeout for the friends to gossip.

Corazame shakes plenty of salt into her fish bowl. Mayazan covers a wince of disgust, and sprinkles just enough in her own to not look strange. Corazame looks down sadly...

CORAZAME

I know, you know.

MAYAZAN

What do you mean, Cory?

CORAZAME

You know what I mean. I know about you and Hertome. I know you've been meeting. And I know the kind of risks you're running to do it.

Mayazan's light dims - she can't mean what she thinks she means, can she? Corazame reaches out to take her hand...

CORAZAME

What I really wanted you to know was that... I understand, Maymi. I've been where you are now. An Ata-C, like yours. It was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Mayazan is on the verge of tears. Corazame is sharing something incredibly personal and dangerous here, such a mark of trust and friendship that Mayazan feels guilty.

CORAZAME

He made me feel... special. But it couldn't be, not given who I am. I know my purpose is to serve. I know that. It's a great comfort. But I wanted you to know... that your secret's safe with me. You'll have only a little time together, so enjoy it while you can. I'll be here for you when it ends.

Overcome, Mayazan pulls Corazame into a hug, their skins BUZZing with their slight electrical charge as they touch.

MAYAZAN

Oh Cory... you've been such a good friend to me. I don't deserve you.

They hold onto each other and weep salty tears...

42 EXT. SPACE - OUTPOST V-4

Back to the Venetan starbase and the *Aventine*...

43 INT. AVENTINE - SICKBAY

The door opens, and Dax and Hyatt enter eagerly. As they do, Alden looks up from where he had been conferring with Kedair, Helkara and Tarses, and smiles broadly at Dax's arrival. He seems bright and cheerful, his burden lifted.

ALDEN

Job done. Hopefully we've got what we need to prove to Helgon exactly what those bastards are up to.

DAX

Alright - Gruhn, Simon, get to work on those samples, quick as you can. Good work, Peter.

ALDEN

Thanks, Ezri. Now I think it's
time I finally get some sleep.

DAX

Couldn't agree more.

Still smiling, Alden heads out, while Helkara and Tarses
move to the laboratories at the back of sickbay. Dax
watches them all go, then she and Hyatt join Kedair...

DAX

How was he?

KEDAIR

Fine. More than fine - I couldn't
have done it without him. He knew
his way around those Tzenkethi
security systems like his life
might once have depended on it.

DAX

(to Hyatt)

And what do you think? Did he seem
okay to you just now?

HYATT

Adrenaline will keep him going for
a while. It could be years before
any deeper damage manifests fully
- hopefully he won't be in the
middle of a mission when it does.

Taking that under consideration, Dax nods for them to go on
their way, so they exit too. Dax moves deeper into sickbay.

In the laboratory area, Dax finds Helkara and Tarses around
a scanning table, the bio-sample on the scanner and them
reading reams of information off the screens...

DAX

Got anything?

HELKARA

The samples are informative, but
sadly not definitive, Captain.

TARSES

Not all P-96 solvents can be used to stabilise navithium resin, but these particular ones can.

DAX

Leaving us slightly more sure than we were, but still not enough to be completely certain. Damn it!

TARSES

I do have an idea, though...

DAX

I'm open to anything, Simon.

TARSES

Okay, so the Tzenkethi need these resins because the air on the Venetan base is too dry for their skins, right?

DAX

Well, that's what they say.

TARSES

Right. But surely there are other emollients out there that will serve the same purpose, and ones that aren't poisonous to humans.

DAX

(catching on)

So why don't we supply it to them? Simon, that's so simple it might be brilliant. But can we do it?

TARSES

If we knew exactly what kind of emollients they needed, I could replicate enough for our current needs here and now. And Starbase 261 would have the resources to offer a permanent supply.

DAX

(mind working)

It would seem like a nice friendly gesture on our part. And if the Tzenkethi refused, it would look suspiciously like they want their resins on V-4 for another reason.

HELKARA

There is another reason why the Tzenkethi might refuse our offer - they might think we're trying to poison them. They might decide to accuse us of that anyway, whether they believe it's true or not.

DAX

(shrug)

Even that could work in our favour - if Helgon thinks the Tzenkethi are accusing us of biological warfare, it might actually lower her estimation of them. Get on it, Simon. We've got nothing to lose from this, and a lot to gain.

Re-energised, Dax turns and strides back out of sickbay...

44 EXT. AB-TZENKETH - RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT - NIGHT

Night has fallen on the city, with the twin moons shining silvery light over the residential tenements.

