

STAR TREK

RENAISSANCE

"Aithalian Lessons"

**Written By
Hadrian McKeggan**

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

First, the blackness of space. Then we see a grey dot, and as it moves closer at a leisurely speed, we see it is the ENTERPRISE.

CROSS (V.O.)

Empty. I guess that's the best word
I can put to it.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- ENGINEERING

The NIGHT SHIFT, indicated by the lower level lighting. A few N.D.s and ANDREW CHAMBERS are quietly walking around, checking the stats. NEIL CROSS passes into camera, walking through Engineering and responding to anyone who seems to engage him with a curt nod. We hear nothing, other than:

CROSS (V.O.)

For the first time in a long time,
pain is something I can deal with.
Keep to myself. Keep under. But
all it leaves is emptiness...
searching...

INT. ENTERPRISE -- MORGUE

Lights off, room's empty. We can still see the room properly. Cross enters, and walks over to a bed where something is covered up. Cross respectfully twitches part of the covering aside, revealing the face of security guard killed in "The Ground Beneath Her Feet." Cross gazes into the sightless eyes.

CROSS (V.O.)

As if there wasn't anything inside.
Just a vacant shell, drifting... a
gaping void where the pain can't
reach me.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

Also NIGHT SHIFT. Focus on Cross as he walks, alone. Only occasionally do we see anyone else in the corridor, and they do not notice him.

CROSS (V.O.)

But searching for what? Well, that's
the problem. I didn't know. I knew
I wanted something, or to do
something, but what that was, I
couldn't begin to define.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- MISSION OPS

NIGHT SHIFT. Almost less than a handful of people here. Cross walks into the room, and begins working at a panel. It looks like he's doing the futuristic equivalent of thumbing the index.

CROSS (V.O.)

So I kept that under, too. But I
knew I needed an answer. What did I
want? What was it I needed?

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CROSS'S QUARTERS

Cross is sitting by the computer terminal in his room. Over his shoulder, we can see a lot of text, and an IMAGE of a blue-green class-M planet not entirely unlike our own Earth...

CROSS (V.O.)

Now, I think I have my answer.

On Cross's face, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM

TALORA

Sir, I cannot allow you to put your life at risk for such an arbitrary reason.

TALORA is sitting in front of Cross, who sits in his usual chair. Cross looks like he's been expecting this, and seems to both sense and ignore Talora's statement at the same time.

CROSS

The border we're currently patrolling is the quietest part of the Klingon frontier. There hasn't been an engagement between Imperialists and Reformists here for half a decade, and both have agreed to respect the neutrality of the area.

TALORA

(pointedly)

That's not my point.

Cross nods. His expression indicates that Talora's point, however necessary, is still a sore wound.

CROSS

(quieter)

"The Butcher of Coular." I'm not expecting cheering crowds.

TALORA

More than one Klingon has sworn to kill you by his bare hands. Even if the inhabitants of the neutral area may not be among them, those that are would not hesitate to jump to the opportunity.

CROSS

I'll try to keep a low profile.

TALORA

You're one of the most recognizable humans in Klingon territory.

CROSS

I said I'd try.

(beat)

Passage of civilian craft into the neutral territory only requires

(MORE)

CROSS (CONT'D)

minimal -- and automatic -- screening
by outpost stations. I won't have
to announce my arrival.

TALORA

That scarcely lessens the potential
risk, and I cannot see why you don't
arrive at all.

Cross, beginning to see this line of reasoning is working,
prepares to take a different angle.

CROSS

Talora, I need to do this. It's
that important to me, that
significant. I just look at that
text, those pictures... and know I
should be there. As if I was always
meant to go there. As if it's all
I've ever been for -- that's what it
means to me. There's the possibility,
even in as quiet a place as here, of
serious danger. But for this, I'm
willing to chance it.

TALORA

Your definition of "need" is very
vague, sir.

CROSS

But it's also very real.

Beat. Talora soaks that in, but she doesn't take long.

TALORA

You may be willing to "chance it,"
Captain, but you have a ship and
crew that need you, and whose need
is both immediate and clearly
definable. Going unarmed and alone
into very likely hostile territory
seriously jeopardizes that need.
Given your important standing, you
can't shrug that duty off. You're
far too valuable.

Cross half-smiles to himself.

CROSS

Valuable? I suspect Delfune would
beg to differ, some Q'tami
notwithstanding.

(beat)

I have sufficient leave time
accumulated. And the Enterprise has
a fine Captain right here.

TALORA

Captain, that is flattering, but --

Cross raises his hand to indicate he has more to say.

CROSS

No, it's not flattering. You've led this crew through some of the hardest times it had. When I wasn't there to turn to -- you were. And you never abandoned them.

(beat)

The crew can do without me, Talora. The crew has done without me -- and you've proven how every good it can still be.

(beat)

You're a good leader. Through some of our gravest problems, you led the crew, and they followed. A Romulan exchange officer that Federation citizens are willing to do much more than merely obey. You inspire loyalty, Talora. And you scarcely give yourself the credit.

(beat)

Even more, you're one I've seen almost all the crew trust.

(beat)

Trust, Talora. You know how much that means in command? Trust is four-fifths of command skill. I lost most of mine at Coular.

TALORA

You cannot allow the opinions of a few --

CROSS

No, I don't mean opinions, Talora. I mean trust. Grey might be alone in his hostility, but that all-important, subtler trust has been shaken clear across the board.

(beat)

But before you say it, you're right. My duty is to this ship, and this crew. It's not a duty I intend to shirk. I have every intention of continuing on here, and every intention of performing my best. But this is something I need, something I want to do above all else. And if problems come by the way...

(MORE)

CROSS (CONT'D)

(beat)

I know the Enterprise will have a Captain she can be proud of.

(beat)

You might consider it unreasonable for me to chance the danger. I know when it comes to this decision, like with any leader, the choice effects more than my own personal existence. But I also know the limits of my importance. The ship can carry on without me, but if I stay... I'll never forgive myself for not going.

There is a long BEAT, as the implications sink in for Talora.

TALORA

I take it you have no intention to be talked out of this?

CROSS

Hardly.

TALORA

Five days?

CROSS

Five days.

Hold as they look at each other, then...

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

We're from someone's POV, not immediately clear whose. We see ELRIS LEA, JENNIFER QUINLAN, Y'LAN, GRIL DOJAR, ERIK GREY, and Talora, all more or less at attendance, looking at someone...

Whom we now reveal is Cross. Slightly inward, with a faint layer of outer amusement. He has a bag.

CROSS

(wry)

No Carter here to see me off? I'm almost disappointed.

QUINLAN

Hal's got him doing a special interest story on the Enterprise's bartender. With any luck, he won't know you're gone for another two hours.

Cross smiles.

CROSS

I don't know which one to pity.

DOJAR

That'd depend if Hal can get Carter to drink a glass of Whagosh cocktail.

CROSS

In that case, it's Hal I pity.

(to Y'lan)

And I hardly expected you at all.

Y'LAN

This peculiar ritual concerning departure was sufficiently interesting to use some limited time examining its intricacies.

CROSS

(dry)

I'm touched, of course.

Y'LAN

I am not touching you.

CROSS

It's a metaphor, Y'lan.

Y'LAN

Is this statement designed to make me serve a general ritualistic function?

CROSS

No, Y'lan, I reserved it specially for you.

Y'LAN

In what capacity, then, am I being assigned in the deliverance of a specially given message?

CROSS

(muttered)

The headache.

