STAR TREK: RENAISSANCE

"Dance"

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FADE IN:

EXT. COVE -- DAY

We get an aerial view of a beautiful cove, nestled in between several low hills. A thin band of sand separates water from the woods that snake in between hills. Overhead, a few gull-like birds circle around the cove and one dives towards the water to catch a fish.

By the shore, five figures MATERIALIZE. All carry tricorders and phasers and sport Starfleet uniforms. Leading the team is DOJAR, along with QUINLAN. They take a moment to drink in their surroundings before unfolding tricorders.

DOJAR
Talk about a beautiful planet.

QUINLAN
It reminds me of my vacation on Risa. (studies tricorder)
We’re looking at animate life signs in the water and the woods.

DOJAR
Complex?

QUINLAN
And diverse. It looks like the equivalent of fish, amphibians, avians, plus some other types that don’t equate to Federation species.

DOJAR
It seems a shame to colonize it, we’ll be disrupting an entire ecosystem.

QUINLAN
And the planet won’t just be a name to the galaxy anymore. People will be able to come here and marvel at what we’ve found.

Dojar NODS in semi-acceptance.

DOJAR
I’m reading some level terrain beyond these woods. Why don’t you and Ensign Wilson check out those woods, while we go around the hills. We’ll meet you on the other side of the woods.
QUINLAN
All right, and I’ll bet that we’ll get there first.

DOJAR
Care to make it interesting?

EXT. WOODS -- DAY
Quinlan and ENSIGN WILSON make their way through the lush vegetation, and stop by a small brook.

WILSON
The water’s got plenty of impurities, sir. Organic material, iron, and manganese, mostly. It’s from a pond about a mile north of here, probably fed from an underground stream.

QUINLAN
Those impurities — can they be filtered?

WILSON
Yes, with the proper equipment.

QUINLAN
Good. Let’s move on.

They continue through the woods.

EXT. WOODS -- LATER
Quinlan and Wilson continue along through the trees.

WILSON
The cellular structure of some of these trees is odd. I don’t know whether to call it plant or fungus.

He hands his tricorder to Quinlan, who studies the readout.

QUINLAN
Whatever it is, it must grow at a phenomenal rate.
(pointing to an especially large tree)
That one over there is only thirty years old.

She hands the tricorder back to Wilson.

EXT. HILL -- DAY
DOJAR and two crewmen stand atop a rocky hillock. Sparse grass and a few odd trees are the only signs of life.
Dojar examines a boulder with his tricorder.

**DOJAR**
This rock contains dozens of different minerals. Iron, copper, gold. It’s like a miniature mine.

**CREWMAN**
The rock below this hill appears to be of the same makeup.

**DOJAR**
I think we’ll have to call it Dojarium.

**EXT. FIELD -- DAY**

Dojar’s company find themselves on a relatively level field, covered with tall grasses. It’s about a dozen acres in size and is surrounded by low hills and woods. As Dojar squints in the sunlight, two figures can be seen approaching from the woods. It’s Quinlan and Wilson.

**DOJAR**
You owe me a steak dinner, Lieutenant.

**(grins)**
**QUINLAN**
I suppose I do.

**WILSON**
This soil appears ideal for farming.

**DOJAR**
Are there any nearby water sources?

**QUINLAN**
There’s a pond a mile north of here. It could probably be used for irrigation, too.

**DOJAR**
What about those trees?

**QUINLAN**
They’re similar to a fungus, because they grow very quickly. But it’s made of a pretty hard wood-like material, nonetheless. Great for building.

**DOJAR**
Speaking of construction, the rocks in the area are rich in minerals.
They continue their conversation, all though we can’t hear the words anymore as we move away.

CUT TO:

EXT. COAST -- DAY

A similar coastline, although not surrounded by hills. On the beach six figures MATERIALIZE in an alien transporter beam. They are ROMULANS. As the new arrivals begin to move about, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER
FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The ENTERPRISE is in orbit of a blue-green planet similar to Earth. Also present is a ROMULAN WARBIRD of previously unseen design, the YEREVIS.

CROSS (V.O.)
Captain’s Log, Stardate 78639.5.
The last portion of the Romulan Neutral Zone has been opened up for exploration and colonization purposes. The Enterprise is surveying possible candidates for Federation colonies. Although what we’d found so far has been far from outstanding, I believed our luck may have changed with Sangeattan Three. Unfortunately, we aren’t the only ones with our eyes on this planet.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM

CROSS, TALORA, and Dojar all stand around a computer panel, looking at various readouts and maps.

TALORA
Our scans from orbit showed that the planet is geologically stable and the climate is moderate overall. Coastal areas like the one Lieutenant Dojar scanned would probably experience light rainfall through most of the year but nothing more.

CROSS
Good. Lieutenant?

DOJAR
The land is ideal for farming. The soil is fertile and rich in about everything, sir. And there’s plenty of healthy vegetation and wildlife.

CROSS
Water sources?

DOJAR
A few decontamination units would remove all impurities.

CROSS
It sounds like this planet rivals Earth and Bajor.
DOJAR
I’d say so, sir.

TALORA
Perhaps, instead of a farming community, we should consider a resort hotel?

DOJAR
I’d visit that.

CROSS
It looks like all we have to worry about is getting the deed to the property.

DOJAR
I doubt the Romulans would want to give this up.

Cross’s COMMBADGE chirps, and Cross taps it.

CROSS
Cross here.

OZRAN’S COMM VOICE
Captain, Commander Korilim is ready to beam over.

CROSS
All right. Have him escorted to the Briefing Room.

OZRAN’S COM VOICE
Yes, sir. Transporter room out.

TALORA
Lieutenant, you were saying that the Romulans likely want this planet as badly as we do. You’re completely right -- the Romulans knew that this region contained many Class-M worlds.

CROSS
Do you know much about this Commander Korilim?

TALORA
He’s a respected captain, I can tell you that. When the Senate wanted to pass laws opening up trade routes with the Klingons, Commander Korilim was able to convince them otherwise. He’s as much politician as soldier.
CROSS
Could he stand up to Ambassador Talora?

TALORA
"Ambassador"?

CROSS
I’m going to need your help. You know Romulan tactics better than I do.

The doors part, and COMMANDER KORILIM and an armed guard enter. Cross dismisses the guard.

CROSS (CONT'D)
Commander, it’s good to finally meet you. I’ve heard lots of great things about you.

KORILIM
From Commander Talora? Times change, apparently.

TALORA
(to Cross)
Commander Korilim and I had some disagreements before. We served together.

KORILIM
Nothing to worry about, Captain. The Romulans are a highly civilized people.

CROSS
Indeed. (beat) I see that leaves one introduction left. Commander, this is my security officer, Lieutenant Dojar.

KORILIM
Ah, a Cardassian.

DOJAR
(guarded)
I am.

KORILIM
I meant no disrespect. I don’t believe I’ve ever heard of a ship with Humans, Romulans, and Cardassians.

DOJAR
Times change.
CROSS
Now that we all know each other, what did you have to discuss, Commander?

KORILIM
There are a few...
(beat)
...issues with the opening up of this sector that need to be ironed out.

As the four sit down at the table, we...