45 INT. MAYAZAN'S APARTMENT

Tidying up for the night, Mayazan is just putting the soup bowls and the teapot into the reclamator when she JERKS -

- because the little RED LIGHT of her implant is PULSING at her temple. She quickly holds her head in her hands to cover it, worried and confused - she did not ask for this.

Corazame sees the reaction from the other side of the room.

CORAZAME

Maymi? What's wrong?

ECU on Mayazan's eyes...

...and they are flooded with red-tinged DATA flowing across her eyeballs. She continues to hide her face...

HOGUE (comm)

Don't react, Neta. This is Hogue.
We're pulling you out in two days.
The directions for where to go are
being sent to you now. Good luck.

A hand falls on Mayazan's shoulder again, and she JUMPS -
- but it's just Corazame, staring at her friend in worry.

CORAZAME

Are you okay? You look strange.

MAYAZAN

I have to go...

Corazame is confused, but then a BRIGHT LIGHT shines past the cracks in the door, the loud WHOOSH of aircraft engines outside, the room actually SHAKES... Cory is horrified...

MAYAZAN

Enforcers - they're coming for me.

CORAZAME

They can't possibly know about you
and Hertome. How could they?

MAYAZAN

I don't know...

Mayazan bolts for the door, YANKing it open...

CORAZAME

Maymi, don't -

46 EXT. AB-TZENKETH - RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT - NIGHT

Mayazan runs out into the courtyard between the apartments, looking up into the night sky...

...and sees an AIRCAR sweeping with its searchlights some distance away. She sighs with relief, but remains alert...

CORAZAME

(from the doorway)

Maymi! You mustn't run from the enforcers. You will only make it worse on yourself...

MAYAZAN

It's not me they're after. Look - they're on the other side of the tenement... where the Ters live.

CORAZAME

Then come back inside - please!

Mayazan heads back inside, still keeping a wary eye on the enforcers' aircar. If they are not coming for her, who are they coming for? Meanwhile Corazame twitters nervously...

CORAZAME

How did you even hear them so soon? Your hearing must be much better than an E's should be...

They step inside, and the door closes back up again.

But elsewhere in the tenement area, where the searchlights still hunt across the boxy apartments and the courtyards, HERTOME quickly pulls back around a corner, desperately hoping the enforcers didn't spot him.

As he stands in a dark alley with his back flat against the shell wall, breath hitching and pulse pounding, he hears SHOUTS and SCREAMS - the sounds of enforcers nearby, taking in someone who does not want to be taken.

Grabbing his chance while they are distracted, he BREAKS and runs down the alley, away from the lights, disappearing into the darkness...

47 **EXT. SPACE - OUTPOST V-4**

Back to the Venetan starbase and the *Aventine*...

48 **INT. AVENTINE - READY ROOM**

Dax sits behind her desk, waiting for a signal to come through. She feels confident, sure this will go her way.

When Helgon appears on her screen, against the background of the Tzenkethi lab on the station, Dax smiles wide.

DAX

Helgon - thanks for speaking to me again. Have you had a chance to consider my offer? I hoped you'd find it very attractive.

HELGON (screen)

You have some gall, Dax. I never fully trusted you Federationers, but to think you could do this...

Dax's face drops - Helgon is clearly *disgusted* with her for something, and Dax can only hope it's not what she thinks.

DAX

I don't understand...

HELGON (screen)

I demand you send Commander Peter Alden to Outpost V-4 at once.

DAX

Why only Alden?

HELGON (screen)

Because only Commander Alden could be responsible for this.

DAX

Responsible for what, Helgon?

HELGON (screen)

For the bomb that was discovered in the medical bay shortly after Commander Alden visited it.

DAX

A bomb? That can't be true -

HELGON (screen)
Are you calling me a liar, Dax?

DAX
No... but I know nothing about a
bomb. And I can't believe -

HELGON (screen)
Alden's psychological state is as
obvious to you as it was to me,
don't deny it. He is unwell, Dax.

DAX
Helgon, I promise you I'll get to
the bottom of this. Please trust
me just a little longer, and I'll
find out. Can you do that?

HELGON (screen)
(pause to consider)
Very well, Dax. A little longer.

The signal drops, and Dax collapses back, stunned.

DAX
Pre-emptive action, she said...
and he looked so happy...
(shakes head)
Dax to Lieutenant Kedair. Meet me
at Commander Alden's quarters...
now. And bring a phaser.

Hating to have to do it, she stands from her chair and
prepares to go arrest her friend for terrorism...

FADE OUT

END OF SHOW