

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

8x08 - "Abyss."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novel

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: Abyss

by David Weddle & Jeffrey Lang

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST - EARLY DAY

RO and TARAN'ATAR trudge through the forest in the dim dawn light. A small army of INGAVI swings through the trees. The main Ingavi KEL swings down and lands in front of them...

KEL

Do not speak loudly. The Jem'Hadar have claimed this area.

TARAN'ATAR

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

KEL

There is something here that you need to see.

The Ingavi in the trees begin to make a low HOOTing sound, sad and mournful. Kel points the way for Ro and Taran'atar through the MIST, towards a break in the trees...

RO

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

KEL

My people do not enter this place anymore.

RO

(to Taran'atar)

They wouldn't lead us into danger.

TARAN'ATAR

Not intentionally, perhaps. Let us get this over with so we can continue our campaign.

With Taran'atar exasperated, and Ro confused and cautious, they step through into a CLEARING...

2 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST CLEARING

...where the trees loom up dark and ominous in the mist,
dead and burned, SCORCHED by weapons fire.

RO

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

An iron NAIL glints in the low light. Ro touches it, sees
that it pins a stick to the tree. She pulls the stick off,
examines it closer. It's not a stick. It's a BONE.

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

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

TARAN'ATAR

Are you finished?

RO

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

TARAN'ATAR

I did not have to see anything.
I could smell it. The fear. The
uncomprehending dread. The trees
are saturated with it.

Tears in her eyes, she places the small bone reverently on
the ground and heads for the exit. Taran'atar follows...

3 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST - EARLY DAY

They enter the forest again, Kel waiting for them sadly...

RO

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

TARAN' ATAR

They?

RO

The Jem'Hadar.

TARAN' ATAR

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

RO

Then who? The Section 31 agents?

KEL

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

RO

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

KEL

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

He pauses, barely able to continue remembering the horror.

KEL (cont)

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

A hateful look at Taran'atar...

KEL (cont)

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

RO

But why?

TARAN'ATAR

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

RO

(angry)

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

(points back)

Isn't that what they wanted to do
to the entire Alpha Quadrant? Nail
us all up to a tree?

TARAN'ATAR

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

(to Kel)

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

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

BLACK OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

4 EXT. LOCKEN'S BASE - MORNING

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

5 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - PRISON CELL

BASHIR is asleep, back turned to DAX, who sits huddled on a separate bunk. They seem very far apart.

Silence as she looks at him, upset, worried and angry. When they finally speak, it's strained and irritable...

DAX

Julian?

A long pause before he answers.

BASHIR

What is it?

DAX

I need to talk.

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

BASHIR

Hold on, my arm's asleep.

(shakes it)

What do you want to talk about?

DAX

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

BASHIR

About what?

DAX

About you. About... who you are.

BASHIR

Don't you mean, what I am?

DAX

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

BASHIR

No? It's what I was thinking. It's what I would be thinking if I were you. Please don't pretend that it wasn't, because I really can't take it anymore. The pretending.

DAX

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

BASHIR

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

DAX

And that is?

BASHIR

I don't know exactly.

DAX

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

BASHIR

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

DAX

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

BASHIR

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

DAX

I can't believe I'm hearing this.

BASHIR

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

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

LOCKEN

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

DAX

What would you know about the
greater good?

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

BASHIR

What about Ezri?

LOCKEN

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

DAX

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

LOCKEN

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

(back to Julian)

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

BASHIR

...My answer is yes.

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

BASHIR

Ezri, you'll understand someday -

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

DAX

You son of a -

BASHIR

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

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

LOCKEN

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

BASHIR

Yes... it does.

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

6 EXT. SINDORIN RAINFOREST - MORNING

Ro hides in the hollows of a dead tree. She peers out...

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

TARAN'ATAR

(whisper)

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

RO

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

He holsters his phaser and grabs his throwing knives...

RO

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

TARAN'ATAR

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

RO

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

TARAN'ATAR

Watch and learn.

RO

I thought that was your job.

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

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

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

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

TARAN'ATAR

Leave. Or die. It makes no
difference to me.

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

RO

What the hell was that?