FADE TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM -- LATER

Dojar, Talora and Cross are now seated at the conference table. Korilim stands by the TACTICAL DISPLAY on the wall, making a presentation of sorts. On the display is a grid, with various dots representing planets. They are scattered around the grid, clustered in some places, spread out in others. A jagged line cuts through the middle of the grid, separating some planets from the others.

KORILIM
As you can see, thanks to the recent dissolution of the Neutral Zone, the Federation has gained considerable territories in the new sectors, including the Sehrat, Musshof, Grenahara, and Borrischian sectors. The Romulan Empire is happy to allow the Federation to colonize these planets. However, they can’t get all the territory out of this deal. The line has to be drawn somewhere.

TALORA
(indicating on diagram)
The plan the Federation has laid out will work perfectly. The Romulans will get several choice areas -- nebulae available for mining, and several trade routes.

KORILIM
(agitated)
As I’ve been telling you, that’s not acceptable. Many of the planets that lie on the Federation side of the boundary were important Romulan member worlds before the Neutral Zone was even created.
That was two centuries ago. And through the Federation's plan, the Romulans actually gain more territory.

That was two centuries ago. And through the Federation’s plan, the Romulans actually gain more territory.

KORILIM
(getting angrier)
Territory is worthless if there’s nothing in it. As we’ve established, these worlds are barren, desolate planets. Only three Class-M planets in the whole sector.

DOJAR
Desolate? You’ve said that time and time again, but they’re far from...

KORILIM
(interrupting)
And time and time again, you haven’t listened.

CROSS
(annoyed)
I think we need to call it a day. We haven’t gotten anywhere in the past hour.

KORILIM
(grumpy)
I concur.

TALORA
I’ll escort you to the transporter room, Commander.

INT. CORRIDOR
Korilim and Talora stride down the corridor.

KORILIM
You make an excellent diplomat, Commander.

TALORA
I was planning to teach debate at the Senatorial College. That’s when they moved me to your department.

KORILIM
It’s odd to see you arguing for Starfleet now. Did you expect to be on the other side of the table?
TALORA
Of course. Starfleet officers are considered to be important diplomats, especially command-level officers. And Romulans will always clash with the Federation.

KORILIM
You argue for them, yet you are one of us.
   (beat)
Intriguing.

TALORA
I don’t think so.

KORILIM
Most Romulans expected that your ideas would clash with those of Starfleet’s. You even said that yourself.

TALORA
And I was partially right. There have been conflicts. My point of view is often different from the Captain’s. But we resolve them.

KORILIM
Is there a conflict here?

TALORA
(longing beat)
I don’t like the way this conversation is going.

KORILIM
I should not have asked.

They come to the transporter room doors.

INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

NARV  OZRAN mans the console; Talora and Korilim enter.

KORILIM
Tell me... do you have lunch plans for tomorrow?

TALORA
It appears I might.

KORILIM
Come by my ship. It’s been a while since you’ve had real Romulan food.
TALORA
I’ll be there.

Korilim steps up the transporter pad and Talora nods to Ozran. Korilim disappears in a fizzle of energy.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE
The two ships, Federation and Romulan, in orbit of the planet.

INT. ENGINEERING
GREY and KINNAN stand at a console, examining the readouts.

GREY
Try recalibrating the power converters.

Kinnan taps a few controls, and watches the response on one of the screens.

KINNAN
No good, Sir.

GREY
Check the output coils.

KINNAN
(tapping more controls)
They are out of alignment. One of them is a little warped.

GREY
Cause?

KINNAN
I don’t know, Sir.
(beat)
Wait a minute...
(taps controls)
That’s a piece of Romulan technology.

GREY
But the converter is Federation-issue.

KINNAN
They may have fallen out of sync.

GREY
Can we fix it?

KINNAN
Yes, but it will likely fall out of sync again in a matter of weeks,
KINNAN (CONT'D)
Sir. I’d need to consult with the people who designed this thing.

GREY
It’s Romulan technology, Lieutenant. They’re already paying us a visit. Why not ask a favor?

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

Same as before. A shot favoring the Romulan warship orbiting the planet.

INT. ROMULAN MESS HALL

A moderately-lit room with odd architecture with a little more green and grey than we’re used to. Replicators line one wall and tables cover the floor. At one table sit Talora and Korilim. They are eating some sort of vegetable salad dish.

TALORA
You implied that you had Romulan food, yet this is replicated.

KORILIM
Ah, but it’s a Romulan replicator. It makes so much of a difference. And the ale is real.

TALORA
I wasn’t complaining, actually. Starfleet replicators produce food with a slightly different taste, one that’s not agreeable to my palate.

KORILIM
I believe that Starfleeters say, "To err is human." From what I’ve heard, it’s true.

TALORA
Captain Cross has made errors in judgment. So have my subordinates. Starfleet lacks the direction of the Romulan Empire. But... they are good officers.

KORILIM
By Starfleet standards.

TALORA
(beat)
Yes.
KORILIM
They don’t follow orders as strictly, do they?

TALORA
On occasion, Starfleet captains have been known to disobey commands. But the results are sometimes good.

KORILIM
Have you ever disobeyed orders?

TALORA
No, Commander, I have not.

KORILIM
That’s good to know. I can tell you’re getting used to the Humans. Just checking to see if you’re still a good officer.

TALORA
I’m getting used to them?

KORILIM
Your posture is slightly relaxed; you spoke casually with Captain Cross in the conference room; and you tolerated the same from the Cardassian.

TALORA
Lieutenant Dojar is too eager sometimes. He does fraternize a little too much, too.

KORILIM
And Cross?

TALORA
If you want the details about the crew, check with Romulan intelligence.

KORILIM
I’d prefer to hear it from you, Commander.

TALORA
(sips the ale)
It’s been a while since I’ve had Romulan ale.

KORILIM
It’s not too strong for you, is it?

TALORA
No, it’s fine.
KORILIM
I know that it's hard to come by in Federation territory, even after the embargo was lifted. But we're not in Federation territory.

TALORA
That remains to be seen.

KORILIM
You know as well as I do, this colony rightfully belongs to the Romulan Empire.

TALORA
Commander, with all due respect, is that what you brought me here to discuss?

KORILIM
Talora, we're just two Romulans having lunch. Can't we discuss politics like any Romulan would?

TALORA
We're about to go back to the conference room to discuss politics. If it goes the way it went yesterday, we'll likely be there for several hours.

KORILIM
(smiles)
Would you expect anything else?

TALORA
(beat, then she remembers something)
There is one thing, though. Our engineers are having some problems with some of the technology you loaned us. Do you think you could send an engineer or two over?
(beat)
We are still allies. It would earn your government major points at the embassy.

KORILIM
I'm not interested in points.
(beat)
But I'll send over a few men.
(MORE)
KORILIM (CONT'D)
You’re a trustworthy person, Talora, and I know you.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE
Same as before.

INT. READY ROOM
Cross sits at his desk, and on his computer screen in ADMIRAL DELFUNE. Outside the window, we can see the planet.

DELFUNE
I hear that planet is a jewel, Captain.

CROSS
It is, Admiral. It’s perfect for a colony.

DELFUNE
Have you seen it yourself?

