FADE IN:

INT. OFFICER'S QUARTERS

Looking out the window. Stars rush by. The room is dimly lit. In the reflection of the window, we see very little.

After a moment, we hear the sound of doors WHOOSHING open. At the same time, a rectangle of light appears at the doorway's reflection in the window.

A FIGURE passes through; we cannot tell who it is. The doors WHOOSH closed.

Constant FOOTSTEPS can be heard in the background. Seconds later, the figure quickly passes in front of the window. We cannot see who it is, not even make out a figure.

We hear heavy breathing.

As we look towards the floor, the figure passes by again, and comes back again.

We see only PACING FEET.

BLACKNESS

A caption appears: "SEVEN DAYS PRIOR".

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise at warp.

INT. BRIDGE

TALORA is in the command chair. DOJAR, SUKOTHAI and GUER man their stations.

Y'LAN stands at the back, watching the various crew with interest.

GUER

We're approaching the Cardassian system. I'm taking us out of warp.

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise slows to impulse, and in the distance is a beige planet: CARDASSIA.

INT. BRIDGE

Same as before.
DOJAR

Onscreen.

The viewscreen is replaced by the image of Cardassia, a swirling beige marble.

Dojar looks in awe, and Y'lan watches Dojar with interest.

DOJAR (CONT'D)
It's been years since I've last been to my home planet.

Y'LAN
That's a relatively small amount of time. I have not been home in over a century. Is being away from home stressful for you?

DOJAR
(beat)
It's not stressful. But to me it's important to return home every now and then. It's an important part of me.
(beat)
Permission to be relieved, sir.

TALORA
Relieved?

DOJAR
(hesitant)
Yes, Commander.

TALORA
Permission denied. Stay at your station.

A surprised Dojar spins around in his chair and focuses on his station. Guer shares the expression.

EXT. SPACE

A giant beige marble hangs from the black sky. The ENTERPRISE is in orbit.

CROSS (V.O.)
Captain's Log, Stardate 78117.9. The Enterprise is in orbit of Cardassia Prime, where we are currently filling in for the USS Mercury, transporting foodstuffs and medical supplies to the surface to feed the hungry population.
(MORE)
CROSS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Lieutenant Dojar has also requested
some extra time to visit his
homeworld, and I have granted him
access to the transporters so that
he may visit as often as he likes.

INT. CARGO BAY

Giant containers -- each at least a dozen feet high, are
stacked in rows in the giant room. About a dozen crew are
taking readings, examining cargo, and other tasks.

In one corner of the bay, GREY is working at a console while
CROSS looks over his shoulder.

GREY
I've located the distribution facility
in Timarra city. We can transport
whenever you give the order, Captain.

CROSS
Have you done the recalibration yet?

GREY
I ran a full diagnostic this morning,
and I had Chief Ozran tune up the
operation control systems. We had
some problems interfacing with the
biofilter, but I installed a previous
model and it worked fine, sir.

CROSS
Let's hope the transporters will be
able to handle this big of a load.

GREY
We shouldn't run into any problems,
sir. Today's been a good day -- not
many problems with the mix.

Cross' commbadge CHIRPS. He taps it.

TALORA'S COMM VOICE
Captain, the distribution facility
is standing by. We're in
geosynchronous orbit and ready to
begin the transport.

CROSS
Acknowledged, Commander.
(to Grey)
Mr. Grey, transport the first
container.

GREY
Yes, sir.
Grey's fingers dance over the controls, and in the background, a container fizzles out of existence.

Grey reads his controls.

GREY (CONT'D)
The transport was successful.

CROSS
Good. I'm sure you can handle the rest of the cargo, Lieutenant.

GREY
Yes, sir.

Cross leaves the cargo bay, and Grey returns to his work.

INT. CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Cross strides down the corridor.

INT. CROSS'S QUARTERS -- CONTINUOUS

Cross enters the dark quarters, and the lights automatically come on. He passes a long, antique table along the wall. On it stand a few photographs as well as a futuristic lamp. He stops, and looks at one particular photograph. It's of a family of four -- two parents and a son and a daughter. He looks at it in contemplation.

EXT. SPACE -- FLASHBACK

A Federation ship EXPLODES into our view, cut into pieces by a squadron of DOMINION WARSHIPS. The two forces clash together violently.

INT. CROSS'S QUARTERS

Same as before, as Cross remembers events from years before.

INT. COMMAND CENTER (FLASHBACK)

A starbase command center, heavily damaged. Smoke, fire, and sparks flood the room. A young NEIL CROSS, perhaps ten years of age, is trying to get his MOTHER's attention as she works to repair damaged equipment. These are the mother and son from the photograph.

NEIL
Mom. Where's dad? And Julie?

She looks at him, eye level. There is no easy way for her to convey the news.

MOTHER
They... they're not coming, Neil.
INT. CROSS'S QUARTERS

Same as before. Cross isn't looking at the photograph anymore, but past it, into something we can't see.

INT. PRISON -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

The same young NEIL CROSS is just one boy in a prison of several hundred HUMANS, BOLIANS, VULCANS, ANDORIANS, and several other SPECIES. Everyone is in ragged clothing. CARDASSIANS and SOLDIERS are posted at the doors, glaring at any who dare come near. A few soldiers make their way through the crowd.

SOLDIER

Move along!

He shoves Neil out of the way, and into his Mother's arms.

INT. CROSS'S QUARTERS

Same as before. Cross puts down the photograph and sighs. He flops down on the couch. His eyes drift to the window, and CARDASSIA hangs outside.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER
FADE IN:

INT. TALORA'S OFFICE

TALORA is sorting through some of her PADDs at her desk. A CHIME sounds at the door.

TALORA

Come in!

The doors WHOOSH open -- it's Lieutenant GUER. He enters.

GUER

Commander.

TALORA

Lieutenant. At ease.

Guer relaxes.

TALORA (CONT'D)

What can I do for you?

GUER

I wanted to see you about an engineering position.

TALORA

Engineering?

GUER

Well, Commander, I do a lot of that kind of work in my job already, and frankly, I think I'm pretty good at it.

TALORA

When you were at the Academy, you took the navigation track. You've stuck with that for your entire career.

GUER

Commander, on the last Enterprise I couldn't stop working on the engineering systems, and I've been helping Lieutenant Grey with the integrated helm systems.

(beat)

I do a good job at engineering, and have plenty of experience in the field.
TALORA
I see. You also have piloted various classes of ships and outperformed your peers at every turn.

GUER
Commander...

TALORA
You would do better to remain on the Enterprise, Lieutenant.

Dismissed.

Guer is taken aback and confused.

GUER
Yes, ma'am.

He turns and exits.

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise is still in orbit of Cardassia.

INT. CORRIDOR

GREY strides down the corridor. DOJAR is several feet behind him, and quickens his pace to catch up. He's dressed in CIVILIAN GARB -- a jacket, shirt, pants, and boots.

DOJAR
Sir!

Grey sees Dojar, and is surprised at the clothing.

GREY
Lieutenant. Going somewhere?

DOJAR
Yes, actually...

GREY
(cutting him off)
Beaming down to Cardassia I'll bet.

DOJAR
I'm just going to visit Timarra City. I have a few friends there.

GREY
I'm sure Cardassia's really nice. You seem excited.

DOJAR
It's not every day I get to go home.

(MORE)
DOJAR (CONT'D)
I haven't even been in the area since the handouts started.

GREY
I predict you'll be in for a surprise, Lieutenant.

