

**STAR TREK: RENAISSANCE**

**"Dance"**

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TEASER

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.

QUINLAN

(grins)

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.

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4.

They continue their conversation, all though we can't here 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

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The ENTERPRISE is in orbit of a blue-green planet similar to Earth. Also present is a ROMULAN WARBIIRD 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.

CROSS

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.

CUT TO:

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,  
(MORE)

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

ACT TWO

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 deuterium 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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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 Kebsec 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

ACT THREE

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

(reluctantly)

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 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

ACT FOUR

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.

SUKOTHAI

Captain, the Romulan ship is receiving a transmission.

CROSS

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

SUKOTHAI

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

A BEAT as Sukothai stares at her panel.

SUKOTHAI (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