CROSS
Not yet. I’ve seen only the pictures and data I sent you.

DELFUNE
That planet is worth having.

CROSS
That’s what the Romulans think, too.

DELFUNE
Captain, it’s important that you get this planet. It’ll be our only foothold for this area. Once we’re there, we can colonize more.

CROSS
Commander Talora is helping me in negotiations. She knows Korilim personally, and so far it’s been a big help.

Delfune looks surprised.

DELFUNE
Commander Talora is negotiating for you?

CROSS
No, sir.

(MORE)
CROSS (CONT'D)
She is merely providing assistance in understanding and preparing for the Romulan negotiation tactics.

DELFUNE
She's still negotiating against her own government. I'm concerned there may be a conflict of interest at stake.

CROSS
(firm)
Admiral, as far as Commander Talora is concerned, she is a Starfleet officer who is assisting her captain in negotiations with a foreign power. I believe that she has made her loyalties clear.

DELFUNE
You'd better be right about that, Cross. The Federation cannot afford to come out the loser in this deal. We need Sangeattan. Most everything else can go. Reab, Jolean, the others... they're not important. You're authorized to take any reasonable action in order to get it.

(beat, hard)
Don't fail us in this, Captain.

There is a long pause in the conversation. Cross glances out the window.

CROSS
Yes, Sir.

DELFUNE
I'll keep in touch. Delfune out.

The comm channel closes. Cross SIGHS, as the implications of Delfune's words begin to dawn on him, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
FADE IN:
EXT. SPACE
The two ships in orbit of the planet.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM

Cross, Talora, Dojar, and Korilim are at the conference table. Again, Korilim is referring to the charts on the wall screen. Several new lines have been added.

KORILIM
As you can see, the Sangeattan System belonged to the Romulan Empire before the Neutral Zone was created.

CROSS
The Federation doesn’t recognize that.

KORILIM
The sector was controlled by another group of Romulans. They eventually dispersed, many of them returning to the Romulan Empire.

CROSS
But at the time, they didn’t belong to the Empire. The Federation recognized them as a sovereign nation. Your claim is no good.

KORILIM
Whether your government recognized the Romulan claim is irrelevant. It was Romulan territory.

TALORA
It won’t do any good to debate previous ownership. We are getting nowhere.

KORILIM
We would be getting somewhere if it weren’t for Captain Cross’s petty politics.

Cross fumes, but Dojar shifts uncomfortably in his chair.
TALORA
Let’s try to keep this civil.

FADE TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM -- LATER

Same as before, except Korilim is sitting and Dojar is at the wall screen.

DOJAR
In the past few months, the Romulan Neutral Zone has been gradually dissolved. The Romulan Empire has gained various star systems, including Mersooka, Vorilius, and Jahreena.

KORILIM
The Federation has gotten the same number of territories!

DOJAR
The Federation’s planets are desolate worlds with few mineral deposits and no water. Mersooka and Vorilius are both full of life and Jahreena has the richest deposits of deutonium this side of Tzenketh.

KORILIM
That’s irrelevant. Those worlds rightfully belong to the Romulans.

CROSS
My government has put up with a lot. We’ve gotten the short end of the deal each time before. I’m sick of it, my superiors are sick of it. As you said, Commander, the line has to be drawn somewhere.

KORILIM
(angry)
I will not let the Federation dictate borders.

CROSS
(longing beat)
Commander Talora, Lieutenant, excuse us.

TALORA
Captain?

CROSS
I need to talk to Commander Korilim alone.
TALORA
Yes, Captain.

Talora and Dojar EXIT.

KORILIM
You aren’t going to shoot me are you?
(beat)
Because you know I’m right.

CROSS
I’m not a murderer, unfortunately.
But I want to make one thing clear to you: you aren’t in charge.

KORILIM
I don’t presume to be. I’m merely...

CROSS
(angry)
You know what this is about. It’s not about this sector. Neither one of us gives a damn about this sector or this area or lines on a screen. It’s about that planet down there and who gets it. This isn’t political, it’s personal and you know it just as much as I do.

KORILIM
(cooly)
We got along so well before.

CROSS
That’s because we were willing to bend in the interest of diplomatic relations. We’re not bending any further.
(beat)
This planet is ours.

KORILIM
I do not recognize any of these politics...

CROSS
What you see right now isn’t politics. It’s determination.

KORILIM
We have determination. You have misdirected anger. I suggest you pull yourself together.
Korilim storms out.

INT. READY ROOM

Cross paces the room in front of Talora, explaining and displaying his particularly bad mood.

CROSS
I have never been so insulted by anyone in my life!

TALORA
I find that hard to believe, Sir.

CROSS
Politics! A Romulan -- accusing me of politics!

TALORA
With all due respect, Sir, if you said that in there, Commander Korilim will be equally insulted.

CROSS
(beat)
I didn’t. Thankfully. But I wanted to.

(beat)
I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to offend you. I’m just a little fed up with his little Romulan superiority complex.

TALORA
You should be glad he has it. It could be a weakness -- one you could exploit.

Cross looks back at Talora, intrigued.

EXT. SPACE

Same as before.

INT. ENGINEERING

Grey, Kinnan, and ROMULAN ENGINEER HORVAHN are standing at the same console. Y’LAN hovers nearby.

HORVAHN
Our ships use different styles of power systems. Our converter runs on an electron coefficient.
GREY
(intrigued)
Interesting...

HORVAHN
Since the coils are built to take advantage of the side effects of our method, I can show you how to produce them artificially.

Y’LAN
Fascinating... while your superiors do not cooperate, you engineers exchange information freely. What is it you call that? Professional courtesy?

GREY
Cooperation in the name of science.

Y’LAN
By reading your historical logs, I can tell this is a relatively new concept.

HORVAHN
I am reluctant to do this. Providing you with information puts us at a tactical disadvantage.

Y’LAN
Intriguing!

GREY
We appreciate it. I can assure you, Captain Cross doesn’t want to attack you or divulge your secrets.

HORVAHN
We’ll see about that.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

Same as before.

INT. MESS HALL

At a few tables, various Starfleet crewmen are eating a snack or a drink, but most tables are empty. At one table by the window sit Talora and Korilim.

TALORA
I have to thank you for lending us your engineer.
KORILIM
It’s no problem. I can trust you.

TALORA
You can trust Captain Cross and Lieutenant Grey as well.

KORILIM
You might think so.
    (haughty)
I, on the other hand, do not.

TALORA
Why? The Romulan Empire is important to the Federation.

KORILIM
It’s not as important, though, if you believe in your superiority.

TALORA
The Federation does not believe in its superiority. Therefore, it is trustworthy.

KORILIM
It’s wise of them not to be overconfident.
    (beat)
You know, my first officer didn’t want to send Mr. Horvahn over. I dismissed his objections.

TALORA
That’s surprising.

KORILIM
He doesn’t trust you. He believes you’ve become a Starfleet officer.

TALORA
Has he been monitoring my posture as well?

KORILIM
You might say a lot of people have.
    (beat)
You’re a prominent figure in the Romulan military. You’re a Romulan officer -- in a command position on the flagship of the Federation. Some people are worried that you may be... forgetting that you represent Romulan interests.
TALORA
When do I not represent Romulan interests?