DOJAR
No kidding. Last time I was here, the street was full of homeless people and beggars.

GREY
Are you staying long?

DOJAR
Not really, I'm just spending the afternoon there.

The two stop at a corridor junction.

GREY
Well, then, enjoy your trip, Lieutenant.

DOJAR
Thank you, sir.

The two go off in opposite directions.

INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM

CHIEF OZRAN, a Gorn in uniform, is manning the transporter controls. The doors WHOOSH open, and DOJAR walks through. Ozran stands at attention. Dojar steps up to the transporter pad.

OZRAN
Sir?

DOJAR
Set coordinates to the center of Timarra City, Chief.

Ozran works at the controls for a moment, then nods to Dojar.

DOJAR (CONT'D)
Energize.

As Ozran's hand slides over the controls, Dojar disappears in a bluish SHIMMER.

EXT. CITY STREET -- DAY

An unpaved, dirty, muddy, street lined by sagging buildings. Unattended Cardassian children scamper about.
Cardassian adults dressed in rags are everywhere. The road is a monument to poverty.

The occasional alien makes his way down the street. A BEGGAR stops several people as they are walking.

In the distance, Dojar appears in a bluish SHIMMER. Heads turn. He is overwhelmed as he looks around him – he is shocked and horrified.

The BEGGAR approaches DOJAR.

BEGGAR
A coin to spare for a poor old man?
A bit of money for a meal, perhaps?

Dojar looks at the beggar in surprise. He digs through his pockets, and produces a small gold coin. The beggar is slightly disappointed, but he snatches it out of Dojar's hand and scuttles away.

Dojar stumbles forward, and catches himself. He approaches an old Cardassian WOMAN.

DOJAR
Excuse me...

WOMAN
(steely voice)
I don't have any money.

DOJAR
I don't want money. I'm looking for a friend. I think he lives in the district.

WOMAN
(smiling now)
What's his name?

DOJAR
Simad. Gerrim Simad.

WOMAN
Come with me.

She leads him down the street.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is small. Along one wall, a small kitchen of sorts, and by that, an old table. A bed is in another corner, and the door on another wall. A high window lets a little bit of light in.

SIMAD, a pale and skinny Cardassian, putters around, cleaning the kitchen counter with a rag.
RENAISSANCE: "Beggars and Choosers" - ACT ONE

A KNOCK on the door.

SIMAD
Who is it?

WOMAN
It's Delesk. Someone wants to see you. He claims to be a friend.

SIMAD
Come in.

DOJAR enters, and DELESK follows.

SIMAD (CONT'D)
(squints)
Dojar! Gril Dojar! How nice to see you!
(to Delesk)
Thank you, Delesk.

Delesk leaves, shutting the door behind her.

DOJAR
It's good to see you too, Simad. How have you been?

SIMAD
Fine. It's been a little rough lately, but I manage.

DOJAR
Do you still work at the factory?

SIMAD
No, I was fired when the new management took over. How's Starfleet been treating you? You a captain yet?

DOJAR
No, not yet. I'm still working on that. Right now, I'm tactical officer of the Enterprise.

SIMAD
The Enterprise. I've heard that name before.

DOJAR
(proudly)
It's the flagship. Most advanced in the fleet.

SIMAD
I'm impressed.

(MORE)
SIMAD (CONT'D)
(coughs)
So, what brings you here?

DOJAR
The Enterprise is delivering food supplies to Cardassia.

Simad gives him a blank look at first, but his face changes. He just realized what Dojar is talking about.

SIMAD
Right. The aid.

Dojar finally takes a look around the apartment.

DOJAR
Are you sure you're doing OK?

SIMAD
I'm fine. This isn't the Enterprise or a hotel or anything, but it's adequate for one old man.

DOJAR
One old man who's lost a lot of weight.

SIMAD
Well, I suppose I've been a little sick lately. A bug that's going around, nothing I can't take care of.

(beat)
Gosh, I haven't seen you in years. We need to catch up. Now, sit and tell me about this ship of yours.

Dojar sits reluctantly at the table, and Simad joins him after putting away the rag.

EXT. SPACE
The ENTERPRISE in orbit of Cardassia.

INT. SICKBAY
ELRIS is doing a checkup on GUER, who sits on the edge of a biobed. She is using a TRICORDER.

ELRIS
That's it. You're fine, Lieutenant.

GUER
Thanks, Doctor.
Guer hops off of the bed as he says this, and exits the Sickbay. As he walks out, TALORA walks in.

ELRIS
Commander.

TALORA
Doctor.

ELRIS
Can I help you?

TALORA
I'm visiting the distribution facility.

ELRIS
Oh?

TALORA
I'm interested in the Federation's aid program. It's one-of-a-kind.

ELRIS
Well, there aren't many other aid programs, so I suppose you're right.
   (beat)
Can I help you?

TALORA
I'd like you to come along.

ELRIS
Oh. What time did you have in mind?

TALORA
Meet me in the transporter room in an hour.

ELRIS
I'll be there.

INT. FACILITY OFFICE -- DAY

A small office of Cardassian architecture. At the desk sits GARASH, a Cardassian in very formal civilian clothing. A SECRETARY pokes her head through the door.

SECRETARY
Sir, there's a man out here who wants to speak to you.

GARASH
Who is it?
SECRETARY
Something like Edrik. Maybe Adrik. I don't remember.

GARASH
Tell him I'm busy this week.

SECRETARY
There's two more people, sir...

Garash sighs.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)
Two women, a Romulan and a Bajoran.

GARASH
I didn't realize the carnival was today.

SECRETARY
It isn't, sir. They're from Starfleet.

GARASH
Starfleet? (beat)
Let them in.

The secretary leaves, and a moment later, ELRIS and TALORA appear at the door.

GARASH (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Ladies, how nice to see you both!

He extends his hand, and Talora and Elris shake it.

TALORA
I'm Commander Talora, first officer of the USS Enterprise, and this is our Chief Medical Officer, Commander Elris.

GARASH
(rambling, but jovial)
Enchanted! The Enterprise? This is new! I'm sorry my office is such a mess - I really didn't have much notice.

TALORA
I apologize for the inconvenience, Mister...

GARASH
Garash.
TALORA
Garash. We'd like to see the
distribution facility while we're in
orbit.

ELRIS
And I have a few questions about the
medical supplies.

GARASH
I'd be delighted to show you our
facilities. I can give you an overview
of the entire operation, if you'd
like.

TALORA
That would be great.

GARASH
Come this way.

They step out of the office.

INT. CORRIDOR
Garash leads Elris and Talora down a wide and busy corridor. They stop in
front of a wide bay of windows, which looks in
on a large, squeaky-clean WAREHOUSE ROOM filled with conveyor
belts. Roughly cubic packages, about two feet high, move
past workers who gradually disassemble them and throw the
excess packaging in large barrels.

At the end of the line, the packages have become groups of
smaller packages of various shapes. These move down a chute
and out of view.

GARASH
This is actually the second stage of
the process. The containers that are
beamed down contain these units of
food, which are then unpacked here.
The ones you see right now contain
vegetable and fruit products, I
believe.

TALORA
How do you keep the place so clean?

GARASH
(points towards the
ceiling)
During breaks in processing, when no
food comes through, pipes along the
ceiling release a harmless gas into
the air.

(MORE)
GARASH (CONT'D)
The polarized particles slowly fall to the floor and pull the dirt and dust along with them. It settles on the floor, and are swept away using pressurized oxygen sweepers.

ELRIS
Fascinating. I'm sure our engineer could use something like that in our engine room.