TARAN'ATAR

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

RO

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

TARAN'ATAR

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

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

7 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

A mess, but there are some flickering lights. She KICKS
away some of the debris and sits in the pilot's seat...

RO

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

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

RO

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

COMPUTER

Four minutes, fifty-five seconds.

She taps more buttons, then heads back to the hatch...

...where Taran'atar stands outside in the forest, looking
through the hatch with a dark expression...

TARAN'ATAR

We are discovered. At least twenty
Jem'Hadar are coming this way.

RO

We need four minutes.

TARAN'ATAR
Keep our link open. I will keep
you apprised.

He shrouds and leaves again...

RO
Computer, time to restart?

COMPUTER
Three minutes, fifty-two seconds.

RO
Can we fire phasers?

COMPUTER
Negative.

RO
Can we raise shields?

COMPUTER
Negative.

With a sigh, she looks out the hatch again...

...and sees two Jem'Hadar FLYING through the air, landing
with a CRUNCH.

TARAN'ATAR (comm)
Shield your eyes.

She does, just in time for an enormous FLASH to go off.
Voices CRY in pain. She looks out...

...and there are four more bodies on the forest floor.

RO
Computer, how much longer?

COMPUTER
One minute, forty-five seconds.

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

8 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST (INTERCUT)

Locken's Jem'Hadar FIRE indiscriminately.

A small rock lands at one of the soldiers' feet --

-- three others immediately react and FIRE, vaporising him.

A KNIFE sails through the FOREST and stops mid-air --

-- a Jem'Hadar UNSHROUDS with the knife stuck right in his face, and collapses dead.

Another unshrouds and FIRES on the runabout --

9 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT (INTERCUT)

-- and the ship rocks with the impact.

COMPUTER

Damage to port bulkhead. Recommend
raising shields.

RO

Raise shields!

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

10 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST (INTERCUT)

The runabout's rear end is lifting, but the nose is stuck.

Still shrouded and hidden behind a tree stump, Taran'atar FIRES low and cuts two Jem'Hadar off at the knees.

The Jem'Hadar fire back, hitting the tree stump. SPLINTERS pepper Taran'atar's skin, make him unshroud with a HISS...

11 INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT (INTERCUT)

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

RO

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

12 **EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST (INTERCUT)**

Taran'atar FIRES at random into the forest. He reaches up, and finds that he is BLEEDING amber blood from his head.

As the runabout SURGES up strongly, he watches it go, cringes back from the heat of the engines...

13 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT (INTERCUT)**

RO
Computer, activate transporter.

COMPUTER
Transporter is offline.

RO
What? Can you reroute power?

COMPUTER
Negative.

RO
Phasers?

COMPUTER
Not yet charged.

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

14 **EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST (INTERCUT)**

Taran'atar watches the runabout leave. He turns around...

...to find six weapons pointed directly in his face.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

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

Taran'atar is unconscious, restrained in a nasty-looking standing device. A hand touches a panel...

...and Taran'atar's body JOLTS. He GRUNTS awake, and sees a nameless JEM'HADAR FIRST gazing at him with fascination.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

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

TARAN'ATAR

Not so damaged.

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

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

TARAN'ATAR

(with difficulty)

You are fools. And your Khan -

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

What are you?

TARAN'ATAR

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

The First GRABS Taran'atar's hair-knot, YANKS him close...

JEM'HADAR FIRST

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

TARAN'ATAR

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Earlier you spoke of the Founders.
Who are they?

TARAN'ATAR

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

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

TARAN'ATAR

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

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

TARAN'ATAR

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

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

(ponders)

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

TARAN'ATAR

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Are they immortal?

TARAN'ATAR

...No. They are not immortal.

JEM'HADAR FIRST

The Khan is immortal.

TARAN'ATAR

What proof do you have of that?

JEM'HADAR FIRST

One does not ask a god for proof.

TARAN'ATAR

Even if you have doubts?

JEM'HADAR FIRST

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

The First turns to leave, but has another thought...

JEM'HADAR FIRST

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

And he leaves, leaving Taran'atar still restrained...