KORILIM
In that conference room. You argued for Cross like a human would.

TALORA
(beat)
And if I agree with Captain Cross?

KORILIM
Exactly my point. You’re not being a Romulan.

TALORA
And that’s what people want, isn’t it? For me to be a Romulan, but on a Federation ship?

KORILIM
(beat)
Yes.

TALORA
That’s an oxymoron. Captain Cross expects me to make decisions that are moral and ethical. Needless to say, that’s not something they taught in Romulan schools.

A BEAT as Korilim studies Talora’s face.

KORILIM
Just remember that you’re a high-profile figure. All of Romulus is watching you.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

Same as before.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM

Cross, Talora, and Dojar are again sitting at the table, while Korilim stands by the monitor. A MAP of the sector is displayed on the screen, with a line running through the middle. There is more BLUE shading (indicating Federation territory) than GREEN (indicating Romulan territory).

KORILIM
The Empire is prepared to offer a compromise on the current issue.

(MORE)
KORILIM (CONT'D)
We are willing to concede the Reab, Jolean, and Ridian systems to the Federation in exchange for Sangeattan III. As clearly displayed on this map, the Federation will receive more territory through this exchange.

Cross looks annoyed by Korilim's presentation.

CROSS
That's hardly what I'd call a fair deal, Commander. Those systems are practically devoid of resources. The territory itself is worthless if there's nothing in it.

KORILIM
Worthless? A Federation starbase in the Jolean System would be a strategic asset to Starfleet's forces along the Romulan border!

CROSS
Only if you're planning for a war. And we're not.

Cross STANDS UP, warming up for a tirade.

CROSS (CONT'D)
And take a look at grid G4 -- You'd still control the vast majority of the Kebsc Cluster. We've only made long-range scans of that region so far, but we detected a number of protostar systems in that area. Undoubtedly with some useful resources in there.

(beat)
That's hardly what I'd call a fair deal.

KORILIM
Captain, I don't believe...

CROSS (interrupts)
I'm not done yet. The Romulan Empire has taken more than its fair share of territory and resources so far. We stood by while you took Mersooka, Vorilius, and Jahreena, not to mention Tamfor and Raches. We're not going to stand still any more.
KORILIM
Captain, I suggest that you be reasonable. Sangeattan III belongs to us. Take what benefits you can from this exchange.

CROSS
It belongs to you? By your logic, half of the galaxy should belong to the Romulan Empire, then!

KORILIM
(cooly)
That is unfortunately not the case at this time. However, we have presented our offer.

Korilim STANDS UP.

KORILIM (CONT'D)
I suggest that you seriously consider our offer. It's the best that you're going to get.

Korilim starts to leave, but stops when Cross starts to speak.

CROSS
(firm)
I don't have to "seriously consider" your offer. I'll decline it outright. Sangeattan III belongs to the Federation, and we're going to have it.

Korilim PAUSES, and Talora looks uncomfortable.

KORILIM
(hard)
That claim is not going to hold, Captain. You should have taken the deal. Believe me, you'll come to regret this decision.

Korilim EXITS, and Dojar silently follows him, glancing at the Captain as he leaves. When the doors close, Cross lets out a long SIGH, looking extremely frustrated.

CROSS
I don't believe this guy...

TALORA
With all due respect, Captain, it was a mistake to decline his offer.

CROSS
How so?

(MORE)
CROSS (CONT'D)
You know his offer was hardly fair.
He was insulting us to even bring it
to the table!

TALORA
Agreed. However, by denying his
proposal outright and standing firm,
you have given him the opportunity
to harden his position as well. He
will be less likely to make
concessions, or even to continue the
negotiations, now.

CROSS
It'll work out. Their position is
tenuous. Out here, without immediate
support, they can't make a claim
stick on their own.

TALORA
Perhaps. But then, we are in the
same position, sir. I would
anticipate that Commander Korilim
make a move soon, to force the issue.

CROSS
Force the issue? Commander, we may
be in heated negotiations here, but
we're not anywhere near declaring
war. We can settle this
diplomatically -- with a victory for
the Federation. Korilim won't have
any other choice.

As Talora absorbs this comment...

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE
A shot of the two ships in orbit. As they pass, we PAN AROUND
to zoom in on the planet itself...

EXT. COAST -- DAY

...And see the coastline which was surveyed by the Romulans
in the teaser. Again, we see a group of Romulans BEAM DOWN.
But then, we see ANOTHER group beam down. And then, another
transporter beam -- but this one deposits a LARGE CONTAINER.
Another transporter beam, and another...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO
FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise and the Yerevis continue in orbit as before.

INT. BRIDGE

SUKOTHAI, Dojar, and Quinlan are at their stations, with other supernumeraries at various positions.

At Ops, Sukothai's panel starts making beeping noises.

    SUKOTHAI
    (reacting)
    That's odd...

    QUINLAN
    What's up?

    SUKOTHAI
    I'm detecting increased energy emissions from the Romulan ship.

    DOJAR
    Are they powering up weapons?

    SUKOTHAI
    No, it's not that... but I can't localize the source just yet.

Interested, Quinlan takes a look at Sukothai's console. She watches for a minute as Sukothai continues to scan.

    QUINLAN
    Try narrowing the scan radius with a theta-band filter.
    (off Sukothai's look)
    They might be trying to block our sensors...

Sukothai does as Quinlan suggests. Works a little more at the panel, before doing a double-take...

    SUKOTHAI
    Um... Lieutenant Dojar? You might want to take a look at this...
    Transferring to the main screen.

On the viewscreen, we see a graphic of the Romulan ship nearby. From the ship, we can see several BEAMS emanating towards the surface of the planet.
DOJAR
(concerned)
Are those what I think they are?

SUKOTHAI
Yes, sir. Transporter beams. And
not just a few... they're beaming
down a LOT of material.

As everyone REACTS...

CUT TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM

Cross and Talora are standing at the monitor on the wall again. The display shows an aerial photograph of the planet below, with several locations of construction in the area.

CROSS
There's no doubt about it... they're
going ahead with their colony.

TALORA
It appears that Commander Korilim is
attempting to force the issue.

CROSS
Force the issue? He's doing a lot
more than that... he's preemptively
ending the entire negotiation process.

TALORA
Captain, with all due respect, I did
warn you that Korilim would try
something like this when you rejected
his last offer.

CROSS
Yes, but this seems like a rather
extreme course of action... He's
risking the entire peace here.

TALORA
On the contrary, Captain. Commander
Korilim believes that he's risking
very little by forcing the issue. I
am quite certain that he does not
believe that the Federation will
risk an armed conflict for this
planet.

CROSS
(defeated)
The trouble is, he's right.
(MORE)
CROSS (CONT'D)
We want that planet... but fighting for it isn't an option. One planet isn't worth a war with the Empire.
(beat)
He's got us right where he wants us.

Talora considers.

TALORA
For the moment, perhaps. It may still be possible to force a settlement that is more favorable for the Federation.

CROSS
How?

TALORA
I am not certain. It is unlikely that we can force Korilim to remove his colony quickly.

CROSS
And the more time we give him, the more time he has to establish the Romulan claim.

