

**STAR TREK: RENAISSANCE**

**"Men of War and Science"**

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise at warp.

INT. ENGINEERING

Engineering is at the peak of alpha shift and is a model of order. The floors are shiny, uniforms are neatly pressed, and everything is running at maximum efficiency. Around the corner comes Lieutenant GREY, who is a perfect reflection of his department. He is in a conversation with KINNAN.

KINNAN

Warp efficiency is at 99.8 percent,  
Sir.

GREY

Where are the other point two  
percentage points?

KINNAN

Sir, 100 percent isn't possible.

GREY

Get as close as you can, Lieutenant.

KINNAN

Yes, Lieutenant.

GREY

And I noted you left for your shift  
three minutes late this morning as  
well.

KINNAN

One of the disadvantages of living  
with the boss.

GREY

Make sure you leave on time in future.

KINNAN

Yes, sir.

The two diverge. Kinnan makes a beeline for somewhere else - anywhere else - while Grey continues his rounds. Grey passes a CHIEF who appears to be in his late fifties. Chief is carrying a coffee mug.

GREY

Chief!

CHIEF

Yes, Lieutenant?

GREY

No drinks on duty.

Grey keeps on going, while the chief heads for the replicator. Meanwhile, in another corner of engineering, KINNAN is talking with BOYLE.

KINNAN

What's up with Grey?

BOYLE

What do you mean?

KINNAN

He's... reverted.

BOYLE

(laughs)

Reverted?

KINNAN

Just when I thought he was lightening up on us, he suddenly starts acting like a soldier.

BOYLE

I suppose he's just... being himself.

(beat)

He used to be in the Marines, you know.

KINNAN

He's told me that. But I would have guessed anyway. I don't see what you see in him.

BOYLE

A lot of people ask me that. But that's why he's stiff like this sometimes. I wouldn't worry about it. He's still worried about the progress of the repairs.

KINNAN

I don't see why, we're ahead of schedule -- we've already completed the work on nearly a third of the decks. I'll be able to move out soon.

BOYLE

You'll be sorry about that.

KINNAN

Yes, won't I just?

BOYLE

(playfully)

Of course you will, you'll see me less.

KINNAN

Yes... I think I'd pay that price at the moment.

BOYLE

He's not that bad.

Kinnan decides to take her advice.

KINNAN

He wants the warp efficiency improved.

BOYLE

It's at 99.8 percent!

KINNAN

I told him.

(smiles)

Don't worry, remember?

CUT TO:

INT. READY ROOM

CROSS is seated at his desk. His commbadge CHIRPS.

TALORA'S COMM VOICE

Captain, there is an incoming transmission from Starfleet Command.

CROSS

Put it through, Commander.

A second later, an image appears on Cross's computer screen. It's ADMIRAL DELFUNE.

DELFUNE

Captain Cross.

CROSS

Admiral. What can I do for you?

DELFUNE

We need you to return to Earth.

CROSS

(a bit worried)

What's happened?

DELFUNE

Nothing. There's a conference you need to attend.

CROSS

Admiral, we're scheduled to pick up equipment for the research facility on Dennos this evening. Can't it wait?

DELFUNE

I'm afraid it can't.

CROSS

I suppose I'll manage in a shuttle.

DELFUNE

No, you won't. The Enterprise needs to come. Lieutenant Grey will also attend the meeting.

CROSS

(somewhat surprised)

Lieutenant Grey? What's the meeting?

DELFUNE

You'll find out when you get here, Captain. Have a good day. Delfune out.

The screen returns to an image of the Starfleet logo.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

TALORA is in command. DOJAR is at tactical, and QUINLAN is at the helm. Cross enters from his ready room.

TALORA

Captain.

CROSS

At ease. Helm, set a course for Earth.

QUINLAN

Yes, Sir.

TALORA

Captain?

CROSS

Admiral Delfune requested my presence and that of Lieutenant Grey.

TALORA  
(somewhat surprised)  
Lieutenant Grey?

CROSS  
(offhand sarcasm)  
I'm as dumbfounded as you are. Carry  
on.

Cross EXITS.

CUT TO:

EXT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS

A beautiful complex of modern buildings, gold in the setting sun.

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR

The buildings are as beautiful inside as out. Every few feet are windows, murals, and plants. A handful of officers bustle about. CROSS and GREY come around a bend, searching the walls for something.

GREY  
What room did he way?

CROSS  
Four-twenty.

GREY  
Here we are.

Grey points to a recess in the wall with double doors. They enter.

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- CONFERENCE ROOM

GREY and CROSS enter to find a moderately lit conference room. Windowless, it is done in wood tones with a long mahogany desk and light paneling along the walls. At the unoccupied head of the table, opposite the doors, is a WALL MONITOR. Around the table are various officers, socializing. Wearing Starfleet uniforms are CAPTAIN JOEL and ADMIRAL PORTMAN, along with a few other officers. Wearing a different uniform similar to that of Starfleet but with a broken green stripe and slightly different insignia are GENERAL BURKE and COLONEL EASTON, accompanied by a few officers of their own. Portman is the first to see Cross.

PORTMAN  
Neil! How good to see you. Let me  
introduce you to the rest of the  
group.

The officers stop their side conversations and direct their attention to Portman.

PORTMAN (CONT'D)

This is Captain Neil Cross of the Enterprise, and his chief engineer, Lieutenant Grey. This is Captain Erika Joel of the Leviathan, and General Burke commands a branch of the Marines. Colonel Easton is the commander of Marine Unit 99.

CROSS

Pleased to meet all of you.

PORTMAN

Neil was under my command a good while back. They don't get much better than him.

(to Joel)

No offense.

JOEL

None taken. I'm honored to meet you, Captain. I've heard a lot about you.

CROSS

I hope it was all good.

They all chuckle

EASTON

Lieutenant Grey used to be in the Marines, I believe?

GREY

That's correct. I served during the Sheliak War.

EASTON

You were involved in the Battle of Marcus, I believe?

GREY

For my sins.

They all chuckle again. DELFUNE enters, and all stand.

PORTMAN

Admiral.

DELFUNE

Admiral, Captains, General, Colonel.

She seats herself at the head of the table (the rest take their seats as well) and presses a button located on the tiny console at his place.

Text appears on the screen behind her: "MARINE INTEGRATION PROJECT."

DELFUNE (CONT'D)

For those of you who don't know, Starfleet and the Marine Corps have been planning the Marine Integration Project for several months now.

CROSS

Marine Integration?

DELFUNE

The Federation has had several wars in the past century. In all of them, Starfleet has transported groups of Marines around. But Starfleet has rarely been involved with them other than that. In conjunction with the imminent deployment of the fleet's new rapid reaction forces, we feel that it would benefit both the fleet and the corps to station Marines on Starfleet vessels.

It is clear from their expressions that BURKE, EASTON, and PORTMAN have known this for a while. But this is news to JOEL, CROSS, and GREY. On their faces, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

Five Federation starships are stopped in space. One is the ENTERPRISE. A short distance away is another Phoenix-class starship, the LEVIATHAN. The two large cruisers are surrounded by three smaller, needle-like vessels which, although obviously Starfleet in design, represent a clear departure from the traditional construction style. They look well-armed and ready for war and are named SCIMITAR, T'PETHAN and MARSHALL.

