

STAR TREK

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RENAISSANCE

**"Regression"**

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

We hang above the surface of Bajor as, slowly, the Enterprise drifts into view. The scars from her recent battle are still evident, but she is in one piece.

CROSS (V.O.)

Captain's Log, Stardate 80029.1. We remain in orbit around Bajor as repairs continue on the deflector grid, shield generators, and assorted minor systems. Hopefully, they will be completed by tomorrow, in time for Lieutenant Quinlan to assume her new post as Chief of Security.

(beat)

Meanwhile, we face the daunting task of helping the Bajorans recover from the Q'tami attack. As far as we can...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BAJOR -- TAMULNA

The scene on the streets is better than during the Q'tami attack -- but not much. Hundreds of Bajoran men, women and children can be seen sitting or lying in the streets, most of them injured, not a few of them dead. Doctors in Bajoran and Starfleet uniforms move among the injured, rendering what help they can, but there are too many people.

In the foreground, we see DOCTOR TORAN NOA bending over an unmoving body, pulling a sheet over her head. An AIDE, crouching nearby, sadly shakes his head.

AIDE

I'm sorry, Doctor. I was almost positive that she would make it.

TORAN

(shaking his head)

Too much damage to the circulatory pathways. She was dead as soon as that Q'tami attacked her; there's nothing we could have done. Damn.

He sighs, rubs his temples for a moment, then stands and walks away, making his way through the throng of people. The aide follows close behind.

TORAN (CONT'D)

We simply don't have the resources to cope with this, even with Starfleet and Dakhur personnel working together. Has there been any word from DS9?

AIDE

Not that I've heard.

TORAN

We need their help down here. What about Doctor Elris, has she returned from her sleep break?

AIDE

(hesitantly)

Sir... she never left.

TORAN

Come again?

The aide points to where DOCTOR ELRIS LEA is bending over a little girl sitting against a brick wall, bandaging her wounds. Toran exchanges a look with the aide, then walks over to Elris.

ELRIS

(to the girl)

My, look at these arm muscles. I'll bet you're good at Sevens, right?

TORAN

Doctor Elris...

She gives Toran a cursory glance, then turns back to her bandaging.

ELRIS

Doctor Toran, this is Lyda. She's a very lucky little girl -- and we're going to get her back with her mommy real soon, aren't we?

TORAN

Doctor Elris...

ELRIS

Did you know that Lyda has an Arcturan mole for a pet?

TORAN

Lea!

ELRIS

Noa, these people need my help. I can't help them if I'm cooped up in my quarters on the Enterprise.

TORAN

You can't help them if you fall asleep  
in the middle of the street here.

She looks at him sharply, her eyes bloodshot and glaring.

ELRIS

I will go on as long as I have to.

Toran smiles slightly. In the background, we catch a glimpse of LT. GRIL DOJAR and two other SECURITY OFFICERS from the Enterprise pass by, their eyes peeled for something or someone. Dojar is giving orders, indistinctly.

TORAN

"It is ironic that, to be an effective physician, one must place her immediate needs above those of her patients, for without the strength and endurance to perform her tasks, she will more likely end up inflicting harm on those she would heal." Do you know who wrote that, Lyda?

The little girl shakes her head, a bit shyly.

TORAN (CONT'D)

Why, it was our own Doctor Elris, here. She's a very well-respected person in Starfleet Medical, and a lot of people listen to what she says. You know, she also wrote--

ELRIS

All right! Three hours--

TORAN

Five. Minimum.

ELRIS

--and after I've finished with this group.

TORAN

I'll take care of that. Beam up and turn in.

He turns toward Lyda and takes over the bandaging. Elris glares at him for a moment, then stands and storms away. Toran watches her receding figure for a moment, then turns to Lyda, manages a smile and rolls his eyes.

TORAN (CONT'D)

Doctors.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY -- CONTINUOUS

Elris rounds a corner into the alley, still fuming. She looks up -- and her eyes widen.

A few meters away, a KRESSARIAN is gathering up boxes of supplies from a Federation cargo container and loading them into a large satchel. He moves quickly, unaware of being watched. Elris looks at him incredulously.

ELRIS

Hey--

The Kressarian looks up. Sizing up the situation in an instant, he drops the satchel, draws something out of his pocket and lunges toward Elris. We catch a brief GLIMPSE of metal in his hand before we...

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

Dojar, his face emotionless, is still scanning the throng of people, when we hear a high-pitched SCREAM -- a familiar voice. Dojar looks in the direction of the alley.

DOJAR

There!

He runs toward the alley, the other two guards close behind. In the background, we see Toran look up, then beckon to the AIDE to take over the bandaging of Lyda and follows them into...

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY -- CONTINUOUS

...where Elris is slumped against the wall, alone. Her hands are clutching a bloody wound in her side; her face is locked in a grimace of pain. Toran kneels down next to her and pulls out a medical tricorder as Dojar and company give her a brief glance, then run off after the looter.

TORAN

How bad?

ELRIS

Not very deep... Just hurts...

TORAN

We'll take a close look at it, just in case.

(MORE)

TORAN (CONT'D)  
(tapping his commbadge)  
Toran to Enterprise. Medical  
emergency. Two to beam directly to  
Sickbay.

A second later, they both disappear in the shimmer of a transporter beam.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANOTHER ALLEY -- CONTINUOUS

The Kressarian, knife still in hand, runs down the length of the alley, then pauses for breath and looks behind him. No one is chasing after him. He smiles, grunts in satisfaction, and starts to jog around a corner.