TALORA
It is a frustrating dilemma.

CROSS
(considering)
Perhaps if we were to present another...

He is interrupted by a COMM BEEP.

DOJAR'S COMM VOICE
Bridge to Cross. Sir, we're receiving a transmission from the Yerevis. It's Commander Korilim, and he's demanding to speak to you immediately.

Cross makes a distasteful face.

CROSS
(relyuctantly)
We're on our way.
(to Talora)
I have a feeling this deal is about to get worse...

Cross and Talora EXIT to the Bridge.
INT. BRIDGE -- CONTINUOUS

Cross takes his place in the center of the Bridge, but pauses for a moment as Talora sits down. She gives him a questioning look, but Cross just gives her an neutral expression in return.

TALORA
Aren't you going to answer the Commander, sir?

CROSS
In a moment. Korilim can stand to wait for me, for once.

TALORA
Sir, with respect, that kind of treatment will not likely help the situation any.

Cross SIGHS. He knows she's right.

CROSS
Very well, put him on screen.

Dojar works his panel, and Korilim appears on the main viewscreen.

KORILIM
Captain Cross, I am...

CROSS
(interrupting)
Commander, it has come to our attention that you have begun construction of a Romulan colony on the surface. Would you care to explain your actions and why you are threatening the negotiations?

Korilim SMILES thinly.

KORILIM
The negotiations are over, Captain Cross. You yourself rejected any further negotiation when you refused our offer.

CROSS
(annoyed)
I was the one to break off the negotiations? I rejected a specific offer, not the entire negotiation process!
KORILIM
(cooly)
You're grasping at straws, Captain. I think I made it clear that the
Empire would not continue pointless negotiations with an unreasoning
Federation partner. We made the decision to take action on our own.

CROSS
You have no right to place that colony. The right to that planet
has not been decided yet.

KORILIM
On the contrary, Captain. As of one hour ago, when we landed our first
brave colonists, Sangeattan III became part of the Romulan Empire.
(harshly)
The Enterprise is now in Romulan territory, Captain. You will leave
this system within four hours, or I will be forced to defend our colony
from an intruding vessel.

With a quick gesture, Korilim ends the communication.

Cross and Talora REACT with frustration and concern.

CUT TO:

INT. READY ROOM

Talora is sitting at Cross's desk, but Cross himself is pacing
around the room, agitated.

CROSS
I can't believe that he's accusing me of breaking off the negotiations!
If he'd present some reasonable offers in the first place, maybe we would get somewhere.

TALORA
Captain, at this point it's not productive to make recriminations. We need a strategy.

CROSS
Well, if you've got suggestions, now's the time.

Talora looks uncertain.
TALORA
It is unlikely that we will be able to prevent a Romulan presence on Sangeattan at this point. With the colony already under construction, the only way to remove the people already present would be through force.

CROSS
We can't go to war on this. Admiral Delfune told me that the Federation needs this planet... but we don't need it at the cost of a war with the Romulans.

TALORA
Perhaps we could attempt to re-open the negotiations. If we were to bring Korilim a sufficiently generous offer, he may be willing to reconsider the possession of Sangeattan.

CROSS
What about joint jurisdiction? If we can't convince him to cede the planet to the Federation, maybe we can still salvage something from this deal.

TALORA
(hesitant)
I don't believe that would work, Captain. At this point, Korilim believes that he has the upper hand. He won't likely concede part of the planet when he currently claims the entire system.

CROSS
(frustrated)
Well, what would you suggest, then? We've got less than four hours before Korilim is going to boot us out of the system altogether, and after that our chances of gaining the planet will disappear entirely. Your help has gotten us nowhere so far!

Talora looks surprised at Cross's hostility, but Cross himself immediately realizes what he's just said.

CROSS (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I guess I'm exactly cut out for Romulan politics, am I?
TALORA
(smiles)
If it helps any, I've had my problems with Human politics...
(beat)
I'll return to the Romulan ship and attempt to reopen a dialogue with Korilim. He may be refusing to negotiate with you further, but he has will hopefully listen to me, at least.

CROSS
Tell him whatever it takes. Just get him to reconsider.

TALORA
Should I offer him control of Earth then, Captain?

They both SMILE at the absurd suggestion.

CROSS
You know what I mean, Commander.

TALORA
Of course, sir. I will report back as soon as we have concluded.

CROSS
Dismissed, Commander.
(beat)
And good luck.

Talora EXITS. On Cross's troubled look, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE
A shot favoring the Romulan Warbird in orbit. As we zoom in:

INT. ROMULAN MESS HALL

Talora and Korilim are sitting at a table. This time, however, their attitudes are all business -- neither has any meal in front of them.

KORILIM
What are you trying to pull, Talora?
We have the planet. This is over.

TALORA
Hardly. A solution needs to be reached...
KORILIM
(raising his voice)
There is a solution! It's sitting out right there!

TALORA
A solution which the Federation does not agree with.

KORILIM
And since when does the Federation's opinion matter, Talora?

TALORA
(coldly)
The Federation is one of the most powerful governments in this quadrant. It is hardly wise to stir its anger, particularly when relations between us are currently agreeable.

Korilim sizes her up, glancing up and down at her.

KORILIM
(sarcastic)
Oh, I'm sure the Federation will lodge an indignant protest. I'm cowering already.
(beat)
Just how badly do you think the Federation really wants this planet, Talora? How far do you think they'll go? They may be aggravated, but this planet isn't worth the risk to them. They'd have to go to war to get it.

TALORA
Seizing this planet would have serious repercussions for the Romulan-Federation Alliance.

Korilim smirks arrogantly. He looks like he loves the sound of his own voice right now.

KORILIM
You should listen to yourself. To what you're saying. "Serious repercussions"? The Federation won't be willing to break off this Alliance, Talora, not over one planet. Oh, there will probably be posturing for weeks, or months, to come, and maybe some pitiful attempt at diplomatic retaliation...

(MORE)
KORILIM (CONT'D)
(beat)
But what does that really mean, hmm?
We'll still be allies, when all is
said and done. Let the Federation
play the victim all it likes.

Talora seems unfazed by Korilim's argument.

TALORA
The repercussions would be far more
real. A precedent will have been
set. There will be nothing to stop
the Federation from seizing other
disputed planets in response.
Whenever the Empire requires leverage
in the Alliance or even a degree of
trust, it will be harder to come by.

KORILIM
Trust? Trust??? I knew the
Federation was foolish, but it is
indeed a new low to trust us. We do
not need nor require their pathetic
trust. And let them have the other
planets.

Korilim spits the word "Federation" as if it is a grievous
insult.

KORILIM (CONT'D)
They're not as useful or as important
as Sangeattan III when combined, and
the Federation knows it.
(beat)
I'm disappointed in you, Talora.
When you requested this meeting, I
expected some outlandish offer to
coax me back into that conference
room, or a desperate plea on Cross's
behalf. But this? You've become
just as weak-willed as the Humans.

Talora glares at him icily.

TALORA
I am still a Romulan.

KORILIM
Of course you are. But you have
forgotten what it means to be Romulan.
Not only that, but you've willingly
chosen to side with the Federation.
TALORA
Perhaps I am merely no longer blinded
by a potentially misguided belief of
self-importance.

