

STAR TREK: RENAISSANCE

"The Public Eye"

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TEASER

FADE IN:

BLANK SCREEN

Nothing for a moment, then:

SUPER: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

EXT. ROMULAN CITY

We see a city square surrounded by khaki and green buildings with a raucous crowd filling it. Huge characters of Romulan text appear over it, obviously a very important exclamation.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

War! War with the Dominion! The Romulan Senate formally declares hostilities following the assassination of Senator Vreenak!

INT. SENATE CHAMBER

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The Senate voted almost unanimously for the declaration after a long speech by the esteemed Senator Amannius.

AMANNIUS

(oratorically)

It is now clearly evident that the Dominion will not honor the Non-Aggression pact. Fellow Citizens, the evidence of the Dominion's cruelty stares us in the face. And we will no longer stand complacent as our foes scheme behind our backs. They will know what it means to arouse the wrath of the Romulan Empire, and they will more than regret their treachery before they're done!

The entire senate chamber rises and applauds Amannius's speech.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Later in his address, Amannius urged all young citizens to enlist in the Star Navy and other forces for the fighting effort.

EXT. SENATE BUILDING STEPS

Amannius stands at a podium in front of a mass of journalists and citizens.

AMANNIUS

We need you to fight in our navies and our armed forces. We need you as labor to help construct equipment for the war effort. Young People of Romulus, it is both your right and duty to defend your country from the barbarians that threaten to destroy all we hold dear.

REPORTER

Senator, do you have anything to say to the parents of those in the armed forces?

AMANNIUS

Only this: I know how strenuous it must be for you, worrying about the fate of your sons and daughters. I know, because my children are out there too. But be proud of them. They are fighting for the noblest cause of our times.

The audience of the speech applauds Amannius.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

In other news, the ongoing search for Senator Norok's missing intern takes an interesting twist...

The screen FADES OUT at the same rate that the announcer's voice does...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

BLANK SCREEN

Nothing for a moment, then:

SUPER: PRESENT DAY

INT. ROMULAN ORBITAL SPACEPORT

An older-looking Amannius walks down the concourse looking for a terminal. Various people glance over at him, recognizing him, ad-libbing "Senator," "Just a moment, sir," etc, but he ignores them as he glides through. He appears happy about something, though we don't know what. He finds his terminal and sits down. The reaction to him dies down, although many still gaze over at where he's seated, more curious than anything else.

Amannius folds his hands and looks out into space, seemingly obliviously to all. After a short while, he appears to see someone he recognizes sitting down at the same terminal out of the corner of his eye. Finally moved to some sort of action, he moves his head to get a better look.

The person he recognizes is a Romulan man that looks to be equivalent to a human in their early 30s. Amannius's face turns to one of recognition, but he can't seem to place who it is. He gazes over with a curious expression. Eventually the other man notices him and looks up, and seems to recognize him as well, but a lot more quickly. And it makes him distinctly uncomfortable, though he tries to hide it.

ROMULAN

Something the matter, sir?

Amannius shakes it off.

AMANNIUS

Nothing, nothing. I just...

He trails off, looks away.

ROMULAN

Just what?

AMANNIUS

Could've sworn we've met.

ROMULAN

I recognize you.

AMANNIUS

Of course you recognize me. I'm a Senator.

The Romulan considers that for a moment. He looks like he's going to say something, but something's holding him back. Finally, he overcomes it.

ROMULAN
(somewhat weakly)
You probably don't remember.

This immediately gains Amannius's attention again.

AMANNIUS
What?

ROMULAN
(louder)
I said, you probably wouldn't remember.

AMANNIUS
So we have met.

The Romulan nods. He pauses, looking over at Amannius, but then decides to go the full way:

ROMULAN
I'm Markan.

Amannius thinks for a moment, and then it hits him. He recoils under a sea of emotions but quickly keeps them in check.

AMANNIUS
(only half a question)
Markan?

Markan winces, but he's evidently played his hand. He tries to remain cool.

MARKAN
(somewhat uneasy, but formal)
Amannius.

Amannius frowns. Markan evidently isn't his favorite customer, but he doesn't understand what's irritating him. Beat.

AMANNIUS
(noncommittal)
It's been a long time.

MARKAN
(abruptly)
Yes.

Now Amannius is annoyed. Markan is hardly treating him with respect.

AMANNIUS

"Yes, Senator."

MARKAN

Yes, Senator.

Beat. Amannius turns away from Markan for a moment. He looks out through the window, seeming impatient. After a moment he turns back.

AMANNIUS

(not all that
interested)

Where are you headed, Markan?

MARKAN

Actually, I'm not.

AMANNIUS

Ah, I see.

(beat)

Why are you here, then?

MARKAN

I'm waiting for someone.

AMANNIUS

(monotone)

Really.

MARKAN

Yes.

Beat.

Markan goes back to reading his PADD. Amannius continues to look out the window. Whatever he's looking for, it isn't there, and it's starting to get on his nerves.

AMANNIUS

(not facing Markan)

I take it you're still in the service.

MARKAN

Oh, still.

AMANNIUS

(still not facing
Markan)

What's that like these days?

MARKAN

(stung)

You want to know?

Amannius now faces Markan.

AMANNIUS

Not particularly.

MARKAN

(bitterly)

Well, I'll tell you.

(beat)

I've been on street patrol duty for the last few years, with the odd security job. Street patrol! What kind of job is that?

Amannius senses Markan's venom, but opts to not rise to the bait.

AMANNIUS

It must be done if crime is to be kept to a minimum.

MARKAN

It's a job for policemen. Not the Tal'Shiar.

AMANNIUS

It's the best job you're suited to, or the Tal'Shiar would not have assigned that to you.

MARKAN

(angry)

Rubbish. The only reason I'm on that job is --

Amannius smiles. It is an unkind, malevolent smile.

AMANNIUS

Go on. Say it. If you dare.

Markan, too late realizing his mistake, is silent. Beat.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

(impetuously, clearly
enjoying this)

All right, I'll say it for you.

(beat)

The Tal'Shiar would have entrusted you with a lot more important assignments if you hadn't pulled off that, that...

Amannius pauses, trying to think of an appropriate label.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

...publicity stunt during the war.

Amannius has hit home. Senator or no, Markan is now very, very annoyed.

MARKAN

(on the brink of
exploding)

Stunt? Stunt? Oh, I suppose you would call it something like that, now, wouldn't you? Stunt! Are you really that ignorant as to who your daughter is? You think that was a stunt? Are you really so...

(beat, restrains
himself)

She was just as willing as I was. Every bit as sincere as I was -- and I was sincere! I didn't do a thing to her. Of course, you would never believe that. You don't understand your own offspring.

Amannius, however, didn't become a Senator overnight. He's got an ace, and he intends to play it. Coldly, he glares at Markan.

AMANNIUS

Oh really? You mean to tell me you really had no hand in that little scandal? You really mean to tell me this didn't service my political enemies? In fact, I bet you enjoyed that little media circus and the infamy you generated! I'm no fool, Markan. Nor am I naive. Like she was. Like she was.

Markan shoots upright, clearly at the end of his nerve. This begins to draw attention. The amount of people occasionally glancing over at Amannius and Markan increases, and the background conversation goes down a notch.

MARKAN

(restraining himself,
indignant)

Look. I came here so I could get back in touch with her.

Amannius's eyes narrow.

AMANNIUS

Oh, so that's why you're here?