DELFUNE (V.O.)

The integration will be executed in phases.

We ZOOM OUT to find that we are actually at:

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- CONFERENCE ROOM

...and the ships are on the screen on the wall. DELFUNE is speaking to the group from the teaser.

DELFUNE

In the first stage Marines will be stationed on five ships. The Enterprise and the Leviathan will each receive two units, while the Scimitar, the T'Pethan, and the Marshall will each receive one.

CROSS

Where are those last three now?

PORTMAN

They're all in the final stages of construction at Utopia Planitia.

JOEL

How many soldiers will I be housing?

EASTON

Sixty. That includes five officers each for the five units.

BURKE

Each unit has a commanding officer, the colonel, as well as two lieutenants and field lieutenants. Each ship will have a colonel on the command staff.

CROSS

Surely you'll leave that up to the discretion of the captains? I already have a security officer and a first officer aboard my ship who is more than capable of coordinating military operations.

DELFUNE

The Marines will be separate. They will receive orders from a joint board with members from Starfleet and the Marines.

Cross looks at Portman. Neither is happy.

CUT TO:

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR

Cross strolls down the corridor with Portman.

CROSS

I knew there was an idea of closer coordination between the Marines and Starfleet... but I had no idea it had gone this far so fast.

PORTMAN

Neither did I. It's mainly the pet project of Admiral Delfune and General Burke.

CROSS

When did you find out?

PORTMAN

Three weeks ago.

CROSS

I still don't know what to think.

PORTMAN

That makes two of us.

CROSS

I'm glad that there's coordination, but soldiers on the Enterprise? Can't something be done -- at least to delay it, until we can work out something more agreeable?

PORTMAN

I don't know. Admiral Delfune has the blessing of the powers that be. And I'm not a power that be.

CROSS

Sure you are. You got me on the Enterprise.

PORTMAN

That was nine months ago, Neil. To be honest, I just don't know how much power I've got anymore. Hell of a way to find out.

CROSS

I suppose I am somewhat of a troublemaker.

PORTMAN

(looking at him wryly)  
That makes two of us again.

CUT TO:

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- LOUNGE

A large, spacious, and comfortable lounge. Various officers sip drinks, read magazines, or just relax in their free time. Generous windows line one wall, affording a grand view of San Francisco Bay. In one seat is GREY, who is chatting away with another OFFICER. Colonel Easton enters.

EASTON

Lieutenant Grey?

Grey looks up.

GREY

Colonel Easton.  
(to officer)  
Excuse me a moment.  
(to Easton)  
What can I do for you?

EASTON

You can tell me about the Battle of Marcus.

GREY

The Battle of Marcus?

EASTON

You said you were there.

GREY

I was. It was something else.

EASTON

I had just graduated from the Academy in Calcutta when the Sheliak War was  
(MORE)

EASTON (CONT'D)

over. I remember reading about the famous skirmish on that far-off planet.

GREY

It's only a few light-years from Bolarus...

EASTON

It seems a lot farther away when you read about it in the newspaper.

(beat)

I want to hear your story.

GREY

Truth be told, I don't remember it that well... but it was hellish. My unit operated out of a Starfleet base.

EASTON

The Marcus Base.

GREY

Well, yes, I guess so. But there was division; we never mixed with the Starfleeters -- apart from Portman, I couldn't even tell you who was serving there at the time. I do remember the Sheliak, though. They're about as far from human as you can get.

EASTON

So I've heard.

They continue their conversation and move down the corridor.

CUT TO:

EXT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- DAY

In the yard in front of the complex, a group of Marines moves in orderly fashion. They walk in two lines, marching to an inaudible beat.

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR

In another section of the corridor, PORTMAN and CROSS watch through a window as the Marines go by.

PORTMAN

(pensively)

They're professionals. Professional soldiers.

CROSS

We were soldiers once. During the war.

PORTMAN

We weren't soldiers.

(beat)

Aren't we scientists? Explorers?  
Who boldly go where no one...

CROSS

...has gone before.

He smiles as he completes the old phrase.

PORTMAN

We were scientists. We went, probably too boldly.

Outside, the Marines pass out of view.

FADE TO:

EXT. MARCUS BASE (FLASHBACK)

Among the hills on a dry, windy planet, a complex of low buildings form an outpost. Here and there, personnel walk outside. The skies are greyish and swirling.

INT. MARCUS BASE -- OPS (FLASHBACK)

The room is large and circular. In the middle is a pit with several consoles. Short flights of stairs lead out in two opposite directions to the regular level and beyond to pairs of doors. The room is compact and complicated; beyond the basic layout it lacks the symmetry characteristic of most Starfleet command centers. But this is Starfleet; there's no doubt about it. Men and women in Starfleet uniforms man the stations, talking amongst themselves. At one end, the doors open; out step CAPTAIN HENRY PORTMAN, in his mid-forties, and LIEUTENANT COMMANDER NEIL CROSS, in his early thirties. Both are younger and carry faces that have seen war but not much of it. But they are solemn as they enter the pit, and their emotion pervades the room. Portman halts in the middle of the pit and puts his heavy hands on the table. Cross makes the announcement to an ENSIGN who is probably on his first assignment.

CROSS

The Sheliak have captured Minzara.

ENSIGN

That's four light years from here...

CROSS

Get me a list of the crew.

CUT TO:

INT. MARCUS BASE -- WARD ROOM

Another large room, narrow, with a bay of windows looking out on the best hills they could find. A conference table dominates one end of the room, while the other end has a few chairs. At either end of the room are viewer screens. On the end with no table, Commander Cross posts a casualty list with about one hundred names under the CONFIRMED DEATH list and two hundred more under MIA. A few other officers and crew are present, awaiting the dreadful posting. Cross steps back and says a few words to those present.

CROSS

Captain Velek was a good friend of mine. I know he defended the base well; the Sheliak paid dearly for this victory.

One CREWMAN speaks up.

CREWMAN

Did anyone manage to escape?

CROSS

Minzara had a complement of a dozen shuttles. Five have been accounted for.

Cross searches for more words, but none come to his mouth. He turns and goes.

CUT TO:

INT. MARCUS BASE -- CAPTAIN'S OFFICE (FLASHBACK)

A roundish room with windows looking out on the hills and out into Ops. In the middle is a desk, and off to one side are a couch and replicator. Off to the other side is a HOLOCOMMUNICATOR. Commander Cross and Captain Portman are standing by the Communicator, speaking with an ADMIRAL on the holocommunicator. His image has a bluish tint.

PORTMAN

We can't take many losses like this, Admiral.

ADMIRAL

I know that, Henry, but we've got to concentrate our troops on Sheliak space.

CROSS

This was a lone group of ships...

ADMIRAL

The only one to break through. That's how the Sheliak work -- they penetrate in a few places while keeping our forces at bay.

PORTMAN

(angry)

There were too many people on that base!

ADMIRAL

Captain, we're doing all we can.

CROSS

What about the Marines?