16 **INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - LOCKEN'S SUITE**

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

BASHIR

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

LOCKEN

They're mine. I brought everything I could salvage from New Beijing. The plan was that I would cook for everyone. It's how I took them all prisoner. A little extra something in the morning omelettes.

BASHIR

So they're all still here?

LOCKEN

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

BASHIR

I'm impressed. But there are still a few obstacles between you... between us... and our goals.

LOCKEN

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

BASHIR

Yes, please. For a start, there's the problem of sheer numbers. The Dominion had all the resources of Cardassia and the Breen, plus the entire Gamma Quadrant, and they couldn't defeat the Federation. You're only churning out a handful of Jem'Hadar a week...

LOCKEN

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

He emerges from the kitchen wiping his hands on a towel,
and goes to his large COMPUTER TERMINAL. He taps lots of
keys inhumanly quickly...

...and the main SCREEN reveals a complex chemical model,
with streams of accompanying data. Bashir peers closely...

BASHIR

A prion. Not like any I've seen.

LOCKEN

(proud)

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

BASHIR

If I understand this correctly --

LOCKEN

And you do, of course.

BASHIR

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

LOCKEN

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

BASHIR

How is it transmitted?

LOCKEN

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

BASHIR

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

LOCKEN

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

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

LOCKEN

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

BASHIR

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

LOCKEN

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

BASHIR

But not enough to make them act immediately.

LOCKEN

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

BASHIR

(pondering)

A war between the Romulans and the Federation...

FLASHBACK - 7x16 "INTER ARMA ENIM SILENT LEGES"

Bashir and SLOAN discuss his mission to Romulus...

SLOAN

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

BASHIR

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

BACK TO SCENE

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

BASHIR

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

LOCKEN

I couldn't have put it better
myself.

BASHIR

What's the timetable for all this?

LOCKEN

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

Locken trots into the kitchen, quite pleased with himself,
leaving Bashir sat at the table, considering all this...

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

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Do these Founders then not give
you the white?

TARAN'ATAR

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Badly?

TARAN'ATAR

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

(grudging)

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

(back to topic)

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

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

TARAN'ATAR

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

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

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

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

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

(re his own
white tube)

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

TARAN'ATAR

I don't know. A Jem'Hadar lives
only to serve the Founders, and I
have served them well. And yet...

(looks away)

...as soon as they discovered my
flaw, they sent me here, to this
blighted corner of the galaxy,
where nothing makes sense! I am
unfit to live among my own kind,
and so I must die here among you
weaklings and traitors. I am a
deviant. It is what I deserve.

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

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

(re tube again)

- as anything but a chain.

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

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

As Taran'atar considers in return...

18 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - PRISON CELL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

19 EXT. LOCKEN'S BASE - DAY

Same as before, only more obviously day now...

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

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

21 INT. VENTILATION SHAFT

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

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

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

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

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

She lands silently, gymnastics skills coming in handy...

DAX

Lights? ...Computer?

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

DAX

Logs. There have to be log files.

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

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

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

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

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

23 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST - DAY

The large old tree that is the Ingavi's hiding place...

24 INT. INGAVI CAVE HIDEOUT

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

RO (v.o.)

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

(beat)

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

25 **EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST - DAY**

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

RO (v.o.)

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

26 **INT. RUNABOUT - COCKPIT**

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

RO

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

(pause)

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

27 **EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST - DAY**

Ro hides among the trees, her binoculars trained on the distant Dominion compound. Numerous Ingavi are around her.

RO (v.o.)

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

Kel appears, hanging upside-down from a branch...

RO

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

KEL

Eight.

RO

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

KEL

Then why haven't we been attacked?

RO

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

KEL

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

RO

They don't. They don't sleep.

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

KEL

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

RO

What?

KEL

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

Ro can only shake her head in confusion. Still...

RO

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

KEL

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

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

28 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - CORRIDOR

Locken stalks down the corridor, furiously muttering.

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

LOCKEN

You. You're feeling alright?

JEM'HADAR

Ready to serve, my Khan.

LOCKEN

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

JEM'HADAR

Understood.

Locken stomps on, with the Jem'Hadar meekly following...