MARKAN

(firm)

Yes, as a matter of fact I am. But you're bent on attacking me over something that's long forgotten!

AMANNIUS

Forgotten? Forgotten? By the public,
maybe. And my enemies may not be
focused on it at present. But
forgotten?

(beat, vicious)

My dear Markan, I do not forget.
And I do most certainly not forget
something like that.

The camera pans to the gateway at the terminal, where people
are debarking a transport. TALORA is among them and sees
Markan and Amannius bickering.

TALORA

(groans)

Perfect...

She strides over to the two men still utterly embroiled in
their argument.

MARKAN

(to Amannius)

No, I doubt you do. Instead, you
decide to hound --

AMANNIUS

Hound? You think you're being hounded
by me now? I haven't touched you
yet, Markan. Not even scratch.
You're the one that's hounding.
You're the one that's come all this
way to see my daughter --

MARKAN

And why shouldn't I? If you are any
indication, she and I have some things
to discuss.

This hits Amannius harder than any of the previous statements.

Talora has now reached them. She is not amused.

AMANNIUS

(now very angry and
in Markan's face,
overlapping)

Don't you dare go anywhere near my
daughter!

TALORA

(icy, overlapping)

Gentlemen.

MARKAN

(to Amannius,
overlapping)

I'll go to whoever I like! And since
when did you speak for your daughter,
surely she has a mind of her own?

TALORA

(louder, overlapping)

Gentlemen!

AMANNIUS

My daughter doesn't --

TALORA

(shouting)

Gentlemen!

Finally, they notice her. There is a tense pause. Talora is very, very irritated. Markan and Amannius both look a little embarrassed.

TALORA (CONT'D)

I didn't come home for this.

MARKAN

(overlapping)

Talora --

AMANNIUS

Daughter -

TALORA

(cold)

Quite a welcoming committee.
Bickering and drawing a crowd, all
in one package.

(sighs)

What on Romulus has gotten into you
two?

They open their mouths again, but Talora stops them with a wave of her hand.

TALORA (CONT'D)

One at a time.

She nods to her father.

AMANNIUS

This man has the gall to consider
meeting you, after what he's done!

TALORA

Markan?

MARKAN
(notably meek)
I just wanted to, well...
(beat)
...talk to you.

Talora looks to one, to the other, and back again.

TALORA
And that justifies this? No, don't
answer that. We'll go.
(preempting)
Both of you.

Talora walks off, Amannius and Markan in tow.

MARKAN
Where?

TALORA
Home. It's been quite some time
since I've been there, and I still
intend to take some time off during
this trip.

Amannius walks over to Talora.

AMANNIUS
(softly, into Talora's
ear)
Are you sure you want to do this?

Talora stops, turns around.

TALORA
Yes.

Amannius is distinctly uncomfortable with the concept.

AMANNIUS
For...
(beat)
...how long?

TALORA
As long as it takes.

Amannius shrugs, resigned.

AMANNIUS
In which case, it shouldn't take
long. Talora, you and I have many
things to discuss...

TALORA
(deadpan)
So I gathered.

Talora distances herself from Amannius. Amannius opens his mouth to speak, but then thinks better of it.

Talora leads them off to the surface-spaceport transporters.

TALORA (CONT'D)
(quiet, to herself)
Many things to discuss...

On Talora, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

SUPER: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

EXT. SPACE

A D'Deridex-class Warbird slowly lumbering across the screen. More Romulan text appears over the image, and the announcer speaks again

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

News from the war front! The Praetor's Navy has made a swift strike against a key Dominion shipyard, crippling its capability to produce warships. This coordinated strike caught the enemy completely off-guard and the opposition was quickly eliminated.

INT. ROMULAN PRESS ROOM

A Romulan officer, the one and only NELAR (as seen in "Day In..."), stands at a podium while journalists with their assorted equipment stand ready to listen to what he has to say. He stands proud and confident. His father's son.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Subcommander Nelar, the eldest son of the esteemed Senator Amannius, was the executive officer on the I.R.W. Marcellius, the command ship of the attack. He recently spoke at a press conference about the success of the Romulan Navy's first contribution to the war.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Subcommander, how would you describe this latest victory?

Nelar smiles, as if he expected this question.

NELAR

In a word? Flawless. Absolutely flawless. Wave after wave of Jem'Hadar attack craft was incinerated by our ships. Clear across the battlefield we held our own and made the Dominion pay dearly for the wrongs committed against the Romulan State. Virtually no casualties, and total annihilation of both base and forces. It is a proud day for the Romulan armed forces.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

On the home front a scandal has emerged as Senator Amannius has drawn criticism from his senate opponents for his allocation of Tal'Shiar resources for his own personal use.

Cut to what appears to be a shoulder camera with a reporter running towards a senatorial fellow.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Senator Amannius!

Nothing, and Amannius is still moving.

REPORTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Senator Amannius! Is there truth behind the rumors that you're using Tal'Shiar resources as personal protection for your family?

Amannius turns to face the reporter.

AMANNIUS

I will say this: It is fully within the jurisdiction of any Senator in this time of war to employ the Tal'Shiar for defense against possible assassination attempts. The Dominion have been known to insidiously dispense of important individuals of the state and replace them with their Changelings, and we cannot allow this to happen in the Romulan Star Empire.

With that Amannius breaks off and walks at a brisk pace away from the reporter.

FADE OUT.

BLANK SCREEN

Nothing for a moment, then:

SUPER: PRESENT DAY

FADE IN:

EXT. ROMULAN COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY

A villa with distinctively Romulan architecture sits on top of a hill lightly covered in lush green trees. The landscape is well-kept around the villa. In the distance hills tower, powerful, silent, and quite inspirational to look at. The overall climate seems to be the Romulan equivalent to summer.

Three figures shimmer into existence from a transporter beam just next to the door. They are Talora, Markan, and Amannius. They walk towards the main doorway of the villa. Amannius presses his thumb to a small plate next to the door, and the sounds of a deadbolt turning can be heard from the door. When they enter, a late-middle-aged Romulan woman, Talora's mother MAYLI, gets up from a chair and walks over to them, arms outstretched.

MAYLI
(relieved, emotional)
Talora! You're home!

She hugs Talora, who returns the favor. When they are done hugging, Mayli then notices Markan standing a distance away in the doorway, and she stares disdainfully at him. Markan looks away when she stares.

TALORA
Markan, why don't you come in?

Amannius is now staring at Markan scornfully as well. Markan starts backing towards the doorway.

MARKAN
(nervously)
I... ah... need to get back to work
anyway. Maybe some other time.

Markan immediately turns and leaves the villa. Outside, Markan hits his commbadge.

MARKAN (CONT'D)
(into commbadge)
Tal'Shiar coordination, one to beam
to Urima.

He disappears in an alien-looking transporter beam. Meanwhile at the villa, Talora turns and faces her father and sighs as she shakes her head at him.

TALORA
We had things to discuss.

AMANNIUS
And quite discussed, if you ask me.

TALORA
He'll be back.

AMANNIUS
I sincerely hope not.

He sees the expression on Talora's face and squeezes her arms.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

My daughter... my darling daughter...

Mayli is preparing a table.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

I know coming home hasn't been what you expected, but I promise...

TALORA

It's okay, father.

She looks up at him. She makes a smile.

TALORA (CONT'D)

I'm just glad to be back. To breathe the air of Lausonia, to see the hills of Taratar...

MAYLI

(motherly)

Are you going to stay the whole day standing?

Talora and Amannius, the former in mock-resignation, sit down.