Before he rounds it, however, a Cardassian fist comes out of nowhere and SLAMS into his jaw, sending him sprawling to the ground.

Dojar, his face still impassive, bends over the fallen Kressarian. He taps his commbadge.

DOJAR  
Dojar to team one. I have him.

He checks the Kressarian's breathing, then gives him an eyeball examination. He spots the knife, and extracts it carefully from his hand. He looks at it carefully, turning it over. It has a very strange design -- the blade itself is quite small, with a serrated edge, and the handle looks to be made of intertwined strands of petrified wood.

DOJAR (CONT'D)  
A rokla blade...

As the other two security officers catch up to him, Dojar looks up -- and for the first time, we see emotion on his face. He is worried. He looks at the other two, wide-eyed.

On a close shot of the knife, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SICKBAY

Elris is lying on one of the beds, absently tapping on the dermal regenerator machine placed over the wound in her side. From the look in her face, the pain is still present, but not as bad as before. She looks up as Toran approaches with a hypospray.

ELRIS  
Fifteen units, right?

TORAN  
Doctor...

ELRIS  
Sorry.

She passively allows Toran to inject her.

TORAN  
Better?

ELRIS  
Yeah.  
(beat)  
Really, Noa, I'm sorry for what happened on the surface. I certainly shouldn't tell you how to do your job, when you clearly had to tell me how to do mine.

TORAN  
Say no more. After what we've seen down there, it's understandable to feel that way. I was tempted to work straight through myself.

He picks up a medical tricorder and scans the wound beneath the dermal regenerator.

TORAN (CONT'D)  
Anyway, the wound was mostly superficial. The only thing I'm worried about is this infection.

ELRIS  
Infection?

TORAN  
A bacterium I've never seen before.  
(MORE)

TORAN (CONT'D)

From what I can tell, it seems completely benign -- but the normal antibiotics aren't taking care of it.

ELRIS

All right. You should run a DNA profile, analyze the base pair--  
(beat)  
I'm doing it again. Sorry.

Toran smiles and is about to reassure her once more, when the Sickbay doors open and Dojar walks in, still holding the Kressarian's knife.

DOJAR

Doctor, are you all right?

ELRIS

Yes, thank you, Gril. I'm in good hands here.

She looks up at Toran with a half-smile. Toran returns it and looks away, a little embarrassed.

DOJAR

(to Toran)

Was there any kind of infection in the wound? A virus, some sort of poison perhaps?

TORAN

(frowning)

There is a mild infection, but it seems to be a harmless bacteria. I was just about to take care of it.

DOJAR

Are you sure that it's harmless? You'd better make certain.

He shows Toran the knife. Toran takes it from him, careful not to touch the blade, and examines it closely. Elris half sits up, trying to see better.

TORAN

I've never seen this before.

As Dojar talks, Toran takes it over to a workstation and scans the knife.

DOJAR

It's called a rokla blade.  
(MORE)

DOJAR (CONT'D)

It was developed by Kressarian traders when they decided that plant DNA was no longer profitable, and started dealing in valuable chemicals and exotic micro-organisms. There's a tiny groove on the serrated edge, designed to hold poisons or deadly viruses.

TORAN

I see it. It seems to be holding the same kind of bacteria that's infected Doctor Elris. But I've double-checked -- it appears absolutely harmless. Perhaps the blade was simply in a dirty environment.

DOJAR

Perhaps. But you'd better stop the infection now. The Kressarians can be... innovative.

TORAN

Right. The standard injection didn't work, so let's see how it likes this...

He prepares another hypospray and brings it over to Elris -- who looks annoyed at being left out of the conversation, but says nothing. Working carefully, he removes the dermal regenerator from Elris's side. Underneath, we see that the wound has completely healed, leaving only the faintest of scars. He applies the hypospray directly over the wound, then scans it once more.

TORAN (CONT'D)

There we are. Infection reduced by thirty percent...and still falling. Guess it just needed a good kick in the pants.

Dojar's commbadge beeps.

BRUNN'S COMM VOICE

Ensign Brunn to Lieutenant Dojar.

DOJAR

Go ahead.

BRUNN'S COMM VOICE

We've handed the Kressarian over to the Dakhur authorities. They assure us he'll be dealt with.

DOJAR

Acknowledged. Out.

(to Elris)

We were tipped off that a looter was going after our supplies, but it seems you found him first. I regret that.

ELRIS

(smiling)

You did your best, Gril. By the way, I thought you were on leave.

DOJAR

I am, as of tomorrow. I've stayed on long enough to break in my replacement. And you know, allowing for her not having been trained in security protocols, I can't imagine someone better suited for the job.

TORAN

That's it. The infection has been completely eradicated.

DOJAR

Are you sure?

TORAN

See for yourself.

He shows Dojar the tricorder readout. Dojar studies it for a moment, then finally nods, satisfied. Elris swings her legs over and hops off the bed.

ELRIS

Thank you both for your help. Doctor Toran, I assume you're heading back to the surface... and meanwhile, I'll be getting some rest. Doctor's orders.

TORAN

Yes, ma'am.

She smiles at the two, turns and walks out of Sickbay.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

A set of turbolift doors open, and Elris exits, turning to walk down the corridor. Suddenly we hear the scurrying of tentacles behind her. She turns to see Y'LAN catching up to her.