Y'lan, though unreadable as always, seems to pause to process the information. Amongst humans the Q'tami has finally interpreted them correctly to the point of knowing when they won't be very pliable to incessant prying -- or bluntly, when it's wise to shut up.

Subtly, the mood changes. Cross's exterior of light joking peels away. He walks down the corridor -- exchanging glances at each crew member. Heavy laden in the eyes is the knowledge of all the vicissitudes they've been through, and a faint, melancholy-tinged sense of camaraderie.

They know why he's going, and the looks show something of hope.

Until Cross's eyes lock with Grey. Cross gazes into those icy, angry orbs. Grey wears his feelings on the cuff of his sleeve, but Cross's are harder to fathom. His expression seems to indicate something, but one is left grasping at "what." Remorse? Acceptance? Sadness?

In a moment, Cross turns away...

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SHUTTLEBAY TWO -- CONTINUOUS

Into the shuttlebay. Cross slings the bag carefully as he strides towards his target -- the Captain's Yacht, cetacean in appearance. The doors close behind him, and he is left alone. We can soon see the name of the Yacht: MAGNUS.

Momentarily, Cross glances around the lonely shuttlebay, and then at his bag -- almost as if he's making the real decision then and there.

Finally, Cross strides towards the Yacht, and the door to the side opens. Cross disappears into it before the door closes.

EXT. ENTERPRISE

A shot of the Enterprise in space. We focus on the doors of one of the shuttlebays, which parts. The Magnus appears, leaving the bay.

INT. MAGNUS -- COCKPIT

We look at Cross from a bird's eye view for a moment. He's sitting in the main chair in the room. Slowly, the camera begins to rotate, until the view has changed from his above him to just behind him. He watches his controls, watching more than operating them. We can hear nothing. We hold for a beat, then Cross picks up from a nearby panel "Tron, Killer of Remus." He flicks through it for a moment but then, evidently not in the mood, puts it back.

CROSS (V.O.)

I came across it in the Enterprise's databanks. Dukhta. A Klingon world. Site of two of the bloodiest campaigns in the bitter Imperialist-Reformist conflict. The planet was much coveted for its considerable wealth. But the savage campaigns both waged to attain it laid the planet utterly waste.

Cross stands, and heads for the replicator at the back.

CROSS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Having shorn Dukhta of what they'd hoped to seize, the two factions moved on to other, still valuable worlds to bicker over. But Dukhta, drifting and forgotten, remained.

Cross mouths to the replicator. A steaming cup of hot chocolate materializes.

CROSS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Dukhta's newfound poverty made it more of a liability than an asset, and when the peace talks rolled round, both self-interested sides were quite content to declare Dukhta part of a "neutral zone" and leave the planet to its fate.

Cross walks back to his chair, and sits down.

CROSS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The planet's people were doing whatever they could to repair their planet's infrastructure, but they'd been pleading to all the major aid agencies for some time now. And not just aid agencies -- anyone who could put in anything to the cause.
(beat)
I guess that's what awoke it.

Cross begins to drink his hot chocolate. He stares idly through the portholes, not seeming to be in any rush or anxiety. Lost in his own thoughts, musing.

CROSS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I looked at their cry for help, and I knew that was what I had looked for. I knew it was what I'd wanted. Almost instinctively, I wanted to reach out, to help, to do something...
(beat)
...something. Pity, conscience... I'm not sure, exactly. Could be one. Could be both.
(beat)
I couldn't see myself acting any other way.

As Cross looks distantly out the viewport...

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAINS -- DAY

A virtually cloudless blue sky extends above us, arching off into the distant horizon. We are far up a mountain, and similar massive beasts, forming a range, arch off to our left and right. If we look far enough in front, dropping our eyes to the ground below, we can see open plains. The natural landscape is simply stunning, absolutely breathtaking, an impressive, awing panorama that should immediately give pause for thought.

One can almost taste the bitter, dehydrating dryness, dustiness, of the air.

And in those plains we can see, so far away, so small, a cluster of shining brown-red -- clearly a city of some kind.

We pan backwards, as if backpedaling, arching up over lumps and steep crevasses in the high mountain surface. Soaring backwards, hugging close to the bedrock but not too close. Finally we see a building -- an unassuming, futuristic shack -- emerge to our right, and we swing about 180 degrees to see a VILLAGE.

The architecture is unmistakably Klingon. But the buildings are simple -- none over two stories -- and drab. They dot this semi-flat area of the mountain specially adapted and shaped to the mountain's terrain. They all look in fairly reasonable repair, if faded -- and although from the future they still instinctively look outdated.

The village is not too large. We can see most of it -- though some of it seems to be off upward on another jut of the mountain not yet visible. It is fairly well organized and has a reasonably well-kept road, and there are buildings to serve a variety of purposes -- though most seem residential.

All buildings, however, seem to cling to the dusty, choky air. There almost seems to be a dirty lair of it on every one.

It is clearly a quiet hour for the inhabitants of the village -- for one gets the distinct feeling the area is occupied -- as nobody is out.

Nobody, that is, except for one OLD KLINGON. He looks like he's at the high end of the Klingon equivalent to the human age of sixty, and has genuinely wrinkled skin to go with the traditional facial anatomy. His hands are gnarled. He has a good, full beard and flowing hair, both with their healthy strands of grey. There is something sharp, keen about the eyes. He wears unassuming clothes -- simple, cotton-looking fabrics, and the Klingon equivalent of an overcoat.

He is standing, and looking just above us, in the direction of higher up the mountain -- but we can't see what he's looking at. His hand is above his eyes, indicating he's looking for something. Seemingly unsatisfied he turns away. Only a slight sense of frustration can be felt, more than anything he looks tired. As if to relax, he idly looks out at the skies.

As we now follow his view, we see, in the sky, a white object plunging towards the city below. The OLD KLINGON seems only mildly curious as he watches it. But even from this distance, the basic outline of the shape is unmistakably the MAGNUS.

On this view, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. DUKHTA -- CITY -- DAY

We see an overhead shot of a fairly LARGE CITY -- presumably the one we saw at the end of Act One, only much closer. The buildings and decor bear a marked resemblance to those on Qo'noS, even if this style doesn't fit as well into the landscape. There is something eerie about the city -- it looks like it's been gutted in the not too distant past. Indentations and visible repairs plastering over scorches are everywhere. Even more blatant are the bombed out buildings, the abandoned, half destroyed ruins that appear with distressing regularity across the landscape. The few buildings that seem to be new have a subdued look about them: Inexpensive, unassuming and nothing other than practical. Given the state of repair of some of the intact buildings, one expects the city was made for a much larger populace than now resides...

We focus on a respectively sized building. It is an older building, but one which seems to have been refurnished quite a bit.

INT. CITY BUILDING -- RECEPTION AREA

A large RECEPTION AREA. It looks like a room with a lot torn out of it. The wallpapers, floorboards and all are all plain and nondescript, but an imposing curve here, an arch there, an exquisite door -- all harkens back to a much more ornate and grandiose room. A reception area has been set up at the extreme back of the room, whose position seems both arbitrary and uncomfortable with the environment. The crowd that throngs about is mostly Klingon, though there are smatterings of Saurians, Anticans, Andorians, Arcturians, Benzites, a few humans...

Cross, naturally, falls into the last category. He's now wearing nondescript civilian clothes. Looking slightly lost and disorientated, Cross heads in the general direction of the end of the room.

We can note that the odd Klingon does look at Cross curiously -- as said before, the crowd is Klingon by a wide margin. But others, perhaps more knowledgeable, look at him first in disbelief and then in icy contempt.