29 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - LOCKEN'S SUITE (INTERCUT)

Locken and the Jem'Hadar enter...

...to find Bashir hunched over the computer terminal from earlier, fingers flying over the panels.

LOCKEN
Stand away, Julian. Over against
the wall.
(he doesn't)
Soldier, take aim. If he doesn't
move in three seconds, shoot him.

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

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

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

30 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - MISSILE SILO (INTERCUT)

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

The missile LAUNCHES, shooting up into the sky...

31 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST (INTERCUT)

From their hiding place in the trees, Ro, Kel and the other
Ingavi hear the noise, look up over the tree line...

...and see the MISSILE soar into the air from behind the
compound. They don't know what it is, but it can't be good.

32 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - LOCKEN'S SUITE (INTERCUT)

Seeing this on the screen, Locken turns to Bashir, smug...

LOCKEN
Honestly, I expected better from
you. If you insisted on being my
enemy, the least you could have
done was make it interesting.

BASHIR
Sorry to disappoint you.

LOCKEN
Well, at least we have the hunt
for your little pet slug-girl to
look forward to. She managed to
accomplish more than you did just
by poisoning my Jem'Hadar...

Julian smirks a little at that...

33 **FLASHBACK - PRISON CELL**

-- as Bashir gets up to talk to Dax, shakes his arm...

BASHIR
Hold on, my arm's asleep.

...and the lost combadge slips down into his fist

-- Bashir grabs Dax, clamps his hand over her mouth...

...and secretly pushes the combadge into her mouth

-- Dax lies alone, her back to the surveillance...

...pulls the combadge out of her mouth, prises a tiny piece
of metal off the bunk, and sets to work

34 **BACK TO SCENE**

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

Locken's face drops in shock. He turns to the computer,
hits more keys...

...and we see the missile approaching from the planet, from
the POV of the Cardassian weapons platform...

35 **EXT. SPACE - SINDORIN ORBIT (INTERCUT)**

...and the two COLLIDE in a huge but harmless explosion.

36 **INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - LOCKEN'S SUITE (INTERCUT)**

Locken gapes at the screen, that has now gone to static...
but then composes himself, turns off the monitor.

LOCKEN

It doesn't matter, Julian. This
was a bug bite. By the time I've
scratched it, there'll be a new
missile and a new payload. The
Romulans on Orias Three will see a
few more sunrises. But you won't.

BASHIR

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

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

BASHIR

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

LOCKEN

No. Who is he? Why should I care?

BASHIR

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

LOCKEN

You're lying.

BASHIR

Am I? Consider this. The Dominion obtained erroneous intelligence to make them attack New Beijing. But where did that information come from? I've had a lot of time to think the last couple of days, and here's what I believe. Section 31 desperately wanted an enhanced agent, and since I'd already turned them down, they came to you. As for a war against the Romulans, they've been planning that for almost a year.

(pause)

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

LOCKEN

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

BASHIR

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

Bashir is genuinely upset himself by this point...

BASHIR

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

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

LOCKEN

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

BASHIR

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

LOCKEN

(to Jem'Hadar)

Kill him.

(no response)

I gave you an order, guard!

JEM'HADAR

My name... is Taran'atar.

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

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

37 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - CORRIDOR

Locken RUNS out of his suite inhumanly fast, Taran'atar's PHASER SHOT just barely missing him, smashing a sculpture instead. At the same instant, Bashir shouts...

BASHIR (o.s.)
No, don't!

38 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - LOCKEN'S SUITE (INTERCUT)

Taran'atar lifts his weapon, holding fire...

TARAN'ATAR
Why did you tell me to stop?

BASHIR
Because I want him alive.

TARAN'ATAR
But he's insane.

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

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

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

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

TARAN'ATAR
Then we must hurry.

BASHIR

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

TARAN'ATAR

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

Off Bashir's concern at that...

39 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - CORRIDOR

Bashir and Taran'atar run down the corridor. They reach a large DOOR, but Taran'atar quickly enters a code into the panel, and the door OPENS. Bashir looks at him confused...

TARAN'ATAR

Inside information.