ADMIRAL

They've been unsuccessful in Sheliak territory.

CROSS

We can use them for planetside defense, like Marcus Base.

PORTMAN

That would free up at least three dozen ships -- enough to reinforce the lines.

ADMIRAL

We're already considering that. General McRay is taking cadets out of the Marine Academy early. They don't have a lot of numbers.

PORTMAN

Yes, but neither do the Sheliak.

ADMIRAL

Captain, that base we lost was four light-years away from you. The Sheliak will probably go after the Pyrrus Station, but there's a chance they might come your way.

PORTMAN

I know. We're already doing battle drills.

ADMIRAL

Good. Keep on your toes, gentlemen.  
(beat)  
Admiral Parker out.

The image fizzles out, leaving Cross and Portman alone. Portman walks to the window.

PORTMAN

I wonder if...

(beat)

I wonder if in three days, these hills will be crawling with Sheliak.

CROSS

I hope not, sir.

PORTMAN

They're ugly hills -- it's an ugly planet. But it's growing on me just the same.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARCUS BASE (FLASHBACK)

Same as before.

INT. MARCUS BASE -- OPS (FLASHBACK)

Commander Cross is in command of the base's nerve center, and the Ensign we saw before is also on duty. They are working together at the table.

ENSIGN

Okay, I've tapped into the sensor grid.

CROSS

What's going on out there?

ENSIGN

There are about a dozen Sheliak ships, crowded around...

(beat)

It's a fragment of the destroyed starbase.

CROSS

A fragment?

ENSIGN

I can't tell for sure, but a section -- about twelve levels high, perhaps -- remains mostly intact.

CROSS

That's not a pretty thought. Sheliak infesting a Starfleet base...

ENSIGN  
(interrupting)  
Wait, there's more.

CROSS  
What is it?

ENSIGN  
The ships are moving now. Five have  
left the main group.  
(beat)  
They're headed our way.

This sinks in.

CROSS  
Get the Captain.

The Ensign taps a few controls. Seconds later, Portman steps out of his office.

PORTMAN  
Is this what I think it is?

CROSS  
Five Sheliak ships, headed our way.

PORTMAN  
Notify Starfleet command.

CROSS  
Ensign, get me a tactical assessment  
as soon as you can.

The slow mood of Ops has changed into a bustling hive of activity. The viewer changes from a view of the hillsides to a starfield with a tactical map, superimposed.

ENSIGN  
I've got it. Three warships and two  
smaller tactical ships. They'll be  
here in twenty-one hours.

PORTMAN  
How long till the planetary defense  
system can be activated?

CROSS  
Four hours.

PORTMAN  
Do it. Cross takes Portman aside.

CROSS  
Sir, I don't think we can handle  
five Sheliak vessels. Three, maybe.  
Four, probably not. Five, no way.

PORTMAN

We've got the defense system, plus  
the planetside weapons.

CROSS

It won't be enough, Sir.

PORTMAN

Do we need to call in ships?

CROSS

As many as we can. If the Sheliak  
take this base, the next stop won't  
be a Starfleet bombardment.

PORTMAN

Bolarus?

CROSS

Or even Betazed. The Dominion did  
it, the Sheliak can too.

They turn back to the activities of the room.

PORTMAN

Ensign, tell Starfleet we need  
whatever reinforcements we can get  
now.

ENSIGN

I'm working on it, sir.

(beat)

I'm also checking with the Bolian  
and the Betazoid governments. It'll  
take them too long to mobilize their  
fleets.

CROSS

Looks like we're going to have to  
rely on Starfleet.

He stands there for a second, contemplating the upcoming  
battle. Then he comes out of his thought.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Well, I've got work to do, Sir.

PORTMAN

Don't forget to get a few hours sleep  
in there somewhere.

CROSS

(smiles)

Yes, Sir.

Cross exits Ops, while Portman surveys the room.

CUT TO:

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR (PRESENT)

Back in the twenty-fifth century, Captain Cross and Admiral Portman briefly reflect on the past. Cross comes out of his thoughts.

CROSS

I've got to get back to my ship,  
Sir. I'm guessing somebody is going  
to want a tour.

PORTMAN

I've got a few people to contact  
myself. I'll see you tomorrow.

CROSS

Good day, Sir.

They head in opposite directions, as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise in orbit of Earth.

INT. CORRIDOR

Grey and Cross walk down the corridor, arriving at a section cordoned off by some tape. On the other side we see a GAPING HOLE, with several engineers around it and in it, soldering away. Large sheets of metal are strewn about.

CROSS

Colonel Easton should be arriving in half an hour.

GREY

Understood, sir.

CROSS

You're doing a fine job, here. It's starting to feel like our ship again.

GREY

Returning to Earth has helped, sir, we have much easier access to what we need. I've even recruited a couple of Earth-based engineers to help.

CROSS

You might even find Colonel Easton volunteering his services.

GREY

He might have to if he wants to get his quarters...

Cross looks at one engineer running a device over the bulkhead that is sucking up the discharge from the soldering. He raises an eyebrow.

GREY (CONT'D)

A clean ship makes for an efficient crew. The atmosphere affects their attitudes.

CROSS

Then I suppose that crew morale is at an all-time high, going by those bulkheads. I can almost see my reflection.

Grey looks at the bulkheads, but doesn't see anything.

CUT TO:

INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM

NARV OZRAN, Gorn in Starfleet uniform, is manning the controls. Cross, Talora, and Grey enter, right on time.

OZRAN  
Captain.

CROSS  
At ease, Chief.

OZRAN  
You're right on time. Colonel Easton  
will be beamed up any moment now.

CROSS  
Good.

OZRAN  
Here he is now.

In a BLUISH SHIMMER, COLONEL EASTON appears on the transporter pad.

CROSS  
Colonel.

EASTON  
Captain Cross.

Easton looks around.

EASTON (CONT'D)  
I can almost see my reflection in  
the bulkheads. You have a wonderful  
ship.

Grey beams.

CROSS  
You already know Lieutenant Grey.  
This is my first officer, Commander  
Talora.

EASTON  
Commander.  
(smiling)  
I was surprised enough when a Gorn  
beamed me in. But you're a --

TALORA

(uncomfortably smiling)

Romulan. I am here on behalf of the Romulan Empire.

CROSS

And she's representing it well.

EASTON

I'm sure you are, Commander. I met a group of Romulan soldiers once, at a conference. I was so impressed that I invited their commander to a Marine base to show my colleagues. They took a few tips from you, if I recall correctly.

This time, it's Talora who's beaming.

TALORA

I'm sure Starfleet could do the same.

The group EXITS the Transporter Room.

CUT TO:

INT. ENGINEERING

The four enter, and all the Engineering staff stand at attention.

GREY

Welcome to Engineering, Colonel.

EASTON

This is your domain, correct?

GREY

It is.

EASTON

I might have guessed.

TALORA

We have a state-of-the-art engine, capable of slipstream transportation. If we were to measure our maximum speed on the warp scale, you would need six decimal places.

EASTON

Fascinating! My engineers will love this.

Talora glances at Cross, who takes note but does not respond.

CROSS

How many engineers do you have,  
Colonel?