Finally, Cross reaches the end of the room -- which is revealed to be the receptionist's desk. The Klingon receptionist is sitting at a 25th century Klingon computer. His clothes have nothing Klingon about them. Cross stands in front of the desk. The receptionist looks up at him for a moment.

RECEPTIONIST

Do I know you?

CROSS

(taken by surprise)

What? No, not that I'm aware of.

He nods.

RECEPTIONIST

Looked familiar.

(now looking at
computer)

Do you wish to make a donation to
the Dukhta Reconstruction Fund?

CROSS

Actually, I'm looking to see if I
can avail of my services for Dukhta's
reconstruction.

RECEPTIONIST

(still working at
computer)

Ah. Any special skills you think
would make you useful for the
reconstruction?

A BEAT as Cross figures out how to answer that.

CROSS

Well, I...

(beat)

I have a reasonable amount of
technical knowledge.

RECEPTIONIST

(looking at computer)

Know how to build replicators from
scratch?

CROSS

(hopefully)

I can repair them.

The Receptionist muses on that for a moment, then realizes:

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry -- I forgot to ask for
your name.

Cross braces himself, then:

CROSS

Cross, Neil A.

The receptionist types that in. His brow furrows for a moment -- and we can see his REALIZATION vividly. He looks up.

RECEPTIONIST

(aghast)

You're...

Cross doesn't nod, but the look in his eyes confirm. The Receptionist stands up, throws open the doors next to him and walks right through. Cross tenses, waits.

The amount of icy, contemptuous stares has seemed to double in the interim.

VOICE (O.S.)

(to Cross)

You there!

Cross's eyes reach across the room until he sees who is calling at him -- an elderly KLINGON. The Klingon is somewhere in the Klingon equivalent to the human eighty or ninety. He is on a futuristic wheelchair.

ELDERLY KLINGON

You did it, you there! I know! My son! He was my son!

Cross begins to turn away -- then IMMEDIATELY thinks the better of it. Determined to see it through, determined to see every moment of it. He stares at the elderly Klingon, saying and doing nothing -- even though the elderly Klingon's outburst is creating an awkward amount of attention. Many people stop what they are doing, and look up -- recognizing Cross for who he is.

ELDERLY KLINGON (CONT'D)

(growing more shrill)

He never wanted to hurt humans, you know! He was my son! You killed him! You did it! I know! You killed him!

The Elderly Klingon pauses to take his breath. He doesn't look angry, or seem angry, but that he's in a great deal of pain, emotionally and physically.

A young Klingon woman (N.D.), who is next to the Elderly Klingon, leans forward and whispers something to him, seeming to calm and placate him. When she looks up at Cross, she looks up with raw hatred, and Cross accepts this verdict much as the other.

The doors open again, the receptionist pointing at Cross for the benefit of a KLINGON WOMAN next to him. Like him, her clothes are distinctly un-Klingon. Her face immediately turns into one of distaste. The receptionist returns to his desk, she holds the door open.

KLINGON WOMAN
(to Cross, indicating
door)
Get inside.

Cross, with that same patient acceptance, walks through the door.

ELDERLY KLINGON (O.S.)
You killed my son!

The receptionist's eyes -- and those of many others -- follow Cross until the Klingon Woman CLOSES the door.

INT. CITY BUILDING -- RECONSTRUCTION HQ -- CONTINUOUS

This room also has an uneasy and conflicting feeling. A room of evident history that, also, has been shorn and replaced with something very different. However, the chairs, table, and Klingon equivalent of chandelier are all clearly from a less stricken age. A small group of Klingons -- six in all -- sit around the table. There is no uniform amongst them, but they are all dressed in clothes clearly lacking Klingon origin. The table seems to be mostly a computer-panel input station, with appropriate panels and flat-on-desk screens for each chair sitting around it. Almost all of the screens currently show maps -- one of a continent with many specks, another of a city and its environs with a few specks, and so on. A complete map of the planet, with several thousand specks, adorns the back wall. One of the sitting Klingons has a cup of hot coffee. This is the one who looks up as the doors part, revealing the KLINGON WOMAN -- followed by Cross. The registering expressions imply these Klingons both know Cross and, however incredulous they are about it, why he's here.

She closes the door behind herself.

KLINGON WOMAN
Is this some kind of joke?

CROSS
No. It's quite sincere.

KLINGON WOMAN
Sincere? This is some kind of joke.
What the hell are you doing on Dukhta?

CROSS
I'm volunteering for a time in the
reconstruction force.

KLINGON WOMAN
Are you trying to make a mockery of
everything we've achieved here?

She walks down one way of the room, then turns to face Cross again.

KLINGON WOMAN (CONT'D)

We're trying to help people.
Thousands of Dukhtans every day go
without the basic necessities needed
for life. Millions more live barely
above poverty level. Our population
has fallen from three to one billion
in the last twenty years! I know
life doesn't mean very much to you,
but here we'll help where we can.

Cross continues to stare at her, not responding.

KLINGON WOMAN (CONT'D)

All right, I don't care why you're
here anyone. Go on, out of my sight.
Get out of the whole damn Klingon
Territories!

Before Cross can begin to leave -

KLINGON WITH COFFEE

Kitara.

The Klingon woman (KITARA) stops -- looking at Cross with
rage barely bridled. But Cross is no longer meeting her
gaze, looking instead across the room, at KLINGON WITH COFFEE.
This Klingon is cynical, and contemptuous of Cross. Balding,
Klingon equivalent of forties. He takes a sup of coffee
before speaking again. Kitara sits in the vacant chair in
the interim.

KLINGON WITH COFFEE (CONT'D)

You say you want to work with our
reconstruction force?

CROSS

That's correct.

KLINGON WITH COFFEE

And is there anywhere in particular
you'd like to be posted? Anywhere
convenient?

CROSS

Not in particular.

KLINGON WITH COFFEE

And tell me, how long do you expect
to be here? Have you renounced your
precious Starfleet to undertake this
noble deed?

CROSS

I will be here for five days. I am here on leave time.

KLINGON WITH COFFEE

Ah, of course. Wouldn't want to keep you waiting to be re-embraced with the precious Fleet, I'd say.

(with sense of black humor)

Think you got any skills that could be useful here? And please remember, genocide would not fall under that category.

Cross winces at the barb.

CROSS

I have some technical know-how.

KLINGON WITH COFFEE

Oh, I see, I see. Would replicators, perchance, fall into that category? Could you build one?

CROSS

I can repair them.

KLINGON WITH COFFEE

Really. My oh my.
(thinking, to himself)
Now where is it...

He taps at his console for a moment, looking for something. He FINDS it.

KLINGON WITH COFFEE (CONT'D)

Ah, yes. You're in luck.
(looking up again)

It just so happens that a village immediately south of here had their replicator shorted out. T'khenaklin's the name. Up the Kolyara Mountains, apparently.

The Klingon pauses, sipping his coffee while reading some more of the text, musing, considering. Then he looks up again.

KLINGON WITH COFFEE (CONT'D)

Seems they've only got the one replicator, and the only storage area for the repair equipment is at the other end of the, ah, village. Rather inconvenient, wouldn't you say?

Cross doesn't respond.

KLINGON WITH COFFEE (CONT'D)

We could use with someone to carry the equipment from storage to replicator. Don't worry about the refreshments, the inhabitants are reported to do a good job at that. Are you up to the task, or would you like to toddle back to where you came from?