MAYLI (CONT'D)

Now, you stay right there. I'll go get some birak fruit.

TALORA

Still home-grown?

Mayli looks around, smiles.

MAYLI

Of course they're home grown, love. And you very well know that.

Talora looks over at Amannius, quizzically. Amannius smiles with mock ruefulness.

AMANNIUS

She insisted. I thought we should get someone else to do it... Nothing will keep her between her and her birak fruit.

A SERVANT passes through.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

(to servant)

Revak!

The servant (Revak) looks over at him.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)
Three glasses of Ale.

Revak nods, departs.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)
(to Talora)
You haven't had to make do on
Federation replicators for Ale, have
you? I tried it once at a conference.
Absolutely awful. Doesn't do it
justice at all.

TALORA
I've found my ways.

Mayli returns, with a plate of BIRAK FRUIT. A blue usually
shaped fruit with wiry brown roots. She places it on the
table, and sits next to them. Talora picks up a fruit as
she looks expectantly, and bites. She tastes, swallows,
looks satisfied.

TALORA (CONT'D)
It's delicious.

She takes another bite.

AMANNIUS
(slightly playfully)
Talora, you won't find a better
example of birak fruit anywhere in
the Empire or out it.

MAYLI
You know that isn't true, you
flatterer.

Amannius smiles and takes a birak fruit, and bites as well.

AMANNIUS
(mockfully)
I savor every morsel.

They smile.

TALORA
Aren't you going to take some, mother?

MAYLI
That's okay, I already ate.

Talora and Amannius eat in silence for a few moments.

MAYLI (CONT'D)

(with concern)

Talora, we've been hearing that something been going on in the Federation...

The mood of the room becomes somber.

AMANNIUS

Reprimanded and a report sent back to the Romulan government about your actions.

Talora looks at Mayli, and then Amannius.

TALORA

You mean you didn't know?

AMANNIUS

Beyond the formal reprimand little information has come into the Empire. We know something big is happening out there, but we don't know what.

Talora nods, taking that in.

TALORA

(quietly)

I see.

AMANNIUS

Could you tell us what happened?

TALORA

I'll do my best. One of the Federation's Klingon border starbases was destroyed by the Klingon Reformists. Captain Cross of the Enterprise, my superior officer, ordered the destruction of an entire Reformist colony in the retaliatory attack.

Amannius lets out a snort of contempt.

AMANNIUS

(condescending)

That's what they get for not keeping a closer eye on the Klingons...

Revak comes back with the glasses of Romulan Ale and hands them out.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

(to servant)

Thank you, Revak.

Revak nods and departs.

TALORA

My captain then became reclusive after the incident and even went missing during the initial parts of the hearing into the matter.

Talora takes a drink from her glass.

TALORA (CONT'D)

One of my crewmates and I took it upon ourselves to go look for him, because Starfleet wasn't.

AMANNIUS

(intrigued)

Really?

Talora nods.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

Don't let me stop you.
(with a wave of his hand)
Proceed.

Talora looks at both of them gravely.

TALORA

(quiet)

There apparently was a large conspiracy about to use Cross as a scapegoat and to cover up the incident. They went so far as to plan the dismantling of the Enterprise.

AMANNIUS

That sounds bad...

TALORA

And it's worse. A shady element in the Federation apparently made a deal with the Reformists to carry out the attack, and didn't honor their secret agreement after the fact.

AMANNIUS

And these Klingons didn't have an issue with this?

TALORA

They couldn't.

(MORE)

TALORA (CONT'D)

When they went to the rendezvous to collect their compensation, the organization had them killed.

Amannius coughs when he hears what Talora just said.

AMANNIUS

(surprised)

Killed them...? I didn't think they had the guts.

TALORA

(distant)

Yes, killed them. I saw the bodies.

AMANNIUS

How?

TALORA

My fellow senior officers and I decided to take it upon ourselves to investigate into what was happening with the Enterprise and Cross, and we found our way to the Hellion Expanse, where the rendezvous was. It's all in the formal report Starfleet sent our Military Exchange Commission. Or so I'd thought.

AMANNIUS

Oh, it's probably in there, but the Praetor hasn't disclosed the full document.

TALORA

Ah.

Mayli puts her hand on Talora's shoulder.

MAYLI

(sympathetic)

This is all quite upsetting.

TALORA

(solemn, distant)

Not as half as it sounds. One of us -
- a friend of mine -- he was killed too.

Amannius sees the pain in the face of the daughter he knows all too well.

AMANNIUS

(consoling)

I'm sorry to hear that... He must have been a fine officer for you to feel upset over his loss.

TALORA

He was. Me and Dojar went through a lot together.

AMANNIUS

(thoughtfully)

Dojar... sounds Cardassian.

TALORA

He is Cardassian. I mean, he was. It's still hard to think of him in the past tense...

AMANNIUS

You seem rather torn up.

Talora notes the minute change in her father's tone, and looks up.

TALORA

Of course I am. Wouldn't you be if you'd lost a friend?

AMANNIUS

A friend, maybe. But a Cardassian... Who would have thought of it. Perhaps you've been among the Federation too long, Talora, to socialize so low.

Talora looks coldly at her father after the insensitivity he just displayed.

TALORA

(cold, emotional)

Dojar was a Starfleet officer. He died carrying out orders that I gave him. And he never doubted them for a moment. I couldn't give a damn what his race was, he was my subordinate, and a good officer. And yes, father, he was a dear friend.

AMANNIUS

(a bit lost for words)

I'm sorry. I didn't realize he meant... could mean... well, a Cardassian --

TALORA

He did.

(MORE)

TALORA (CONT'D)

If you spent more time amongst other species, Amannius, you'd realize they're not as unlike as you tend to believe.

AMANNIUS

Similar, yes, but them and their ways are simply inferior to ours. I suppose, given the circumstances it was a likely friend to make...

He notices Talora isn't that fond of that reaction either and trails off.

An awkward silence follows. Amannius is embarrassed, Talora lost in the memories of her times with that old friend. Then, in an attempt to relieve the tension, Mayli speaks.

MAYLI

Well, in all this fuss somebody forgot the news he was meant to tell you.

Mayli nudges Amannius.

AMANNIUS

What?
(realizing)
Oh...

Talora looks intrigued.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

Well, Talora, the Romulan Navy has finalized the design plans for our answer to the Starfleet's Phoenix-class ship. Construction of the I.R.W. Lukan is planned to start soon.

TALORA

That was quick... What does this have to do with the Senate?

AMANNIUS

The command of the Lukan is a politically charged position. He or she would be commanding the flagship of the fleet and would be the forefront representative of our interests. I'm bidding for you to fill this position.

On Talora's surprised expression, we...

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP

A room in the mysterious alien ship we've seen in the previous episodes. It's too dark for us to see what kind of room or on what ship it is, though.

Markan beams in, and looks about, disoriented.

MARKAN

What the...?

Suddenly, four tentacles whip out and grab hold of his wrists and ankles. Markan squirms, trying to break free, but to no avail. A fifth tentacle brings a hypospray to Markan's neck and presses it down. As the hypospray hisses, Markan's body goes limp. The tentacles put Markan down onto the ground gently. The camera pans to the owner of the tentacles, Y'LAN.

COMM VOICE

Do we have him?

Y'LAN

Yes, you did. I will commence with the memory implant shortly. What is your progress on the Tal'Shiar computer systems?

COMM VOICE

They have some heavy security around their database, but nothing we can't handle. I'm planting the files right now.