TALORA
In that engine room it would be waste.

GARASH
It's not exactly needed here either. We have one of the cleanest facilities in the sector. Shall we move on?

INT. APARTMENT
Same as before.

DOJAR
So, who's Delesk? A lady friend?

SIMAD
I met her through work. And yes, she's just a friend. And speaking of ladies, do you have one yet?

DOJAR
(laughs)
No, not yet.

SIMAD
What, you? There's got to be plenty of young women on the Enterprise. Don't tell me that you don't have your eye on any of them?

DOJAR
No, Simad, I don't.
(joking)
Some of those Admirals, though...

The two laugh at the joke. A brief and awkward pause follows.

DOJAR (CONT'D)
Gosh, I must have been here for at least an hour. Well, it was good catching up with you, Simad.

SIMAD
You're leaving?
DOJAR
Sorry... I to be back aboard the Enterprise.
(beat)
Duties.

SIMAD
Can you come around again?

DOJAR
(slightly uncomfortable)
I may be able to come back tomorrow afternoon.

SIMAD
(smiling)
Please do.

Dojar taps his commbadge.

DOJAR
Dojar to Enterprise. One to beam up.

OZRAN'S COMM VOICE
Acknowledged.

Dojar disappears in the SHIMMER of a TRANSPORTER BEAM.

INT. SICKBAY

Elris is just sitting down at her desk when Dojar enters.

DOJAR
Doctor!

ELRIS
Lieutenant. How can I help you?

DOJAR
I need you to visit a friend of mine.

ELRIS
I'm sorry?

DOJAR
His name's Simad.

ELRIS
(confused)
Is there something I should know?

DOJAR
Just bring your medical tricorder.
ELRIS
Lieutenant, we have very specific orders with regard to Cardassia. You know I'm not allowed to treat anybody without going through the Cardassian government.

DOJAR
You can't treat anybody, Doctor. But you can scan them, can't you?

ELRIS
Sorry, but I can't do that either.

DOJAR
I don't understand why not.

ELRIS
There's a little technicality at work here: doctor-patient confidentiality. If I break it, what kind of a doctor am I? Certainly not the Chief Medical Officer of the USS Enterprise.

DOJAR
I think my friend is sick, and I'm requesting a scan. You must be able to do that!

ELRIS
I'm sorry, Lieutenant. You're dismissed.

Dojar studies Elris' face. She isn't completely behind what she is saying. Dojar walks out of Sickbay.

EXT. SPACE
The Enterprise in orbit of Cardassia.

INT. READY ROOM
Cross sits at his desk. On it is a small metal box with a black ring on top.

Along the front are some controls, and Cross presses one of these. A tiny holographic MAN in a Starfleet uniform appears standing inside the black ring.

MAN
Hey, Neil, it's Dad. I want you to know... that I love you very much. You're a great son, you always have been.

(MORE)
MAN (CONT'D)
I know that some day, you'll be the best Parrises Squares player in the Quadrant. I'm so proud of you, son.

A CHIME at the door.

CROSS
Come.

Talora steps through, carrying a PADD.

TALORA
Captain.

CROSS
Commander. What can I do for you?

TALORA
I have the report on my visit with the Superintendant and...
(sees the hologram)
Did I come at a bad time?

CROSS
No. I'm fine. I'm just...
(beat)
reminiscing.

TALORA
Generally, people reminisce with others. May I ask who it is?

CROSS
My father. He was in Starfleet, too. This was his latest recording...
before he died.

TALORA
I think I understand how you feel. I have a similar recording from my elder brother.

CROSS
Sometimes I like to look at this. It's the only active holo I have of him. He hated recording them, and this one was recorded six months before he died.

TALORA
(searches for something to say)
I'm sure he would have been proud to know that you sit in this office.
CROSS

He certainly didn't predict it. I wanted to go into sports.

Talora stands there, speechless. If she's ever been uncomfortable, it's now.

CROSS (CONT'D)

(almost to himself)

He didn't die for any reason, you know? I heard that he was killed in cold blood by a Cardassian, his hands raised. He surrendered...

(beat)

I'm sorry, Commander. I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable.

TALORA

Quite alright, Captain. My report.

She places the report on the desk. Cross doesn't even glance at it. After a few seconds, she turns and leaves. As Cross looks at the hologram, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise in orbit of Cardassia.

INT. DOJAR'S QUARTERS

DOJAR sits at his desk, reading a PADD. His face lights up - he's found something important in what he's reading. He gets up and scrambles out the door, taking the PADD with him.

INT. SICKBAY

ELRIS stands at a research table with a young ensign. Various test tubes are on the table, along with some scientific equipment. The ensign is running some scans with a TRICORDER while Elris works with some of the equipment. Dojar enters with the PADD.

   DOJAR
   (excited)
   Doctor.

Elris sees Dojar.

   ELRIS
   Hello again.
   (to Ensign)
   Excuse me, Ensign.
   (to Dojar)
   In my office.

Dojar follows Elris to her office. She sits down at the desk, and he hands her the PADD.

   ELRIS (CONT'D)
   What's this?

   DOJAR
   It's the treaty signed by the Federation and Cardassia at the end of the war. Go to Section 12.

   ELRIS
   (reads the PADD)
   This is the part about humanitarian aid for Cardassia.

   DOJAR
   In the fourth paragraph, it specifies that the Federation provides resources, but the Cardassian
DOJAR (CONT'D)
government is responsible for
distributing the aid.

ELRIS
And Federation officials and Starfleet
personnel can't treat people or
provide resources without first going
through the government.

DOJAR
Read a little further, and you'll
see that an analysis is allowed.

Elris puts down the PADD.

DOJAR (CONT'D)
I'm requesting that you analyze a
small portion of the population.

Elris considers, then stands up.

ELRIS
Meet me in the transporter room at
the end of the shift.

DOJAR
Thank you!

ELRIS
Now, if you'll excuse I have an
experiment to do.

EXT. SPACE
The Enterprise in orbit.

EXT. CITY STREET -- DAY
Same as before. Heads turn again as Elris and Dojar beam
down to the surface.

Elris is certainly surprised upon seeing the poverty. Dojar
is in civilian clothes; Elris is in uniform.

DOJAR
Now, he doesn't know that you're
scanning him, so be discreet.

ELRIS
(uncomfortable)
All right.

DOJAR
And... don't let him know that you're
a doctor.
ELRIS
A doctor? I could have sworn I was just your personal tricorder.

Dojar doesn't laugh.

INT. APARTMENT -- DAY

Same as before, except SIMAD is reading a book in the corner. A KNOCK on the door...

SIMAD
Come in!

Dojar and Elris enter.

DOJAR
I brought someone with me. I hope you don't mind. This is Commander Elris.

SIMAD
(smiles courteously)
Nice to meet you.

ELRIS
Nice to meet you too, Simad. Dojar's told me all about you.

SIMAD
Oh?
(looks at Dojar)
Have a seat.

ELRIS
I can't stay for long.

Elris and Dojar sit, and as they speak, Elris pulls out her TRICORDER and holds it out of view. She looks at Simad while holding the tricorder open for a second, and then quietly folds it up without looking at it.

SIMAD
So, Elris, what do you do on the Enterprise?

DOJAR
She's a science officer. She...
(beat)
Studies physiology.

ELRIS
(glares at Dojar)
Mainly new encounters.
SIMAD
Oh. Well, you're very lucky to have a friend in Dojar.

DOJAR
Thank you.

