

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

9x13 - "Malefictorum."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the short story

Star Trek: Corps of Engineers: Malefictorum

Written by Terri Osbourne

and on elements from the novel

*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine
Mission Gamma Book 2 - This Grey Spirit*

by Heather Jarman

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 INT. KLINGON HALL OF WARRIORS

A slaughtered KLINGON body, dead and glassy eyes staring. More dead and bloodied bodies fill a large, high-ceilinged dramatic hall, lined with statues and portraits. A panting, sweating Klingon woman of heaving bosom - NGARA - stands...

NGARA

(Show yourself!)

QablIj Hi'ang!

An exerted Klingon man with bulging muscles - LUGHOR - stalks to her with lust in his eyes. The style is operatic, overblown, stereotyped Klingon battle and bloodlust...

LUGHOR

(I'm right here!)

QabwIj vIso'be!

NGARA

I will toast my father's honour
over your corpse, you *p'tahk!*

As Lughor reaches her, Ngara SPINS in a furious battle, CLASHing her spear against his own, hair flying all over. His spear tears the fabric of her sleeve, baring her arm.

Angered, Ngara manages to THRUST the tip of her spear into Lughor's thigh. The pain gives him strength to respond...

NGARA

On this night, I will stand in
black pools of your blood, spilled
when I slit your throat!

Finally, Ngara makes one huge dramatic SLO-MO LEAP towards Lughor, ROARing, her spear outstretched. Lughor leaps up to join her in mid-air, knocks her spear out of her hand --

-- and they fall to the ground, him on top of her. Ngara ROARS again and flips him until she is on top, pressing on his shoulders, digging her fingernails in.

Both growling and breathing deeply, they stare into each other's eyes. Pulling her arms up and away, he brings up a knife out of nowhere and slits the laces on her corset...

LUGHOR
I will have you!

DAX (v.o.)
Nog, what the hell are you reading?

2 INT. DEFIANT - MESS HALL

NOG slams down the padd he was reading, face-down onto the table, as DAX peers over his shoulder. He puts his arm over the padd, hiding it. He is flustered, skin flushed...

DAX
At ease, Lieutenant. I can only assume that isn't the engineering report I asked for.

Still breathing hard, Nog reaches desperately around until he finds another padd, grabs it and SHOVES it at Dax...

NOG
Umm, no, that would be this one.

DAX
Thanks. I've got Bowers running a diagnostic from the tactical side. We'll identify those false readings one way or the other.

Dax takes the second padd, straightens up to read it. Nog begins to hope he is getting out of this intact...

NOG
I'm sure we will.

DAX
(casually)
That must have been fascinating reading on that other padd. You don't often encounter references to leather corsets in Starfleet engineering manuals.

Nog cringes. Ensign PERMENTER (8x17 "Empathy") overhears and grins. She brings her tray and sits opposite Nog...

PERMENTER

Oh! "Burning Hearts of *Qo'noS*"!
Have you got to the part where
Ngara has the *bat'leth* duel with
the whole House of Rutark?

Hideously embarrassed, Nog looks desperately to Dax for rescue. She smiles back sweetly, awaiting his answer...

NOG

Yes, alright! I'm reading "Burning
Hearts of *Qo'noS*"! There, I said
it. Are you happy?
(to Permenter,
eager and excited)
That was great! I never thought
she'd make it past the bewitched
targs guarding the moat, did you?

DAX

Is this what all engineers do
between duty shifts?

PERMENTER

Hey, no fair, Lieutenant. I got it
from T'rb in sciences, so they
started it. Didn't Richter have it
before T'rb?

NOG

No, Richter asked me to pass it to
her when I was done. Ensign
Senkowski gave it to T'rb.

Now Ensign SENKOWSKI (male, human) overhears too, and joins the party at the table with his own tray...

SENKOWSKI

Don't you dare drag me into this.
Imagine it, Lieutenant - a Klingon
bodice-ripper. It's the end of
literature as we know it.

PERMENTER

This from the man who practically
begged me to let him borrow
"Vulcan Love Slave."

NOG

(perking up)
Really? Which version?

SENKOWSKI

The classic original. By Krem.

NOG

That's never been proven.

SENKOWSKI

I know Iskel is the favourite, but
I'd say the evidence that Krem is
the original author is compelling.
Either way, I'd take "Vulcan Love
Slave" over "Burning Hearts of
Qo'noS" any day.

(turns to Dax)

And for the record, Lieutenant,
I happen to like Starfleet's
engineering manuals. I find them
pithy, concise and thorough.

DAX

(straight-faced)
I appreciate your candour, Ensign.

PERMENTER

(smirking)
Still annoyed Mikaela got the
promotion, eh, Jason?

SENKOWSKI

I take my engineering duties very
seriously.

DAX

As well you should.

Nog has been trying to sneak another look at his padd. Dax
nudges him back to the conversation...

NOG

Oh. You're an invaluable member of the team, Ensign.

(to Dax, protesting)

What? I'm at the good part.

The mess hall doors open, and SAM BOWERS strides in, carrying another padd. He heads for Dax...

BOWERS

Turns out we had a redundant programming problem. Nothing serious after all.

DAX

That's a relief. The last thing we need in a fire-fight is a malfunctioning torpedo bay.

BOWERS

Tell me about it. I like to think I'm good at improvising, but it's a lot easier with a full arsenal.

Bowers sits down at the table, opposite Nog...

BOWERS

So... has Lughor broken Ngara's clavicle yet?

Nog rolls his eyes, while Dax chuckles...

3 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE - ESTABLISHING

Standard establishing shot, *Defiant* not present.

4 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE

Lieutenant RO sits behind her desk, hard at work, a bit exasperated and worn out. The main doors open and Bajoran Sgt ETANA pops her head in, a little nervous...

ETANA

Boss? Umm, Lieutenant... do you have a moment? I wanted to talk to you about something...

RO
(smiling)
Oh, I think I know what this is.
You want --

The COMM sounds suddenly - a human male voice, the fear and uncertainty coming through clearly...

GORDIMER (comm)
Lieutenant Ro...

RO
(to Etana)
Hold that thought.
(into comm)
Gordimer? That you? Are you okay?
(no answer)
Gordimer! Answer me!

Still no answer. Ro is now very worried.

RO
Computer, locate Ensign Gordimer.

COMPUTER
Ensign Gordimer is in his
quarters. Habitat ring, section
thirty-seven delta.

RO
Is he alone?

COMPUTER
Affirmative.

RO
Any sign of unauthorised weapons
fire?

COMPUTER
Negative.

At Ro's urgent nod, Etana rushes to the weapons locker. Ro runs out of the room onto the Promenade, with Etana running after, handing her a phaser. Ro slaps her combadge...

RO
Ro to Shul. Meet me and Etana at
Ensign Gordimer's quarters.
Something's wrong.

SHUL (comm)
Acknowledged.

RO
Ro to Ops. I need an emergency
site-to-site transport for two to
the habitat ring, section thirty-
seven delta. Code seven green.