Y'LAN

Satisfactory. Continue monitoring our targets' activities and inform me of any changes.

As Y'lan starts putting a strange device on Markan's head, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

SUPER: PRESENT DAY

INT. HALLWAY

A hallway in an urban apartment complex in a Romulan city. It is by no means ritzy, and is beginning to show age. Talora walks down the hall with a PADD, as if she's looking for an address. She arrives at the address her PADD says and rings the doorbell. It gives a futuristic but distinctly Romulan chirp sound, which sounds more like a gong.

MARKAN
(through doorbell PA)
Who is it?

TALORA
It's Talora.

The door opens and Markan looks out. He is dressed in Tal'Shiar uniform.

MARKAN
Yes?

TALORA
We need to talk...

MARKAN
I know...

TALORA
Markan, I...

MARKAN
Not right now.

Talora nods.

MARKAN (CONT'D)
Want to come in?

TALORA
Actually, I was going to invite you out for lunch.

Markan contemplates for a second, shrugs.

MARKAN
Sure, why not?

He motions to his clothes.

MARKAN (CONT'D)

I won't look awfully casual in this,
though.

Markan goes back into his quarters to get ready.

MARKAN (CONT'D)

Come on in if you'd like.

Talora walks into the room. It is a rather small apartment, with only a bedroom and bathroom attached to the main room. The walls are sparsely covered. A desk with a terminal and a sidearm in a leather holster is in one corner amongst other various devices. The disruptor catches Talora's eye.

TALORA

Nice place you have here.

MARKAN

Yeah, you make do with what the
Tal'Shiar gives you...

Talora walks over to the desk and removes the disruptor from the holster and examines it. It's obviously Romulan, but it is much leaner looking than the standard Romulan disruptor, obviously meant to be easily concealed under a jacket. Markan emerges from his bedroom dressed in casual clothes and sees Talora examining the weapon.

TALORA

(re: disruptor)

Is this the new special issue?

MARKAN

(pessimistic)

Yeah, I'm surprised they even bothered
issuing me one.

Talora notes Markan's bitterness in his comment. He goes over to gather some of the stuff off the table. Talora hands Markan the disruptor as he picks up the holster and conceals it under his coat.

MARKAN (CONT'D)

Where to?

TALORA

I not sure. I'm not familiar with
this city.

MARKAN

You're inviting me out to dinner and
don't know where to take me?

TALORA

It seemed a good idea at the time.

MARKAN

Relax. It is, it is. Probably better then staying around here, anyway.

Markan ponders for a second and grins.

MARKAN (CONT'D)

And I know just the place.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTDOOR RESTAURANT

Talora and Markan are sitting at a table underneath an umbrella, with plates of food in front of them. The street nearby is somewhat busy with people milling about with a rail tram overhead.

TALORA

Nice place.

MARKAN

Yeah. I usually show up here when I'm off the street.

Talora picks at the food, which looks rather unusual.

TALORA

What do you call this again?

MARKAN

D'nezzorette.

Markan slices a chunk of food from his plate.

MARKAN (CONT'D)

It's a specialty around these parts. Pretty popular.

TALORA

I see.

Talora looks down at the plate. She doesn't like the look but it, but still, she hasn't taken a bite. Not too hopefully, she slices part of it off, carries it up to her mouth with her fork, and samples a small part. Swallows. Places the fork back down.

TALORA (CONT'D)

The cuisine is... interesting.

Markan chuckles.

MARKAN

You haven't eaten much Umira food, have you?

TALORA

Before now I'd never been to Umira.

Markan takes another bite.

MARKAN

It's different, certainly. But you grow used to it. And after a time you can't imagine life without it.

Talora gazes down at the food for a moment.

TALORA

I don't think I can imagine life with it.

Markan shakes his head. They return to eating in peace for a beat.

TALORA (CONT'D)

What have you been doing lately?

Markan shrugs. Unlike prior he doesn't seem to be all that anxious to unload his burdens.

MARKAN

Not that much. Not anything all that interesting, anyway. For most of the last decade, I've been working as a bodyguard for whoever the Tal'Shiar assigns me. And not exactly upper-class guard work either. I can't think of anybody who'd want to kill a stock broker...

(beat)

No, wait, I can.

Talora smiles, shakes her head. Markan grins wryly.

MARKAN (CONT'D)

Not that I'd be any use against myself, mind you. In any case, I've broken out of that deadlock.

TALORA

Really?

MARKAN

Really. Lately, I've been assigned to monitor activities of the Talons of D'Deridex extremist group. That's the same amount of excitement, mind you.

TALORA

(thoughtful)

The Talons of D'Deridex...

She considers the name for a moment, initially unfamiliar with it.

TALORA (CONT'D)

Isn't that the anti-Federation extremist group that bombed the Federation Embassy about ten years ago?

MARKAN

Twelve. And that's them, all right.

TALORA

Ah.

(beat)

I thought they were largely inactive right now.

MARKAN

And that's exactly the point. Hence, my assignment of monitoring them.

TALORA

Have you identified them?

MARKAN

Most of them, including the ringleaders. That is, by face. I haven't been allowed to correlate their faces to available files. At least, I know most those present at the meetings I monitor. I can't indict any of them, though, since the Talons of the D'deridex are, as you pointed out, stationary for the past twelve years. Legally they're considered no more than a protest group...

(beat)

That is, until they spring into action. Which is why I'm there. theoretically speaking, of course. It doesn't look like they'll ever actually spring into action.

TALORA

Ah. What's their agenda?

MARKAN

Oh, the usual drivel. I'm sure you've heard it before. They want the return of the Neutral Zone, the abrogation of all previous treaties, the expulsion or execution of Federation nationals from the Empire, and immediate armament for hostilities.

(MORE)

MARKAN (CONT'D)

They're convinced that if Romulus moves now, and forcefully, the Federation itself could fall under our dominion.

(beat)

Utter rubbish.

TALORA

You record their conversations?

MARKAN

Part of my job.

TALORA

Have they said anything that could incriminate them?

MARKAN

Beyond the admissions they're staunchly anti-Federation and members of that club, no, not really. All they do is go on long winded, impassioned, repletive hate speeches. Very boring stuff, really. Talk, talk, talk.

TALORA

And no action?

MARKAN

If there were action or even the half-consideration of action they probably would have assigned someone else.

Beat. They return to eating for a moment. Then Markan thoughtfully puts down his eating utensils and looks up at Talora.

MARKAN (CONT'D)

So what have you been up to? I hear you've gotten into quite a big issue with Starfleet.

Talora looks up at Markan once more and considers his statement.

TALORA

Yes... Starfleet is starting to become more and more shady. Harder to follow, and harder to trust.

(beat)

You'd think they were trying to compete with us.

MARKAN

You make it sound like the Dominion
all over again.

TALORA

No, it's not that. Something more
sinister.

MARKAN

What?

TALORA

That's the problem. I don't know.

Markan chuckles at Talora's comment.

MARKAN

I remember the day you were sure you
either knew everything now, or you
would later.

TALORA

And I remember the day you still had
a passing acquaintance and
comprehension of modesty.

Markan laughs, shakes his head.

MARKAN

And what about starship command? As
I recall, you were determined to
become a Commander. Listening to
you, you made it sound like the best
job in the world.

(beat)

Well, what of that job, Talora? Are
you enjoying it?

TALORA

It was nothing like what I expected.
So many things to administrate, so
many hard decisions to make.

MARKAN

But are you enjoying it?