Y'LAN

Doctor, it is good to see you well.  
I heard of your injury.

ELRIS

Word travels fast on this ship.

Y'LAN

I received the information from  
Lieutenant Dojar.

Elris looks blank for a moment, then nods in realization.

ELRIS

Oh... right.

Y'LAN

Indeed. May I speak with you for a  
moment.

She looks wary for a moment, then relaxes.

ELRIS

Walk me to my quarters?

Y'LAN

That would be acceptable.

They start down the corridor together.

Y'LAN (CONT'D)

From what I understand of recent  
events, there seemed to be concern  
that your life was in danger from  
your injury. Is that true?

ELRIS

My life? Well... as doctors, we  
feel a responsibility and a need to  
preserve the health and well-being  
of our patients. The most fundamental  
part of that task is keeping them  
alive. But if you're asking whether  
I seriously thought my life was in  
danger, I didn't.

Y'LAN

Not even briefly?

Elris considers.

ELRIS

Well, perhaps for a second when he  
actually attacked me. I would call  
it an instinctive reaction. Why are  
you asking this?

Y'LAN

I have recently been observing the role of self-preservation in humanoid species, particularly as manifested in certain instincts and behavioral patterns.

ELRIS

I imagine every sentient being tries to keep itself and its comrades alive for as long as possible.

Y'LAN

That is not at all the case. B'kordalian females, for instance, invariably kill their mates and then themselves immediately after reproducing.

ELRIS

Okay, most sentient beings. But given the way evolution works, Y'lan, preservation and continuance of one's species is usually a more powerful urge than self-preservation among sentient species. Not always, but usually.

Y'LAN

Of course. My question is, for Bajorans and other humanoids, what other instincts or values can override the urge for self-preservation?

Elris stops walking. She is silent for a long moment.

ELRIS

I suppose... the best example would be preserving the lives and well-being of our loved ones.

Y'LAN

Including your offspring?

Elris flinches slightly, then looks at Y'lan. His question has obviously touched a nerve.

ELRIS

(quietly)  
Especially our offspring.

Y'LAN

But then might not such behaviors fall under the category of --

ELRIS

Y'lan. These are my quarters.

Y'LAN

Yes.

Pause.

ELRIS

Would you excuse me?

Y'LAN

Of course.

Y'lan nods his head at her, then scurries off down the corridor. Elris watches him go, trying to keep her face impassive. She then enters...

INT. ENTERPRISE -- ELRIS'S QUARTERS -- CONTINUOUS

She takes two steps inside, wait for the doors to hiss shut behind her, then closes her eyes and sighs, letting the mask drop.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAJOR -- STREET

Much the same as before. Doctors are moving among the crowd of injured, giving what help they can. We spot TALORA walking slowly down the street, her face somber, taking everything in. After a moment, she spots Toran, bending over an elderly man with a broken leg, and walks over to him.

TALORA

Doctor.

Toran looks up at her briefly, then returns to his work.

TORAN

Can I help you, Commander?

TALORA

I wanted to inform you that DS9 is sending another contingent of medical staff. They'll be arriving within the hour.

TORAN

That's the best news I've heard in a while. Thank you, Commander.

He finishes casting the old man's leg, gives him a friendly smile and pat on the shoulder, then stands. Talora is still standing there, looking at the scene.

TORAN (CONT'D)

(quietly)

You could have called from the ship,  
you know. You didn't have to come  
down.

Pause.

TALORA

I wanted to see for myself. I heard  
it was... bad.

TORAN

(nodding)

That it is, Commander.

We pan away from these two, toward the hundreds of Bajoran men, women and children in the street. We focus on their faces as we pass them -- some are grim, some are desperate, some are determined, and some have lost the ability to feel anything at all. Looking at the Starfleet and Bajoran doctors who are doing their best to help, we see much the same expressions.

We finally focus on a little girl, bending over a body in the street. As we approach, we see it is Lyda, the little girl from before. She is crying and saying something we can't hear.

TALORA (V.O.)

We do the best we can.

TORAN (V.O.)

It doesn't seem to be enough.

Pulling in closer, we see that the body is that of a young woman, whose face bears an obvious resemblance to Lyda's. Her eyes are open, sightless, staring into the sky.

TALORA (V.O.)

It's all there is...

On the woman's face we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- ELRIS'S QUARTERS

Elris is lying on her side on the bed, not sleeping, staring at nothing. She is still exhausted, but from the haunted look on her face, no sleep will come tonight. She sighs, rolls onto her back and stares up at the ceiling.

The door chimes. Elris groans and rubs at her forehead.

ELRIS  
(quietly)  
Please just go away.

The door chimes again. Groaning, Elris hauls herself out of bed and past the partition into the main room of her quarters.

ELRIS (CONT'D)  
Come in.

The doors open. CAPT. NEIL CROSS pokes his head in hesitantly, looks around, then steps into the quarters. He manages a weak smile. Elris sighs again -- the last person she wants to see just now.

CROSS  
I heard what happened. Are you all right?

ELRIS  
Just fine, Captain. Doctor Toran patched me up in no time.

CROSS  
I'm glad to hear it.

An awkward pause.

CROSS (CONT'D)  
This is a bad time, isn't it?

Elris pauses, then sighs and rubs her forehead again. Her face softens a little.

ELRIS  
I'm sorry, Neil. Yes, it's a bad time, but that's not your fault. You don't need to leave.