EASTON

Only three, I'm afraid. But they're  
good ones.

Cross looks at Grey.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

The four enter.

DOJAR is in command from the tactical station, and QUINLAN  
is at the helm.

DOJAR

Captain on the bridge.

CROSS

At ease.

(to Easton)

Colonel, welcome to the bridge.

Easton surveys the room, and notices Dojar.

CROSS (CONT'D)

In the front is the helm controls.  
On that side are science and  
engineering stations, and on the  
other side are tactical and operations  
stations. In the center here, with  
Lieutenant Dojar, is the tactical  
station.

EASTON

Lieutenant Dojar. I'm Colonel Easton.

DOJAR

What brings you here, Colonel, if I  
may ask?

EASTON

The Enterprise is being assigned a  
Marine unit. I'm just here to take  
a look around.

DOJAR

Oh?

He glances at Cross, who nods.

CROSS

The project is still in the development stages, of course.

EASTON

I'm certain we can work everything out.

(beat)

Captain, I must say, this is an impressive ship. I heard what happened recently, and I was expecting the damage to be much more widespread.

CROSS

You can thank Lieutenant Grey for our quick recovery. He's a fine officer.

EASTON

I saw how engineering was run captain, I can see that.

(beat)

And your crew, Captain. It's very diverse. It's not very often that I meet Romulans, Bajorans, and Cardassians all in the same day.

Dojar shifts uncomfortably, as does Talora. Cross notices.

CROSS

Maybe you need to see the Ready Room, Colonel. Commander, you have the Bridge. Lieutenant, you're dismissed.

A confused Grey and a knowing Talora follow his orders, while Easton follows Cross into his ready room.

INT. READY ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Cross and Easton enter.

CROSS

(reserved)

Colonel, I'm glad you like my ship, but...

EASTON

Is something wrong?

CROSS

I have a very diverse crew here, like you said. You haven't even seen all the species we've got here. Last time I checked, there were at least twenty-five. But you will be seeing them every day. Bajorans. Andorians. Cardassians. Gorn. Trill.

EASTON

(smiles)

It's certainly more than I'm used to, I'll grant you that. Most of the Marines are Humans or Vulcans.

CROSS

(beat, slightly angry)

Colonel, let me be straight with you. This isn't the Marines, as you've seen. This is a Starfleet vessel. Many different species. You've managed to offend three of my senior staff already, let alone other crew members.

EASTON

I merely noted the different races...

CROSS

Colonel, you'll find that race is sometimes a factor here. Don't go around treating it like it doesn't matter on my ship.

EASTON

I apologize for that Captain, but I'm sensing there's something more here than just my offending Commander Talora...

CROSS

There's nothing more, Colonel.

(beat)

I didn't mean to be angry, but...

EASTON

I understand.

(beat)

Well, I think I'd better be going. I'll see you tomorrow, Captain.

Easton does a military-style turn and exits. A few seconds later, the door chimes.

CROSS

Come in.

Talora enters.

CROSS (CONT'D)

What is it, Commander?

TALORA

I couldn't help but notice that Colonel Easton seemed agitated when he left your office.

CROSS

I... almost lost my temper with him.

TALORA

What for?

CROSS

Oh, come on, Commander. He offended you, Elris, Dojar, even Chief Ozran. Wait till five dozen marines are aboard.

TALORA

(deadpan)

I suppose they will make the Dominion War seem like a minor disagreement.

CROSS

Well, no...

(smiling)

I doubt it will be that bad. But can you really say that you're looking forward to working with Easton?

TALORA

It's somewhere between Admiral Delfune and the Borg.

CROSS

We'll keep that one off the record.

(beat)

I don't know, I just have a bad feeling about all this. Soldiers? On the Enterprise? Of all the Enterprises, only two have been truly military ships -- this one and the Enterprise-E. Archer, Kirk, Pike... they were explorers. Explorers, Talora. They weren't the first to be called in on a military operation. Captain Picard wrote an entire book on his travels. But putting a Marine unit on the Enterprise means that it will be a first-class warship. As soon as there's a bit of conflict, we'll be called in. No more exploration. When they move more Marines in, science personnel will move out.

TALORA

It's not only the Enterprise.

CROSS

I know, but... it gets to me sometimes.

TALORA

(beat)

Perhaps it is possible for the Marines  
to put on another ship.

Cross considers the idea, reflection on the past...

FADE TO:

INT. MARCUS BASE -- OPS (FLASHBACK)

Lieutenant Commander Cross and Captain Portman stand in the  
Ops pit, with the ENSIGN we saw before.

ENSIGN

The Potomac and the Hudson are in  
orbit. I've got both captains on  
visual.

PORTMAN

On screen.

On the viewer, the image splits. On either side are the  
bridges of Starfleet ships, with Commanders PARLER and HEVEK  
on the screen.

PORTMAN (CONT'D)

Commanders.

PARLER

I've got Marines waiting in the  
Transporter Room.

HEVEK

I as well, Captain.

PORTMAN

We'll start with you, Commander  
Parler. Give me just a second.

He taps his commbadge.

PORTMAN (CONT'D)

Portman to transporter bay. Prepare  
for transports.

CUT TO:

INT. MARCUS BASE -- CAPTAIN'S OFFICE -- LATER (FLASHBACK)

PORTMAN stands in his office.

CROSS'S COMM VOICE

We've got one hundred twenty Marine  
soldiers here. Colonel Jenner is on  
his way.

PORTMAN

Thanks.

A CHIME at the door.

PORTMAN (CONT'D)

Come in!

The doors part, and COLONEL JENNER and his LIEUTENANT enter.

JENNER

Captain Portman, I'm Colonel Jenner,  
Marine Corps.

PORTMAN

I'm glad you could come.

JENNER

This is my lieutenant...

A BEAT, while Portman studies the Lieutenant. He's human, with pale skin and a short crop of blond hair. He stands tall and straight as a rail.

JENNER (CONT'D)

Lieutenant Erik Grey.

GREY

Captain.

PORTMAN

Well, Colonel, Lieutenant, I can't tell you how glad I am that you're here. I believe you just got back from the front lines?

JENNER

Yes. My unit was part of the force attempting to take the Kinneriton System.

PORTMAN

Yes, I heard about that one.

GREY

We were lucky -- we didn't lose a single man. Most of the units lost at least a dozen.

PORTMAN

Lucky indeed.

JENNER

Captain, I want to make sure that we all have the luck we had at Kinneriton here, at Marcus Base.

PORTMAN

That makes two of us.

JENNER

May my engineering staff have a go  
at your systems?

PORTMAN

What for? We have one of the best  
engineers in Starfleet...

JENNER

(beat)

Captain, if you want a victory, you're  
going to have to let the Marines  
help.

PORTMAN

(a bit taken aback)

Certainly. What do you need?

JENNER

Lieutenant Grey?

GREY

We have a dozen tactical engineers  
who specialize in weapons. If they  
can modify your weapons grids, it  
will make a considerable difference  
in our overall strength.

PORTMAN

I'm afraid we don't have much of  
that down here. This is a science  
base. We have an orbital platform,  
but that's about it. Can you work  
with that?