The Klingon clearly expects the latter answer.

CROSS

That will be fine, thank you. Could I have the coordinates?

KLINGON WITH COFFEE

Hm?

CROSS

I could take them back to my ship -

KLINGON WITH COFFEE

(direly)

You have a ship in orbit!

The Klingon is about to continue, but Cross cuts in.

CROSS

(calmly, forcefully)

I have a shuttle. Single, unarmed, and parked in the spaceport. If you could give me the coordinates and when you would like me there --

KLINGON WITH COFFEE

(dismissive)

It wouldn't make a difference, anyhow. The Kolyara Mountains are full of, what's it...

He looks down at the screen again.

KLINGON WITH COFFEE (CONT'D)

Ah, kelbanite.

(looking back up)

Blocks all transporter beams, you know.

CROSS

Then I could land my yacht in the region --

KLINGON WITH COFFEE

Those mountains are some of the most treacherous peaks on the whole continent. There's barely enough space for all those blasted villages that dot it, let alone a one-man craft.

CROSS

Are there any vehicles available?

KLINGON WITH COFFEE

None that we can spare.

The Klingon looks down at the screen again. He's getting impatient, now. That he thoroughly dislikes Cross is obvious, that he's trying to fob him off the quickest way possible is just as subtle.

KLINGON WITH COFFEE (CONT'D)

There happens to be another young volunteer who is coming back from a month's leave. He should be here later today, and will begin the hike up to T'khenaklin at noon. He's been working there for some time, too. You can go with him.

The Klingon looks up.

KLINGON WITH COFFEE (CONT'D)

Oh, and don't get any smart ideas. The lad's got military experience, and is always armed. First sign of trouble... won't be a second time.
(beat)
Got that?

Cross nods, very slowly.

CROSS

Where do I meet him?

CUT TO:

EXT. DUKHTA -- KOLYARA MOUNTAINS -- BOTTOM -- NOON

A KLINGON MALE, mid twenties, is standing by the foot of a mountain. He is dressed in civilian garb -- but the garb is also traditional Klingon wear. It resembles the traditional attire of Klingon warriors. On his belt is visible holding place for both a d'k tahg and a Klingon disruptor. He has a backpack. As for the Klingon himself, he is strong, athletic, and energetic, flowing hair. There is something faintly grim in him.

CROSS (O.S.)
(from behind)
D'korga, I presume.

The Klingon turns to face him. Besides a backpack, Cross wears the same clothes as before. The Klingon smiles unpleasantly.

D'KORGA
Quite correct. The Butcher of Coular,
no doubt.

Cross doesn't respond to D'korga. D'korga waves in the direction of the mountain range.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)
Come!

D'korga walks a bit to the left, and then sets his foot on part of the mountain range. We can now see that this is a path -- narrow, but not too steep. The only other distinction between this path and the rest of the hills is that it is worn, without grass or life -- but otherwise basic dirt. Nearby the path, there is a sign in Klingon.

D'korga looks back at Cross, who hasn't moved.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)
Or is this too steep?

Cross looks up the mountain. The path is visible for some way up, but is shrouded about midway.

CROSS
Is any special equipment needed?

D'korga LAUGHS heartily.

D'KORGA
Equipment? How weak you are! No,
no equipment, human. Just willpower.
But do you have that, eh?

CROSS
(dryly)
I'll manage.

D'korga calms down.

D'KORGA
Good, good. Come!

D'Korga now begins to walk up the path. Cross, not missing a beat, follows.

The ascent up the mountain is fairly steep -- enough to be significantly more tiring than a flat road, but barely not steep enough to need any additional support.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DUKHTA -- KOLYARA MOUNTAINS -- PATH -- AFTERNOON

We pan across another part of the track, this segment much higher up than the previous one. D'korga and Cross pass into view. Both are sweating and substantially more tired than we've seen them before. Though D'korga is strained physically, he seems to have lost none of his vigor. Cross, on the other hand, is exhausted in every respect, and he sits on the ground.

CROSS

(panting)

Maybe... maybe we should have a...

D'korga snorts.

D'KORGA

Do you break so easily?

D'korga hunches down near Cross, but does not sit down. Cross pulls off his backpack and opens it.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

I would never had considered such a great butcher so frail.

Cross looks up at him.

CROSS

I'll be all right in a moment.

D'KORGA

Really.

Cross takes a flask out of his backpack. It's considerably more advanced than an average flask -- it seems to have a self-heating system. He opens it, and welcome steam wafts at him. He takes a light sip.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

(confused)

What are you doing?

Cross looks up again.

CROSS

(pointedly)

I'm drinking hot chocolate.

He holds the flask out to D'korga.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Want some?

D'KORGA

(making a face)

I won't touch your human drinks.

Cross shrugs, putting the flask back to his lips.

CROSS

Suit yourself.

D'korga watches him for a moment, grimacing first in distaste and then, in a minute, with impatience.

D'KORGA

(angry)

We have no time for this!

D'korga yanks the flask out of Cross's hands.

CROSS

Hey --

D'korga turns it upside down and pours the contents onto a nearby rock. When finished, he smiles grimly, caps it and hands it back to Cross.

D'KORGA

(sarcastic)

There. All done.

D'korga gets up and walks off further down the path.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

(not looking behind)

Come!

Cross, bemused and still a little shocked, puts his backpack back on and follows after D'korga. We pan up the mountainside with him. They continue to hike up the semi-steep path. Trees begin to pan out below them. Cross is keeping up, but is not very relieved.

CROSS

You wouldn't know how long it is,
would you?

D'KORGA

(not looking back)

Hah!

Cross is able to near D'korga, who is still walking at a decently brisk pace.

CROSS

D'korga?

D'korga stops, turns around.

D'KORGA

(seething)

We shall not reach T'khenaklin before
nightfall. And if you continue to
whine, we shall not reach there before
mid-morning!

D'korga whirls around and continues his march up.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

Come!

Cross exhales, and then continues the hike.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KOLYARA MOUNTAINS -- PATH -- NIGHTFALL

The sun has just set. We are now very high up the Kolyara Mountains. Both D'korga and Cross are now nearing the ends of their ability -- though as before, D'korga's vigor is still unabashed. Cross has turned in on himself. His face seems to say he's only aware now of the march -- the long, tiring march.

We now can see that D'korga is looking up at something. We go to his POV to REVEAL...

ANGLE ON VILLAGE

The dusty, isolated village we saw at the end of Act One. It is directly ahead, only slightly higher than the hikers. They soon make good the distance. It is then, when D'korga reaches directly outside the village, Cross begins to focus on his surroundings again.

CROSS

(distantly)

Is this...?

D'KORGA

Yes.

Cross sighs, exhausted. He immediately sits down on the nearest rock.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

Stay there. I'll arrange the
accommodation. Don't expect one of
your cushy Starfleet beds.

Cross nods, too tired to speak. D'korga walks down the dusty road through the village towards a particular building.

As he does, Cross looks around himself. Towards the starry sky, and around the dusty, quiet little village. There is a feeling of serenity, of calm. He looks fairly appreciative.

CROSS

(muttered, to himself)

Hmm.

On Cross, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- FIELD -- MORNING

A patch of roughly flat land, just slightly away from a nearby residential building. It is not that big, but not overly small: T'khenaklin proper to one side, a dizzying ravine sweeping down the other.

We focus on Cross, who is sleeping in this field. He is using his bag seen earlier as a pillow, and he's lying on something rolled out.