5 INT. DS9 - OPS CENTRE

While Bajoran Sgt SHUL (8x21 "Lesser Evil") runs quickly across Ops to the transporter platform, KIRA looks urgently up from her position at the central Ops table, and nods to Bolian ensign T'RB, sitting at the science station...

KIRA
Do it.

T'RB
(works panels)
Energising...

6 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

While Ro and Etana continue to run down the Promenade towards a turbolift, a moving transporter beam catches them on the move, dissolving their running figures...

7 INT. DS9 - HABITAT RING CORRIDOR

...and rematerialises them, still running, in the corridor. They run a few more paces to a door, and Ro slaps the door chime. There is no answer...

RO
Security override, priority one.
Access Ro gamma three-two-two.

A BEEP, and the door opens. Her weapon raised and Etana covering her back, Ro steps cautiously into the room...

8 **INT. DS9 - GORDIMER'S QUARTERS**

Everything looks normal - a double room, twin beds with their own separate furniture. Etana covers the room. Off screen we hear the transporter, and soon SHUL steps in. Ro sees a glass on the floor, tipped over, water spilled on the carpet. Ro looks further around the other bed --

-- and there is Ensign GORDIMER (8x12 "Demons of Air and Darkness"). Face down, wearing pyjama bottoms but no shirt, a stream of blood leaking out of one ear onto the carpet. A Starfleet padd has fallen out of his hand to the ground.

RO
Gordimer!

Ro rushes to him, crouches down - eyes are open and scared, and he is shuddering, unable to breath or move. While Etana and Shul secure the room, Ro slaps her combadge hard...

RO
Ro to Infirmary, incoming wounded, medical emergency. Ops, beam Gordimer directly to the Infirmary then shut down the transporters. Etana, get down there too. If he so much as breathes a word, I want to know. Shul, secure the room and set up out in the corridor. Not even Captain Kira gets in here without my permission. Understood?

Everyone gets to work. Gordimer's eyes just manage to focus on Ro, before the transporter takes him.

And ending on Ro's confused and furious face...

BLACK OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

9 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

In the operating theatre, BASHIR slowly and sadly pulls a sheet over Gordimer's face and body. Seeing this, Ro stalks out of the theatre, and into the Infirmary's main room.

Etana and RICHTER (human female, last seen 8x22 "Greater Good") stand together, comforting each other. Ro shakes her head, and Etana clenches her jaw...

RO
Is the program ready?

ETANA
It's uploading right now, boss.

Ro nods acknowledgement and carries on out of the room, leaving Etana and Richter alone.

RICHTER
You okay, babe?

ETANA
Yeah... Just a little shaken, I guess.

BASHIR
(from other room)
Kristen, I could use your help in here.

Kristen looks to her girlfriend, not wanting to leave her. But Etana nods encouragingly...

ETANA
Go on. I'll be fine. I've got work to do too.

Richter kisses Etana tenderly, then reluctantly heads back into the operating theatre with Bashir. Etana steels herself and leaves the Infirmary...

10 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE

Ro strides across, on a mission, heading for Quark's...

11 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR (CONTINUOUS)

An ordinary evening crowd. Ro heads to the stairs to the holosuites. Seeing her, QUARK eagerly steps out...

QUARK
Laren... Can I get you --

RO
Not the time, Quark. I need to use
a holosuite. Now.

QUARK
Absolutely, anything for you. I
was hoping I'd see --

RO
Quark.

Realising she is serious, he stops trying to schmooze her.

QUARK
O - okay... holosuite three is
available. Come with me.

RO
Thank you.

Quark leads her up the stairs, and she follows. They reach the upper corridor together, and see that TARAN'ATAR is at the door of one of the holosuites, working the panels...

RO
(acknowledging)
Taran'atar.

TARAN'ATAR
Lieutenant.

RO
Come for a training session?

QUARK

Of course he has. All he does is
take up my holosuite time.

TARAN'ATAR

If you would prefer that I train
on you and your patrons, rather
than holographic opponents, I
would be happy to oblige.

QUARK

(to Ro)

You see? Nothing but threats.

Quark throws his hands up in exasperation and leaves. As
Taran'atar opens one door and enters, Ro opens the other
door and steps through...

12 INT. HOLOSUITE (CONTINUOUS)

...onto a bare holosuite grid, the door closing behind her.

RO

Computer. Run program Ro Two.

The computer bleeps affirmatively, and the holosuite
shimmers, the image replaced by...

13 INT. DS9 - GORDIMER'S QUARTERS

Ro appears to be back in Gordimer's room, exactly as it was
when she found the body. She walks around freely, knowing
she is free to touch whatever she wants.

RO

Computer, access all log files
from crew quarters. Go back five
hours. Replicator logs, personal
logs, entry-exit logs, medical
logs, whatever's available.
Correlate those and extrapolate
a recreation of the events that
transpired in this cabin. Begin
with Gordimer returning from his
duty shift this morning.

COMPUTER
Accessing.

While the computer does its work, Ro continues to walk around the room. Besides the outline of where the body fell, and the glass and padd that fell, nothing seems out of place. Uniforms folded neatly, boots shined, bed made perfectly. The same on the other side of the room.

RO
(to self)
Looks like he was just reading the
padd, got up to get a drink, then
collapsed when he came back to the
bed. Wasn't close enough to the
table to hit his head.
(inspects table)
No blood or impact damage.

She goes to Gordimer's bedside table. There is a PICTURE FRAME featuring Gordimer standing with his arms around two older people - his parents. Next to it is a bar of gold-pressed latinum. Ro picks it up, turns it over, frowns...

RO
No maker's mark. That's not right.
(taps combadge)
Ro to Etana. You found a bar of
latinum in Gordimer's room?

ETANA (comm)
Yes. It's in the evidence locker
with the glass and the padd. Why?

RO
I want more scans done on it. I've
got reason to believe it might be
counterfeit.

ETANA (comm)
Will do. Anything else?

RO
Not yet. Ro out.

She puts the bar back on the table...

COMPUTER

Ready. Extrapolated series of events is not comprehensive.

RO

That's okay. Run the program.

The doors open and Gordimer walks in, peels off his jacket, goes to the closet to hang it neatly. Stretches the muscles in his shoulders and neck, goes to the replicator...

GORDIMER

Computer, chicken Caesar salad with croutons, please. Oh, and a glass of water. Delay thirty minutes.

COMPUTER

Acknowledged.

That done, he turns and heads into the bathroom. The door closes behind him, then we hear the sonic shower...

RO

Computer, speed up recreation to five times normal speed.

Gordimer walks out of the bathroom at five-times speed, in his pyjama bottoms, towelling his hair. Folds the towel neatly, hangs it over a chair, goes to the replicator, brings the dinner back to a dining table, and tucks in.

Meanwhile, at normal speed, Ro walks around a bit more, watching Gordimer but keeping an eye out for intruders.

Gordimer finishes his dinner, takes the plates back to the replicator. He goes to his shelves and grabs a padd. He lies on his bed, props himself up with a pillow and places the still half-full glass on the bedside table.

As he reads the padd at high-speed, periodically sipping from his glass, Ro peers over his shoulder...

RO

That looks like the padd with the Ferengi business journals on it.