KORILIM
I believe you just proved my point
for me. A Romulan is always assu...

The lights in the room suddenly go DARK. The only light in
the room is from the planet nearby and the more distant star.
Korilim and Talora both REACT immediately.

KORILIM (CONT'D)
(hitting his
communicator)
Bridge, this is Korilim. Status
report!

ROMULAN COMM VOICE
We're experiencing a massive power
drain, Commander. Engineering
reports...

The entire ship LURCHES unexpectedly, throwing both Korilim
and Talora off their feet.

INT. ROMULAN ENGINE ROOM

We see a glimpse of the Romulan power core, its glowing
components flickering in overall darkness. But the sight
lasts only for a second, as a nearby power conduit erupts in
a massive EXPLOSION...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE
FADE IN:

EXT: SPACE

The Romulan ship is drifting, with a massive BREACH in the hull near the engine core. The lights and warp nacelles are flickering, and as we watch, the nacelles go dim.

INT. BRIDGE

Cross is staring in horror at the scene unfolding on the viewscreen. Dojar, Quinlan, and Sukothai are at their posts as before.

SUKOTHAI
I'm detecting major damage to the engineering section. Massive power loss. Engines are out, they're drifting... Life support is holding, but barely.

CROSS
Life signs?

SUKOTHAI
Hard to say. There's a lot of particle interference -- I can't resolve any specific life signatures. There's still some crew left, though.

CROSS
Bridge to Transporter Room. Has Commander Talora returned from the Yerevis yet?

OZRAN’S COMM VOICE
No, sir. She's still on the Warbird.

Cross looks up, concerned.

CROSS
Acknowledged. Try to get a lock on her, but wait for my word before beaming her back.

(to Dojar)
Can you contact Talora through her comm badge?
DOJAR
I'll see if I can break through the interference.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMULAN CORRIDOR

It's a scene of chaos. Romulan engineers hurry along with equipment, while other officers carry wounded crewmates. The entire ship continues to RUMBLE with muted instability, and we hear an occasional GROAN of stressed metal.

Talora and Korilim quickly round a corner, with Korilim speaking into his communicator.

KORILIM
...And I don't care how many engineers you have to pull from sealing hull breaches, I want that power drain stopped immediately!

He closes the channel.

KORILIM (CONT'D)
This is impossible. An Imperial Romulan Warbird does not simply lose power and suffer a catastrophic explosion for no reason.

Talora sees where this is leading.

TALORA
Commander, I highly...

KORILIM
(interrupting)
Spare me your excuses, Talora. It's obvious what's happened here. Do you really...

He is interrupted by a BEEP from Talora's comm badge.

DOJAR'S COMM VOICE
Enterprise to Talora. Can you respond, Commander?

We hear some STATIC through the connection.

TALORA
Talora here, Enterprise. I'm fine.

CROSS'S COMM VOICE
It's good to hear your voice, Commander. Do the Romulans require assistance?
KORILIM
(breaking in)
Absolutely not! We've had more than enough "help" from the Federation, Cross.

TALORA
(alarmed)
Commander...

KORILIM
Enough! Return to your ship immediately. You don't belong here any more.

Talora looks like she's about to argue the point, but she thinks better of it, and taps her comm badge.

TALORA
Enterprise, one to beam aboard.

Talora disappears in a fizzle of light. Once she is gone, Korilim EXITS.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise cruises in orbit, as the Warbird continues to drift in the background, most of its systems dark.

INT. BRIDGE

Cross is sitting in his chair as Talora enters. Dojar, Quinlan, and Sukothai are at their stations as before, and Grey is at the Engineering station.

CROSS
How bad is it over there?

TALORA
Very bad. There was an explosion in one of the power transfer conduits near the singularity core. Their main power distribution system is down, and the ship is running on emergency reserves. They were lucky not to lose the entire ship in the process.

DOJAR
Captain, the Yerevis is transmitting a distress signal... but it's too weak to make it very far.

CROSS
How far?
DOJAR
Only about half a light-year. Not enough to reach any Romulan ships.

GREY
Unless there are cloaked vessels in the vicinity.

TALORA
Captain, we have a bigger problem. Korilim believes that this explosion was the result of sabotage.

CROSS
I hope you're joking...

TALORA
This is a rather fortuitous development for the Federation. Korilim can no longer make the Romulan claim to Sangeattan hold, without a force to back it up. With the way relations were deteriorating prior to the explosion, this development could be considered... convenient, at best.

CROSS
And at worst, he'll assume that we attacked his ship in order to drive them away.

DOJAR
Captain, the Yerevis is attempting to increase the power of their transmission.

TALORA
If they manage to contact the border patrol...

CROSS
...we'll have a hostile Romulan fleet breathing down our necks in no time.

(beat)
Lieutenant Grey, I need a fast analysis of the Romulan ship's power systems.

GREY
What do you want me to look for?

CROSS
Find out the cause of the explosion. And a way to prove that we didn't cause the damage.

(MORE)
CROSS (CONT'D)
Talora, work with him. You're familiar with their technology.

TALORA
Yes, sir.

CROSS
Dojar, keep scanning for any Romulan ships in the area, cloaked or otherwise.
(beat)
I'll see if I can do some damage control on the diplomatic front...

CUT TO:

INT. READY ROOM

Cross is seated at his desk, staring intently at the computer terminal in front of him.

CROSS
Come on, come on...

After a moment, the computer screen changes to show Korilim. Behind him, we see the Romulan bridge in shambles.

KORILIM
Captain, we are quite busy over here, as I'm sure you already know. What is it you want?

CROSS
What I want is to offer our assistance. It's come to my attention that your people are operating under the assumption that we are the ones who caused the explosion. I want to assure you that that is not the case.

Korilim LAUGHS out loud.

KORILIM
You expect me to believe that you're totally innocent? That as soon as we claimed Sangeattan for ourselves, you didn't attempt to force us to abandon our claim?

CROSS
Commander, I appreciate what the situation looks like from your end. But I assure you, we had nothing to do with the explosion.
KORILIM
Your assurances mean nothing, Captain. And your cowardly attack on us will have grave consequences for the Federation.

The communication terminates. Cross is left staring at the screen, and he lets out a SIGH of disgust.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

Talora and Grey are working at the Engineering station. Grey is intently concentrating on the display screen in front of him, while Talora seems distracted.

GREY
There's no sign of a surge in the power flow... So it's not a reactor overload that caused the explosion. (beat) Perhaps there was a flaw in the support structure of the conduit... Commander, can you tell where the secondary distribution node would be along the conduit?

Talora remains silent.

GREY (CONT'D)
Commander?

Talora suddenly seems to become aware of Grey again.

TALORA
Yes... the secondary distribution node. I believe that would be... approximately seventeen meters aft of the core outflow assembly.

GREY
Okay. And the backup power relay?

TALORA
(beat)
I'm not certain. I am only partially familiar with the specifications for this class of Warbird.

Grey frowns in frustration.

TALORA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry I can't be of much help. It appears that I have lost much of my effectiveness...
GREY
Commander, you can't hold yourself responsible for the explosion. It was an accident.