We focus on him for a moment, then he is KICKED sharply by a boot. Cross lurches to one side, startled awake.

D'KORGA (O.S.)

Get up!

Sure enough, the kicker is D'KORGA, who now comes into view. Groggily, Cross shakes and lifts himself upright. He looks around at the field, lost for a second, then his memory comes back to him.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

No time to spare. Come on! Work now.

Cross initially doesn't respond, but looks to the ground to confirm something -- his eyes stopping at his sack and draped fabric.

CROSS

(still looking)

I slept...?

He looks up to D'korga, indicates.

D'korga LAUGHS.

D'KORGA

Yes, that's not a comfy Starfleet bed. None of those around here!

D'korga turns away and heads towards the village.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

Come!

CROSS

Could I get a change of clothes?

D'korga turns around.

D'KORGA

This is not your Starfleet. No time
for cushy beds or "clothes-changing."
We work, and we work now.
(turning around again)
Come!

Cross shrugs, turns around, folds the fabric, puts it in the bag --

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

Come!

and heads off to join D'korga.

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- MARKET -- MORNING

We are now within T'khenaklin proper. D'korga and Cross walk up that small, dusty lane seen earlier. We are evidently in a kind of marketplace. There are a number of stands and signs, but presently only a handful of people are out. There is a decent space for both, but nothing particularly substantial. The impression we get is that not much actually changes hands at this market. We see a KLINGON, late fifties, at a stand, preparing fruits and fresh meat. He's dressed with clothes that look worn -- not something commonly seen in this pristine future.

CROSS

(to D'korga)
What's he doing?

Cross indicates to D'korga. D'korga chuckles, quietly.

D'KORGA

He's selling his wares.

Cross's brow furrows -- then he realizes.

CROSS

He's selling that food?

D'KORGA

Not everyone has the benefit of replicators. Isn't that what you came for?
(beat, contemptuous)
What you claimed to come for.

Cross is bemused, and follows D'korga.

CROSS

Yes, I came to repair the replicators.
I just never thought...

D'korga turns around at him, now truly angry. Something's been simmering for a while, but now it's snapped.

D'KORGA

(barely restrained,
maliciously)

Never thought! Then what did you think? Did you think we got our food out of holes in the ground? Did you think we slept in cushy Starfleet beds like you did? Did you think we'd all be just like you? What did you think you were doing at Coular? What did you think those Klingons down there were? Lambs?
(beat)

Never thought!

D'korga stalks on ahead of Cross. A few people of T'khenaklin look at Cross as a result of this outburst. Cross looks pained, but silent. He follows D'korga.

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- REPLICATOR HOUSE -- MIDMORNING

We have reached what appears to be near the outer area of the village -- up on that part not fully seen in Act One. The mountain continues to plummet upwards before us, the rest of T'khenaklin looks from this angle as a small set of buildings cradled at the edge of the mountain's fearful precipices.

We focus on one particular building. It looks like all the rest in T'khenaklin: Outdated, dusty, isolated, worn down. The faded, worn colors are indicative of grey, if anything. It's also in a respectable state of disrepair. It's single story and, from the look of it, single-roomed. It has one respectably Klingon window, and one traditional Klingon door.

D'korga comes into view, opens the door of the building, and enters. He leaves the door open for CROSS to follow.

INT. REPLICATOR HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Essentially, a REPLICATOR dominates the far end of this single room. Substantially larger than the replicators we usually see. It more or less is the far wall, and has a long terminal for receiving more than one other. It is very clunky and evidently old -- something that looks very much like a very early replicator model. The replicator is, of course, both tarnished and dilapidated. It is walled off by a counter, which is also in disrepair. A handful of seats are about the room, but none look sturdy enough to actually use.

Three KLINGONS are already working on the replicator.

One, (KLINGON #1) female, is dressed in some Klingon equivalent of hiking gear, a bit older than D'korga. The second, (KLINGON #2) male, is approximately D'korga's age, and is dressed in Klingon civilian wear.

The third, (KLINGON #3) male, well-rounded with smallish eyes, is about Cross's age and is dressed in loose, bland clothing. The third and first are at the replicator, apparently fiddling with some tools. Part of it's covering has been removed, and they are working at systems that don't show any sign of life.

D'korga enters. His anger from before is beginning to cool off.

KLINGON #2

You're late.

D'KORGA

(coolly)

You can blame that on the newcomer.

Cross enters behind him. The second Klingon gazes coldly at him.

KLINGON #2

(to Cross)

We've been informed.

CROSS

Then you have me at a disadvantage.

Simultaneously, the first and third Klingons stop their work and look up. They gaze at Cross with the same expression as the second.

D'KORGA

Cross, this here --

(indicating KLINGON
#2)

is Jrosennes. This --

(indicating KLINGON
#1)

is Maktra. And this --

(indicating KLINGON
#3)

Is Durnak.

CROSS

(tacitly)

Nice to meet you.

DURNAK

(haughty)

Of course.

(to D'korga)

The power chargers aren't working.

D'KORGA

What? You'd said you'd completed the first phase of repairs.

DURNAK

We had. But when we began working on the second phase, it all broke down.

D'korga leans down to the replicator and inspects it. He mutters to himself for a moment, then picks up a tool. MAKTRA, JROSENNES and Durnak crowd around him.

D'KORGA

You used this, right?

DURNAK

Yes, as you said.

D'korga then indicates part of the repair board.

D'KORGA

Did you use it here?

Jrosennes curses.

JROSENNES

Mu'qaD! I knew I forgot something!

D'KORGA

Okay.

(to Maktra)

Here, pass me that.

Maktra hands him another device.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

Now, not all the work we've done is gone. We can get to it if I simply do this...

D'korga begins to work with the tool as they watch. The some of the area uncovered begins to light up, and emits a soft hum.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

...there.

(beat, he looks around)

Jrosennes, where's the main power converter?

JROSENNES

It's back at storage.

D'KORGA

Go get it.

Jrosennes nods, and LEAVES. D'korga hands the device he has been using to Maktra.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)
 Here, keep this
 (indicating)
 stable.

He picks up a tool as she begins to work. He works at another end of the uncovered area, as Durnak follows him.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)
 (indicating something)
 Hmm. We're going to have to replace this.

DURNAK
 Don't have any replacements. However, I've got an idea...

D'KORGA
 Yes?

CROSS
 Ahem.

Durnak gets up, turns around.

DURNAK
 (harshly)
 Don't you have something you need doing?

CROSS
 No, actually.

Durnak pauses for just a moment.

DURNAK
 All right. Here, go fetch me a Saurian Brandy. I could use one.

CROSS
 Where can I find it?

DURNAK
 Down at Jal's. She keeps some in stock for us.

CROSS
 Jal's?

DURNAK
 qoH, you slept in her field, didn't you?

CROSS
 (realizing)
 Ah.

CUT TO:

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- FIELD -- MIDMORNING

Same field as before. Cross is now next to the residential building DIRECTLY in front of the field. The door opens.

An ELDERLY KLINGON WOMAN comes out from it. She is wrinkled, though too vibrant to be seen as infirm, and wears cotton-like fabrics not entirely unlike the OLD KLINGON seen at the end of Act One. She looks at Cross with distinct surprise.

ELDERLY KLINGON WOMAN

I thought you weren't coming back till later.

CROSS

You're Jal?

JAL

I'm hardly anybody else.

CROSS

Okay. I was sent to get some Saurian Brandy from you.

JAL

It's Durnak, isn't it?

CROSS

Well, yes. It's for Durnak.