After a while, Gordimer gets up from the bed, replaces the padd neatly on its shelf, and grabs another...

RO

That's the padd with the novel.
Computer, resume normal speed.

Gordimer returns to normal speed. He brings the second padd back to the bed, fluffs the pillow, and settles in again. He continues to read for a while, as Ro watches everything.

Gordimer rubs at his temple, as if getting a headache. Stretching his neck muscles again, he gets up from the bed, carrying the padd and the now-empty glass. He places the glass back into the replicator...

GORDIMER

Computer, two aspirin and some
more water, please.

The replicator refills his glass. He takes the two pills, swallows them with the water, heads back to the bed. But at the foot of the bed --

-- he STUMBLES, the strength going from his legs. The glass and padd tumble from his hands to where Ro found them. On his knees, he manages to croak...

GORDIMER

Need help... Lieutenant Ro...

RO (comm)

Gordimer? That you? Are you okay?

(pause)

Gordimer! Answer me!

Shuddering and struggling to breathe, he collapses to the floor where Ro found him.

Her eyes wide with frustration and anger, Ro stares down at him, no wiser now than before...

14 **EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE**

The *Defiant* has returned, and is just settling into its place on the docking ring...

15 **INT. DS9 - WARDROOM**

A senior staff meeting. VAUGHN, Dax, Nog, Bowers, Bashir and Ro sit around the table. Kira enters and takes her place at the head of the table, all business...

KIRA
Alright. Talk to me.

BASHIR
Ensign Devin Gordimer died at around seven-thirty hours. Cause of death was massive cerebral haemorrhage. Something or someone shattered his eardrums and caused his brain to vibrate inside his skull until about a thousand blood vessels burst all at once. I've never heard of anything like it.

RO
I have reason to believe he was attacked.

KIRA
I thought you said there were no signs of a struggle.

RO
Correct. No signs of an accident either. And I'm only just getting started, but I don't see anything to make me think it was suicide. So if the doctor's ruling out a spontaneous medical condition --

She looks to Bashir - he nods his agreement.

RO (cont)
-- then I don't see any other option.

VAUGHN
Do you have any suspects?

RO

Not so far. Sensors don't show anybody else in the room at the time. No transporter signatures. He wasn't poisoned. No malfunction in the sonic shower. His roommate Jason Senkowski was away with you on the *Defiant*. He was well-liked by his colleagues. Never gave me any trouble on security detail.

NOG

It's like the perfect locked-room murder mystery.

RO

I don't like mysteries, Nog.

Kira sighs, frustrated. Turns to Vaughn...

KIRA

Commander, anything to report?

VAUGHN

Nothing out of the ordinary. The Cardassian colonies are getting along about as well as they have since the war, thanks to our aid shipments. The *Defiant* was just there to do our fair share.

(sigh)

Unfortunately, even with the Klingons, Romulans and Starfleet all sharing responsibility for patrolling their territory, various predators and pirates are making their presence felt. Ghemor and Macet do what they can, but...

KIRA

Alright. Make sure Macet knows we'll help if we can, as long as it doesn't compromise our own security. But right now, Ensign Gordimer is our priority.

(to Ro)

KIRA (cont)
Lieutenant, continue with your investigations. You have my full support, whatever you need. Dax, you and Nog head up the science teams while Shar's away. I want every sensor reading, every DNA trace checked and rechecked. People do not die on this station if I can help it. Dismissed.

Nodding, the others get up to leave. Ro is the last one to leave, but Kira calls to her...

KIRA
Ro... are you alright?

RO
Not really, no.

Ro exits without another word, leaving Kira alone...

16 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE

Ro sits behind her desk, unhappy with the job she is about to do. Her desk computer bleeps...

COMPUTER
Connection established. Channel secured.

Her screen changes to reveal an older human man, Gordimer's FATHER, looking a little perplexed...

FATHER (screen)
Ummm, Lieutenant... Ro, is it? How can I help you? They pulled me out of a lecture for this.

RO
I'm sorry, Professor Gordimer. But I'm the chief of security here on Deep Space Nine, and there's been an incident regarding your son.

FATHER (screen)
(chuckles)
You sound like one of his old
grade school teachers. What did
Devin do now?

The older man's good humour makes this horrible duty all
the worse for Ro. She forces herself onwards...

RO
No, sir... I don't know any good
way to say this, so I guess I'll
just say it. Devin has died.

His face drops. A few deep breaths, then a shaky voice...

FATHER (screen)
What happened?

RO
I'm afraid I can't say that yet.
Not with any certainty, anyway.
The investigation has only just
begun.

FATHER (screen)
I - I understand. If someone did
this to him, I trust that you'll
find out who.

RO
(with feeling)
I will. I promise.

On Ro's wounded but determined expression...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

17 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE

Ro is hard at work behind her desk. Etana enters from the rear security cells area and takes the opposite seat...

ETANA

How's it going, boss?

RO

Not good. The recreation gave me a couple of ideas, but nothing that can create the kind of vibrations Bashir described. Tell me you have something.

ETANA

Well, you were right about the bar of latinum. It's fake. But the two padds he read are just standard issue - the same as available to anyone in Starfleet. I checked their registry numbers and they're both accounted for at all times.

RO

Any interesting DNA traces?

ETANA

On the padds, only the ones that match perfectly with whoever checked it out. On the latinum, though, besides human, there was Ferengi, Cardassian and Bajoran.

RO

All of which are to be expected.

ETANA

I agree. But we should have an expert check it over to be sure.

RO

Yeah, you're right. Ro to Bashir.

BASHIR (comm)
Go ahead.

RO
I'm sending Etana round to you
with a piece of evidence that we
need examined. I need you to
confirm our DNA trace readings.

BASHIR (comm)
Understood.

Ro signs off. Etana gets up and goes back through the rear
cell doors, reappearing after a moment carrying a container
which holds the latinum in the blue glow of a stasis field.

RO
Oh, wait - you wanted to ask me
something, didn't you?

ETANA
It can wait.

She heads on out of the doors and onto the Promenade.

At the same time, Ensign Senkowski appears in the doorway.
He is exhausted, dishevelled, disturbed by recent events...

SENKOWSKI
Um, hi... you wanted to see me,
Lieutenant?

RO
Come in, come in. How are you
doing, Jason? Settling into the
new quarters?

SENKOWSKI
I guess. Thank you for arranging
them for me.

RO
Have you slept?

SENKOWSKI

Not since the *Defiant* got back. I just keep wondering if whatever got Devin was really meant for me.

RO

Why? Do either of you have enemies who might try something like this?

SENKOWSKI

Not that I know of. I mean, I knew Dev pretty well from the *Musgrave*, but we'd only been there a year before we both transferred here.

RO

What about before the transfer? Did he take any vacations?

SENKOWSKI

Are you kidding? He was saving up every penny to retire to Risa. He didn't leave the ship that often. I think the last time either of us left - before the transfer, I mean - was the away mission in the Badlands to salvage that old Cardassian freighter Commander Vaughn discovered.

Ro pauses. That brings up a whole new set of possibilities.