TALORA

(seeming indignant)
Of course I am.

Markan looks at her, knowingly.

TALORA (CONT'D)

...Usually.

Beat.

MARKAN

And?

Talora sighs in mock-resignation.

TALORA

And -- there are some days that I wish I was still just a tactical officer.

MARKAN

So you'd rather be in another job, or another track?

TALORA

(definitively)
Not for Romulus.

MARKAN

Good for you, then. It's nice to see one of us is doing well in the universe.

Beat.

TALORA

Markan, we were going to...

Talora suddenly looks distracted by something, and peers off around Markan. We cut to what she sees, a pair of Romulans at a restaurant across the street watching them, one of which is quite heavily built. They have a distinctly unsavory air about themselves. They appear to notice Talora looking at them and quickly get up to leave.

MARKAN

Talora? What is it?

Talora nods behind him.

TALORA

Those people were watching us.

Markan turns around to see and manages to catch a glimpse of the larger one's face before they disappear around a corner building.

MARKAN

(serious)
I think we'd better get out of here.

Markan and Talora both get up from their table.

TALORA

Why? Who are they?

They begin to get whatever belongings they have.

MARKAN

(while putting on his
coat)

I don't know... I've seen the larger
one's face somewhere before, but I
can't remember where.

TALORA

Talons of D'Deridex?

MARKAN

Could be. Could be just a street
thug. Trouble in any case.

Talora leaves a credit chit on the table.

MARKAN (CONT'D)

You don't need to do that -- I'll
pay.

TALORA

From your job description I doubt
you've got money to burn, and besides,
I was the one taking us out.

MARKAN

Your loss.

They gather up their stuff and leave.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

BLANK SCREEN

Nothing for a moment, then:

FADE IN:

INT. NEWSCAST STUDIO

A Romulan anchor presenting news in a newscast.

ANNOUNCER

...And in other news, the Senate is going through final deliberations over the command of the I.R.W. Lukan, the Imperial Navy's newest flagship.

A picture-in-picture appears next to the announcer's head showing a still picture of the Senate chamber, with more of the incomprehensible (to us, at least) Romulan text underneath it.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Senator Amannius is planning to formally bid his daughter, Subcommander Talora, for the position during this session. Although unannounced, there is a strong suspicion that one of Amannius's rivals will forward a sudden counterproposal, as has been hinted over these past few days. To talk with us about this and more, we have an expert on Senate politics and author of the book on the topic "The Seven Feathers of D'Ramax," Uria Jarok, here in the studio.

(to offscreen)

Uria -- can I call you Uria?

We CUT to a ROMULAN WOMAN (URIA JAROK).

JAROK

Sure, Claudia, go ahead.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Let's get right down to business. What kind of chances do you think Talora has of winning this bid, realistically?

JAROK

Well Claudia, I think the chances
are not good...

CUT TO:

INT. ROMULAN SENATE CHAMBER

An expansive room with a domed ceiling. There is a large amphitheater of desks on the lower area, with a large bleacher on the upper level. The architecture is obviously Romulan, with birds-of-prey with wings outstretched carved into the masonry on the ceiling. Scenes from Romulan mythology are also carved into sections, idealized images of people in dramatic postures that coincidentally recalls the Sistine Chapel, thousands of light-years away...

People are slowly entering the Senate chamber, both on the floor and in the bleachers. Among those already sat down in the bleachers are Talora and her mother Mayli, who are sitting down. They talk quietly amongst themselves.

MAYLI

Lausonia is always a good season for
birak fruit. But this lausonia is
particularly special. Can you believe
I've got twice the harvest of birak
fruit compared to last year...

Talora doesn't seem to be interested.

MAYLI (CONT'D)

Talora, I know this doesn't interest
you, but you don't seem to even be
trying.

Talora breaks out of her silence and turns and looks at Mayli.

TALORA

(apologetically)

I'm sorry -- was I that obvious?

Mayli smiles, warmly and a bit mischievously.

MAYLI

Don't try to fool your mother, Talora.
Are you worried about the command?

TALORA

Oh, it's not that. Not that much,
that is.

MAYLI

Then what, dear?

TALORA

Yesterday people were watching me.

MAYLI

Stalkers?

Talora nods.

TALORA

You could call them that.

MAYLI

(firmly)

I would. No other name for those kind of brigands.

TALORA

Markan and I noticed two people watching us while we were eating. Markan was going look into it.

MAYLI

(contemptuous)

Oh. I guess it will be dealt with real soon.

TALORA

Mother...

MAYLI

Don't 'mother' me, Talora. I don't like the looks of that Markan.

TALORA

Mother, I can socialize with whom I please.

MAYLI

Of course, darling. But don't go looking for my approval. He's in the Tal'Shiar, Talora, the Tal'Shiar. Never forget that. The Tal'Shiar are to be used, maybe even respected... but loved?

TALORA

Who said it was love?

MAYLI

It was before, and it is now. I told you not to lie to your mother.

(beat)

But even if you do love him, you shouldn't trust him. Shouldn't trust any of them.

TALORA

I know what they're capable of, Mother. I haven't forgotten that.

Mayli puts her hand on her daughter's shoulder.

MAYLI

I knew you had sense, Talora.

Talora nods, not all that interested. There's a beat.

MAYLI (CONT'D)

(changing the topic)

Well... Are we settled in, Talora?

TALORA

(looking at the immense
size of the chamber)

Yeah... I forgot just how big this
room is...

Mayli shakes her head.

MAYLI

Well, that's what you get for getting
sent away in that pointless exchange
program...

TALORA

You disapprove of that too?

MAYLI

Of course I do. It's not like that
starship of yours makes much stops
at Romulus. I rarely get to see you
these days.

TALORA

It was a wise career move.

MAYLI

Oh, I don't doubt that. It's just a
good thing you're about to make
another wise career move... and come
back home, into the fold.

Beat, as Talora considers Mayli's statement.

TALORA

(carefully)

Mother, why did father bid for my
taking of the Lukan?

MAYLI

Your father thought your career needed
a gentle nudge forward. You don't
get much praise working in Starfleet.

TALORA

(slightly annoyed)

But I wanted...

Talora is cut off by a GAVEL, and the senate CONSUL speaking.

CONSUL

The Romulan Senate is now in session.
The first order of business on the
roster is the command position of
the I.R.W. Lukan.

Amannius stands up from his desk.

AMANNIUS

Consul?

The Consul notices him.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

I have a proposal.

The Consul nods.

CONSUL

Senator Amannius has the floor.

Amannius stands.

AMANNIUS

I propose a candidate for the
captaincy of the Lukan: Subcommander
Talora.

Amannius presses a button on his desk's computer panel. A large screen behind the Consul comes to life, displaying Talora's Romulan Navy record.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

(oratorically)

She has been in the service since
the Dominion War, and has received
several commendations, even one from
the Praetor himself. She also has
experience with several technologies
gained through the Technology Exchange
Treaty with the Federation, namely
Quantum Slipstream Drives.

(beat)

Each one of her commanding officers
has commended her for outstanding
performance of her duties, above and
beyond the call. And in her Starfleet
service she has kept Federation
interests at heart. The ideal figure
for this position.

VOICE

(forcefully, tersely)

I oppose Senator Amannius's
proposition.

The room is silent, immediately drawn to that voice -- as some sudden whispering starts up. Amannius looks clear across the room, and we pan around with him to see a Senator, who is now also standing. He is a lean, wiry figure. He has a distinctly formidable, commanding air about him.