Simad folds his hands on the table. Elris notices a cut near his elbow. She can only see one end of it – the sleeve covers most of it up.

ELRIS
Simad, you have a cut on your arm.

SIMAD
It's nothing.

ELRIS
No, it looks like something.

Dojar looks at the cut. It's near the elbow and the surrounding bluish-brown skin suggests an infection.

DOJAR
How did you cut yourself?

SIMAD
Oh, I fell and scraped my arm against the counter. Nothing serious.

ELRIS
(leans forward)
Well, let me have a look.

SIMAD
(slightly exasperated)
I'm fine.
(settles)
I'm fine. Don't worry about me. It's just a minor cut.

ELRIS
(settles back into her chair)
I see.

Simad fumbles for small talk.

SIMAD
So, tell me more about yourself.

EXT. CITY STREET -- DAY

Dojar and Elris walk out of the building. Again, a few heads turn.
RENAISSANCE: "Beggars and Choosers" - ACT TWO

DOJAR
Well?

ELRIS
He's sick.

DOJAR
Tell me more.

ELRIS
He has Kemmet's disease. The condition is exacerbated by an empty stomach, which he also has.

DOJAR
Is it serious?

ELRIS
It could be, it might not be. I'd need to take him to Sickbay to find out. But that's against our agreement with the Cardassians.

DOJAR
All right. Thank you.

ELRIS
I'm beaming back up.

At that moment, the BEGGAR from before approaches Elris. He is again clothed in mere rags, which seem like even less in contrast to Elris' uniform.

BEGGAR
Food for a beggar?

Dojar digs in his pockets and pulls out a coin. The beggar snatches it away and scampers off. Elris looks after him thoughtfully. After a beat, she taps her commbadge.

ELRIS
One to beam up.

She disappears in a shimmer.

Dojar walks back into the building.

INT. APARTMENT -- DAY
Same as before. Dojar enters.

SIMAD
Did she beam up?

DOJAR
Yes.

(MORE)
DOJAR (CONT'D)
(beat)
We need to talk.

SIMAD
About what?

DOJAR
Simad... you're getting really thin. I'm afraid you're not eating enough.

SIMAD
I'm fine.

DOJAR
You've lost a lot of weight. Simad, please. Tell me what's going on.

SIMAD
I haven't always been able to get food, that's all. It's a hard life. I'm doing pretty well, considering.

DOJAR
Considering?

SIMAD
It's nothing.

DOJAR
I realize the aid that comes in isn't much, but you wouldn't be this thin, would you?

SIMAD
There really isn't much food. I stopped going to the facility. It wasn't worth the trip.

DOJAR
I'm going to get you some food, Simad.

SIMAD
It won't do any good. You'll hardly get anything.

DOJAR
We'll see about that.

SIMAD
You're wasting your time!

DOJAR
And you're wasting away. Please, let me try to help.

Simad finally backs down. He sighs.
RENAISSANCE: "Beggars and Choosers" - ACT TWO

26.

SIMAD
If you're going to go, take my ID card. You'll need it for the food.

DOJAR
Alright.

Simad hands Dojar a small red card, and Dojar walks out the door.

INT. TALORA'S OFFICE

Talora is shuffling PADDs around at her desk. A chime sounds at the door.

TALORA
Come.

It's GUER.

TALORA (CONT'D)
Did you decide on medical science this time?

GUER
No, ma'am. But I wanted to request that you consider me when you find an opening in Engineering.

TALORA
I thought you might come back. But I'm afraid we have more than a full staff.

GUER
I know that. I was thinking of a position on another ship.

EXT. NICER CITY STREET

Dojar makes his way down another Cardassian city street. This one is nicer -- paved sidewalks, nicer buildings in decent repair. There are few people about and those that are in the street are moderately dressed -- nothing like the rags from Simad's district.

One one sidewalk is Dojar. He is walking quickly. He spots a large, building about a half-kilometer away, and starts toward it. Heavy FOOTSTEPS behind him. A HAND grasps Dojar by the shoulder and he spins round to face a POLICE OFFICER.

OFFICER
What are you doing here?

DOJAR
I'm sorry?
OFFICER
By the looks of you, you're not from around here. Let me see your ID.

DOJAR
I'm going to get food for a friend.

OFFICER
(harsher)
I want your ID.

DOJAR
I don't have an ID If you'll let me pass, I can get on my way.

OFFICER
Alright, you're coming with me.

He grasps Dojar's arm. Dojar resists.

DOJAR
I haven't done anything wrong.

OFFICER
That's what they all say, isn't it? Come on.

DOJAR
My name is Gril Dojar and I'm Chief Tactical Officer of the Federation Starship Enterprise.

OFFICER
Yep. That's what the last guy said, too. You're quite popular around here.

Dojar wrings his arm free and pulls his commbadge out of his jacket.

DOJAR
Here's my insignia. If you don't believe me now, believe me when I say that you'll be sparking an interstellar incident.

The officer is quite taken aback.

OFFICER
I'm sorry, sir. I didn't know...

DOJAR
I told you, didn't I?

He continues down the street in a huff.
INT. FACILITY ROOM

A longish room, with windows along one wall. An attendant stands at each window.

Long lines of Cardassians stem from each. A door on another wall. Every few moments, the person at the front of each line walks away with a small package - not bigger than a small medkit.

Near the front of the line stands Dojar. He shifts from foot to another. He looks as if he's been here a while.

The DOOR opens, and a tall Cardassian man walks out. He's clad in military garb.

He carries a large package, about the size of a grocery bag. Dojar stares as he walks by. His attention is caught by another, similarly dressed man who comes through the door with a similar package.

The door shuts, and Dojar shifts back to his other foot. He turns to the man behind him.

    DOJAR
    Excuse me, could you tell me something?

    MAN
    What?

    DOJAR
    Why are there a few people coming through there...

He points to the door.

    DOJAR (CONT'D)
    With so much more food?

    MAN
    (bitterly)
    Those are government officers. Watch the next man that comes through. He'll have a uniform and polished boots.

Dojar turns back around. After a moment, the door opens again. Another figure walks out, with a large package of food. He fits the man's description perfectly.

INT. FACILITY ROOM

Several minutes later, Dojar is at the head of the line.

    ATTENDANT
    Your ID?
Dojar fishes out Simad's red ID card from his pocket. The attendant takes it, studies the picture, and looks back up at Dojar.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
This isn't you.

DOJAR
It's for a friend, not me.

ATTENDANT
(eying Dojar suspiciously)
I see.

She swipes the card through a little machine. After a response from the computer, she takes a small package out and gives it to Dojar, also returning the card.

Dojar takes the package, and opens it.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
Move along.
(to next person in line)
Next!

Dojar doesn't move.

DOJAR
Did you know that I'm in Starfleet? On my ship, a meal is usually enough to fill one's stomach.

ATTENDANT
I suppose you're Gril Dojar. C'mon, I don't have all day.

DOJAR
Do you know how many times I've heard that? You're not funny, but you are mistaken.

Dojar pulls out his commbadge, and looks questioningly at the attendant.

ATTENDANT
(surprised)
I see. Sir, there's a door to your left. I'm very sorry about the mix-up.

DOJAR
(grumbling)
At least I'm famous around here...
INT. WAITING ROOM -- DAY

A desk at one end with a SECOND ATTENDANT seated behind it, and a row of empty chairs begging for an occupant. The room is much nicer than the previous -- cleaner, brighter, well-furnished. Several Cardassians -- many dressed in military or at least formal clothing -- stand around, chatting idly.