RO

Did you notice anything unusual in the Badlands? Any signs he might have been sick?

SENKOWSKI

No, ma'am - nothing. He always made sure he was healthy. Got his check-up every six months on the dot, whether he needed it or not. He was always in the gym. Always made sure he ate right. He was probably in better shape than Captain Dayrit.

RO

Did he ever talk about anyone
being mad at him? Anyone who might
have had a vendetta against him?

(shakes his head)

Jason, did you ever touch his
padds, or his bar of latinum?

SENKOWSKI

(that's unthinkable!)

Oh no no no, definitely not. He
almost broke one of my ships once.
After that we agreed he wouldn't
touch anything of mine, and I
wouldn't touch anything of his.

RO

Those ships mean a lot to you?

SENKOWSKI

(shrug)

I'm an engineer, Lieutenant.
Building and fixing ships is what
I do. There's a model of the old
Constitution-class *Defiant* at home
that I built when I was twelve. I
built both the *Grayson* and the
Commonwealth.

RO

The which?

SENKOWSKI

The two models in my quarters.
They're pre-Federation explorer
ships. My great-great-grandfather
helped design the *Grayson*.

RO

You don't happen to know why he
kept the bar of latinum on his
shelf, do you?

SENKOWSKI

No, ma'am.

RO
Or why he was reading Ferengi
business journals?

SENKOWSKI
(shrug)
I know he had a fascination for
the Ferengi markets. Maybe one of
his stocks came through.

Ro sits back, getting frustrated with all the dead ends...

RO
Okay. Thanks, Jason. You should go
and relax, try to get some sleep.
But let me know if you think of
anything else.

SENKOWSKI
I will. Thank you, Lieutenant.

He gets up and heads out to the Promenade, leaving Ro no
further on than she was.

18 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

Just a moment to re-establish and indicate time passing...

19 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

The doors open and Ro wanders in, arms folded, deep in
thought. Bashir looks up from his work to see her...

BASHIR
Lieutenant? You okay?

RO
I guess. I just need to know --

BASHIR
What killed Gordimer?

RO
No. Well, yeah, eventually, but
that's not it.

BASHIR

Then what is it?

Ro opens her mouth to reply, but nothing comes out. She is frustrated, can't put her thoughts into words...

RO

I don't know.

BASHIR

You need to know something, but you don't know what that something is?

RO

I've been going round in circles for hours. I know there's something that's just out of my reach. I don't know how to explain it.

BASHIR

Try me. I may not be a counsellor, but I can ask a direct question.

(beat)

Why don't you start by telling me why you came through that door?

RO

I'm getting tired of dead ends. I don't know any more about why he died than I did when I walked into his quarters. Well, I do, but it's not helpful.

BASHIR

I may not have known you for long, Lieutenant, but I've never known you to run out of options.

RO

(indignant)

Who said I'm out of options? I've just tested every one I thought of already, and came up with nothing, that's all. There's no evidence that he tripped on anything.

RO (cont)

He didn't have a medical condition that would cause him to suddenly collapse. There were no incurable blood disorders involved. So why?

BASHIR

(sigh)

Trust me, I'm just as frustrated as you are. His blood chemistry was otherwise completely normal.

RO

So if he wasn't drugged, there wasn't a struggle, and he didn't trip, then what?

BASHIR

What we need is a change of subject - that sometimes helps me think. How was your trip to Ferenginar?

RO

Oh, it was fine, I suppose. Except for the rain. And the bugs. And the cold. And all the Ferengi.

BASHIR

Well, at least you saved Rom's throne for him. And Leeta's a mother! Rom's a lucky man.

RO

I guess. I just feel sorry for the poor guy. His enemies knew exactly how to attack him - just confuse him to death.

BASHIR

Rom never was the sharpest tool in the box.

RO

It's an old terrorist trick - hide your weapon in plain sight.

RO (cont)
Did it all the time in the Maquis.
Use something everyone would just
accept because they're used to
seeing it. In this case - Rom
being a bit... well, stupid.

(pause; a new
thought occurs)
Something in plain sight. Some-
thing we'd just look straight past
because we'd never think of it as
a weapon.

BASHIR
(catching on)
The padds... What if there was
something inside one of the padds?
Wouldn't we have picked it up on
the scans?

RO
Not if it had a masking signal.

They are both excited. It is not an answer, but definitely
a step in the right direction. Ro taps her combadge.

RO
Ro to K--

ETANA (comm)
(interrupting)
Etana to Ro. We've got another
body.

As Ro and Bashir react...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

20 INT. DS9 - SENKOWSKI'S QUARTERS

Ro stands angrily, looking down at Senkowski's dead body, his glassy eyes seeming to accuse her.

Bashir inspects the body, Etana scans the room. Another padd on his bedside table, another spilled glass of water on the floor, and another trickle of blood from his ear...

RO

This looks like the same thing.

BASHIR

That'd be a logical assumption.
Except for blood type, these
readings are virtually identical
to what I found on Gordimer. I'm
even picking up the same amount of
brain tissue in the blood.

RO

He was afraid that whatever got
Gordimer was meant for him. I
guess he was right.

(sigh)

Well, at least now we've got a
signature on the murder weapon.
Etana, grab the padd and get it to
Dax and Nog.

Etana gingerly picks up the padd with gloved hands...

ETANA

Will do, boss. Anything else?

RO

Run a DNA trace on the glass as
well. Compare it to Gordimer's and
against the standard replicator
settings. I want to make sure the
replicators aren't lying to us.

Etana leaves. Ro seethes...

21 **INT. DS9 - SCIENCE LAB**

Ro, Dax and Nog stand around a worktable. In the centre lie the two padds in question, surrounded by a force field. The doors open and KIRA enters, heading straight for them...

RO
We think we've got the murder
weapon, Captain.

KIRA
The padds? You're serious?

RO
Deadly. Go ahead, Nog.

Nog manipulates some metallic callipers that pass through the force field. He uses them to open one of the padds and take off its cover. The tech inside has clearly been rearranged. Kira leans in, looks at it...

RO
I scanned that padd myself three
times. So did Etana, so did Dax.
Nothing showed up.

KIRA
How did the scanners miss this
much tampering?

NOG
(uses callipers
to point)
Because of this. It's designed to
contact the central computer for
regular programming updates. But
it's not doing that anymore. Now
it's sending out false signals to
fool any sensor into thinking it's
just a regular off-the-shelf unit.

KIRA
And what's it hiding?

NOG
That, I'm still working on.

KIRA

But how did it get modified in the first place? Those things are kept in Starfleet possession at all times. You can't just grab them off the Promenade.

RO

And there's no record of any going missing. So that leaves direct tampering out of the question. I... do have a theory, but it's a bit... out there.

KIRA

Everything's out there right now, Lieutenant. Spit it out.

RO

Well, there was one other common factor between Gordimer and Senkowski's deaths, something I overlooked at first. They weren't just both reading padds when they died. According to the library access files, they were reading the same thing. A novel called "Burning Hearts of Qo'noS."

KIRA

What, you're saying the story killed them?

NOG

Hold on - "Burning Hearts of Qo'noS"? I read that book!