TALORA
Not that. The negotiations. The Captain asked me to assist him in preparing for the meeting with Korilim, but instead, we've been outmaneuvered at every turn. And now, an ill-timed accident has ruined the negotiations entirely. The Federation stands to lose a lot from this situation.
(beat)
I've not only failed in my duty to Starfleet, but in the process I've alienated fellow Romulan officers as well.

GREY
From my experience, Commander, Federation values have always clashed with Romulan values. You've approached this situation from the position of a Human Starfleet officer, or a Vulcan officer. Considering your background, I find that effort laudable. But wouldn't it be more appropriate to use Romulan arguments in this situation?

TALORA
Perhaps, but Starfleet and Romulan methods are fundamentally incompatible. Many Romulan tactics would be considered unethical by Starfleet officers.

GREY
Possibly, but not if they're used against...

Grey is interrupted by a COMM BEEP.

CROSS'S COMM VOICE
Cross to Talora. Would you join me in my Ready Room, please?

TALORA
On my way, Captain.
(beat)
Thank you for your advice, Lieutenant.
INT. READY ROOM

Cross is standing by the window when Talora ENTERS. As he starts to speak, he remains facing towards the window.

CROSS
Commander, how soon can you prepare an Engineering detail to be sent down to the planet?

TALORA
For what purpose?

CROSS
For the construction of a small Federation colony.

Talora is floored by this statement.

TALORA
Sir?

Cross finally turns to face Talora.

CROSS
I know what you're going to say. It's reckless, it's unwise, and it's very likely going to piss the Romulans off even more than they are now.

(beat)
But I am tired of being pushed around by a Romulan officer who's convinced that the entire galaxy belongs to the Empire. An opportunity has presented itself -- I want to take advantage of it.

TALORA
Captain, landing a colony on Sangeattan now will only serve to justify Korilim's suspicions that we attacked him.

CROSS
Unless we can prove that the explosion wasn't our fault. I have every confidence in Lieutenant Grey's investigative talents. Besides, we have the truth on our side.

TALORA
Be that as it may, Captain, but if the belief that the Enterprise attacked a Romulan Warbird spreads, it would very likely end the Federation-Romulan alliance.
Cross smiles at Talora's words.

CROSS
Korilim claimed that the Federation wasn't willing to risk a diplomatic crisis over a single planet. He's right.

(beat)
But I'm betting that the same applies to the Romulans, as well. They want to avoid a conflict just as much as we do. They've pushed us far enough. It's time we pushed back some.

Talora NODS.

TALORA
Understood, sir.

(beat)
If I may say so, it's a very... Romulan tactic you're trying.

CROSS
(smiles)
I learn from the best, Commander.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

As before: the Enterprise cruises in orbit, and the Romulan ship continues to drift, unpowered.

INT. BRIDGE

The Bridge is staffed mostly by supernumeraries, and is noticeably dimmer than usual -- this is the night shift. Grey is at the Engineering station, still working intently at his monitor. Sukothai is at Ops, and Ensign Schneider is at Tactical. Cross ENTERS from the Ready Room.

CROSS
Status report, Lieutenant?

SUKOTHAI
Commander Talora is overseeing the construction project from Mission Ops, sir. She reports that the away team has completed the power distribution facility and are in the process of setting up the first habitats.

CROSS
Good. Mr. Grey, have you made any progress?
GREY
Some, sir. I've managed to trace the explosion to their primary power converter. However, I can't establish a cause yet, or prove that it wasn't Starfleet interference.

Sukothai's console BEEPS, and she reacts with concern.

SU KH OTAI
Captain, the Romulan ship is receiving a transmission.

CROSS
I thought there weren't any Romulan ships in range.

SU KH OTAI
I'm not detecting anything. I'll try to trace the signal...

A BEAT as Sukothai stares at her panel.

SU KH OTAI (CONT'D)
Sir? You'd better look at this...

On the viewscreen, a sensor image appears. A schematic of empty space, save for three flickering dots.

CROSS
Magnify.

As the picture zooms in, we see the shapes of THREE ROMULAN WARBIRDS, looking ready for business.

On Cross's dismayed look, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR
ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. BRIDGE

Continuous action from Act Four.

CROSS

Put all decks on Yellow Alert, Sukothai.

Cross hits his comm badge.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Cross to all senior officers, report to the Bridge at once.

(beat, to Schneider)

Ensign, I want a tactical analysis of those ships.

As he's speaking, he hurries across the Bridge towards the Engineering station.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Grey, I need some answers, and I need them quickly.

GREY

Sir, I'm working as fast as I can. But I just don't know enough about Romulan technology to trace the cause of the explosion.

CROSS

Then focus on what you do know. Because if we don't have an explanation for that explosion, our alliance is about to blow up in our faces.

Grey looks strained, as if he's about to argue further.

GREY

Yes, sir.

Cross turns to Ensign Schneider, at Tactical.

CROSS

Ensign, what about that tactical analysis?

SCHNEIDER

They're still cloaked, sir, but our sensors have partially penetrated the distortions.

(MORE)
SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)
Computer matches their configuration with the D'vorx-class Warbirds. It's a relatively new design, but they're not as powerful as the Enterprise. ETA... thirty minutes.

At the rear of the Bridge, Talora and Dojar ENTER. Dojar replaces Schneider at Tactical, and Talora joins Cross.

CROSS
It seems that Korilim managed to get some help, Commander. We've got three Warbirds on an intercept vector.

Talora FROWNS at the viewscreen, which still shows the approaching ships.

CROSS (CONT'D)
The question is, is this a threat that Korilim intends to follow through with?

TALORA
As far as Korilim is concerned, we've already initiated the hostilities. He's merely responding to our attack. (beat) Fighting now would only make us appear more guilty than ever, and retreat would effectively concede the planet.

CROSS (glumly)
And if we retreat, the whole incident will turn into an embarrassment for the Federation anyway.

Cross sits down in his chair.

CROSS (CONT'D)
Mr. Dojar, hail the Yerevis again. (to Talora) Let's hope that reason prevails...

Dojar works at his console for a moment, before getting a negative BEEP.

DOJAR
Sir, they're refusing our hail.

Cross grimaces.

CROSS
Open a channel anyway. (MORE)
CROSS (CONT'D)
(off Dojar's nod)
Commander Korilim, this is Captain Cross. Please respond.
(beat, no response)
We are currently tracking the approach of three Warbirds, but their intentions are unknown. We don't want a fight, but we are prepared to defend ourselves if necessary.
(beat, frustrated)
Come on, Commander...

INT. ROMULAN BRIDGE -- CONTINUOUS

Commander Korilim is standing in the center, impassively listening to Cross's speech, with his FIRST OFFICER standing next to him. Around them, supernumeraries continue to struggle with failing systems.

CROSS'S COMM VOICE
(continuing)
Don't throw away the alliance over a misunderstanding. The Enterprise did not attack your ship. Are you willing to risk an interstellar conflict over a paranoid assumption?

Korilim's eyes FLASH with anger.

CROSS'S COMM VOICE (CONT'D)
The Federation and the Empire have spent twenty-five years working to overcome centuries of hostility. The Federation values its alliance with the Romulans very highly. You claimed that we wouldn't risk a war by fighting openly for this planet. Wouldn't it follow that we wouldn't fight covertly either?