Jal turns away from him, heading off toward a corner.

JAL

(over her shoulder)

He's running up quite a bill.

Jal returns with a bottle of Saurian brandy. She hands it to Cross.

JAL (CONT'D)

Tell him I want some of that payment he's meant to give before the end of the week or he'll stop getting his brandy.

CROSS

I'll be sure to.

JAL

You want anything?

CROSS

No thanks.

Jal nods.

JAL

Bye now.

Jal closes the door. Cross turns away, back the direction he came from, carrying the Saurian Brandy. He seems slightly melancholy. He looks down at the bottle.

CROSS

(ironically, muttered)

I guess this is what I was searching
for...

As he walks off, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- REPLICATOR HOUSE -- AFTERNOON

The same as it was before, only now clearly later in the day.

INT. REPLICATOR HOUSE

There are the remains of eaten foodstuffs and their plates on the counter, two emptied bottles -- the latter bloodwine. Durnak, standing by the counter, is busy downing a third. Jrosennes, Maktra, and D'korga are hunched down, busily working at the replicator. Cross is sitting on one of those disreputable-looking chairs at the corner, next to the door. So far, it hasn't given out on him. He's beginning to nod off.

JROSENNES

(indicating)

Do you think we should...

D'KORGA

(indicating something
else)

No, that compromises this too much.

MAKTRA

D'korga?

D'KORGA

Yes, Maktra?

MAKTRA

I don't think this'll hold.
(indicating)

Look.

D'KORGA

What... tojo'Qa'!

(to Durnak)

Durnak!

Durnak stops drinking.

DURNAK

Eh?

D'KORGA

This jury-rigging of yours won't hold, Durnak.

Durnak gets off the counter and bends over D'korga.

DURNAK

How...?

(he sees it)

Damn! I guess we will need to replace it.

(beat)

I'll contact HQ about this tomorrow.

D'KORGA

Tomorrow? But without that we can't hold this!

DURNAK

Day's over, D'korga.

D'KORGA

What, already?

DURNAK

It'll hold. For the night.

D'korga looks back at it.

D'KORGA

(reluctant)

I guess.

D'korga stands.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

All right. We'll meet again tomorrow, at...

(looking at empty plate)

That was my gagh!

DURNAK

(guiltily)

Oh, was it? Sorry.

D'KORGA

(irritated)

It's fine.

D'korga heads towards the door, Jrosennes, Maktra and finally Durnak following him in more or less that order.

Before D'korga exits, he thumps Cross.

CROSS

(awake)

Ow.

D'KORGA

You're done for the day. Go away
now.

D'korga opens the door and EXITS. Cross cradles his arm as Jrosennes, Maktra and Durnak follow suit, none of them showing any particular pity for him -- in Jrosennes's case, mild amusement.

CUT TO:

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- MARKET -- AFTERNOON

Cross strolls alone, backpack on pack. He is thoughtful, restless. His expression says it all: This isn't what he expected.

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- RAVINE -- AFTERNOON

Cross is now standing at the natural edge of T'khenaklin. He gazes out at the panorama of mountains at a remarkably similar angle to the shot in act one.

He just seems to stare there, lost to everything. Enraptured.

VOICE (O.S.)

It's a beautiful view, isn't it?

Cross slowly turns around, at an angle, looking up at the OLD KLINGON as seen in Act One. The OLD KLINGON has hardly changed since then. He is not looking at either Cross or the view, but uphill -- seeming to look for something.

Not finding it, he looks over towards the blue sky.

CROSS

(subdued)

Yes.

OLD KLINGON

(conversationally)

Sometimes it's so easy to forget,
you know. Living up here all the
time. So every day I stay up here...

(beat)

I make sure I never forget.

Cross gazes on, slightly uncertain.

OLD KLINGON (CONT'D)

Ah.

(MORE)

OLD KLINGON (CONT'D)

(slowly, touch of
irony)

I presume you're wondering whether
or not I know you're Captain Neil
Cross of the starship Enterprise,
and if I do, why I am not launching
into a tirade.

CROSS

You seem to be reasonably well
informed.

OLD KLINGON

Reasonably. To be polite, my name
is Kaunel, though unlike you I do
not have a starship to call my home.
I am of T'khenaklin.

CROSS

Ah.

KAUNEL

And as for why I have not launched a
tirade, I am sure you have heard
plenty of them now. There's no reason
for me to retrace ground amply
covered.

CROSS

(guardedly)

I see.

Kaunel walks over to Cross, and looks out across the blue.
Cross is initially hesitant from taking his eyes off Kaunel,
but then too focuses on the stunning view.

KAUNEL

(not looking)

Why are you here, Cross?

CROSS

Don't you know?

KAUNEL

I think I do.

CROSS

(puzzled)

Oh?

KAUNEL

(matter-of-fact)

You're here to patronize us.

This sparks an immediate REACTION from Cross, who turns to
face Kaunel.

CROSS

Now wait one moment --

Kaunel turns to look at Cross.

KAUNEL

(swiftly, with dry
contempt)

You kill a few dozen Klingons and find the guilt unbearable. You want to throw a sop over it, you want an easy answer. You want some kind of forgiveness, reversal, second chance, though of course you'd never call it that.

(beat)

So you decide to follow logic. Opposites cancel out. To remove guilt of killing people, save some people. It's a neat little piece of moral math. Course, the equation works even better when you're saving Klingons -- how magnanimous, indeed!

(beat)

Problem is for you, guilt usually doesn't go by the numbers.

CROSS

That's...

Suddenly, he stops. The truth seems to dawn on him. He raises his eyebrows. Slightly shell-shocked, he muses for a moment.

CROSS (CONT'D)

And what if it is? What if it's just my guilt? How does that concern you?

Kaunel shrugs, as if the answer is obvious.

KAUNEL

We're the ones you came to help.

(beat, suggestive)

Maybe you should think about that.

On Kaunel, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- FIELD -- DAWN

Same as usual, only the local star is just beginning to rise. Cross is lying on the ground, the same fabric spread out to support him, the same backpack acting as a headrest. However, he is not asleep. He looking up into the navy sky... thinking.

We hold on him for a BEAT in total silence, then:

CROSS (V.O.)

Kaunel was right. I was searching to alleviate my guilt, that guilt I finally felt I had under control.

(beat)

I came here because I thought I needed people -- to need me. That if only I had that, it'd have been better.

(beat)

Well, they don't need me. And I'm beginning to wonder if it would have made any difference if they had...

(beat)

Probably not.

CUT TO:

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- REPLICATOR HOUSE -- MIDDAY

An establishing shot of the Replicator House, midday. Nobody is visible outside it.

INT. REPLICATOR HOUSE

A close focus on Cross. His eyes are closed.

D'KORGA (O.S.)

(sharply)

Cross!

No response.

D'korga hits him. Cross starts.

CROSS

(dimly)

Yes? What?

D'KORGA

Get down to storage. Get the box marked "Replicator Hardware."

We can now see the entire room properly. D'korga is right next to Cross, who once more was at the corner of the room on one of the chairs. Off at the far side of the room Durnak, Maktra and Jrosennes are busy working at the replicator.

CROSS

Right, okay.

Beat. Cross, seeming quite tired, doesn't move at first.

D'KORGA

Move!

Cross, grumbling, gets up and heads towards the door.

CROSS

You don't have to keep hitting me,
you know.

D'KORGA

(coldly)

That's my prerogative. Now move!
Or are you sick of performing
humanitarian acts already, butcher?