DAX

(dismayed)

Oh gods... the novels...

(off Kira's look)

Just before the *Defiant* left for its patrol of Cardassian space, there was a new batch of stories uploaded to the library. Half the *Defiant's* crew have read it.

RO

Computer, list of all people who
read "Burning Hearts of Qo'noS."

COMPUTER

Lieutenant Nog. Ensign T'rb.
Ensign Devin Gordimer. Crewman
Sevak. Lieutenant Samaritan
Bowers. Lieutenant Kesh-u. Ensign
Bryanne Permenter. Ensign Jason
Senkowski. Lieutenant Cardok.

KIRA

If that book is the key, then how
come Gordimer and Senkowski are
dead and the rest are still alive?

RO

(realising)

Because they're human.

(off Kira's look)

Nog's a Ferengi. T'rb's a Bolian.
Cardok's a Benzite. But Gordimer
and Senkowski are both human.
Maybe whatever this thing does is
only tailored to humans.

NOG

But... Bowers. And Permenter.

RO

I think we need to get them to the
Infirmary as soon as possible.

KIRA

Wait, that still doesn't explain
how a story can kill you.

NOG

There could be a hidden line of
code in the text. A sophisticated
enough code could reprogram the
padd's own technology to perform
other functions - like send out
masking signals.

RO
(another
inspiration)
Bashir said that Gordimer's
eardrums were burst. Nog, check
this thing's loudspeakers.

Nog manipulates the callipers, pulls bits of tech out of
the way. Taps keys on the worktable, scans the padds...

NOG
You were right. The speakers have
been reconfigured into an acoustic
amplifier. This thing could focus
a beam of sound like a phaser.

RO
Sonic bullet. Just as effective as
any sword or knife, and completely
undetectable to standard sensors.

KIRA
Alright, I buy it. Computer, shut
down all access to the station
library's fictional database.
Interface with the *Defiant's* main
computer and do the same there.

COMPUTER
Access cancelled.

KIRA
Now where did this thing come
from? Who the hell goes to the
trouble of writing a novel with a
secret code embedded in it, just
to try and kill some humans?

DAX
Computer, who uploaded the novel
"Burning Hearts of *Qo'noS*" to the
fictional library?

COMPUTER
Novel uploaded by Ambassador
Quark.

This is just confirmation of Kira's worst assumptions...

KIRA
That little troll - that's it.
I'm gonna personally kill him.

Nog reacts - hurt, upset. Ro turns angrily to Kira...

RO
Captain. Can I speak to you
privately for a moment?

Not waiting for a reply, Ro grabs Kira by the arm and drags her out of the room, into the corridor...

22 INT. DS9 - DOCKING RING CORRIDOR (CONTINUOUS)

Kira reacts badly, throwing Ro's arm off furiously...

KIRA
What the hell do you think you're
doing?

RO
Permission to speak freely, sir?

KIRA
This better be good, Lieutenant.

RO
Then to use your own question, what
the hell do you think you're doing?
(off Kira's look)
You just promised to kill the duly
appointed ambassador from
Ferenginar, right in front of his
own nephew, who also just happens
to be your own chief engineer. You
cannot do things like that, not
when you're a Starfleet captain.

KIRA
You're giving me advice on how to
be a good Starfleet officer?
That's rich.

RO

That's exactly what I'm doing.
Believe it or not I've been in
Starfleet before - twice. I've
pissed off enough captains and
admirals to learn where to draw
the line, and what you just said
in there was way over it.

KIRA

Quark helped to kill two Starfleet
officers, Ro! That's over the
line! I might have known you'd
defend him...

RO

(darkly)

I beg your pardon?

KIRA

I'm talking about you and your...
relationship with him.

RO

My relationship with Quark is none
of your damn business, Captain.
But as a matter of fact... I
recently broke off whatever kind
of relationship that was.

KIRA

(surprised into
sympathy)

Really? Oh... I didn't know.

RO

Yeah, well... like I said, none of
your business.

(reins it in)

Captain, I don't want to fight
with you. But do you seriously
think Quark is capable of this?

KIRA

He's been breaking laws since the
day he set foot on this station.

RO

Import regulations! Selling fake trinkets, over-charging customers. But you can't honestly tell me you think he'd actually kill someone, or knowingly help someone else do it. He may be greedy and devious, but he is not a murderer.

KIRA

(grudging)

Alright, maybe he's not. But he is involved in this in some way, and he's going to tell us exactly how.

RO

Oh, absolutely. I'm going to make him spill every secret he's got. But it's got to be done politely. He's a government official now, and he deserves respect on that basis alone.

KIRA

Can we really do that? Questioning him inside the bar could raise all kinds of diplomatic problems. It's sovereign Ferengi territory now.

RO

I don't know. A little interview right there in the embassy might prove handy. He won't want to cause a scene for his customers.

A bit annoyed at having to accede to Ro, but smart enough to accept when she is wrong, Kira turns to the door...

KIRA

Alright - that's a plan.

(beat)

Thank you, Lieutenant.

The door opens and they head back into the lab...

...where Nog and Dax are waiting, rather uncomfortably...

KIRA

Lieutenant Nog, I'd like to
apologise for what I said earlier.
Under Federation law, your uncle
is innocent until proven guilty.
And... though it surprises me to
say it, he probably is innocent.

Nog accepts the apology silently, still a little shaken...

KIRA

Now, back to business. You said
this thing was uploaded to the
library, and everybody had access
to it on the *Defiant*. Could it be
related to the glitch in the
Defiant's targeting systems?

NOG

I don't think so, Captain. If I'm
right about how this works, then
it would only start reconfiguring
the tech once the file's accessed.
Just sitting there in the computer
shouldn't have any effect.

KIRA

But it's worth making sure. Take
Bowers and get on it. Once he's
been to the Infirmary, that is.

(Nog nods)

And you're absolutely certain this
thing only affects humans?

NOG

So far. But any program clever
enough to do this wouldn't have
much trouble tailoring itself to
different frequencies. Humans may
have just been the first target.

DAX
I'll have everyone on that list
report to Julian for a check-up.

KIRA
Good. I don't want any more bodies
on my deck.

CUT TO:

24 **INT. KLINGON HALL OF WARRIORS**

Dead and bloody Klingon BODIES cover the ground, just like in the novel at the top of the episode. Except that now, instead of Ngara the Klingon warrior-woman, TARAN'ATAR is the one slashing through them with speed and viciousness.

He executes several complicated manoeuvres battling the oncoming Klingon warriors, slaughtering every one easily.

Then he loses balance and STUMBLES a little, and one of the holographic Klingons manages to draw blood.

Taran'atar instantly turns and IMPALES the Klingon on his *kar'takin* knife. But he is still a little bit clumsy. He fights on as best he can, refusing to give in to the dizziness that is slowly encroaching.

He does not understand why his movements are becoming more uncoordinated, or why his head isn't clear. His frustration only makes him fight harder.

Eventually he loses his balance again, and collapses to his knees, unable to raise his arms to fight. He tries to force his eyes to stay open, but they flutter closed, and he slumps to the floor. The Klingons bray victory...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

25 INT. DS9 - QUARK'S BAR

TREIR stands hands-on-hips, reacting warily to the presence of Ro and Kira side by side in uniform...