Cross nods and shrugs.

CROSS  
Other than that, then, how are things on the surface? I haven't been down lately.

ELRIS  
Things are bad. I didn't even want to come back to sleep, but... well, I came to see the light. I'd still rather be down there.

CROSS  
You're only one person.  
(MORE)

CROSS (CONT'D)

You're the CMO of the Enterprise,  
but that doesn't mean you can do  
anything and everything. Besides, I  
happen to know you have an excellent  
staff.

ELRIS

(smiling a little)

I certainly do.

Cross hesitates.

CROSS

By the way, do you mind if I use  
your replicator?

Elris looks at him oddly for a moment, then shrugs and waves  
him toward it. Cross steps up to Elris's replicator and  
taps a button on it.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Hot chocolate, touch of mint.

A brief pause, then a steaming mug of hot chocolate  
materializes. Cross extracts it, sips at it, and nods  
approvingly.

ELRIS

Are we having replicator problems  
again?

CROSS

Replicators, turbolifts, intership  
comm systems, anything that can cause  
a headache by breaking down is doing  
so. The food slot in my quarters is  
down, and no matter what I say to  
the one in my ready room, it gives  
me a cup of tea. Chamomile. Cold.

ELRIS

(irritated)

Why didn't you try the mess hall  
before barging in here and using  
mine?

Cross looks at her in surprise.

CROSS

I'm sorry. I just figured, as long  
as I was here...

Elris bites her lower lip and relaxes her face a little.

ELRIS

No, I'm sorry. It's just been a very long few days, and I'm ready to take it out on anyone right now. Like I said, it's not your fault. Anyway, I know how you are with your chocolate.

She laughs a little, weakly. Cross smiles and sips again.

CROSS

Well. There's no real hurry, of course, but I'd like your Medical report on my desk as soon as you can manage it. Things are starting to get busy back in the Federation Center, and we might be recalled from Bajor at any moment.

ELRIS

What do you mean, things are starting to get busy?

CROSS

(with a shrug)

Just whispers I've heard over the comm channels. Rumors. Little things mostly, but I'm starting to get one of those feelings.

ELRIS

Right. I'll give you that report as soon as possible. What about the Kressarian who attacked me? Do you know anything?

CROSS

(chuckling dryly)

Turns out he's just a down on his luck scavenger, thought he'd try to make a profit on Federation pharmaceuticals.

ELRIS

Well, it wouldn't have done him much good in any case. Starfleet Medical--

She winces and rubs her forehead again. Cross frowns.

CROSS

Doctor?

ELRIS

Sorry... just a stress headache. I'm fine. You were saying?

Cross blinks.

CROSS

Actually, you were saying that stealing the medicine wouldn't have done the Kressarian much good.

ELRIS

Oh. Well, it wouldn't have. Starfleet Medical keeps very tight records; they'd be able to trace it.

CROSS

(still frowning)

Are you sure you're all right?

ELRIS

Positive.

(beat)

By the way, do you know what Y'lan is up to these days?

CROSS

Except for Dojar, I'm not sure anybody does. Why?

ELRIS

He was just asking me some strange questions.

CROSS

What sort of questions?

Elris pauses for a long moment. She picks up a nearby tricorder and starts to fidget with it.

ELRIS

Humanoid behavior patterns, that kind of thing. It was probably nothing. Just plain old-fashioned Q'tami curiosity.

CROSS

But were his questions- -

ELRIS

(snapping)

Drop it, Neil!

Cross is taken aback. Elris closes her eyes and makes a visible effort to control herself.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Could you just leave now, please?

Cross hesitates, then sets the hot chocolate down on a table.

CROSS

I suppose we can finish this up later.

ELRIS

Fine, whatever.

Cross nods, turns and walks out the door. Elris clenches her teeth, exhales, and tosses the tricorder aside without looking. It KNOCKS Cross's mug to the floor, spilling hot chocolate everywhere.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Oh, damn it to hell!

Looking unhappier than ever, she starts toward the washroom to get a towel.

Halfway there, she STOPS suddenly and clutches her forehead for a second, wincing in pain. Then she looks up again.

She looks around -- why is she standing there?

After a moment of this, she shrugs to herself, sits down at her nearby computer terminal, and turns it on. She begins typing in her notes from the surface. The intercom beeps.

QUINLAN'S COMM VOICE

Quinlan to Elris.

ELRIS

Oh for the love of the Prophets,  
what do you WANT?

Silence.

QUINLAN'S COMM VOICE

Sheesh. Bite my head off.

ELRIS

Jen, it's been a very long day.  
I've been working for almost twenty  
hours straight, mostly just so I  
could write out death certificates.  
I've been stabbed, infected, my  
feelings toyed with for a science  
project, and I yelled at my commanding  
officer. All before dinner, too.

QUINLAN'S COMM VOICE

So you haven't had dinner yet. Want  
to meet me in the mess hall?

Elris pauses, incredulous, then LAUGHS in spite of herself.

ELRIS

Why not? Just give me a couple  
minutes to change.

QUINLAN'S COMM VOICE

You bet. Quinlan out.

Elris stands, stretches a little, and walks toward a nearby dresser. Then she stops. Her eyes widen. She looks at the mug and the spilled hot chocolate on the floor, which from her previous angles were not visible. She says nothing, but her expression tells us that she never saw that before, and has no idea how it happened. On her confusion, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- MESS HALL

It is a moderately busy dinner hour. Elris and Quinlan are sitting at a table together, Elris picking at a traditional Bajoran dish, Quinlan -- who now sports a gold uniform appropriate to her new assignment as Chief of Security -- diving into a plate of ribs as she talks.