Amannius and the upstart lock eyes. From their expressions alone it is plain they are very, very old enemies. The Consul, maintaining an officious air, flickers his gaze from Amannius to the outspoken Senator.

CONSUL

Senator Amannius, do you cede the floor to Senator Voran?

Amannius grimaces, not wanting to cede, but knowing he has no choice. The other Senator (VORAN) has an almost smug expression at this reaction -- almost.

CONSUL (CONT'D)

Senator Amannius?

AMANNIUS

(hesitant, not breaking his gaze from Voran)
...Yes. I cede the floor.

He sits, slowly, almost mechanically, his gaze still locked. Voran enters the fore. He's not smiling, but he doesn't have to be to so blatantly express what he feels. Cool, calm, with precision, confident, alert. Like the world really was his oyster.

There is quiet consternation amongst the Senators and others present resulting from this recent reaction. They're all waiting to see what Voran will say. Voran, savoring the moment, licks his dry lips.

VORAN

I do not deny that Subcommander Talora has, on occasion, proven herself to be a competent officer, but not only is she unworthy of the position forwarded to her by the hardly objective Senator Amannius, there are also far more appeasable choices.

(beat)

What choices, you might ask. The alternative is perhaps one of the most distinguished officers in the Romulan Star Navy to date, who has proved himself time and time again in the Commander's chair -- not mere Subcommander's -- as a shrewd, brilliant, and fully Romulan Commander.

(MORE)

VORAN (CONT'D)

The popular consensus of the moment is that Commander Korilim is to be the commanding officer of the Lukan.

Many gazes turn towards KORILIM (from "Dance"), who is in the room, but he remains somewhat unreadable, though content, confident, and clearly pleased. The beginnings of a smile, but only the beginnings, curve his lips.

Amannius looks somewhat nervous about the argument Voran is about to make. Voran notes Amannius's nervousness as savors it, licking his brittle lips once more. The tension is almost electric.

VORAN (CONT'D)

Furthermore, recent reports from the Starfleet Exchange Program show that Commander Talora has disregarded explicit orders from a flag officer and willingly violated her oath of duty.

Voran presses a few buttons on a PADD he's holding. The screen now displays Talora's exchange records, translated to Romulan text.

The entire senate floor looks at screen, scrutinizing the document.

We can see from the expression on Voran's face that he's far from over -- on the contrary, he's only beginning.

VORAN (CONT'D)

(indignant)

Senators, visitors, onlookers, all those present, she committed an act no less than treason! Only weeks ago! Is this the kind of officer we want commanding our flagship? One that disregards orders whenever it suits her? One whose loyalty depends on her mood?

(beat, venomous)

And that is not all, as you will note looking at that file. Not only disloyal, Subcommander Talora has proven herself to be grossly incompetent, having shared responsibility for the deaths of no less than sixty-seven Federation civilians!

(beat, appraisingly)

Or will we take Korilim, whose unconditional loyalty to the Twin Planets has been shown time and time

(MORE)

VORAN (CONT'D)

again, who performed above and beyond the duty Romulus required of him whenever it was necessary? A hero of Chin'toka III? Awarded three Avides? A man is guilty of neither treason nor is incompetent? The man whom, I should add, squared off with that same Subcommander Talora for the cause of the Romulan Star Empire while she was against!

CONSUL

Is that all, Senator Voran?

VORAN

All, esteemed Consul. Until any counterarguments are raised.

The Consul nods, noting that, and looks over to Amannius.

CONSUL

Senator Amannius, do you contest this information?

Amannius doesn't stop looking at Voran, not for one instant. Voran looks at him with an expression bordering on contempt, as if the decision Amannius next makes is but a minor inconvenience. Amannius, on the other hand, is angry, with a hint of depression, but also resigned. He's lost this round, and he knows it.

AMANNIUS

...No, Your Honor.

CONSUL

Does anyone else wish to propose a candidate or add to the discussion?

Beat.

CONSUL (CONT'D)

Senator Voran, do you have anything more to add, in light of this?

Voran smiles thinly, finally permitting himself to feel smug.

VORAN

Yes, your honor. Since none wish to address my previous comments, I do indeed.

(beat)

It is also noted that Subcommander Talora's exchange commission is still active, and she still is listed as the executive officer on the U.S.S.

(MORE)

VORAN (CONT'D)

Enterprise. Subcommander Talora's experience in the Federation Starfleet would better suit the Empire as a conduit of information and intergovernmental cooperation. Though, as I noted, there are things in Talora's record that leave much to be desired, she has shown herself in this manner at least fully up to the task given to her. Her exchange commission will not expire until the end of the Standard Federation year, and despite her appalling actions according to my Federation counterparts she is optional to return to activities within Starfleet until that commission expires.

(beat)

And that is not all. I furthermore propose that her exchange commission be renewed for the additional duration of five such years.

CONSUL

So recorded. The issue shall be put to the Senate if Talora is not voted into the command of the Lukan. Is that all, Senator Voran?

VORAN

Yes, your honor, if none wish to counter.

CONSUL

Senator Amannius?

AMANNIUS

(weakly, quiet)

Yes.

Voran sits back down. Unlike Amannius he returns to his seat with grace, and a fully satisfied air.

CONSUL

Are there any other arguments that anyone wishes to make on this matter?

Long beat.

CONSUL (CONT'D)

Very well. All Senators present please vote for Commander Korilim or Subcommander Talora for the command of the I.R.W. Lukan on your terminals now.

The Senate floor becomes quiet, and the bleachers become awash with chatter. The screen behind the Consul is replaced with a vote counter with proportion bars next to the names. One bar takes a very fast lead, and the shorter bar is having major problems catching up.

Mayli watches in shock as the larger bar's growth slowly steadies out in relation to the shorter one's. Talora watches on, as if she half-expected it to happen. She seems disappointed, but not in those results. Both bars continue to rise, but Korilim's bar far more rapidly. Finally, after the Consul uses his gavel:

CONSUL (CONT'D)

All the Senators have been accounted for. This voting session is now over. Congratulations, Korilim, you shall be assigned to the I.R.W. Lukan once the ship is commissioned.

There is a slight round of approving applause. Korilim does not speak or get up, but he now completes his smile. It is not particularly open, but it is fully contented smile.

CONSUL (CONT'D)

This session of the Senate is now concluded. There will be a short recess before the second order of business is addressed.

Slowly the previously muted conversation levels begin to rise and visitors and senators alike file out of the room. Mayli and Talora remain seated.

MAYLI

(to Talora)

Oh my... Talora, I'm so sorry...

TALORA

(consoling)

It's all right, Mother. Korilim was probably a better choice anyway...

MAYLI

That Voran was incredibly...

Mayli fumbles with words, can't think of an expletive worthy of the crime. Talora puts her hand on her shoulder.

TALORA

Flinging insults and accusations is part of political life, mother, as I know too well.

Mayli looks over at Talora. Somehow she had expected much more of a reaction from her.

MAYLI

(soft)

Talora, are you sure you're fine?

TALORA

Yes, Mother. I'm okay.

MAYLI

Your father worked very hard on this... Weeks and weeks of political maneuvering. He was determined to make it work. He's going to be so depressed after this failure.

Talora looks off into the distance, pondering her mother's words.

TALORA

(thoughtful)

Maybe I should have a talk with him.

We pan to where she is looking and reveal that it is Amannius, who is still on the floor. He looks very sullen over the decision, rubbing his forehead.