INT. BRIDGE -- CONTINUOUS

As before.

CROSS
(almost pleading)
Please respond.

Silence. Cross looks at Talora, unhappy.

CROSS (CONT'D)
Cross out.

INT. ROMULAN BRIDGE -- CONTINUOUS

The Bridge crew is watching Korilim.
ROMULAN COMM OFFICER
Do we respond, Commander?

KORILIM
(sneers)
Hardly.
(beat)
Tactical, what's the distance of the task force?

ROMULAN TACTICAL OFFICER
Approximately 40 billion kilometers.

KORILIM
(grimly)
Instruct them to come in firing.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

The tension is thick on the Bridge. All are watching the viewscreen which shows the approaching Romulan ships.

DOJAR
The Romulan ships are at 800 million kilometers and closing.

CROSS
(to Talora)
Has the away team been beamed up?

TALORA
Yes, sir.

A beat as Cross weighs the coming decision.

CROSS
Lieutenant, power up the slipstream drive.

GREY
Understood, sir. Slipstream will be ready in ninety seconds.

Cross looks sadly at Talora.

CROSS
It seems we've lost this round...

CUT TO:

INT. ROMULAN BRIDGE

Korilim is sitting in the center chair, with a somewhat eager smile playing across his lips.
ROMULAN TACTICAL OFFICER
Commander, the Enterprise is powering up its engines.

KORILIM
They're running away... how pathetic.

At the rear of the Bridge, Engineer Horvahn ENTERS with a PADD in his hand, his expression grim. He approaches the ROMULAN FIRST OFFICER.

HORVAHN
(quietly)
Excuse me, Subcommander... I've completed my analysis of the power systems.

He presents the PADD to the First Officer, who hands it to Korilim. Horvahn waits at attention.

Korilim reads the PADD with disinterest at first, but we see his eyes FLARE, and he suddenly begins reading intently.

KORILIM
This isn't possible.

HORVAHN
Sir, I double-checked the figures myself. The analysis of the explosion indicates that the power rupture was the result of a miscalculation of the singularity core's induction frequency.

Korilim looks furious.

KORILIM
That's what they WANT us to believe! Why do you think they began landing their own colony soon after we were crippled?

FIRST OFFICER
Commander, they may have landed their own colony, but that does not in itself prove that they were responsible for the explosion. Furthermore, if we have proof that it was an accident, a conflict would not be beneficial to the Empire... and would in fact harm it greatly.

Korilim looks at the PADD again, almost desperately. We can see his confidence evaporating. Finally, he looks up.
KORILIM
(curtly)
Instruct the task force to stand down.

FIRST OFFICER
Yes, Commander.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE
As before.

GREY
Slipstream will be ready in ten seconds.

QUINLAN
Our escape course is plotted and ready, Captain.

CROSS
Prepare to engage...

Dojar STARTS when he hears a sudden BEEPING from his console.

DOJAR
Captain, the Romulan ships are slowing.
(beat)
And the Yerevis is hailing us.

Cross SMILES in relief.

CROSS
Onscreen, Lieutenant.

Korilim appears on the viewscreen. He looks unhappy, but resolved.

KORILIM
Captain, my engineers have informed me that the explosion was apparently... the result of an accident. I have ordered our ships to stand down.
(beat, harder)
However, there still remains the matter of the illegal colony which you recently planted on Sangeattan. You have infringed on the territory of the Romulan Empire -- you will immediately remove that settlement at once.

Cross briefly looks at Talora, almost amused.
CROSS
I don't think so, Commander. As you may recall, the issue of ownership of Sangeattan was never actually settled. Perhaps... you'd care to reopen the negotiations?

KORILIM
This system has been established as part of the...

CROSS
(interrupts)
No, it hasn't.
(beat)
However, there may be a compromise to be worked out.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM

Korilim SLAMS his hand on the table.

KORILIM
JOINT JURISDICTION???

Cross sits at the head of the table, unmoved by Korilim's belligerence. Talora and Dojar are sitting next to him.

CROSS
Under the circumstances, I'd say it's the only possible solution, Commander.

KORILIM
"The only possible..." That's absurd!

CROSS
It wasn't the only solution at first. However, things have changed since then. You won't remove your colony, we won't remove ours... therefore, they're both going to remain where they are.

KORILIM
This planet was clearly claimed as Romulan territory. You violated that claim by planting your colony!

TALORA
The Humans have an old adage, Commander: "Possession is nine-tenths of the law." I think that perfectly sums up the situation here.
KORILIM
(incredulous)
Do you really expect that co-possession of the planet could possibly succeed?

CROSS
We'll have to find out. We may have had our problems in the past -- the incident on Benzar is a prime example -- but I'm confident that this will prove to be a beneficial solution for both of our governments.

KORILIM
(dripping sarcasm)
Your confidence is so very reassuring.

CROSS
(ignoring the jibe)
I'm glad to hear it. If there's nothing else, then?

KORILIM
No, there's nothing else, Captain. But rest assured... we will not be forgetting what you have done here.

Korilim GETS UP, and with only a final GLARE, he EXITS, with Dojar following.

As the door hisses shut, Cross lets out a long SIGH.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD -- DAY

A wide overhead shot of this new Federation colony. As yet, it is only a small collection of prefabricated shelters and one medium, industrial-style building. Engineers can be seen bustling around, continuing with the construction efforts.

ANGLE ON CROSS AND TALORA

As they walk among the burgeoning settlement. Cross is drinking in the surroundings, both natural and man-made.

CROSS
It's as beautiful as the reports said.

(beat)
Definitely worth the trouble.

TALORA
I certainly hope so.
Cross notices that Talora looks troubled.

CROSS
Something bothering you, Commander?

Talora considers for a moment before replying.

TALORA
I'm not entirely certain that your final solution will ultimately prove to be a beneficial one.

CROSS
Talora, we just went through hell just to get half of this planet. How can it not be beneficial?

TALORA
I mean that the Federation only has half of the planet. Romulus has the other half. As recent events have demonstrated, relations between the two are hardly the most stable, despite the continuing alliance. (beat) I'm afraid that Federation and Romulan policies may continue to conflict. Now, our governments will be forced to work more closely. Further disagreements are bound to develop over time -- Sangeattan may become a flash point for a future conflict between us.

CROSS
Well, I for one hold out some hope. After all, you and I seem to be turning out all right.

TALORA
(smiles reluctantly)
We are, at that.

Cross's comm badge CHIRPS.

CROSS
Cross here.

DOJAR'S COMM VOICE
Captain, the transport Grand Canyon is ready to beam down the first group of colonists and supplies.

CROSS
Understood, Lieutenant. Cross out. (to Talora) Well, let's not keep them waiting.
As Cross and Talora move off, we zoom out to get another look at the growing colony. Off in the distance, we can see the SHIMMER of the transporter, and groups of colonists begin to appear.

Dissolve to:

Ext. space

The Enterprise is accompanied by a Starfleet transport, orbiting the blue-green orb.

Pan around to see the Romulan Warbirds, accompanied by a transport of their own...

Fade out.

End of Act Five