QUINLAN

...and now I can't find it anywhere. Can you believe it? My favorite song, it was all over subspace three weeks ago, and now they're pretending it doesn't even exist! It's just so...

(in Whagosh)

...unacceptable!

She looks at Elris's distant expression.

QUINLAN (CONT'D)

Oh, Lea, what am I doing? I'm your friend; I should be listening to your problems instead of going off about my own petty little issues.

ELRIS

You know what? I'm sick of thinking about my problems. I'd rather hear about yours.

QUINLAN

(laughing)

I'm only too happy to oblige. Now, this song isn't on --

ELRIS

Jen, I would have thought you'd be going on about your new job. Chief of Security on the Enterprise. Big responsibility, lots to get used to, subordinates jealous of an outsider taking over, that sort of thing.

QUINLAN

(with a shrug)

Same thing I've been doing all my life, just with a bit more paperwork. But seriously, do you ever listen to the music programming on subspace?

ELRIS

From what I understand, it's intended for those with short attention spans.

QUINLAN

It's not that. I've thought about it quite a bit, actually, and I've developed what I call Quinlan's Theory of Musical Regression to explain how it works. Interested?

ELRIS

Let's hear it.

QUINLAN

Right. First, you have a really good song, which gets played a great deal. Second, lots of people say to themselves, "I really love that song." Third, consequently, they ask for the song to be played more and more.

ELRIS

(smiling)

My, you really do have this all worked out, don't you?

QUINLAN

Can I finish? Fourth, it gets played more and more often until, fifth, people get utterly sick of hearing it. And it's just a short step from there to, sixth, "I really hate that song!"

ELRIS

(ironically)

And that's why everybody seems to hate really good music?

QUINLAN

(missing the irony)

Exactly! That song I was telling you about, for example -- one of the best songs ever recorded, and nobody will play it anymore, because everybody but me is totally sick of it. It's even been banned from Argo!

ELRIS

(chuckling)

What an astoundingly brilliant flash of the obvious. I guess Jen Quinlan does have --

She suddenly drops her fork to the table, PITCHES forward slightly and gasps. Quinlan leans toward her, frowning.

QUINLAN

Lea? You all right?

Elris looks up -- and for a brief instant, we see that her eyes were rolled upward into her head. Then she looks forward and focuses on Quinlan once more. She blinks, shakes her head as though to clear it of the cobwebs.

QUINLAN (CONT'D)

Talk to me, Lea. Everything okay?

ELRIS

Um. Yeah, I'm fine... I'm sorry, Jen. For a second there, I just felt really dizzy.

QUINLAN

Maybe you should go back to Sickbay.

ELRIS

It's fine, really. I've just really pushed myself the last couple days. Just need to relax, that's all.

QUINLAN

Are you sure?

ELRIS

(brightly)

Positive. So, let's hear it.

QUINLAN

What?

ELRIS

Quinlan's Theory of Musical Regression. Let's hear it.

Pause.

QUINLAN

Lea, I just spent the last couple minutes explaining it to you.

Elris laughs. Then she sees the look on Quinlan's face, and becomes uncertain.

ELRIS

No you didn't. You spent the last couple minutes complaining about how people are ignoring your favorite song, and then you said you had a theory to explain the whole thing. Then I had that dizzy spell...

QUINLAN

Hold it. Are you telling me that you don't remember anything I said after I told you I had a theory?

The forced smile slowly vanishes from Elris's face.

ELRIS

Not in the slightest. And you know, I'd say you must be pulling my leg, except for the look on your face. That and...

QUINLAN

And?

ELRIS

And something like this happened just a little while ago. In my quarters. I was talking to the Captain, he had a mug of hot chocolate, and he left it on a table. He went out, I was holding a tricorder, and then... I was standing a couple meters away, and the mug of chocolate was spilled on the floor next to the tricorder. I don't remember how either of them got there.

The two women stare at each other for a long moment.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

I think I'll go to Sickbay after all.

QUINLAN

I think I'll go with you.

They rise to leave.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

Elris and Quinlan walk down the corridor toward Sickbay; Quinlan keeps a hand on Elris's arm, as though ready to catch her from fainting at any moment.

QUINLAN

With everyone helping out down on Bajor, I just hope someone is there to help you.

ELRIS

I scheduled it so that there would always be one person in Sickbay.

(MORE)

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Jen, maybe we're overreacting. It's so bizarre -- maybe it's just one of those things.

QUINLAN

Once, maybe, but twice? You're a doctor -- would you take a chance?

ELRIS

Probably not, but I--

She GASPS in pain and PITCHES forward again. Quinlan moves fast, and does indeed catch her from falling. She does her best to stand Elris upright, as Elris recovers her breath. After a moment, she looks at Quinlan.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Jen? Where did you come from?

Quinlan's face falls. She throws one of Elris's arms over her shoulders and half escorts, half carries her down the corridor.

QUINLAN

Come on. We're almost at Sickbay.

ELRIS

Sickbay? Weren't we going to meet at the mess hall?

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SICKBAY

A familiar-looking scene: Elris sitting on a biobed, allowing Toran to scan her head with a medical tricorder while Quinlan looks on anxiously.