Dojar enters. A few heads turn, but for the most part, he is ignored. He walks up to the desk, and slaps his commbadge down on it.

    DOJAR
    I'm Lieutenant Dojar of the USS Enterprise. I've come to get a meal for a friend.

    SECOND ATTENDANT
    Certainly, Lieutenant.

She pulls out a large bag like we saw before and hands it to him with a smile.

    SECOND ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
    Have a good day.

Dojar is already on his way out.

INT. APARTMENT -- DAY

Dojar arrives with the food.

    DOJAR
    I brought you this.

Simad looks at the food, and almost conceals his surprise -- and excitement.

    SIMAD
    Thank you so much, Dojar. What would I do without you?

    DOJAR
    Not much, I'm afraid... I had to use my Starfleet ID to get this.

    SIMAD
    I'm not surprised.

    DOJAR
    Simad, did you know that malnourishment causes Kemmet's disease? 
    (beat)
    It can be serious, you know.
SIMAD
(quietly)
How did you find out?

DOJAR
That's not important.

SIMAD
It was Elris, wasn't it? She scanned me with one of your Starfleet tricorders.

DOJAR
I'm sorry, Simad. I was worried. I wanted to help, and you wouldn't let me. The scanning only confirmed what I suspected.

SIMAD
(angry)
Well, very nice of you to waltz in here and take charge of things. I see Starfleet taught you well.

DOJAR
I'm your friend, Simad. You can't even tell me that your sick?

SIMAD
There was nothing you could do. You would have worried, so I didn't tell you. It was better that way.

DOJAR
But I'm sure I could help, in some way. You can trust me, Simad.

SIMAD
Apparently, I can't.

DOJAR
Simad... What if I can help you?

SIMAD
(bitter)
I don't think you can. The Cardassian government wouldn't allow it.

DOJAR
(angry)
We can work around that! I work on the Enterprise. My captain is a diplomat!
SIMAD
(insistent)
Please... don't worry about me. You can't help, just keep it off your mind. It's better that way, Dojar.

DOJAR
Yes, it's always better, whatever way you choose. Always better.

SIMAD
You can leave, Dojar.

DOJAR
(angry)
I think I will.

As Dojar storms out, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO
FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise is in orbit of Cardassia.

INT. CORRIDOR

CROSS is leading a stately-looking Cardassian woman, GOVERNOR HAMARRIN, and her bodyguard through the ship.

HAMARRIN
Your engine room is quite organized. You run a tight ship.

CROSS
Lieutenant Grey is to blame for that, I'm afraid. Not everything on board is quite that sterile.

HAMARRIN
He's an efficient leader, I can tell.

CROSS
(smiling)
As a Cardassian, I'm sure you can appreciate that, ma'am.

HAMARRIN
As a Cardassian?

CROSS
(beginning to back-pedal)
Oh, well, the Cardassian government is renowned for its efficiency. Starfleet could take a lesson from you.

HAMARRIN
(forcing a smile)
Yes, I'm sure it could. (beat) What's next on the tour?

INT. BRIDGE

TALORA is running the nerve center at the moment, and various officers are manning the stations. Cross, Hamarrin, and her guards enter from the rear.

TALORA stands.
CROSS
Welcome to the Bridge, Governor.

HAMARRIN
Impressive.

CROSS
Governor Hamarrin, this is my first officer, Commander Talora.

HAMARRIN
It looks like you're lucky to be here, Commander.

TALORA
(forcing a smile)
I am, Governor.
(beat)
This is the control center of the Enterprise. Flight, operations, sciences, weapons, they're all controlled from the Bridge.

CROSS
And also security.

HAMARRIN
Lieutenant Dojar is the head of that department, if I recall correctly?

CROSS
Yes. He's not here right now, for personal reasons, but when he's on duty he keeps very close tabs on his security officers. We rarely have any trouble with them.

HAMARRIN
Yes, I would hope so. I'm afraid I have some pressing matters on the surface at the moment, so if you'll excuse me, I'll return to the transporter room.

Hamarrin exits quickly and her bodyguards follow. Talora turns to Cross.

TALORA
Dojar would be happy to know you have such a high opinion of his security procedures.

CROSS
I was just trying to make a good impression, Commander. That's important, you know.
TALORA
Yes, it is.

She looks at Cross, and he tries to read her expression. When he fails, he walks toward his ready room.

CROSS
I'll be in my ready room, Commander.

EXT. SPACE
The Enterprise is still in orbit of Cardassia.

INT. READY ROOM
CROSS sits at his desk, working at his computer. Outside the window, the large beige planet... The door CHIMES.

CROSS
Come in.

The doors part, and DOJAR and TALORA enter.

DOJAR & TALORA
Captain.

CROSS
At ease.
(to Dojar)
You don't look so happy. Did your visit go well?

DOJAR
No. Captain, I have bad news...

CROSS
(stands)
What happened? How is your friend?

DOJAR
He's sick, but that's not the point.

CROSS
What is it?

DOJAR
I went to get food for him, but to get a full meal, I had to tell them I was in Starfleet. They treated me just like one of their Guls, which is much better than how they treat the rest of the population. They get quick service, and plenty of food. I was stuck with the rest of the population.
CROSS
And?

DOJAR
Most people are getting a little bread, maybe some fruit sauce or something. Not much more.

TALORA
It would appear that Superintendant Garash wasn't completely honest in our meeting.

DOJAR
There isn't much in the way of medical aid, either. I'd like to request that we send a team of doctors to the facility.

TALORA
Lieutenant!

CROSS
Not yet.
(beat)
I have to speak with Starfleet first. I don't want to hear about it anymore, understood?

DOJAR
Yes, sir.

CROSS
Dismissed, Lieutenant.

Dojar exits.

CROSS (CONT'D)
This doesn't look good, Commander.

TALORA
Lieutenant Dojar isn't going to help the situation, either. I hope he doesn't try to take matters into his own hands.

CROSS
I doubt he'll do that, but it is important that he respect the chain of command.
(beat)
I might need your support on this, Commander, when we're talking to my superiors.

TALORA
I'll do my best.
CROSS
I suppose that's all I can ask, isn't it?

TALORA
Yes, sir.

CROSS
Thank you, Commander.

Talora exits. Cross settles back in his chair and thinks for a moment. He looks out at Cardassia again.

He taps his COMMBADGE, which CHIRPS.

CROSS (CONT'D)
Cross to Bridge.

TALORA'S COMM VOICE
Talora here.

CROSS
Send a message to Superintendant Garash. Tell him I'd like to speak with him as soon as possible.

TALORA'S COMM VOICE
Aye, sir.

CROSS
Cross out.

EXT. SPACE
The Enterprise in orbit of Cardassia.

INT. CORRIDOR
Elris and Dojar walk briskly down the corridor.

ELRIS
What did he say?

DOJAR
He didn't want to do anything just yet.

ELRIS
Welcome to the world of politics -- and Neil Cross.

DOJAR
I asked him about sending a medical team to help out at the facility. He was... hesitant about that.
ELRIS
I can imagine.

DOJAR
Doctor, you saw what it's like out there, in the streets. We need to help. But he won't listen to me, and Commander Talora's just the same. Can you go talk to him, Doctor?

ELRIS
What makes you think he'd listen to me?

DOJAR
Well...
(beat)
You're his wife.

ELRIS
(harumphs)
And that means I have special powers?

DOJAR
You have his ear. You can influence him.

ELRIS
I don't like the sound of that.

DOJAR
Welcome to the world of politics, Commander.