TREIR
This can't be good. I take it you
want to speak to the Ambassador?

Quark emerges from among some customers he was schmoozing, and saunters over with an ingratiating smile...

QUARK
A-ha! My two favourite Bajoran
beauties. Treir, have our guests
asked for a drink?

TREIR
Not yet.

QUARK
Well, table three has. Off you go.

Treir throws an acidic look at Quark, then back to Ro...

TREIR
Whatever it is, I saw him do it.

Treir heads away. Quark leads Ro and Kira to the bar...

QUARK
Now, what can I get you --

RO
What do you know about the novel
"Burning Hearts of Qo'noS" ?

QUARK
Ah! What a wonderful story! A best
seller on Vulcan, I'm told. You're
welcome, by the way.

KIRA

So you admit you uploaded it?

QUARK

Of course. Why not? I've heard only good things. That Bolian science ensign loved it. What is it with blue guys wearing blue uniforms around here, anyway?

RO

Quark, that story is specifically designed to kill people.

QUARK

Oh, a little suspense never hurt anybody.

KIRA

I've got two dead bodies in the Infirmary that suggest otherwise.

QUARK

(quiet, shocked)

Two dead bodies?

RO

I don't suppose you have any idea why Ensign Gordimer was interested in Ferengi business journals, do you? Or why there was a fake bar of latinum in his room?

KIRA

A deal that went bad, maybe?

QUARK

(becoming worried)

What? No! Captain, I don't even know Ensign Gordimer!

(off Kira's look)

Okay - I know him as a customer. I know what he likes to drink. But that's all! I don't know anything about any fake latinum.

KIRA

Quark...

(glance at Ro;

tries to be polite)

Ambassador, the fact is that you are responsible for uploading a program to DS-Nine's computer that caused the deaths of two Starfleet officers. Do you really want another weapons trafficking charge on your record? Diplomatic privilege only extends so far.

Quark looks with panic back and forth between the two...

QUARK

Laren...

RO

Don't even try it, Quark. Whoever designed this thing doesn't care what species you are. It adjusts itself for every known species.

(really working it)

Your own nephew read it. He barely escaped with his life. Hasn't your family suffered enough lately?

KIRA

Tell us who made it, Quark, and maybe my report to the Federation Council will tell them you didn't know what it was capable of.

QUARK

I don't know who made it!

RO

If it's such a best seller, how can you not know who wrote it?

QUARK

That's just what Tellow told me!

RO

Who's Tellow?

QUARK

The Wadi - the Wadi trader who
sold it to me.

KIRA

Wadi? You mean those guys with
that stupid game? Why would they
be selling a Klingon story?

QUARK

Maybe it's a reinterpretation.
Maybe it's fan fiction.

He rummages quickly in a drawer, eager to get this over
with. He pulls out a small chip and hands it to Ro...

QUARK

Here - this is what he gave me.
Laren, you have to believe me, I
had no idea --

RO

I do, Quark. Thank you.

KIRA

Yes, thank you for your help,
Ambassador. I'm sure it will make
a difference to their families.

Kira and Ro leave - Quark is genuinely hurt and upset...

26 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

Moments later, Ro and Kira stride into the Infirmary, where
Bashir sits at his desk...

KIRA

Julian - anything?

BASHIR

Doctor Tarses is examining Ensign
Permenter right now. She did
complain of a headache, but that's
all. And she's the last, everyone
else checked out fine.

RO

Great. I've got another piece of evidence to scan for DNA traces.

She hands him the chip. He places it in a scanner, switches it on, inspects the results...

BASHIR

Human... Bajoran... Ferengi...

RO

You, me, Quark.

BASHIR

Right. But there's something else here... I can't quite tell. The sample's corrupted, as if somebody had tried to remove their fingerprints. Plus, of course, there's not a lot of surface area.

KIRA

Could it be Wadi?

BASHIR

Wadi? The guys with the game?

(looks closer)

Yes... yes, it could be Wadi. The protein sequences are a match even with the small sample. But there's still another trace I can't get a handle on. I'll keep working...

KIRA

Do it on the *Defiant*, Doctor. Kira to Dax - pull up the flight plan on the Wadi trader vessel that was here two weeks ago.

27 INT. DS9 - OPS CENTRE (INTERCUT)

DAX works the central Ops console, VAUGHN nearby....

DAX

Got it, Captain. They went back through the wormhole.

KIRA (comm)
Vaughn, are you there?

VAUGHN
Yes, Captain. What's going on?

KIRA (comm)
Get the *Defiant* ready, Commander.
You're going after them.

Intrigued, Vaughn beckons BOWERS over from tactical to follow him towards the turbolift....

28 INT. DS9 - INFIRMARY

Ro and Kira head towards the exit as Bashir prepares his equipment. But in the doorway, Ro pauses...

RO
Captain, if we're going into the
Gamma Quadrant, should we take
Taran'atar?

KIRA
Are you sure that's a good idea?

RO
Never hurts to have muscle on your
side. And I think he needs to get
off the station. He's like a tiger
in a cage, Captain... we need to
let him out to prowl around once
in a while or he'll just go crazy.

KIRA
Okay, I guess you're right. Have
you seen him?

RO
Last I saw, he was heading into
the holosuite.

KIRA
As usual. Come on...

They exit onto...

29 INT. DS9 - PROMENADE (CONTINUOUS)

...where they find that Taran'atar is actually standing outside of Quark's bar, staring across the Promenade at the door to the Infirmary. As Ro and Kira exit, he stiffens...

RO

Taran'atar! Just the man I want to see. I've got a mission for you.

Taran'atar looks to Kira, confirming that this is what Kira wants. She nods, and Taran'atar turns back to Ro...

RO

I don't know if you're aware, but two officers have been killed on the station in the last day.

TARAN'ATAR

No, I was not aware. And... that surprises me.

RO

We've identified the culprit as a Wadi trader. The *Defiant* is going to follow the trail. I want you with us.

TARAN'ATAR

Are we returning to the Dominion?

KIRA

...No. You'll return here with us.

TARAN'ATAR

As you say. I will prepare.

Taran'atar walks off. Kira shares a cautious look with Ro.

KIRA

I'll tell Vaughn to record a transmission for the Dominion, so they know why we're in the Gamma Quadrant. Have Taran'atar co-sign it. Hopefully they'll trust that we're not going to cause trouble.

RO
Aren't we?

Ro heads back to the security office to prepare...

30 **EXT. DS9 - ESTABLISHING**

Focusing on the *Defiant* sitting on the docking ring.

31 **INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE**

Bowers is at tactical, TENMEI at helm. Ro stands to one side, tense and arms folded. Vaughn enters...

VAUGHN
Lieutenant - I don't believe I've
seen you on the bridge before.

RO
Your point?

VAUGHN
Simply that you've always been
welcome. As the senior security
officer, you're entitled to take
the tactical position.

RO
Bowers is welcome to it. I've got
enough to worry about.