ELRIS

What are you doing back, anyway?

TORAN

Decided to follow my own advice before I fell asleep in the street. Anyway, there's nothing wrong that I can see.

ELRIS

Maybe we're overreacting. It's bizarre... Maybe it's just one of those things.

Quinlan reacts to this familiar turn of phrase.

TORAN

Hardly. I meant nothing was wrong neurologically -- nothing that would explain your memory loss. But your heart rate is elevated, and your respiration is erratic -- too much so to be simple stress. How many times has this happened today?

ELRIS

Just now with Jen, and then earlier in my quarters -- that wasn't more than a few seconds. So, twice.

QUINLAN

Three times. You also lost a minute or so in the mess hall.

ELRIS

I did?

TORAN

I don't believe this. You're also showing reduced anisomycin levels.

He thinks for a moment.

TORAN (CONT'D)

This might be the result of your stab wound earlier -- do you remember that?

ELRIS

Of course I do. There was a benign infection, which you got rid of.

TORAN

But Lieutenant Dojar said that the blade was designed to hold chemicals and poisons -- and the Kressarians deal in exotic versions of both. So either the infection wasn't so benign, or there was something besides that bacteria on the blade. Either way, there's a definite pattern here.

QUINLAN

What pattern?

TORAN

The first memory loss we know of, in your quarters, caused you to lose a few seconds. The second, a minute. The third was, what, fifteen or twenty minutes?

QUINLAN

Something like that.

TORAN

And there may have been lapses before that, small enough to go undetected. Doctor, you are losing increasingly large portions of your memory, starting from the most recent and working backward. The intervals appear to be random, but there may be a pattern we can't see yet...

QUINLAN

(incredulously)

And you know all this, how?

TORAN

Empirical deduction.

ELRIS

(softly)

He's right, Jen. It's the explanation that best fits the data. And since my anisomycin is being depleted as well...

TORAN

...you are not actually aware of the memory loss. We can assume that the damage isn't psychological, so first we need to determine whether --

Elris SCREAMS in pain and collapses back onto the bed -- Toran and Quinlan catch her just in time and restrain her as she shakes visibly for a few seconds. Then her muscles relax and she begins gasping for breath. Her hands go to her left side and clutch at where she had been stabbed.

ELRIS

(weakly)

Doctor Toran... need a dermal regenerator...

Toran and Quinlan exchange glances.

TORAN

Doctor Elris, listen to me. We've already taken care of that. Your wound was healed several hours ago. You're suffering from memory loss, so you don't remember it.

Elris's eyes widen. She catches her breath, and explores the area around the wound with her hands. The skin is intact.

ELRIS

You're right. But how can that be?  
I remember being stabbed very clearly,  
just a few seconds ago.

Toran, looking grim, taps his commbadge.

TORAN

Toran to Captain Cross.

No answer.

QUINLAN

They must be working on the intership  
communications again.

TORAN

Go and report to him in person.  
Tell him what's going on.

Quinlan nods and runs out of the room, as Elris looks around  
in confusion.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM

Cross is sitting here, reading through a PADD.

The intercom on his desk beeps.

DOJAR'S COMM VOICE

Dojar to Cross.

CROSS

Yes, Lieutenant?

DOJAR'S COMM VOICE

Admiral Thel calling on subspace,  
sir. Priority one.

CROSS

I'll take it in here.

He puts down the PADD and switches on the desk terminal.  
The face of ADMIRAL THEL appears.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Yes, Admiral?

THEL

Captain, you are still in orbit around  
Bajor, correct?

CROSS

Correct, sir. Is there a problem?

THEL

There may be. Two ships in the Bajoran sector, a Federation runabout and a Bolian freighter, have reported being attacked by a Klingon Bird-of-Prey. We believe it is manned by a rogue Reformist crew.

CROSS

(frowning)

Has there been any communication?

THEL

Negative. Our information comes from Starfleet Intelligence.

CROSS

Did the other ships come out all right?

THEL

Fortunately, they were only disabled and set adrift.

CROSS

We can have a rescue operation mounted within minutes, sir. The medical staff will have to --

THEL

Negative.

Pause.

CROSS

Sir?

THEL

Deep Space Nine will be able to handle the rescue operations. We're not sure what the Klingons' motive is, so we want you to stay in orbit around Bajor, in case they try to take advantage of the situation there. The Enterprise should be a sufficient deterrent, I should think. But if they do show up, make contact and divert them out of Federation territory if possible.

CROSS

And if not possible?

THEL

You are to take whatever steps are necessary to protect Federation interests. Is that clear?

Cross stiffens slightly, and pauses for a long moment.

CROSS

Yes, sir.

THEL

Very good. Keep me updated as practical. Thel out.

Thel's face disappears, replaced by the Federation logo. Cross turns off the terminal, then leans back and gazes off at nothing for a moment, his face puzzled. The doorbell chirps.

CROSS

Come in.

The doors open, admitting Quinlan. She is out of breath as she steps up to the desk.

QUINLAN

Captain... It's Doctor Elris...

Cross's face freezes.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SICKBAY

Elris is sitting up on the biobed, allowing Toran to inject her with yet another hypospray. A NURSE has arrived, and is working nearby. Toran turns his attention to a piece of equipment next to the bed. He adjusts it and taps into it as he talks.

TORAN

That medicine should take care of the seizures for the time being. There's not much else I can do at the moment, except find the agent causing your memory loss.