Another pair of WEAPONS DRONES appear. Taran'atar SHOOTS one, but the other SHOOTS the wall near him --

The wall SHATTERS with shards of metal, and Taran'atar goes down with a pained GRUNT. Bashir tries to help him up --

-- and his hand comes away damp with amber fluid.

BASHIR

You're hurt.

TARAN'ATAR

It can wait. That way?

BASHIR

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

They press on, until they reach the big double doors to the training room. Across them are painted the word "FALSE" in large jagged letters, in an amber paint...

BASHIR

Is this... blood?

TARAN'ATAR
The situation has deteriorated.

BASHIR
Then we'll have to hurry.

The doors open, and multiple weapons SHOTS bolt out --
-- Taran'atar THROWS Bashir to the ground, peers in...

40 **INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - JEM'HADAR TRAINING ROOM (INTERCUT)**

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

JEM'HADAR
False! Faaaaalse!

Locken stands at the front on a platform, trying to calm and reassure them... and to his worry, it's not working.

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

The Jem'Hadar First stands calmly before him, staring at him, the only one who's not out of control...

JEM'HADAR FIRST
Perhaps you are. But you must be a
weak god, because you have had to
use the white to keep us faithful.
And if you are weak... and you
created us... then we are weak
too. But we will not be weak now.
We are Jem'Hadar. True Jem'Hadar!
We are strong. So you cannot be
our god. You... are... false!

LOCKEN
But I am your Khan...

Dozens of disrupters point at him in response...

41 INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - CORRIDOR (INTERCUT)

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

TARAN'ATAR

He is dead?

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Yes.

TARAN'ATAR

Good.

Bashir surges to his feet about to rage at them...

...but when he sees the look of barely contained fury mixed with almost existential angst, he thinks better of it.

A panel falls from the ceiling with a CLANG. Taran'atar raises his weapon, but Bashir shouts quickly --

BASHIR

No, don't shoot!

-- because Dax appears and drops to the floor. She is filthy with grime, but Bashir grabs her in a fierce hug...

DAX

I'm fine, Julian. Don't worry. How are you? And what was all that weapons fire? It sounded like it was right here.

BASHIR

Things haven't gone exactly...

DAX

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

BASHIR

Yes... I don't think anyone could have helped him. Not even me.

RO (o.s.)
Hey, break it up you two. I'm
embarrassed just watching you.

They turn --

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

DAX
Ro!

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

BASHIR
Ro, please tell me these are
friends of yours.

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

She turns to them and makes some funny noises, CLICKS and
HISSES, and they back down. Ro turns back to Dax...

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

BASHIR
And the Ingavi are... natives?

RO
Sort of. It's a long story. But
what's been going on here? By the
time we got right up to the gate,
all we found was dead Jem'Hadar.
What did you do?

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

BASHIR

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

TARAN'ATAR

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

BASHIR

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

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Close this door. Now.

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

Jem'Hadar! Stand at attention!

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

JEM'HADAR FIRST

The need grows strong in them...
in all of us.

BASHIR

But we can fix the white...

JEM'HADAR FIRST

No. It is too late for that.

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

TARAN'ATAR

Give them a good death.

The First nods, and turns back to the room. Taran'atar finishes closing the door.

Within seconds, the sounds of disruptor fire and SCREAMS and ROARS come from inside...

TARAN'ATAR

We must go.

RO

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

BASHIR

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

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

DAX

I have to go - he's not armed.

RO

He's not thinking.

DAX

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

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

42 INT. LOCKEN'S BASE - LABORATORY

By the time Dax catches up, Bashir has already got back to the stasis lab, and is furiously working at the computer.

He starts urgently opening cabinets, looking for something. She lets him - he needs to get it out of his system...

DAX

You know, back in the cell... you almost had me convinced. What are you looking for?

BASHIR

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

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

BASHIR

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

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

Dax knows exactly what he is seeing...

DAX

(quietly)

Do you see the line now?

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

DAX

You don't want the evidence?

BASHIR

This isn't evidence, Ezri. It's atrocity.

He FIRES on the stasis tubes, YELLING with disgust...