GREY

We'll find a way, Captain.

JENNER

If you'll excuse us, Captain Portman,  
there are some matters to be dealt  
with.

PORTMAN

Of course. Make yourselves at home.

Jenner nods. He and Grey both do a military turn, and then  
exit the office.

PORTMAN (CONT'D)

(to himself)

I could swear I've seen Lieutenant  
Grey in some recruitment poster  
somewhere...

The door chimes again.

PORTMAN (CONT'D)

Come in.

CROSS enters.

CROSS

Well?

PORTMAN

The Marines have very kindly offered their services. Read between the lines: they're moving in.

CROSS

Marley's not going to be happy about this.

PORTMAN

This is our base, Commander. Colonel Jenner knows that.

CROSS

Still...

(beat)

Marley's very protective of his systems.

PORTMAN

Well, he is an engineer, isn't he?

Cross laughs slightly, but then his face returns to normal.

CROSS

The Sheliak will be here in a few hours.

PORTMAN

You'd better get to work, Commander.

CROSS

Yes, Sir.

Cross exits. Portman watches him go with a slight smile, almost a parental smile.

PORTMAN

(muttering to himself)

You're a good kid, Neil.

On his far-off expression, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE (PRESENT)

We fade in to an intense battle. An old Klingon Bird-of-Prey screams past the screen. We can see that it is being fired upon by two of the Starfleet ships we saw earlier, the T'PETHAN and the MARSHALL. They look like smaller replicas of the Enterprise. A flurry of phaser fire blasts the Klingon ship. Its shields flicker, and then the last phaser blast strikes the hull. Also present is the SCIMITAR, the other Federation ship we saw before, and another Bird-of-Prey. The Scimitar fires a volley of torpedoes which strike the flickering shields of the fighter. The first Klingon ship comes to a halt. It's dead in the water, but nobody bothers to finish it off. Soon, the second Klingon vessel does the same.

Then the image pauses, and all five ships come about so that we are looking straight at their ventral sides, as if they were merely images on a computer screen in a...

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- CONFERENCE ROOM

The five ships are lined up neatly on the computer screen. Meanwhile, the same group as before is present.

DELFUNE

We approached with three Starfleet ships, and we left with three Starfleet ships and two Reformist ships.

JOEL

You would be able to transport enough Marines over to take over a Klingon ship? I mean, Romulans I could understand, but Klingons?

EASTON

Klingon ships don't require many people, and the Reformists don't have the manpower to fully staff all of their ships anyway.

PORTMAN

This is an interesting simulation, Admiral, but could it work?

Easton glances questioningly at Delfune, who appears to make a decision.

DELFUNE

It already has.

CROSS

(confused)

With all due respect, Admiral, what do you mean, it already has?

EASTON

The three ships you saw there were staffed with Marines two weeks ago. They made a quick visit to the Klingon border yesterday.

PORTMAN

(angry)

I was never told about this!

DELFUNE

Aside from those three crews, only a handful of people in Starfleet were.

EASTON

It was imperative that we keep it secret, Admiral. You must understand.

CROSS

Imperative, Colonel?

PORTMAN

I'm not convinced either.

Delfune tries to defuse the situation.

DELFUNE

This isn't a major matter. This was a test run. Information was given out on a need-to-know basis.

Portman fumes for a second.

PORTMAN

Where are these ships now?

DELFUNE

Starbase 212.

Portman and Cross glance at each other.

CUT TO:

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- ADJUTANT'S DESK

Behind a desk is seated a young female ADJUTANT in uniform.

Admiral Portman stops at the desk.

PORTMAN

I need to see Admiral Delfune. Now.

ADJUTANT

One moment, sir.

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- DELFUNE'S OFFICE

A large, spacious office. The walls are mostly wood paneling, and two wide windows look out on San Francisco Bay. The Golden Gate Bridge shimmers in the distance. Inside, an aquarium stands in the corner, and a row of ship models lines the wall. A group of pictures, probably of Delfune's family, hangs on another wall, beside a few drawings that look like the work of a four-year-old.

Admiral Delfune sits behind the desk, writing on a PADD, when there is the sound of a BUZZER.

ADJUTANT'S COMM VOICE

Admiral Portman is here to see you, sir.

DELFUNE

Let him in, Donna.

A second later, the doors part and Admiral Portman enters. Delfune stands.

DELFUNE (CONT'D)

Admiral. What can I do for you?

PORTMAN

You can tell me what the hell you were thinking when you stationed Marines on three Starfleet ships and sent them into battle.

DELFUNE

I was thinking that it was my prerogative as head of tactical operations for the Klingon border and as head of the integration project.

PORTMAN

Why didn't you tell me? And don't give me anything about need-to-know basis.

DELFUNE

Because, Admiral, this is my project. I talked to my superiors, who thought it would be best to keep it under a tight lid because it might not be widely accepted in Starfleet at the moment. If the mission was successful, more people would accept the integration.

PORTMAN

(angry)

Do you know what I'm thinking? I'm thinking I'm the head of Starfleet personnel along the Klingon border, and the next time you start moving large groups of people around, you'd better notify me.

DELFUNE

(coldly)

I don't answer to you, Admiral. We're the same rank, we work for different people.

PORTMAN

We do? I work for Starfleet, I don't know about you.

DELFUNE

I work for Starfleet as well. This project is for the benefit of Starfleet.

PORTMAN

Then why the hell didn't you tell me?

DELFUNE

Because you wouldn't like it, that's why. I know you. You don't like the Marines.

PORTMAN

I don't like them when they're on Starfleet ships without my knowledge!

DELFUNE

Make your case to the Chief of Starfleet, because I'm not listening, Admiral.

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- ADJUTANT'S DESK

Portman exits, practically breathing fire.

ADJUTANT

Good day, sir.

PORTMAN

Go to hell.

ADJUTANT

Yes, sir.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLODECK -- BRIDGE

We're on the Enterprise bridge, but the crew is different. Most are generic, nameless Starfleet officers, but several stations are manned by Marines. Cross and Easton, however, stand at the back. They are detached from the scene, because it is actually a simulation.

EASTON

Captain, I think this simulation will help you to better understand the potential of our two branches of the military collaborating.

CROSS

(reluctant)  
Let's see it.

EASTON

Computer, enter battle sequence four.

COMPUTER VOICE

Entering sequence.

Around Cross and Easton, the rest of the Bridge crew comes to life.

OPS OFFICER

Captain, there's a Klingon ship approaching. Vor'cha-class attack cruiser, bearing two-twelve mark four.

CAPTAIN

Bring weapons online.

TACTICAL OFFICER

Phasers and quantum torpedoes online, sir.

The tactical officer is a Marine.

CAPTAIN

Hail them.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

No response, Sir.

CAPTAIN

Fine. Shields up, red alert.

The appropriate KLAXONS and LIGHTS begin to do their work. The lights dim, allowing the crew to focus on their computer screens. Suddenly, the ship rocks.

TACTICAL OFFICER

We've been hit. Starboard bow, Deck 8. No serious damage.

CAPTAIN

Fire at will, Lieutenant.