ELRIS

Okay... So it's a progressive retrograde amnesia, its onset is random, and it doesn't seem to have a terminus, is that it?

TORAN

That's it.

ELRIS

I've already lost several hours, and at this rate I'll lose days, then weeks. Then years, I suppose.

(MORE)

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Eventually, in fact, I'll... lose everything. I'll become a blank slate, won't I?

Toran looks up from the equipment, looks squarely into Elris's eyes.

TORAN

(softly)

Doctor, I promise you we won't let that happen.

ELRIS

(forcing a smile)

I appreciate that, Noa. And I know I won't be much good to you while this is happening, so I trust you to do your best. Just remember to isolate the biologic responsible, to monitor my inhibitor levels, and stand by with a transfusion once you find a counteragent. With any luck, my memories are only blocked, not completely erased. But run a CLF profile, just in case, and --

(beat)

Sorry.

TORAN

It's okay.

A brief, awkward pause. They look at each other.

ELRIS

(hesitantly)

Noa... I just want you to know --

She suddenly GASPS and her face contorts in pain. Toran moves to catch her, but it is unnecessary -- she remains sitting upright, and returns to normal after only a few seconds. She looks at Toran and the nurse, confused.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

How did I get onto this biobed? And what are you folks just standing about for? Those people down there need our help!

Toran looks at the nurse, then at Elris.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CONFERENCE ROOM

Cross presides over the meeting, with Dojar, Quinlan, Talora, LT. CMDR. ERIK GREY, and Toran all in attendance.

TORAN

Doctor Elris has now lost approximately five days' worth of her memory, with lapses occurring two or three times an hour on the average. At this rate, she will have lost all of her memories in a little over a day and a half.

TALORA

And it's only affecting her memories?

TORAN

Not quite. As I've said, each lapse induces a seizure, which can be controlled medically. However, this disease is also depleting her anisomycin levels at a corresponding rate. I should explain that anisomycin is a protein synthesis inhibitor, which in Bajorans acts as a memory suppressant. It's what prevents us from remembering every detail of our lives as though it happened a moment ago. Unfortunately, it is also necessary for proper neurological functioning. Without it, she could suffer permanent brain damage.

GREY

Can you synthesize it?

TORAN

Yes, but it would be too dangerous to administer unless I can first isolate and remove the infecting agent. It must be a highly mutated form of the bacteria on the knife, but we can't identify it yet. The medical staff and I are working on that now.

QUINLAN

Why not simply ask the Kressarian? I'm sure he would know something about his wares.

TORAN

I've spoken to the security station in Tamulna about that. I'm waiting to hear back from them.

CROSS

Well, I see no reason to keep you from your work, Doctor. Dismissed.

TORAN

Aye, sir. Thank you.

He stands, nods at the others, and leaves. Cross turns back to the others, whose collective worry is evident on their faces. Cross pauses for a long moment, then takes a deep breath and speaks.

CROSS

I know you're all worried, and I realize it's a difficult time. But we must concentrate on our tasks. We've received an update from Admiral Thel on the rogue Klingon ship. Commander?

Talora nods and taps a button on the table. The viewscreen lights up, displaying the schematic for a Klingon Bird-of-Prey.

TALORA

Starfleet Intelligence identified this vessel, the Brik'tagh, as the vessel stolen by a crew of Reformists. An hour ago, the Reformists issued a statement disavowing the crew and their actions.

DOJAR

It can't be a simple matter to steal a Bird-of-Prey.

TALORA

Actually, the Brik'tagh was in private hands at the time. The Imperialists have been putting some of their obsolete designs on the market for additional military funding. Quietly, of course.

DOJAR

Of course. Have we heard anything about their motives?

TALORA

Not a thing. But as far as we know, she's still in the Bajoran Sector.

CROSS

Should they show up in this system, our job is to prevent them from approaching Bajor. I want you all to make sure you're well-rested and alert, ready for combat at a moment's notice. I don't think we can afford a mistake on this one. Any questions or concerns?

QUINLAN

Will DS9 be able to help?

CROSS

Between helping the Bajorans and rescuing the Brik'tagh's other victims, they have their hands full. We'll have to take care of it ourselves.

GREY

Captain, the shield generators are still being worked on, as is the deflector grid. I would advise using them sparingly for the time being. Most of the minor systems have been repaired, however.

CROSS

Understood. Anything else?

Silence.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Thank you all. Dismissed.

He stands. Everyone else, except Talora, rises to leave. Presently, only she and Cross remain. Cross looks at his First Officer with a twisted half-smile.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Let me guess.

TALORA

I think you know, Captain.

Cross considers a moment.

CROSS

She's my ex-wife, my Chief Medical Officer, and one of the finest officers under my command. So, naturally, I am quite concerned. I have no intention, however, of allowing that concern to interfere with my judgment, or my duty.

Talora nods, stands, and slowly paces around the table.

TALORA

With respect, sir, people who allow their emotional ties to interfere with their judgment or duty rarely have the intention of doing so.

CROSS

And if such people are very lucky, they have a capable First Officer to step in and take the reins, just in case.

TALORA

Is there a chance of that happening today? If so, I'd like to know in advance.

Cross pauses for a long moment, looking at her.

CROSS

It's not something I would lose sleep over, Commander. But... I'll be totally honest with you. Elris and I do have a long history together, a history that, much as we both would sometimes like to, we cannot simply shrug off when it's convenient. She...