VAUGHN
Then why the change today?
(beat)
This is personal, isn't it?

Ro turns towards Vaughn, shielding their conversation...

RO
Almost three-hundred people died at
Sidau, Commander. And while I'll do
everything in my power to bring the
murderer to justice, I can accept
that there probably wasn't anything
I could have personally done to
stop it from happening.

RO (cont)

But Gordimer and Senkowski were on
my station, under my protection.
It's my fault they're dead, and I
will track down whoever did it -
personally.

VAUGHN

Ro... I can certainly understand
why you'd feel that way. But like
I said, you have to know we're all
in this together. The only person
who we can unequivocally say is to
blame is Mister Tellow.

RO

And like I said, it's one thing to
know that in your head. It's
another matter to feel it in your
heart, when you're the one who has
to call up the proud parents and
tell them their child is dead.

Understanding that, Vaughn settles into the command chair
and turns to Tenmei, fatherly love in his eyes...

VAUGHN

Ensign, whenever you're ready.

TENMEI

Aye sir.

32 **EXT. DEFIANT**

Defiant pulls back slowly, turns, surges out into space.
The wormhole opens, and the *Defiant* dives in...

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

33 INT. ALIEN BAR

Ro pins a sweaty, corpulent Wadi male - TELLOW - against a grimy wall of this dingy, seedy bar. One hand around his fleshy throat, the other pressing a phaser to his head...

RO

Why do you want to run, Tellow? It makes me think you might be hiding something.

TELOW

No. I don't deal with Starfleet.

RO

But you do deal with Ferengi. And that Ferengi deals with Starfleet. And he says you sold him a weapon.

TELOW

I don't know nothing 'bout no weapon or no Ferengi.

RO

You know anything about Betazoids?

TELOW

Oh please, Federation law --

RO

Do I look like I give a damn about Federation law?

Behind her, Bowers stands holding off the bartender-cum-bouncer, a hulking DOSI male, with his own phaser...

BOWERS

Lieutenant, are you sure about this? Commander Vaughn --

Ro shares a look with him - *come on, get what I'm doing...*

RO
I don't care what Vaughn thinks!
We're dealing with a threat to
Federation security here!
(back to Tellow)
Now... are we going to play nice,
or do I bring in my Betazoid to
rip it out of your brain?

As Tellow decides what he's least afraid of here...

34 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

Ro enters, striding quickly over to where Vaughn and Bashir stand at the science station, looking at readings...

RO
We've got a bigger problem.

VAUGHN
I know. Bashir just told me he's
identified the last DNA trace.

BASHIR
(grave)
It's Vorta.

RO
(nodding)
If this is the first wave of a new
Dominion attack...

VAUGHN
I don't think so. I'd say more
likely we're dealing with another
defective clone. Which doesn't
make him any less dangerous.

RO
According to Mister Tellow, we're
looking for a Vorta named Luaran.
She's working entirely without the
Dominion's support, out of the
abandoned communications post at
Callinon Seven.

VAUGHN

Luaran...? The last Luaran I met was in charge of the Dominion's occupation of Betazed. I killed her myself.

BASHIR

Captain Kira encountered a Luaran in Cardassian space too.

VAUGHN

Ensign Tenmei, engage cloak and set course for the Callinon system, maximum warp.

TENMEI

Aye, sir.

The lights dim for stealth mode, and the screen shows the stars streaking as the ship jumps to warp...

34 EXT. SPACE - CALLINON SYSTEM

A distant red sun, a large gas giant planet in foreground. The system also has a lot of asteroids and small moons...

35 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

Increase magnification - revealing a tiny communications satellite silhouetted against the gas giant...

VAUGHN

Take us in, Tenmei. Slow and easy. Bowers, keep a close eye.

BOWERS

Aye, sir. No sign of --

The ship is suddenly ROCKED by phaser fire out of nowhere.

VAUGHN

-- the hell? Bowers!

BOWERS

Phaser cannon! Localising now --

VAUGHN

Evasive manoeuvres, Tenmei! Damage report! How the hell'd she see through the cloak?

BOWERS

Minor damage deck three, ablative armour holding. The Dominion has seen through our cloak before, sir. I've got the phaser source - two asteroids either side of us.

VAUGHN

Drop cloak, take them out, Bowers.

36 **EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT**

Mid-evasive manoeuvre, the *Defiant* uncloaks and immediately FIRES phasers on two asteroids, which EXPLODE. But we now see two spinning points of light approaching...

37 **INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE**

BOWERS

Incoming! Two photon torpedoes - scratch that, quantum torpedoes!

VAUGHN

Shoot them down, Bowers.

BOWERS

I'm trying sir, but I can't seem to get a lock...

VAUGHN

Vaughn to Nog! You told me these targeting problems were fixed!

38 **INT. DEFIANT - MAIN ENGINEERING**

NOG and his crew, including Permenter, working busily...

NOG

I thought they were, sir! I'm re-routing now.

Nog runs across to another console -- but stops at the sight of TARAN'ATAR standing there. Nog glares up at the hulking Jem'Hadar, who stares back, intrigued...

TARAN'ATAR
You no longer fear me.

NOG
I got over that a while ago. Now
you're just in my way.

Strangely impressed, Taran'atar slowly steps aside and lets Nog pass. Nog urgently works the other panel...

39 EXT. SPACE - DEFIANT

Just as the torpedoes are getting worryingly close, the *Defiant's* pulse phasers FIRE --

--- and destroy the torpedoes in open space.

As the ship heads towards the planet, small MISSILES shoot out from other nearby asteroids and impact against the shields, picking away at them in many tiny explosions...

40 INT. DEFIANT - MAIN BRIDGE

As Bowers works his panels...

BOWERS
Small missile fire, sir. Diverting
shield power... Shields now at
one-hundred-five percent.

VAUGHN
If that's all she's got, then we
shouldn't have any problems here.
Any sign of shields on the
listening post itself?

BOWERS
Nothing we can't interfere with.

41 EXT. SPACE - ESTABLISHING

The listening post, hanging in front of the gas giant...

42 INT. CALLINON LISTENING POST

Where Dax and O'Brien got caught in 3x01 "The Search, pt 1" now a dark and abandoned. Transporters deposit RO, BOWERS, NOG and TARAN'ATAR in the darkness, all armed.

Massive ear-piercing ALARMS instantly screech and echo, making Nog cringe from the noise. Wincing, Bowers tracks the speakers -- and SHOOTs them out with his phaser. The sounds dies. Nodding her thanks, Ro leads them forward...

RO

Anybody see anything?

As if in answer, a loud ROAR signals a single JEM'HADAR running towards them in the darkness. Nog GASPS in shock. Bowers and Ro both raise their phasers...

...but Taran'atar has already LAUNCHED forward to face the other Jem'Hadar. They set to battle...

...but Taran'atar is clearly the superior fighter. The other Jem'Hadar is untrained, uncoordinated, undisciplined. Taran'atar takes him out in a few strokes of his *kar'takin*, and he drops to the ground, dead.

Catching her breath, Ro is about to head forward. But then a PHASER bolt comes out of the darkness. Bowers falls to the ground, BELLOWing in pain, caught in the leg.