Cross opens the door, is about to walk outside, but then, thinking something else, turns back towards D'korga.

CROSS

Where's storage?

D'korga curses, and runs right towards the door, pushing Cross out of the way.

D'KORGA

I'll go.

CROSS

I didn't -

D'KORGA

Go back to sleep.

D'korga stalks down the street. Cross, bemused, watches him go. The three other Klingons have stopped what they are doing and watch this icily. Cross then enters the room again a little timidly. He closes the door behind him and looks towards the three Klingons, who have not taken their eyes off him.

CROSS

As you were.

MAKTRA

Shut up.

Slightly embarrassed, Cross sinks back into his chair. Slowly, the three pry their eyes off him and return to work.

Cross, still a little tired, watches them for a moment. He begins to yawn --

MAKTRA (CONT'D)

I said shut up!

He's stifled.

CUT TO:

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- FIELD -- LATE AFTERNOON

That same field. Cross has just arrived. He is about to set down his backpack --

KAUNEL (O.S.)

Still here?

Cross turns to face him. Kaunel is the same as before, but he seems to have the stingy bite taken out of him. He walks towards Cross.

KAUNEL (CONT'D)

I didn't think you were a man of denial.

CROSS

I have three more days booked here.

KAUNEL

I doubt either the reconstruction workers or their Headquarters would obstruct an early cancellation.

CROSS

I don't intend one.

KAUNEL

(expansively)

Ah.

CROSS

(slightly irked)

You seem quite intent to preach.

KAUNEL

I don't preach. I merely report the facts, my interpretation of them, whether or not the listener wants to hear them or not.

CROSS

Of course.

Beat. Kaunel turns away from Cross, now looking up towards the mountain, searching. He does this for only a moment, and then, evidently unsatisfied, he turns back to Cross.

KAUNEL

Were you intending to sleep there?

CROSS

Yes. It's all I've got.

KAUNEL

Would you prefer to sleep under a roof?

Cross's eyes narrow.

CROSS

Are you mocking me?

KAUNEL

No, I'm offering. You can sleep in my house for those three nights you say you'll stay here. Or will it be four?

CROSS

No, three's sufficient. Would I be correct in assuming the price is a sermon?

KAUNEL

Very.

Cross nonchalantly shrugs to this response.

KAUNEL (CONT'D)

This way.

Kaunel gestures away from the field. Cross follows him...

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- MAIN

...from Jal's lodging and across T'khenaklin. As seemingly always, only a handful people are out.

CROSS

Not to be blunt, but why are you taking me in?

Kaunel looks directly at Cross. His eyes are full of a deeply sincere passion.

KAUNEL

That's what you need to understand.

CUT TO:

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- HOVEL -- NIGHTFALL

One more residential building of T'khenaklin's. This one looks particularly unimpressive -- a single story structure. From this angle we can see one window only, as well as a door -- like most other buildings here, obviously, in Klingon style.

INT. KITCHEN -- HOVEL

Well, kitchen is approximately the best word for it. There is a drab couch that looks mildly comfortable, a low-lying wooden table, an apparatus looking like some cross between a futuristic sink and a boiler. Various odds and ends are on the wooden table, almost all of which seem to be of a uniquely personal nature. There is an uncomfortable looking chair next to the table, a cheap version of the Klingon chairs we're more accustomed to seeing. The walls are faded, cracked and grey. There is the Klingon equivalent of a coat hanger, where Kaunel's overcoat now rests. There is one door in the room, which appears to lead out into whatever passes as the hovel's hallway. Cross sits on the couch. He is clearly thinking to himself. Kaunel is currently operating the taps, letting what appears to be steaming water pour into a cup that he is holding. Over the following dialogue the cup fills, he puts it to one side and lets the water fill another cup.

KAUNEL

(not looking up)

Is there anything you'd like in particular?

CROSS

(staring at the wall)

In particular?

KAUNEL

To drink.

CROSS

No, I'm fine.

KAUNEL

Will steaming water do?

CROSS

I don't want to press...

Kaunel laughs.

KAUNEL

Oh, don't worry. This thing is corrected to a sewage system.

(MORE)

KAUNEL (CONT'D)

I have almost unlimited access to water for a small fee.

(beat)

Just because we don't have replicators doesn't mean we have to forage.

(beat)

How will steaming water be?

CROSS

Fine, thank you.

Beat. Cross considers something.

CROSS (CONT'D)

What were you looking for?

KAUNEL

Hmm?

CROSS

I saw you look up toward the mountains once or twice. What's that about?

Kaunel laughs, pleasantly.

KAUNEL

I was searching for Thirak. They're an animal native to Dukhta, an orange-fleeced mammal. Their meat is tender and on high demand here in T'khenaklin. Killing a Thirak can result in a respectable sum. Sure, like I said, we're not foragers. We could import replicated Thirak meat if we wanted to from the city -- it's not that expensive. But real Thirak flesh is much tastier, more sumptuous. Not only that, but their fleece makes excellent cotton.

He turns around, now holding a steaming cup of water in each hand. He walks over to Cross, places a cup before Cross and puts the other next to the chair, which he then sits down on.

KAUNEL (CONT'D)

(indicating clothes)

My wife made this out of dyed Thirak cotton. It's very durable stuff -- here, feel it.

Cross reaches out his hand and strokes the cotton. It seems to be quite dense. He puts his hand down.

CROSS

I see.

KAUNEL

(indicating cup)

Go ahead, try it. Not much of a specialty, but it's a favored drink of mine.

He then picks up the cup of steaming water. He tests it carefully with his tongue. His reaction is most unpleasant, and he puts the cup back down.

KAUNEL (CONT'D)

Too hot?

Cross nods the affirmative, rubbing his mouth. Kaunel smiles.

KAUNEL (CONT'D)

Pity. It will, of course, cool down in a few moments.

CROSS

(not wanting to prod)

Your wife?

Kaunel sighs, deeply. He seems more grave now than he's been before.

KAUNEL

She died a few years ago.

CROSS

(somber)

I'm sorry to hear that.

Kaunel pauses, takes a sip from his steaming cup of water. He swallows it down quickly, not showing any sign of pain. Once more, his gaze locks with Cross's.

KAUNEL

I have never left Dukhta. Oh, I've all over the planet -- from Krumar City to the coasts of Dirsat. The Khoraki desert, the Mackal beaches... I like to travel. But I've never seen the point in going to space. A life is short, and a single planet has more than enough attractions to keep one occupied.

(beat)

And even then, I've spent most of my time in T'khenaklin. Yes, it's a small village. So I'm staying here to stop it becoming any smaller.

(beat)

And you're not the first person I've seen come their way here on a mission.

(MORE)

KAUNEL (CONT'D)

A few Imperialists came up here, once. They wanted to protect us from the Reformists. By the time they'd left a few Reformists came up here too: They wanted to protect us from the Imperialists.

(beat)

And they're not the only misguided people you're following in the footsteps of, not at all. We had Starfleet folk here about a decade ago. They called themselves peacekeepers. Of course, we needed to be protected from the Imperialists and the Reformists.

Cross shrugs.

CROSS

I'm not trying to protect you from anyone.

KAUNEL

True. But your folly is the same as theirs: They all came here assuming we needed them. Nobody, naturally, asked us if we wanted or needed their help. And it turned out that, if anything, they needed us.

(beat)

Not for the same reasons as you, of course. The Imperialists and the Reformists wanted to secure the Kolyara Mountain villages as easily defensible bases for hit and run attacks. The peacekeepers wanted to stop them from occupying the villages for precisely that reason.