INT. READY ROOM

Cross sits at his desk, with a cup of coffee in one hand. A CHIME at the door.

Cross sighs.

CROSS
Come in!

The doors part, and ELRIS steps in.

ELRIS
Hello.

CROSS
(short)
What is it?

Elris shows a bit of surprise at his rudeness.

CROSS (CONT'D)
I'm...
(MORE)
CROSS (CONT'D)
(lightens up)
I'm sorry. It's been a rough few days.

ELRIS
I'll say.

CROSS
So, Doctor, what can I do for you?

ELRIS
I'd like to send a medical team down to Cardassia.

Cross stands, takes a swig of coffee.

CROSS
I see Dojar got to you.

ELRIS
What are you talking about, Captain?

CROSS
He's been asking me for all sorts of things...

ELRIS
Excuse me, but I went down there myself.

CROSS
Why?

ELRIS
To meet a friend of Dojar's.

CROSS
So, Dojar got to you.

ELRIS
(angry)
I believe in some of the same things as the rest of the senior staff. You know -- food, medicine, things like that. I don't think of it as some crusade from a fellow crewmate, I think of it as an issue.

CROSS
Alright. I'm sorry.
(beat)
Now, about this medical team?
ELRIS
I'd like to send a medical team down to Cardassia, so that they could help more people.

CROSS
I believe that goes against our treaty.

ELRIS
Our doctors would work in the facility. They'd almost be working for the Cardassian government. I'm sure they'd love a few more doctors on hand.

CROSS
I'll consider it.

ELRIS
Consider it?

CROSS
(a little harsh)
Yes, I'll consider it. Dismissed, Commander.

ELRIS
Are you sure you're alright?

CROSS
(sighs)
Yes.

Elris walks out.

INT. MESS HALL

Various crew sit about at the tables. At one table sit GUER, KINNAN and ATKINSON. As they chat, TALORA enters, spots the trio, and approaches.

TALORA
(to Guer)
Lieutenant Guer.

GUER
Yes, Commander?

TALORA
Come with me.

Talora leads him out the door, while Kinnan and Atkinson share surprised looks.
INT. CORRIDOR

Talora and Guer walk briskly down the corridor.

TALORA
I talked to a few different captains for you.

GUER
Anything?

TALORA
No, Lieutenant. There just aren't any open engineering positions.

Guer frowns, but Talora isn't finished.

TALORA (CONT'D)
The XO of the Corsica is moving out in a month, and Captain T'lavok is still looking for a replacement.

GUER
First Officer?

TALORA
Yes.

GUER
Did you tell him anything?

TALORA
I didn't talk to T'lavok yet, but I have looked over your previous evaluations and reviewed your file. Say the word, and I'll recommend you for promotion.

Guer is overwhelmed.

GUER
This is...
(beat)
wow...
(beat)
This is really something...

TALORA
Yes, Lieutenant, it's something.

GUER
I don't know. Command is a big step.

TALORA
You would get a promotion to Lieutenant Commander.
(MORE)
TALORA (CONT'D)
The Corsica is a small ship. You would be more than capable of running it.

GUER
I still don't know...

Talora pauses, as if she's not sure whether she should say what she's thinking.

TALORA
If I may say so, you'd be missing out.

GUER
I'll think about it.
(beat)
Does the Captain know?

TALORA
No.

GUER
Thank you, Commander. I appreciate it.

TALORA
I think that...
(beat)
It's part of the job.

EXT. SPACE
The Enterprise in orbit of Cardassia.

INT. BRIDGE
Talora is in the command chair. Dojar is at Tactical, SUKOTHAI at Ops.

SUKOTHAI
I have an incoming hail for the Captain on an official Cardassian frequency.

Talora taps her commbadge.

TALORA
Talora to Captain Cross.

CROSS' COMM VOICE
Go ahead.
TALORA
I believe Mr. Garash is returning your call. Should I route it to your ready room?

CROSS' COMM VOICE
No, I'll take it on the bridge.

Cross out.

Talora nods to Sukothai. GARASH appears on the view screen. Seconds later Cross enters the bridge from the side.

CROSS
(cordial)
Superintendent Garash, I'm Captain Cross of the Enterprise.

GARASH
Captain, how nice to see you! How can I help you?

CROSS
Several of my officers have beamed down to your facility.

GARASH
Yes, I believe I met Commander Talora and Doctor Elris.

CROSS
They've noticed some problems with the distribution of the resources that the Federation provides.

GARASH
There are some problems, Captain. But the Cardassian government is taking care of them.

CROSS
I believe the problems might be bigger than that.

GARASH
(abruptly)
I don't have time to discuss this.

The screen goes blank.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE
FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise is still in orbit of Cardassia.

INT. DOJAR'S QUARTERS

The room is dark. A little bit of light streams in from the window. Outside, CARDASSIA hangs from the sky. DOJAR stands in front of the window, looking at the planet. His commbadge CHIRPS.

CROSS' COMM VOICE
Cross to all senior staff. Please report to the conference room immediately.

Dojar turns to go.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

CROSS sits at the head of the table, and TALORA, Y'LAN, ELRIS, GREY, DOJAR, and QUINLAN are seated around it.

CROSS
I've gotten word back from Starfleet Command.

QUINLAN
That was quick.

CROSS
They've got a few problems of their own right now, so they've given me full diplomatic powers for the duration of this mission. I can negotiate treaties, act upon them, whatever.

(beat)

As of now, I am Starfleet Command. Commander Talora's briefed you all on the current situation, and I need your help to make this decision.

TALORA
We have three options available. First, we can take charge of the distribution, so that we control who gets what. Second, we can threaten not to send aid at all.

Several officers look up.
TALORA (CONT'D)
Third, we can choose not to do anything about it at all. We could keep sending the aid, and let the Cardassian government do what they please.

DOJAR
In other words, we could look the other way.

Cross silences him with a glare.

Y'LAN
How difficult would that first option be?

QUINLAN
That's a big job. We'd have to send a lot of people in.

TALORA
It is possible to just replace the administration with Starfleet people, and let Cardassian personnel do the actual work.

QUINLAN
(sarcasm)
There's an idea.

DOJAR
A good idea.

QUINLAN
I was going to say the opposite, actually. Why should we enforce what we believe on another nation? After all, Cardassia is a sovereign nation.

DOJAR
Not while the Federation is sending aid.

QUINLAN
The political status doesn't matter! There are hundreds of governments that we don't recognize, but we don't shove the Prime Directive down their throats!

DOJAR
But we can't just stand by while people are starving!

Elris is near the point of sighing again.
CROSS
(to Elris)
Doctor, I haven't heard anything out of you.

ELRIS
I'm with Lieutenant Dojar. We have to take action.

The table is silent for a moment.

QUINLAN
(half-muttering)
I'll bet somebody was having this discussion a few thousand years ago...

CROSS
(to Quinlan)
Who did you have in mind?

QUINLAN
Just a few Changelings, who had to decide whether they should try to impose order on a chaotic galaxy.

DOJAR
You can't compare the Dominion to us. We weren't in chaos, Cardassia is!

Again, the table falls silent.

GREY
I suppose we could try the second option.

TALORA
To threaten to halt the aid?

GREY
I don't see why not. Cardassia depends on us -- we have leverage. We should use it.

DOJAR
What if we don't have as much leverage as we think we do? Then what?

CROSS
All right, Lieutenant. I've heard enough. I'll see about sending in facilitators.

Cross turns toward the window.

CROSS (CONT'D)
Dismissed.
The rest of the officers file out, but TALORA stays behind.