43 EXT. SINDORIN - RAINFOREST - DAY

Trees are shoved aside and broken, as black-suited and masked FIGURES force through with phaser rifles...

The Ingavi who are guarding the outside of the compound CHARGE at them, throwing spears...

...and the black-suited figures FIRE, casually cutting them down without a thought.

44 **INT. LOCKEN'S COMPOUND - CORRIDOR**

Bel hears the SCREAMS of the dying Ingavi outside, and he immediately TURNS to go to them...

RO

Kel! Wait! We can help!

TARAN'ATAR

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

RO

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

KEL

You already kept your promise, Ro.
You freed us from the Jem'Hadar.
This is not your responsibility.

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

RO

Doctor, I'm begging you...

BASHIR

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

RO

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

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

TARAN'ATAR

How do we get out of here?

DAX

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

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

45 **INT. SECTION 31 BASE CAMP**

COLE watches screens that show the Section 31 attack on the compound, the fires breaking out, the dying Ingavi, the already dead Jem'Hadar. He watches it all dispassionately.

A nondescript JUNIOR AGENT approaches from behind.

COLE

Yes?

AGENT

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

COLE

Right. I did, didn't I?

Cole just watches the screens. The agent is uncertain...

AGENT

Orders, sir?

COLE

Let it go.

AGENT

Sir?

COLE

Let it go.

The agent nods and leaves. Cole watches the screens.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

46 INT. DS9 - KIRA'S OFFICE

KIRA sits behind her desk. Bashir, Dax, Ro and Taran'atar are in front, being debriefed. Both Bashir and Ro are rather agitated...

KIRA

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

BASHIR

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

KIRA

No... that will never come out.

RO

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

DAX

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

RO

Most of the Ingavi probably are dead by now!

KIRA

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

RO

(disgusted)

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

(pause,

catch breath)

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

KIRA

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

BASHIR

Where is Empok Nor?

KIRA

Nog towed it into orbit of Cajara.

Ro picks up her grimy travel bag and EXITS.

BASHIR

You'll have to excuse me too.

KIRA

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

Bashir smiles thinly, unable to deny it.

KIRA (cont)

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

BASHIR

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

KIRA

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

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

KIRA

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

BASHIR

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

KIRA

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

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

KIRA

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

TARAN'ATAR

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

KIRA

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

TARAN'ATAR

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

He wants to say something else - Kira senses it...

KIRA

Go ahead. What is it?

TARAN'ATAR

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

KIRA

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

TARAN'ATAR

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

KIRA

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

KIRA (cont)

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

TARAN'ATAR

This is all very paradoxical.

KIRA

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

TARAN'ATAR

Then perhaps, that will be our common ground.

47 EXT. EMPOK NOR - ESTABLISHING

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

48 INT. EMPOK NOR - PROMENADE

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

VAUGHN

Doctor. What can I do for you?

BASHIR

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

VAUGHN

Of course, Doctor.

BASHIR

You knew what was going to happen.

VAUGHN

That's not a question.

(Bashir turns to leave)

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

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

VAUGHN

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

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

VAUGHN

I'm quite sure Section 31 could have mustered a force capable of reducing Locken, his Jem'Hadar and his hatchery to ashes without you, but they would have lost what they were really after all along.

BASHIR

His data.

VAUGHN

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

VAUGHN (cont)

They got what they wanted, and
they covered their tracks.

(pause)

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

BASHIR

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

VAUGHN

(dangerous)

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

BASHIR

(realising)

You've been fighting them too.

VAUGHN

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

Bashir begins to protest, but Vaughn placates him.

VAUGHN (cont)

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

BASHIR

A lot of good that did the Ingavi.

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

49 **EXT. EMPOK NOR**

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

50 **INT. EMPOK NOR - PROMENADE**

BASHIR

What the hell is that?

VAUGHN

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

BASHIR

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

VAUGHN

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

BASHIR

(catches on)

You got the Ingavi off Sindorin!

VAUGHN

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

BASHIR

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

VAUGHN

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

BASHIR

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

VAUGHN

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

BASHIR

Wait for what?

VAUGHN

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

Bashir smiles, and they begin to walk together...

FADE OUT:

THE END