(beat)

But they did need us. And you needed us. None of them were that concerned about our wishes and needs, and neither were you.

(beat, motioning to door)

Out, past that hallway, is a bed. I'm letting you sleep on it. I won't gain anything from that -- I'll have to sleep on the couch, actually.

CROSS

I could sleep on the couch --

KAUNEL

No, I wouldn't hear of it.

(MORE)

KAUNEL (CONT'D)

Take the bed. You asked me earlier why I was letting you sleep on the bed, and this is precisely my point.
(beat)

Help, true help, is self-less. You do things for people not become you have a need for it or see some advantage in it, but because they both need you to do it and will benefit from you doing it.

CROSS

That's what you wanted to tell me?

KAUNEL

In essence, yes.

Cross gazes over towards Kaunel for a moment. They share it in silence.

CROSS

Thank you.

KAUNEL

You have nothing to thank me for.

CROSS

The bed.

Kaunel waves it away.

KAUNEL

Not at all.

(beat)

Would you like to use it now? Or would you like some dinner?

CROSS

That's okay, I'm not hungry.

KAUNEL

Ah. Not find Klingon food appetizing?

CROSS

I'm getting used to it.

Kaunel chuckles.

KAUNEL

(in a slightly better mood)

Go on, take the bed. Not much of one, but who cares?

Cross stands, opens the door. He looks back at Kaunel.

CROSS

Where is it?

KAUNEL

Only other room in the house, toilet
excluded. Right across the hallway.

(with irony)

Can't miss it.

CROSS

Thanks.

Cross exits, closing the door behind him. As Kaunel readies
to sleep on the couch, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

EXT. RECONSTRUCTION HOUSE -- MORNING

An establishing shot of the Reconstruction House, morning. Cross comes into camera view, and walks right up to the door, which he opens.

INT. RECONSTRUCTION HOUSE

Cross has just entered. D'korga is standing directly in front of Jrosennes, Maktra to one side. A conversation between the last three is evidently already in place. Cross watches passively.

D'KORGA

He's what?

JROSENNES

Ill.

D'KORGA

From what?

Beat. Jrosennes seems somewhat comfortable answering this question.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

Jrosennes!

JROSENNES

A...

(beat)

Hangover, D'korga. He and I were out last night, and, well, he had a few again.

MAKTRA

Why didn't you stop him?

JROSENNES

(overlapping)

I tried, but he wouldn't listen!

D'KORGA

(malicious, overlapping)

A few! I doubt it was a few!

(beat, curses)

We need Durnak today, ghuy'cha'! The replacement has arrived and we need him for the installation!

JROSENNES

He might come round later.

D'KORGA

Later. Later!

D'korga flings his arm at the counter.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

He even eats my gagh!

CROSS

What was his specialty?

MAKTRA

(sharply)

Stay out of this, butcher.

CROSS

I'm just asking.

D'korga, slowly, turns around.

D'KORGA

And how does it interest you?

CROSS

I might have some knowledge in it.

D'KORGA

Durnak was our specialist on the preservation of mass conservation.

CROSS

Hmm.

D'KORGA

Well?

CROSS

I got a very good mark in that on the Academy.

D'KORGA

All right.

MAKTRA

(protesting)

D'korga --

D'KORGA

(stern)

Maktra.

(to Cross)

You can have a look at this and offer your advice, if your knowledge is sufficient. But you are not to touch anything without my permission.

Cross comes over to the replicator. He and D'korga hunch down together. Maktra and Jrosennes hunch down nearby.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

(indicating)

Now, we intend to replace this with this. But we don't want to disrupt the rigging here...

Cross rubs his chin thoughtfully.

CROSS

That's a rather odd alignment.

MAKTRA

(contemptuously)

Is that all you have to say?

CROSS

Here, you could keep that power in place if you move this... to here and this... there. It won't work as well as his arrangement, but it will work long enough for the transfer to be made.

D'KORGA

(doubtful)

Hmmm.

JROSENNES

It looks sound to me.

D'KORGA

When I need your advice on this matter, Jrosennes, I'll let you know.

D'korga begins to work at the open area, moving wires et al.

CROSS

That looks a lot like my suggestion.

D'KORGA

That's because it is your suggestion. Now, what do you think we should do next?

CROSS

Where's the replacement part?

D'korga hands him an object.

D'KORGA

Here.

Cross doubtfully looks down at it for a moment.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

(noticing)

Just hold it while I take the faulty one out. Unless you think there's any other alterations needed?

CROSS

No, that's fine for now.

D'korga disconnects the device, and puts it on the floor. He now puts the other device in.

CROSS (CONT'D)

(indicating)

However, don't connect it back yet to it's original position. The second jury-rigging I've done there is less stable than the original, so it's got to be readjusted carefully. First, you see, this ... should go here, and this... here. I'll come back to settling that later. It'll leave the space needed to move this ... here and this ... here. Now, I know that's not the normal configuration, but you seem to be missing a few parts anyway so it would only work properly using that method... I think.

D'KORGA

You think?

CROSS

Oh, I'm as sure as I can be about this, trust me.

D'KORGA

No, thank you.

CROSS

Oh.

D'korga begins to work. Cross watches him for a few moments.

CROSS (CONT'D)

You're just doing it anyway.

D'KORGA

That's because it seems like a good idea.

D'korga finishes.

D'KORGA (CONT'D)

Now, what next?

We pull back over D'korga's shoulder as Cross begins to point things out (which he does in silence).

CROSS (V.O.)

Sometimes when you search, you're not looking what you thought you were looking for. You thought you were desiring something from the outside world, but in the end, it's only something your mind can give you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECONSTRUCTION HOUSE -- LATER

We're still at the same angle and the same room, but Cross, D'korga etc. are in different positions. Food is on the counter. It seems some time has passed, and they talk and work silently.

CROSS (V.O.)

An inner peace. To expunge the guilt from my mind. A foolish and senseless dream, I realize it now. That's my guilt: I must live with it. It is an integral part of me, and it is something I must never forget I am guilty of, or wish away... I feel if I could wish this away, I'd be less than human.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECONSTRUCTION HOUSE -- LATER

Another FADE. The four are now joined by Durnak. D'korga, Jrosennes and Durnak are debating something while Cross and Mektra work.

CROSS (V.O.)

But part of my search was noble, even if it was just an outer layer to look for a peace that didn't exist. Helping others. It doesn't expunge guilt. It can never, ever, repay that terrible thing I've done, that catastrophe of my making that lurks in my sleeping and waking thoughts.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECONSTRUCTION HOUSE -- LATER

Yet another FADE. Cross, Durnak and Jrosennes are working at something while D'korga and Mektra supply tools.

After a few moments, Cross stands, talks to them, and they all in no particular order EXIT.

CUT TO:

EXT. T'KHENAKLIN -- RAVINE

The same shot of the city as seen in the first act. Kaunel is there, looking out, down towards that distant city.

CROSS (V.O.)

But it can make the universe a better place. Maybe just a little. Maybe just insuring a few people have more food than they had before. But it's a difference. And those differences are worth striving for.

We cut to Kaunel's POV and see what he sees: A small shape in the distance, the MAGNUS, ascending to the stars. Kaunel smiles slightly, somewhat disinterested (as sound returns). Then he thinks he hears something, and turns around, looking up the mountaintop.

Is that a patch of orange...?

KAUNEL

Hah!

Kaunel races up towards the Thirak directly above him as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

THE END