On this clearly depressed man's face, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. AMANNIUS'S OFFICE

A large office building, lined with bookcases and pictures, and a large wooden desk and chair in front of a window. The large grey window looks out on the uniform and yet in a way beautiful Romulan skyline. The room itself is stuffy and yet homely, cold and yet having warmth. A place almost lived in by one man, and yet he is a man rarely pleasant.

The man himself, AMANNIUS, is sitting in the chair, tending to business on his desk's computer terminal. The comm chimes. Amannius looks up.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

Sir, your daughter Talora is here to see you.

Amannius's expression indicated he expected this, and he braces himself. He looks back down at his screen.

AMANNIUS

(to the air)

Send her in.

The door parts, and Talora enters Amannius's office. The door closes behind her. She looks around, noting the many changes in the room since she'd been here last.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

(working on console,
not directly looking
at Talora)

I hear you're planning on going back to Starfleet tomorrow.

TALORA

Yes, I am. And the Senate has extended my commission for the next five years.

AMANNIUS

(still not looking at
her)

Congratulations.

TALORA

(moving closer)

Thank you.

Beat.

TALORA (CONT'D)

Do you remember that argument we had?

AMANNIUS

(still not looking)

Which one? There's been a few.

TALORA

It was back in my academy days. After you suggested I keep politics as a main course. Do you remember what I told you?

(beat)

That I wanted to advance on my own merits, and not my family name.

AMANNIUS

(still not making eye contact)

I know.

Another beat.

TALORA

(frustrated)

Then why did you do this?

Amannius SIGHS, and finally makes eye contact with Talora. He looks worn, tired, but caring. Genuinely concerned for his daughter.

AMANNIUS

(slow, passionate)

I wanted an heir to my title. Someone who had a career just as distinguished as mine to continue the family line. Our family has always had a member who was at the forefront of the issues of the Empire even before the Earth War almost three centuries ago.

TALORA

(nonchalant, but understanding the viewpoint)

...I see...

AMANNIUS

And when Nelar died, I had lost the one I made out to be my heir. It was a terrible blow to me, to you, to all the family. It was a loss that I felt deeply then, and I feel deeply now. My boy...

He trails off. Looking to the floor. Talora knows better then to disturb that silence.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

(finally picking up
the thread again)

It was also a blow to the name. He was the one I had hoped would fulfill the family line in that regard. With him dead that could never be possible.

His gaze reaches Talora's again.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

But I still had you...

(beat)

I turned to advancing your career, hoping you could become the heir to our family's history.

Beat. Talora takes in her father's statement gravely, but with no less warmth then he.

TALORA

(consoling)

You instilled the right values in me in my upbringing, father. That's distinguishing enough for me.

She walks over to him and places her hand on his shoulder.

TALORA (CONT'D)

And, perhaps, one day I will fulfill that family name, father. To make you and the generations before you proud.

Amannius looks up, moved, and grateful.

AMANNIUS

You don't need to make me proud, Talora. You already have.

(beat)

Thank you.

Amannius gets up.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

Have fun with your time extension in the Exchange Program. I know you'll do your best and your duty to both the Empire and the Federation. And I hope your ship escapes decommissioning over this incident.

(MORE)

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

The Federation/Romulan relations
just wouldn't be the same without an
Enterprise involved.

TALORA

Thank you, Father. Although I don't
think there's much chance of that.

AMANNIUS

We're Romulans, Talora. We make our
chances.

They reach the door. Before they exit, Amannius turns to
face Talora.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

Care to dine with your mother and me
later tonight one last time?

TALORA

I already have plans with Markan
tonight.

Amannius doesn't seem as surprised as Talora expected.

AMANNIUS

Then you can bring him along.

TALORA

(surprised)
You don't say.

AMANNIUS

(semi-mock insistence)
Father knows best.

TALORA

All right, all right. He'll come.
If he agrees to it.

Beat. Talora opens the door.

TALORA (CONT'D)

Goodbye, Father.

AMANNIUS

See you tonight.

Talora exits the office, closing the door behind her.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROMULAN SENATE BUILDING

Talora is walking down the large number of steps in front of
the building.

Part of the way down, she pauses to take a look across the large open square at the bottom of the steps. She pauses as she sees two hooded figures on the far side of the square, one apparently watching her intently. As she watches, the smaller of the two turns to leave, briefly pausing as if to call the other along. The taller figure stands for a moment longer, before following the first.

Talora pauses before she continues down the steps and out into the square, when MARKAN comes running up behind her.

He looks like he's been running for some distance, as he is panting heavily.

MARKAN
(exhausted)
Talora!

Talora turns around to look at him, concerned at his abruptness.

TALORA
Markan, what's wrong?

MARKAN
(still panting)
I found out who our mystery men were.

Markan hands her a PADD with pictures of the two stalkers and some information next to them. Talora's eyes widen when she reaches a certain point in the dossier.

TALORA
(looking up)
You're not serious...

Grim, Markan nods.

MARKAN
Talons of D'Deridex.

TALORA
But why us? Until a few days ago I hadn't even heard...

Talora trails off as it clicks.

TALORA (CONT'D)
I'm in the Starfleet Exchange Program.

MARKAN
Precisely.

TALORA
Did you tell your supervisor?

MARKAN

He didn't follow up. He said I "lacked enough evidence to further investigate the matter." I knew all along they didn't take me seriously, but this really is critical! Trust me, the Talons may have talked high, but they haven't stalked anyone... since twelve years ago.

TALORA

(curses)

D'Vor.

(to Markan)

What do we do?

MARKAN

I'm going to escort you to the transporter port. They probably will strike soon if they intend to. Let's go.

Markan briefly surveys the area before they move out.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIL TRAM STATION

Talora and Markan emerge from a car.

TALORA

We're here.

MARKAN

(whispered)

Sssh! They might recognize your voice.

Markan surveys the area again. He spots something or someone off in the distance. We pan around to see that it's the larger of the two stalkers.

MARKAN (CONT'D)

I see the large one. Be careful. And stay close to me.

Talora nods. Markan and Talora move through the crowd, cautiously, quietly, trying to attract as little attention as possible. Suddenly, a second person appears from behind them -- the other stalker. Before they see him or can react, he then grabs Talora and drags her off.

TALORA

(shouting)

Markan!

Markan whirls around to see Talora being dragged off by the second stalker. Talora is struggling, but she is obviously not making any progress escaping her captor. The man is racing through the crowd, moving too fast for the few feeble attempts made by onlookers to stop him successfully. Markan gives chase, racing after him as fast as he can, as the stalker makes a turn into an alley. Some of the crowd is letting him through, but many, largely oblivious to the recent event, block his path, so Markan begins the excruciating task of moving through them to his quarry.

Finally, wades through the crowd and breaks out into a sprint after the captor. He reaches the alley, peers within, and notes that the captor is there. He stays next to the alley and pulls out his disruptor from his jacket.

EXT. ALLEY

Markan whirls into the alley-way, pointing his disruptor at the captor.

MARKAN
Tal'Shiar! Freeze!

The captor turns around, and now also has a disruptor in hand. He has it pointed at Talora's head, and is also using Talora as a shield. He grins a sickening grin at Markan. Markan draws a bead with the sight onto the captor's head.

Markan then feels a poke to his temple, the muzzle of another disruptor. A very large hand is holding the grip, owned by the burly Romulan.

DANGEROUS-LOOKING ROMULAN
(deep baritone,
hissing, into Markan's
ear)
Drop the weapon, Tal'Shiar.