The tactical officer begins to work diligently at his console. On the viewscreen, the Klingon ship passes into view and it is under heavy fire from the Enterprise. Its shields shimmer. The ship moves out of view. Every few seconds, our ship lurches.

TACTICAL OFFICER

I've broken through their shields.

CAPTAIN

Bridge to Transporter Room One. Are you ready?

COMM VOICE

Yes, Sir.

CAPTAIN

Ops, lower shields. Engage transporter.

The Ops officer works quickly. Meanwhile, the ship LURCHES.

TACTICAL OFFICER

Direct hit, Engineering sector. The hull armor is holding.

OPS OFFICER

We've beamed over twenty men.

CAPTAIN

That's enough. Raise shields.

The ship lurches again.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Hold your fire.

The ship lurches one last time...

OPS OFFICER

The Colonel reports that the bridge has been taken.

CAPTAIN

Good. Begin transporting Klingons over.

OPS OFFICER

Aye, aye sir.

CAPTAIN

End red alert.

The klaxons and lights cease.

OPS OFFICER

The Marines have complete control of the Klingon ship.

Suddenly, everything freezes, except Cross and Easton.

COMPUTER VOICE

Battle sequence completed. Total time: one minute, thirty-five seconds.

CROSS

(stunned)

That was quick.

EASTON

That is one of our better times. I think the worst we've ever done was ten minutes.

CROSS

I've battled the replicator for longer periods of time than that.

EASTON

As you can see, a Marine unit can beam over to an enemy ship. As soon as it has control of the bridge, there is no need to exchange any more fire. It's quite efficient.

CROSS

(a little disturbed)

Yes, I can see that.

Hold on Cross's reaction...

CUT TO:

EXT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS

Same as before.

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR

Portman and Cross trudge down the corridor.

CROSS (CONT'D)

It was very disconcerting.

PORTMAN

What?

CROSS

Seeing Marines. On my bridge. I suppose I could live with them down on some lower deck, but in the simulation, most of the Bridge tactical staff wasn't Starfleet! It's almost as if we kept the ship running while they ran everything else.

PORTMAN

Was there was a Starfleet captain in charge?

CROSS

Yes, but...

(beat)

It wasn't the same. I really have a bad feeling about all this.

PORTMAN

(cooly)

You're completely justified, Captain.

CROSS

I take it you're not a fan of the Marines either?

PORTMAN

They're just too different. Besides, it's been made clear to me that I have no part in this project. I'm only at the meetings because it looks good.

CROSS

You can't do anything about this?

PORTMAN

I don't know, Neil. This is Admiral Delfune's project.

CROSS

What about your superiors? Don't your and her supervisors report to the same person?

PORTMAN

Yes, Admiral Korek. But he won't do anything. He likes Delfune.

CROSS

This sounds like some big popularity contest.

PORTMAN

It always has been. And I'm on the losing side.

They continue their march down the corridor.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE (FLASHBACK)

In the past, another contest rages, but this one has different stakes. Three Sheliak warships -- massive, imposing vessels that dwarf their surrounding ships -- and two Sheliak tactical ships, much smaller, dart to evade enemy fire. Two Starfleet ships are engaging the Sheliak, with limited success. They are almost lagging behind. But the Sheliak are focusing on something else: weapons platforms. Sparsely allocated spheres dish out heavy fire to the attacking warships. A spew of fire hits one of the Sheliak tactical vessels. It careens through space, and then explodes into a million tiny shards.

INT. MARCUS BASE OPS (FLASHBACK)

Commander Cross and Captain Portman watch the raging battle from the Ops pit on the viewscreen. The ENSIGN stands by, relaying information.

ENSIGN

One tactical vessel destroyed. Orbitals did it.

CROSS

How are they holding up?

ENSIGN

Orbital defense platforms at 78 percent capacity.

PORTMAN

What about our ships?

ENSIGN

Both Captains report a few casualties. The Sheliak seem to be focusing their energy on the orbital defense platform. They've been able to destroy about a dozen units.

PORTMAN

Get me Colonel Jenner.

The ensign taps a few controls.

JENNER'S COMM VOICE

Colonel Jenner here.

PORTMAN

I'm going to order Commanders Parler and Hevek to focus on the smallest ship, since the Sheliak don't seem to be taking notice of them. I want you to commandeer it.

JENNER'S COMM VOICE

Captain, we need to get one of the bigger ones.

PORTMAN

We're starting small, Colonel.

JENNER'S COMM VOICE

Captain, we can skip the tactical ship and...

PORTMAN

This is no time for argument, Colonel. Get ready to beam up to the tactical vessel.

JENNER'S COMM VOICE

Captain, I'm seriously suggesting that...

PORTMAN

(angry under the  
pressure)

This is my base. Do what I told you!

JENNER'S COMM VOICE

(taken aback)

Yes, Captain.

INT. MARCUS BASE -- TRANSPORTER ROOM (FLASHBACK)

Colonel Jenner and Lieutenant Grey stand in front of dozens of Marines.

GREY

Sir, this is a mistake!

JENNER

I know it is. But we don't have a choice. Get them ready, Lieutenant.

GREY

Yes, Sir.

(to marines)

All right, line up by fives!

As the Marines get into formation, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. READY ROOM

CROSS is working at his desk.

SUKOTHAI'S COMM VOICE  
Captain, Captain Joel is hailing  
you.

Cross sighs.

CROSS  
Put her through.

He turns his console towards him as JOEL'S face appears on  
the screen.

JOEL  
Captain, just a courtesy call to say  
we are leaving, and to wish you well.

CROSS  
Thank you, Captain, most civilized  
of you.

JOEL  
Looking forward to receiving your  
new shipmates?

CROSS  
Not particularly.

JOEL  
Captain, you have to realize this is  
not going to go away. Admiral Delfune  
is right, we have to take precautions  
nowadays. We don't know what's to  
come.

CROSS  
I prefer to welcome the future with  
open arms rather than a raised rifle.

JOEL  
A nice, if rather naive, view of the  
galaxy.

CROSS  
Perhaps.

JOEL  
Don't be difficult about this,  
Captain, I warn you, it could damage  
your career if you are.

CROSS

I'm glad my career is of such importance to you.

JOEL

I know you have a close relationship with Portman, but there are others out there who are not so pleased with you. Don't give them any more ammunition than they need.

CROSS

I'll keep it in mind. Have a good trip.

JOEL

You too, Captain. Good luck.

They sign off. Cross leans back, disgusted.

EXT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- EVENING

A large grassy area surrounded by buildings, it reminds one of a university campus. A café stands at one corner. It is a buzzing place, full of hustle and bustle. Cadets and officers walk around, enjoying the late spring evening, some sitting at tables, others on the grass, others walking around. Through this GREY and BOYLE walk.

BOYLE

We should come back to Earth more often.

GREY

(distracted)  
Mmmm, we should.

BOYLE

What's up with you tonight? You haven't said two words since we beamed down.

GREY

Nothing, I'm just thinking...

BOYLE

About what?

Grey hesitates.

GREY

Well, if you really want to know, about the conduit sealant on deck ten. An engineer from here brought a new one up to try, and I'm not sure it'll work.