TALORA
Something on your mind, Captain?

CROSS
Why?

TALORA
You've been brooding a little lately, and taking a less hands-on role in the operations of the ship. Call it a hunch.
(beat)
Is something bothering you?

CROSS
Nothing.
(beat)
Well, something.

TALORA
A hard decision?

CROSS
Commander, I've made hard decisions before. I've even negotiated on the Federation's behalf before. But this...
(beat)
this is different.

TALORA
Why?

CROSS
I'm not sure that I'm completely...
(beat)
Unbiased.

TALORA
Yes, I forgot. The prison.

CROSS
Maybe I am biased against Cardassia. Unsympathetic. But in a way, they earned this. They betrayed the Alpha Quadrant.

TALORA
Would you like my opinion?

CROSS
(smiles slightly)
Why not...
TALORA
The Cardassians did betray the rest of the Alpha Quadrant when they joined the Dominion. But at the end of the war, they turned on the Dominion. If not for them, the Dominion would have overrun Romulus and eventually the Federation.

CROSS
If they hadn't joined in the first place, we might have won early on.
(beat)
Thanks for your help, but... I'd rather get through this alone.

TALORA
(straightening up)
Yes, Captain.

Talora exits.

EXT. SPACE
The Enterprise is still in orbit of Cardassia.

INT. CORRIDOR
Dojar ambles down the corridor, in no particular hurry, but in a melancholy mood. Elris appears from behind, catches up, and matches his pace.

ELRIS
I forgot to ask before, but how's Simad?

DOJAR
He admitted he had Kemmet's, but he wasn't to happy about being scanned. He got angry.

ELRIS
What did you say when you saw him again?

DOJAR
I haven't seen him yet.

ELRIS
Really? It's been what, three days?

DOJAR
I suppose.

ELRIS
We won't be in orbit forever.
(MORE)
ELRIS (CONT'D)
We have to get back to the Klingon border soon.

DOJAR
I know. It's just... Why's he so stubborn? He can't even accept a little help from a friend.

ELRIS
Some people have a lot of pride.

DOJAR
I'll say.
(exasperated)
I wish he would let me help, though.

ELRIS
Maybe he would.

DOJAR
If?

ELRIS
If you apologized to him.

DOJAR
I'm not the one who should be apologizing.

ELRIS
That's probably true.
(beat)
It's funny, though, because if you did apologize, he might actually let you help.
(beat)
Just a thought, that's all.

As she walks off, she leaves a contemplative Dojar behind her. A moment later, Talora passes Dojar in the corridor.

TALORA
Lieutenant.

DOJAR
Commander.

FOLLOW Talora as GUER catches up.

GUER
Commander! I'd like to apply for the promotion.

TALORA
I thought you might.
(MORE)
TALORA (CONT'D)
One other person just put in an application -- Lieutenant Rugat from the Valiant. If you do get the position, I can help you take all the required tests for the command level.

GUER
I guess I could be administering the tests in a while.

TALORA
You've only applied for the position, Lieutenant. Don't get excited.

GUER
Right, Commander.

TALORA
You should hear back in a week or so. We also need to do one other thing.

INT. READY ROOM

Cross sits at his desk. Talora and Guer are also present.

CROSS
You're leaving?

GUER
Maybe, sir. I've only applied for the position. First Officer of the Corsica, sir.

CROSS
Oh.
   (smiles)
Well, that's good, Lieutenant. You deserve a promotion.

GUER
Thank you, sir.

CROSS
Any other applicants?

TALORA
One. Not much of a contest, though.

CROSS
Well, good luck. I don't know whether to hope you get the position, Lieutenant, if you know what I mean. You're a hell of a pilot.
GUER
(leans)
Thank you, sir.

CROSS
Dismissed, Lieutenant.

Guer leaves.

CROSS (CONT'D)
Commander, you came at just the right time. I made my offer to Cardassia -- the facilitators, that is.

TALORA
How did it go?

CROSS
They didn't seem to happy about the facilitators.
(beat)
I spoke to Garash, and he wasn't too supportive of the idea. As for his superiors, they probably won't be either.

TALORA
Cardassians value their independence. I'm not surprised.

CROSS
Neither was I. The thing is, that leaves us with only two options.

INT. APARTMENT
Simad lies in bed, asleep. A knock comes at the door, but he doesn't stir. After a moment, another knock comes and Simad wakes up.

SIMAD
Who is it?

DOJAR
It's Dojar.

Simad sits up in bed.

SIMAD
Come in.

The door opens and Dojar walks through.

SIMAD (CONT'D)
You're back.
DOJAR
I think I owe you an apology. For...
butting in.

SIMAD
How about adding lying about a friend
to the list? And scanning me?

DOJAR
Touché.

A moment of silence.

SIMAD
Apology accepted.

DOJAR
Thanks, Simad.

SIMAD
I'd also like to apologize. I didn't
mean to get angry.

DOJAR
That's quite all right.

INT. BRIDGE

CROSS is in the command chair, with TALORA at his side. DOJAR, SUKOTHAI, and GUER all man their stations.

SUHOThai
I'm receiving an incoming transmission
from Superintendent Garash.

CROSS
(grimly)
Put it onscreen.

Garash appears on the viewer.

GARASH
Captain, we've considered your offer.

CROSS
I hope it was satisfactory?

GARASH
It was not.
(beat)
We believe that how Cardassia
distributes its aid is its own
business.
(sincerely)
I'm very sorry, Captain.
CROSS
I hope you realize the possible consequences of that decision.
(a beat, then to Sukothai)
End transmission.

The viewer goes blank.

TALORA
(sotto voce)
Time for another staff meeting?

CROSS
I don't think so. It's my decision now.

On Cross' grim expression, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR
EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise is still in orbit of Cardassia. It is serene and quiet in the night.

INT. CORRIDOR

Cross slowly strolls down the corridor. Other crewmen pass him, and several address him. Everything glides over his head, and he doesn't notice the other crew.

INT. TURBOLIFT

Cross steps into the turbolift, finding himself with GUER and AGOLIVE.

GUER
(a formality)
Ensign.
(to Cross)
Captain, I wanted to talk to you.

CROSS
Not now, Lieutenant.

GUER
Yes, sir.

Cross is on the verge of reprimanding Guer just for responding, but he restrains himself. Guer notices, and raises an eyebrow at Agolive.

She smiles.

CROSS
Something to say, Lieutenant?

GUER
No, sir.

CROSS
I didn't think so.

Guer straightens up, as does Agolive. Their expressions go blank.

The turbolift stops, and Cross exits. Guer and Agolive exhale.

INT. CROSS' QUARTERS

Large and nicely furnished. The antique table we saw before, plus a bookshelf stands in one corner, with some old-fashioned books as well as a few padds. On another wall is a replicator, a computer, and a smallish view screen. A sitting area is by the windows, and more rooms are off to one side.
Outside the large windows, Cardassia watches the silence.

The doors whoosh open and Cross strides in. He walks to the replicator.

CROSS

Hot chocolate, touch of mint.

The hot chocolate mug materializes, and Cross takes it. He blows on it for a second and takes a sip. Satisfied, he seats himself in the sitting area. He is facing Cardassia.

INT. BRIDGE

The bridge is calm and serene with the night shift. SUKOTHAI is in the command chair. Only a few stations are manned. TALORA arrives and walks to the command chair. She carries a PADD.

TALORA

Relieved, Lieutenant.

SUKOTHAI

Commander?

TALORA

I'll take the rest of the shift. I can't sleep.