We go to a wide-angle shot at this standoff. Markan looks nervously back and forth between the captor and the dangerous-looking Romulan. He takes a deep breath, and then leaps into action. In one swift, smooth movement, he ducks his head out of the Dangerous-Looking Romulan's disruptor, and fires off a shot at the captor. The burly Romulan's disruptor misses and hits a wall on the other side of Markan, and Markan's shot misses its intended target and strikes the captor in the arm. Talora's captor yelps as he is hit.

Talora seizes the opportunity of her captor being wounded and whips the arm around her and twists it. The captor, still stunned from getting shot, is unable to counter. She twists the arm hard, and a soft snapping sound is heard. As the captor screams out in pain, Talora follows up with a knee to his chest. Talora then grabs the base of his neck and squeezes. The captor goes limp and collapses on the ground. Talora lets out a sigh of relief.

At the same time, Markan follows up from his fancy move by kicking the burly Romulan in the stomach, and then further twirling around his arm to slap the disruptor out of his opponent's hand. The burly Romulan is momentarily stunned by the kick. Markan winds up another kick, but the Romulan catches his foot before it strikes. Markan whips his disruptor up to fire, but the burly Romulan swiftly swats the gun out of his hand. Markan's assailant then picks him up by the leg and drops him. Markan gets up, only to be grabbed on the sides by the Dangerous-Looking Romulan's large hands. He then savagely head-butts Markan, and punches him in the chest. Markan flies backwards into a wall.

Markan is now bleeding green blood from his forehead and nose. He tries to sit up, and yelps in pain and clutches his rib cage. Talora looks helplessly on as the hulking Romulan walks up to Markan, smiling, as if to toy with him some more. Talora then looks down and sees Markan's disruptor laying in front of her foot. She quickly looks at Markan sitting there awaiting his demise. Talora kicks the disruptor to Markan, who then quickly picks it up in one rapid movement before the Romulan can react. The Romulan then lunges at Markan, hoping to smother him with his great bulk before Markan can fire, but it is too late. A bright green beam issues forth from Markan's disruptor, hitting the Dangerous-Looking Romulan squarely in the chest. With an earth-curdling scream, he vanishes in a cloud of green vapor. Talora then runs over to the battered Markan and kneels down next to him to inspect his injuries.

TALORA

(worried)

Markan! Are you okay?

MARKAN

(not there at all)

Uhhh...

We cut to a first-person view through Markan's eyes, which are all blurry, and see a double-vision of Talora.

FADE TO BLACK.

TALORA

(echoing)

Markan!

FADE IN:

We fade back in again through Markan's eyes. He appears to be lying down, and there are several devices of a medical nature on the wall in front of him. A beeping noise is coming from the side of him, which is slowly gaining in speed.

VOICE

(distant)

He's coming around!

INT. ROMULAN HOSPITAL

An emergency room, with Markan, all bandaged up and with a device on his head, and Talora and a Romulan doctor standing next to him.

DOCTOR
(to Talora)
That should do it.

MARKAN
(groggily)
Where...
(beat)
Where am I?

TALORA
You're in D'Atan's Mercy hospital.

DOCTOR
I'll be back later.

The Doctor leaves to tend to another patient. Markan gets up a bit, but hisses as he feels an arc of pain go up his rib cage. He groans in pain. Talora puts a hand on his shoulder, making him move back down.

MARKAN
That doesn't feel so good.

TALORA
Take it easy. The doctor says you have three broken ribs and a concussion. You should be able to leave in two days, one, if you're lucky.

MARKAN
Brilliant. Just brilliant.

Beat as his memory returns to him.

MARKAN (CONT'D)
(more sympathetically)
Are you okay?

TALORA
I'm fine.

MARKAN
The attackers?

TALORA
You killed one, the other is in custody, being treated for his injuries. The Tal'Shiar is going to do an investigation into the matter.

Markan lets out a soft grunt.

MARKAN
(mockingly)
Now they do an investigation.

Beat.

TALORA
Those were some fancy moves you pulled
off there.

MARKAN
(jovially)
Didn't you know? All Tal'Shiar agents
have to be a phase 1 adept in
Taldos'El.

Beat.

TALORA
And I was fairly sure when I picked
up that disruptor it wasn't set to
kill.

Markan shrugs.

MARKAN
I had to be sure.

Beat.

MARKAN (CONT'D)
(jokingly)
Well, I guess this means no dinner
tonight.

Talora smiles.

TALORA
I forgot to tell you...
(beat)
I've decided to stay a couple more
weeks until you get better.

Markan coughs.

MARKAN
Ah...
(beat)
Well then...

Just then, AMANNIUS walks into the ward.

MARKAN (CONT'D)
(noticing him)
Senator.

AMANNIUS

Markan.

MARKAN

I won't detain your daughter any longer, you can speak to her now.

AMANNIUS

Actually, it's you I came to see.

Markan frowns, not knowing what to make of that.

Beat. Amannius takes a deep breath.

AMANNIUS (CONT'D)

I have something to tell you. I'm sorry for letting something that has long past affect my attitude towards you. I've ruined your career, and mistreated you at the spaceport. I hope you can accept my apology.

MARKAN

Apology accepted. I'd extend my hand, but...

Markan nods to his incapacitated position.

Amannius turns to leave, but turns around to say one last thing.

AMANNIUS

(almost as an
afterthought)

And thank you for saving my daughter's life.

MARKAN

Anytime. Well, that is, if I need to in the future...

AMANNIUS

(not sure what to
make of that)

Right.

Amannius then exits Markan's ward. Markan looks back to Talora.

MARKAN

I really balled up that one, didn't I?

TALORA

He understands. Sometimes he isn't the best with words himself.

MARKAN

A Senator?

TALORA

And a father.

MARKAN

Ahhhhh...

Beat.

MARKAN (CONT'D)

Where do you think we should spend
the rest of those few weeks?

TALORA

Who says I'm staying with you?

MARKAN

Who else would you be staying with?
Your father?

TALORA

Why not you stay with him too?

The look on Markan's face is priceless.

MARKAN

You're not serious...

TALORA

Of course I'm not.

Markan seems visibly relieved.

Beat. Talora moves towards Markan, about to say or do
something -- but then considers better of it.

TALORA (CONT'D)

I have to get going too. I have to
unpack again.

Markan smiles, trying to look comfortable -- although he
clearly isn't.

MARKAN

See you around.

Talora gets up to leave, leaving the camera fixed on Markan,
who falls back asleep to let his body heal. A voice over of
a newscast plays as well.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

(fading out)

Welcome to the evening news.

(MORE)

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Our breaking story is a thwarted attempt on the life of Senator Amannius's daughter thanks to the intervention of an unidentified Tal'Shiar agent. The attack was believe to be...

The shot then pans out more, and appears to have actually been on a display screen. The announcer slowly fades out into the background noise.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP

Y'LAN watches Markan sleeping blissfully, and checks several other readouts on other displays.

COMM VOICE

Mission accomplished.

Y'LAN

Yes, but now we have other complications.

COMM VOICE

What do you mean?

Y'LAN

They will likely discover that this time, their plan was not thwarted by a coincidental event. There will be obvious clues in Markan's brain that there was a memory implant. They may also decide to take care of their targets themselves instead of manipulating others to carry out their mission.

COMM VOICE

What's our new course?

Y'LAN

Sector 001.

COMM VOICE

Understood.

On Y'lan's unreadable alien face, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

THE END