BOYLE

Erik, can't you think about something else for once in your life?

GREY

I'm sorry, I can't help it!

BOYLE

I know you can't. Who are they?

They are just walking past a café, and from out of it EASTON has appeared, with a couple of men who are in the same uniform as him. Easton is moving towards Grey.

GREY

That's Colonel Easton, soon to be a member of our crew.

BOYLE

Really?

Easton reaches them.

EASTON

Lieutenant. We were just talking about you.

GREY

(warily)  
Really?

EASTON

Of course! Being an ex-Marine yourself, you must be looking forward to having some company once again.

BOYLE

He has quite enough company, thank---

EASTON

(interrupting)  
Come in and introduce yourself. After all, you'll soon be serving with these people. I've been telling them your story about the Battle of Marcus.

GREY

Well...

He looks at Boyle. She raises her eyes to heaven.

BOYLE

(disgusted)  
Oh fine, you go ahead and enjoy yourself. Don't mind me. Go on.

(MORE)

BOYLE (CONT'D)

I'm sure Rob can use some help in  
Engineering.

She walks off without another word. As Easton and Grey head  
inside...

INT. CAFE -- CONTINUOUS

EASTON

Here he is, the hero of the Battle  
of Marcus. Tell them, Lieutenant,  
what it was like.

GREY

It was quite something...

FADE TO:

INT. SHELIAK SHIP -- CORRIDOR (FLASHBACK)

Grey, Jenner, and the other Marines are under a barrage of  
fire as they rush along the corridor, engaging in shooting  
matches with the Sheliak as they pass them.

JENNER

We need to head for the Bridge.  
Grey?

GREY

Their bridge is on level seven.  
About thirty meters ahead.

JENNER

Let's go!

CUT TO:

INT. MARCUS BASE -- OPS (FLASHBACK)

Portman storms in as Cross is watching the viewscreen. On  
it, they can see the viewpoint of one of the Marines as they  
hurry along.

PORTMAN

What the hell's going on?

CROSS

Colonel Jenner disobeyed you. He  
went for one of the big guns.

PORTMAN

What? Jenner, you hear me?

JENNER'S COMM VOICE

Captain, I apologize, but I had to do what I thought was best. We take this ship, we take the battle.

Portman looks on, silently seething.

FADE TO:

INT. CAFE (PRESENT)

Grey is telling the story, surrounded by Easton and three other men, all looking enthralled by it.

GREY

We knew we had to get to the bridge before the Sheliaks could beam any more troops on board.

EASTON

And did you?

GREY

Of course we did. We were the best.

They all chuckle appreciatively.

EASTON

It just goes to show, when it comes to military battles, Starfleet is incompetent.

GREY

I don't know if I'd agree with that.

EASTON

Of course you would. Look at that example you just gave us. If Portman had had his way, the result of the battle may have gone very differently...

GREY

He didn't exactly see it that way. After the battle, he had a few words with Colonel Jenner. He was ordered to leave less than twenty four hours after the battle was over.

EASTON

Starfleet arrogance.

GREY

Perhaps...

FADE TO:

INT. MARCUS BASE -- WARD ROOM (FLASHBACK)

Portman is standing alone when the door opens and Jenner and Grey enter.

JENNER

We are leaving. We could assist with the clean up.

PORTMAN

No, thank you.

BEAT.

PORTMAN (CONT'D)

Was there something else?

JENNER

I am sorry we had to take matters into our own hands, but I believe we would not have won otherwise.

PORTMAN

I believe differently. But I also believe that whether you had that opinion or not, you shouldn't have disobeyed orders.

JENNER

You do not understand these matters. I do. That is the difference. And Starfleet would do well to note that difference.

PORTMAN

What are you saying?

JENNER

That as long as we play these war games, we should put the right people in charge.

PORTMAN

The right people being you?

JENNER

Your words, not mine. But in these situations, I believe a change in command protocol would be beneficial...

Portman nods and turns round.

PORTMAN

Dismissed, Colonel Jenner.

Jenner looks at him for a long moment, then nods and leaves with Grey. Portman sighs and turns back.

FADE TO:

INT. CAFE (PRESENT)

As before: Grey, Easton, and the Marines.

EASTON

Jenner was right, of course.

GREY

I thought so too, at the time.

EASTON

Of course he was. The day that Starfleet could rely on its doddering peaceful coda is long past. It's about time they woke up and saw that.

GREY

Some people would say that was a rather nihilistic view on life.

EASTON

Some people would be wrong then. Starfleet has to realize that when we are at war, the Marines have a vital place. And with that place, we should have increased control over what happens.

GREY

I don't think that's necessarily a good...

EASTON

I didn't have you down as a left-winger, Lieutenant.

GREY

I'm not, I just don't think Starfleet should necessarily be so military-bent.

EASTON

Rubbish. Wars demand strong leaders, and that's what the Marines have.

GREY

And who is Starfleet at war with at the moment?

EASTON

We're always at war with someone,  
Lieutenant Grey.

Grey looks at him for a minute, concerned.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR

The lights are dimmed, indicating a night shift. CROSS is walking along pensively. He turns a corner, and finds himself in the corridor that is being repaired. Here the full day lights are on, and night-shift engineers are working. To his surprise, he finds GREY standing there too.

GREY

Captain.

CROSS

Lieutenant. It's late, what are you  
doing still here?

GREY

Oh, Lieutenant Kinnan is working  
late in Engineering, I don't want to  
go to bed until he gets back, it'll  
disturb me.

CROSS

I see. It's looking good.

GREY

Yes, sir.  
(beat)  
Sir, if I may ask?

CROSS

Yes?

GREY

How do you feel about Colonel Easton?

CROSS

I -- I am sure he's a fine soldier.

GREY

What about the Marines?

CROSS

I...  
(beat)  
I don't want them on the ship.

Grey nods slowly.

GREY

Neither do I.

CROSS

You surprise me. A military man  
like yourself...

GREY

Yes, sir. But things change. People  
change.

CROSS

Have you changed?

GREY

I believe... I have. I used to think  
that Starfleet's main directive was  
one of defense, that her primary  
function in life was as a peacekeeper.

CROSS

Yes. Given your experiences in the  
past I can see why that would be.

GREY

Yes. But ever since I've been on  
board the Enterprise, I've seen a  
different side of Starfleet. The  
places we've been, the people we've  
met... this is a ship of exploration,  
sir.

CROSS

That's what they always tell me.

GREY

It's not a place for soldiers, it's  
a place scientists, not a ship for  
killing but a world for discovering  
life. And, as much as it surprises  
me to say it, I wouldn't wish it any  
other way.

Cross nods.

CROSS

You're not the only person to feel  
like that.

Long beat.

GREY

(quietly)

Don't let them come on board, Captain.  
Please.

Cross looks at him, not knowing what to say. Then he smiles, pats him on the back and turns to go.

CROSS

Don't worry, Lieutenant. Good night.

GREY

Good night, sir.

As Cross walks off and Grey continues to watch the repairs we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- CONFERENCE ROOM

Portman and Cross standing, looking at each other grimly.

CROSS

I can hear her. Three, two, one,  
mark.