SUKOTHAI

Yes, Commander.

Sukothai exits, and Talora picks up the PADD. She begins to read, but without interest. After a few moments, she puts down the PADD.

INT. CROSS' QUARTERS

Cross now sits on the couch along the window, with Cardassia to his back. He's not in deep thought, however. He stands, goes to the replicator, and puts his empty mug inside.

CROSS

Refill.

He waits a couple seconds, and then pulls out a full mug of hot chocolate. As he walks out of his quarters, the lights go out.

INT. BRIDGE

Same as before. Cross enters. Talora stands.

TALORA

(formally)

Captain on the bridge.
Cross doesn't say a word. He continues to his ready room, leaving as quickly and as silently as he came. A confused Talora sits.

INT. READY ROOM

Cross sits at his desk and taps his computer.

CROSS
Computer, open a subspace channel to Admiral Portman...

EXT. READY ROOM

Seconds later. We are looking into the room from outside the windows. Cross, cocoa mug in hand, is talking to his computer. He pauses, then sets the mug down. He gestures with his hands and speaks. He pauses again, watching the person on his computer screen. He nods in contemplation, and continues the conversation.

INT. MESS HALL

Dojar sits alone at a table near the window. Y'lan enters the mess hall, spots Dojar, and plops down awkwardly at the table.

Y'LAN
The Captain is making his decision now, Lieutenant.

DOJAR
I know.
(beat)
Y'lan, how long has it been since you were home?

Y'LAN
One hundred and twelve Earth years.

DOJAR
Do you think that when you return, it might be different?

Y'LAN
I doubt that it will be radically different.
(beat)
It is possible, though, that it could be completely alien to me. But unlikely.

DOJAR
What if you found your home at war?

Y'LAN
We are not at war.
DOJAR
Hypothetically, though...

Y'LAN
It is possible, of course. We are constantly exploring. Just like in this area of space, incidents are bound to spark. Why do you ask?

DOJAR
I haven't visited home since I joined Starfleet. I guess I expected it to be the same. I didn't realize it would have gone so far downhill.

Y'LAN
When I came to this quadrant a century ago, I didn't expect the Federation to become what it is today, either.

Y'lan leaves the table and the mess hall, leaving the last comment with Dojar.

Dojar's eyes turn to the window, where Cardassia hangs in the sky.

EXT. CITY STREET -- DAY

This is a different street than we saw before. Cross stands among the impoverished masses, seeing firsthand children in rags and old men sitting along in corners, with nothing to eat. At one end of the street is a wall about ten feet high. There are no buildings behind it, and large Cardassian characters are painted on the wall. Cross notices it, and approaches a VENDOR in the street.

CROSS
What's beyond that wall?

VENDOR
That's the bomb site.

CROSS
Bomb?

VENDOR
Well, I don't know if was a bomb or not. It's from the Dominion War -- you know, twenty-five years ago. I think the radiation was so bad that they couldn't get rid of it. If you go beyond the wall, you'll be poisoned.

Cross looks at the wall.
CROSS
How bad was it?

VENDOR
Well, I'm no historian, but I hear it was devastating. It left lots of people homeless and hungry -- even more dead. We're working on that, you know, but I think it will still be a while till we recover.

Cross can only nod in agreement.

INT. BRIDGE

Dojar is now at his station. Talora is in the command chair. Cross enters from the rear.

DOJAR
(immediately)
Captain on the bridge!

All the officers stand at attention, but Cross does not let them return to their duties.

TALORA
Captain?

Cross stops at the center of the bridge.

CROSS
Open a channel to the Cardassian government.

Dojar hesitates, then taps a few controls.

CROSS (CONT'D)
No, wait. Broadcast. All official frequencies. Audio and visual.

DOJAR
(beat)
Broadcasting, sir.

CROSS
(sounding official)
This is Captain Cross speaking for the United Federation of Planets.
(beat)
It has recently come to my attention that the government of Cardassia has been distributing the aid provided by the Federation poorly, in an unfair manner.

(MORE)
CROSS (CONT'D)
The Federation is committed to helping all of Cardassia's citizens, not just the wealthy or well-connected. But this commitment requires the help of the Cardassian government as well.

(beat)
Until Cardassia adopts and adheres to a policy of equal distribution, regardless of race, past, or social status, the Federation cannot provide any aid. I am hereby suspending all humanitarian aid to Cardassia.

He nods to Dojar, who doesn't respond. Cross turns around, and issues the order himself:

CROSS (CONT'D)
Computer, close channel.

(turns to Dojar)
I hope you understand my decision, Lieutenant?

DOJAR
(hollow)
Yes, sir.

Cross sits next to Talora.

TALORA
(sotto voce)
You spent a lot of time on that one.

CROSS
(sotto voce)
In the end, there was only one moral option.

TALORA
What did Starfleet have to say?

CROSS
They back my decision. The Council can still block it, but it's unlikely.

(beat)
Will you back my decision?

TALORA
Why does that matter?

CROSS
Maybe it doesn't matter to anyone else. But it matters to me.

TALORA
I don't agree with it.
CROSS
That's not what I asked.

TALORA
(beat)
I'll support it.

CROSS
Thank you, Commander.

INT. APARTMENT
Dojar sits at the table with Simad.

SIMAD
I wish that they didn't have to do that.

DOJAR
It wasn't 'they.' It was my Captain.

SIMAD
It was inevitable.
(a bit of sarcasm)
The Federation has to be a moral society.

DOJAR
I'm not so sure about that.
(beat)
I'm leaving orbit in a few hours.

SIMAD
I see. Well, don't forget about me.

DOJAR
I won't.

SIMAD
Good.

DOJAR
I don't like good-byes.

SIMAD
(almost laughing)
Neither do I.

DOJAR
Well, we'll see each other again, won't we?

SIMAD
Yeah.

DOJAR
I've got to go.
Dojar stands, and taps his commbadge.

DOJAR (CONT'D)

Dojar to Enterprise. One to beam up.

He disappears in a shimmer, leaving Simad alone in the apartment.

INT. MESS HALL

Various officers sit at the tables. DOJAR sits alone. On a screen on the wall, an ANCHOR reads the news.

ANCHOR

(in middle of report)

and the Ambassador to Kronos has been recalled temporarily. More on the situation later.

(beat)

On the Cardassian front...

Several heads turn, including Dojar's.

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Captain Neil Cross of the Enterprise decided yesterday to withdraw humanitarian aid from Cardassia due to unfair distribution. The Federation Council supported his decision in an impromptu council meeting, telling the press only that the Federation is committed to fair distribution of its humanitarian aid.

Dojar gets up from the table as the anchor continues with the news and leaves the mess.

INT. DOJAR'S QUARTERS -- CONTINUOUS

We are looking out the window. Stars rush by. The room is dimly lit. In the reflection of the window, we see very little.

After a moment, we hear the sound of doors WHOOSHING open. At the same time, a rectangle of light appears at the doorway's reflection in the window.

A FIGURE passes through -- we cannot tell who it is. The doors WHOOSH closed.

Constant FOOTSTEPS can be heard in the background. Seconds later, DOJAR passes in front of the window.

Heavy breathing.

Dojar passes by again, and comes back again. As we look towards the floor, we see only PACING FEET.
RENAISSANCE: "Beggars and Choosers" - ACT FIVE

Then we move up to a photograph next to the couch. It is of Simad and Dojar, younger and smiling, probably best friends.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER FAMILY PHOTO. A photo of Cross' family.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

THE END