Ro turns to see LUARAN (from 7x22 "Tacking Into the Wind") emerging with phaser in hand. The Vorta looks unkempt and dishevelled, like she has gone just a little bit crazy...

LUARAN

Lower your weapon, human.

RO

(not lowering)

You need your eyes checked - I'm not human.

LUARAN

You're all human! I take it my little free gift with purchase has begun its work...

Ro is about to try another tack, to negotiate. But before she can --

-- Taran'atar PUSHES past her and barrels towards the Vorta. Luaran's face gapes in surprise to see the Jem'Hadar coming towards her, forgetting the phaser she holds...

RO
Taran'atar, wait --

...but too late. With a violent ROAR, Taran'atar runs up and THRUSTS his *kar'takin* right through Luaran's chest. The Vorta GASPS in surprise and shock, gurgling as she stares disbelieving into Taran'atar's eyes...

RO
Taran'atar, no!

Luaran twitches, dying right there on his knife, until eventually she sags and Taran'atar throws her away. Ro is horrified and appalled, points her phaser at Taran'atar...

RO
Stand down, now!

She looks down in shock at Luaran's body, then up at Taran'atar. He dares her to confront him...

RO
(slaps combadge)
Ro to *Defiant*! Emergency medical transport right now for Bowers and the Vorta! Right now!

The transporter takes Bowers and Luaran. Nog stands back, not quite as brave as he would like to believe. Ro keeps her weapon trained on Taran'atar...

The Jem'Hadar, however, has noticed something on the ground behind where Luaran's body was. It is Luaran's ketracel-white box. He stares at it, can't take his eyes off it...

43 EXT. DS9 - ESTABLISHING

We're home, and the *Defiant* has returned...

Ro and Kira stand over Luaran's dead body on a biobed...

RO

She must have wanted revenge for losing the war. And thought she'd found a clever way to take it.

KIRA

Luaran... I met her, you know. I helped kill her. The last thing she saw was Odo handing Garak the gun that killed her. Maybe that's why her next incarnation went crazy.

RO

Do we tell Odo?

KIRA

Tell him what - that we used Taran'atar to kill another member of the Dominion? I don't think that would help him convince the other Founders to trust us.

(beat)

It can't have been easy for her. Staying away from home, away from her people for so long.

RO

What do we do about Taran'atar?

KIRA

What can we do?

With a sigh, Kira heads out. Ro follows. As they exit...

...they pass DAX on her way in. She heads to Bashir, who points out two padds on the work surface between them...

BASHIR

Ah, there you are. You can put those back into circulation. Nog certified them both one-hundred percent brain-killer free.

Dax picks up the padds, starts flicking through them...

DAX

So... "Burning Hearts of Qo'noS,"
eh? You read it?

BASHIR

Never got the chance, actually.
Probably for the best.

DAX

Jadzia read it years ago. And you
know, she didn't even think of it
as fiction.

Dax takes the padds and gets up to leave. On her way out,
she throws a playful glance back over her shoulder...

DAX

She considered it an instruction
manual.

Bashir watches her go, surprised, confused and intrigued.
Was she just flirting with him...?

45 INT. DS9 - SECURITY OFFICE

Ro sits at her desk, exhausted. Taran'atar stands at
attention before her, uncowed...

RO

I just really wish that you hadn't
killed that Vorta. I was hoping to
take her alive for any information
she might have.

TARAN'ATAR

(unimpressed grunt)

Why order me to come if you did
not want me to kill for you? It is
the only use I have here.

RO

Surely you understand by now that
we try to avoid killing whenever
possible.

TARAN'ATAR

She murdered two of your own officers. Does that not demand her own death in return?

RO

I am fully aware of what she did, Taran'atar. But Starfleet has rules that we have to follow about this kind of thing. I... may not always agree with those rules. But I am obligated to follow them.

TARAN'ATAR

Am I to be punished?

RO

I've spoken to Captain Kira. She decided to let it go. This time.

TARAN'ATAR

I should have never gone on that mission. It was a waste of my time.

RO

I thought you'd be happy to get off the station. To finally do something.

TARAN'ATAR

That Vorta was no challenge. She was weak and deluded. She had betrayed the Dominion. She deserved to die.

RO

(uncomfortable)

Now, you actually sound happier...

TARAN'ATAR

Many Jem'Hadar would be happy to kill their Vorta, if only we were permitted. We follow their orders because the Founders command us to do so. Because that is the order of things. Nothing more.

TARAN'ATAR (cont)
(leans closer)
Perhaps you should remember that
the next time you want me to
follow your orders.

Taran'atar turns on his heel and walks out, leaving Ro
somewhat wiggled. She slumps in her seat, pondering. With
the door still open, Etana steps inside, nervously...

ETANA
Boss?

RO
Hi, Kol. Oh right, yes, of course.
You wanted to talk to me, didn't
you? I guess I'm free now.

Etana comes in, tentatively takes a seat...

RO
To be honest, I've been waiting
for this. I expected you to ask
for a recommendation for your
transfer to Starfleet weeks ago.

ETANA
Lieutenant... I'm not transferring
to Starfleet. In fact, I'm here to
tell you that I'm leaving security
altogether.

A long pause, as Ro stares disbelievingly. Then quietly...

RO
I beg your pardon?

ETANA
I'm staying with the Militia, but
I'm going to transfer to the
Medical Corps and work in the
infirmary with Kristen.

RO
So what you're saying is that
you're abandoning me?

ETANA

I'm doing no such thing. You've got a full Starfleet crew, and now you've got Major Cenn --

RO

Cenn's a whining baby. He doesn't know this station like you do. He barely knows where his own quarters are.

ETANA

Laren, I don't want to argue about this. It wasn't an easy decision for me. The fact is, you've been a good friend, and...

(smirk)

...an okay boss. But this has been coming for a while. Kristen was working so hard while Doctor Bashir was away. I didn't see her for a whole three months while the *Defiant* was in the Gamma Quadrant. And... considering the last couple of days, now's as good a time to get out of security as any.

RO

You're quitting over Gordimer?

ETANA

(exasperated)

You know that's not what this is about. I'm tired of never seeing my girlfriend. If I transfer to Medical I can stay on the station and I get to spend more time with Kristen. And it's not like I don't have the training already. Please don't make this hard on me, Laren.

RO

Well, I'm not happy about it. But it's your life. And I wouldn't want to be the person who stands between you and Kristen.

ETANA

Thank you. The request has already gone in to General Lenaris. You'll give it your nod of approval?

RO

(grudging)

If I have to. Still can't believe you're leaving me with Cenn, though.

ETANA

Give him a chance. He might surprise you.

RO

(sombre)

I've had enough surprises for a while, thanks.

ETANA

Yeah. I guess so.

On that note, Etana quietly gets up and leaves. Ro sighs. After a pause, she rallies herself, unhappy but resigned.

RO

Computer, establish connection to the University of Soweto, Earth. For the attention of Professor Harold Gordimer.

COMPUTER

Working...

Ro sits back sadly as the computer does its work...

FADE OUT:

THE END