On "mark" DELFUNE marches in, looking livid. She holds in her hand a PADD, which she angrily gestures.

DELFUNE

What the hell is this?

CROSS

I assume it's my report, in which I conclude there is no need for Marines on my ship.

DELFUNE

You cannot refuse this, Captain, you do not have the authority.

PORTMAN

No, but I do.

Delfune turns and looks at Portman.

DELFUNE

No, you don't. You don't have any authority any more.

PORTMAN

Perhaps I don't. Perhaps I do. But one thing I do know. You push this thing forward, you insist that the Enterprise takes these soldiers on board, and I will be handing in my resignation first thing tomorrow morning.

DELFUNE

I hardly see why you think that should alter my stance. I won't miss you.

PORTMAN

You know as well as I do this isn't just about you and me.

Long beat.

DELFUNE

I look forward to receiving your pips. Captain, Colonel Easton will be formally joining your crew oh six hundred hours tomorrow. That is all.

Delfune turns and walks out stiffly. Cross looks at Portman.

CROSS

I hope you know what you're doing.

PORTMAN

I do. Now we just sit and wait.

CROSS

Not for the first time.

FADE TO:

INT. MARCUS BASE -- CAPTAIN'S OFFICE (FLASHBACK)

Portman is writing a report when the door chimes.

PORTMAN

Come.

CROSS enters. He hands a PADD over to Portman.

CROSS

Jenner's field report.

PORTMAN

Should make interesting reading.

He takes it.

CROSS

He recommends the Marines deploy a permanent detachment here.

PORTMAN

Really.

CROSS

He also criticizes your handling of the battle.

PORTMAN

Well, he would, wouldn't he?

Cross looks troubled.

PORTMAN (CONT'D)

I know that look, Neil. What's on your mind?

CROSS

It's just that... Jenner did win the battle.

PORTMAN

Yes, he did. But he lost three of his men along the way, because he invaded a heavily guarded ship. If he'd followed my orders, I doubt he would have lost them. The tactical ships had fewer personnel on them, and certainly even fewer who were trained in close-quarters combat. Seizing that ship, we could have done the same things we did on the other ship, but three more men would be returning to their barracks tonight.

CROSS

I know.

PORTMAN

The marines aren't trained to think like that, though. They are trained to think that they are expendable for the greater good. It doesn't matter if A and B and C die, as long as the battle is won. But I can never think like that. For me, one man dying is one man too much. And for Starfleet as well. And that is why...

He waves the PADD at Cross.

PORTMAN (CONT'D)

He won't get far with that.

CROSS

I hope not.

PORTMAN

He won't. Starfleet is war-weary at the moment, Neil. The Dominion war, the Borg incursions, now the Sheliak. We know it's going to be another long push, but we also know that this time we're not dealing with an enemy of the caliber of the Founders or the Jem'Hadar. The top brass want to get back to doing what we do best -- exploring, and making friends. We used to be pretty good at it, you know.

CROSS

I wish I remembered that time.

PORTMAN

You don't have to. You'll see it again, in the future. My father used to have an expression: "Greet the future with open arms, not a raised rifle." I like to think that's possible. And so does Starfleet. They'll turn this proposal down in a second.

He tosses the PADD onto the table.

CROSS

It's good to know.

PORTMAN

It is. The day Starfleet starts to seriously consider having Marines on board our bases and ships is the day we know we're really in trouble. I'll get working on a reply to this. You get to bed. It's been a long day.

CROSS

It has. Thank you, Captain.

He turns and walks out. Portman smiles and looks at the PADD again.

CUT TO:

INT. GREY'S QUARTERS (PRESENT)

Grey is sleeping when a chime goes.

EASTON'S COMM VOICE

Easton to Grey.

Grey looks blearily up.

GREY

Grey here. What's going on?

EASTON

Your presence is required.

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- CONFERENCE ROOM

The windows show it is very early morning. Grey enters, and reacts in surprise when he sees Cross and Portman sitting on one side of the table, and Delfune, General Burke, and Easton on the other, glaring across.

GREY

What -- what's going on?

DELFUNE

Please sit down, Lieutenant.

He does so.

EASTON

I asked Lieutenant Grey here as a witness to these proceedings. As a former military man, I think he will understand the significance of them. Admiral Delfune?

DELFUNE

We are recording.

EASTON

Thank you. Captain Cross, I formally ask permission for myself and my men to join the USS Enterprise, on Stardate 78783.6.

CROSS

I refuse permission.

DELFUNE

Captain, I order you to take these Marines on board your ship.

PORTMAN

And I disavow that order. The Captain does not have to if he does not wish.

CROSS

I do not wish.

Delfune nods.

DELFUNE

Let the records show that this meeting was witnessed by Lieutenant Erik Grey, serial number SFE7292739-3. End recording.

The formalities come to an end.

DELFUNE (CONT'D)

You've made a big mistake today. Both of you. I won't forget this.

She stands up and walks stiffly out. Easton turns to Grey.

EASTON

Grey, a word.

Grey looks from one to another, and then stands up and walks out with Easton. Cross breathes a sigh of relief.

CROSS

What happened?

Portman smiles wryly.

PORTMAN

Delfune knows that this is a delicate time for Starfleet, and the Federation at large. With the Klingon situation heating up, as well as the Trills going their own way, the quadrant is in a precarious state of the moment, and Starfleet must preserve its aura of stability, at least to the outside world.

CROSS

(nods)

They couldn't afford to have one of their most admired admirals resigning over an issue like this.

PORTMAN

I wouldn't have put it in quite those terms, but basically, yes.

CROSS

And you knew that?

PORTMAN

Not exactly. I wasn't sure how popular I still was. It's obvious the good admiral has made some calls, and found less support than she might have hoped for.

CROSS

A risky move.

PORTMAN

Not for the first time.

CROSS

Did you see that look she gave us when she left?

PORTMAN

Indeed. I don't expect to receive a birthday card from her this year. Come on, I'll treat you to an early morning breakfast. I think we deserve it...

He puts his arm round Cross' shoulder and they walk out.

CUT TO:

INT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR

EASTON is walking briskly down with GREY.

EASTON

I was hoping you would support us.

GREY

I support what is best for the Federation.

EASTON

I thought you were a Marine.

GREY

I was... once.

EASTON

Once a Marine, always a Marine.

GREY

Maybe. Or maybe you stay a Marine until you look out over the edge of your world and see that there is much more to life than just the next skirmish, the next mission.

EASTON

That would be a weakness.

GREY

Or a strength.

EASTON

Starfleet has corrupted you. It is disappointing to see a fine officer go down.

GREY

Corrupted? I prefer to think of it as being enlightened.

EASTON

A shame. A Marine's first duty is to maintain discipline at all times, not allow extraneous thoughts to enter his head.

GREY

Become an automaton?

EASTON

Become a soldier. That is what we  
are there for.

GREY

As long as that Marine remembers  
what it is he is working for. It's  
when they don't that the trouble  
starts. Goodbye, Colonel Easton.

He salutes him. Easton hesitates, and then salutes back,  
before turning and walking their separate ways, both down  
the corridor and into the future. As we watch them go, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

THE END