He breaks off, his eyes suddenly filled with emotion and realization.

CROSS (CONT'D)

(quietly)

She is a part of who I am. I can't escape that. And if anything happens to her... Honestly, Talora, I don't know what I would do.

Talora walks up to him, smiling, but serious. She looks him in the eye.

TALORA

I would hope to see you do your duty, Captain. If I may say so, that is also a part of who you are.

Cross looks back at her. He manages a weak smile and a nod. But his eyes are filled with uncertainty as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SURGICAL BAY

We see only Elris at first, laying on the surgical bed, her eyes closed, her face contorted in pain, her breath ragged. After several seconds of this, she breathes easier. Slowly, she opens her eyes and focuses them.

Quinlan and Dojar stand next to her bed. Dojar's face is expressionless as he looks down on Elris, but Quinlan is smiling and trying -- unsuccessfully -- to not look worried. Elris tries to raise her head, then winces and lowers it back down.

ELRIS

Jen? What's going on? Did I faint?

QUINLAN

You're okay, Lea. We're all going to take good care of you.

Elris stares at her.

ELRIS

Isn't that supposed to be my line? Anyway, what am I doing here?

When Dojar speaks, it is as though he is reciting something he has said several times earlier. There is not much humanity in his words.

DOJAR

You're suffering from a disease which is causing progressive memory loss. Doctor Toran and the others are working on it now.

QUINLAN

Dojar and I are just here to keep you company. What was the last thing you remember?

ELRIS

The last thing I remember? Having a drink in the Rec Lounge with Captain Williams -- two minutes ago.

Dojar and Quinlan exchange looks.

QUINLAN

Captain Robert Williams? The guy who was here while we were on the Trafalgar?

DOJAR

Incredible. She's already lost over a month.

Elris's eyes widen.

ELRIS

A MONTH? I don't... How did this happen?

DOJAR

We don't know. As I said, they're working on it.

There is an pause. Then Quinlan, for lack of anything else to do or say, turns back to Elris and takes her hand.

QUINLAN

Keep talking to us, Lea. What were you doing just before you woke up here?

ELRIS

(frowning)

Woke up? It doesn't feel like I've been asleep. Like I said, it seems like just a few minutes ago, I was having a drink with Captain Williams. We were exchanging stories. I was just telling him about the time you --

She breaks off suddenly, clenches her mouth shut and tries not to laugh.

QUINLAN

The time I what?

ELRIS

Nothing.

QUINLAN

Lea...

ELRIS

I'll tell you later.

QUINLAN

(shouting)

You won't remember to tell me later!

Elris looks at her, confused.

ELRIS

Jen? What do you mean?

DOJAR

She means you won't remember any of this later. The disease is causing recurrent memory lapses. You're losing larger and larger chunks of your memory.

Elris thinks about this. Then she looks back at them. Quinlan is looking downward, biting her lip. Dojar looks awkward, out of place.

ELRIS

Hey, guys... Cheer up, would you? I don't really understand any of this, but if you keep this up, I'm going to start getting emotional.

Quinlan laughs, a tear spilling down her cheek.

QUINLAN

We thought we were here to cheer you up.

ELRIS

(smiling)

I'm a doctor, remember? I can take care of myself.

She is quiet for a moment, thinking.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Most of the time, anyway.

QUINLAN

I guess you're not used to this, are you? Having other people take care of you, I mean. Putting yourself in their hands.

ELRIS

No... I suppose not.

Another long silence, which is broken by Dojar's commbadge beeping.

CROSS'S COMM VOICE

Lieutenant Dojar to the Bridge.

DOJAR

On my way.

He nods at the other two and leaves the surgical bay.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SICKBAY -- CONTINUOUS

Dojar exits the surgical bay and crosses over to Sickbay's exit, on his way to the Bridge.

We then pan over to where Toran is sitting at a workstation. On the screen is a Bajoran, the ADMINISTRATOR of Dakhur Province.

ADMINISTRATOR

I'm sorry I can't help you more, Doctor. The Kressarian refuses to say a word, and the databanks from his ship give no clue about the bacteria on his rokla knife. Nor are there any samples in his cargo hold. We'll keep looking, of course, just in case we missed something.

TORAN

Administrator, bear in mind that this bacterium could easily show up as something else. I think it began to mutate as soon as it entered Doctor Elris's body.

ADMINISTRATOR

Understood. Anything we find, we'll relay to you at once.

(beat)

I do hope she recovers. Doctor Elris helped to save a lot of lives here. We won't forget it.

With a final nod, the Administrator's face disappears from the screen. Toran, looking quietly frustrated and dejected, stands and turns to a nearby NURSE.

TORAN

Would you run a quick diagnostic on the MSW program? I've been having some trouble with it.

NURSE

Right away, Doctor.

As the nurse heads off, we hear some loud but indistinct talking from the surgical bay. Toran, frowning, walks over to the surgical bay door and looks inside as Elris, in a state of near-panic, is trying to stand up. Quinlan tries to keep her on the bed and comfort her at the same time.

ELRIS

I can't be lying in here! We need to get Ensign Hillman in at once!

QUINLAN

Listen to me --

ELRIS

No, you listen! He may be dying! If we don't operate soon, he'll...

Her voice fades away as Toran, looking unhappier than ever, walks back to his workstation. He starts typing into it, slowly at first, then with more speed and determination. His face sets into a stony mask.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SICKBAY -- LATER

Same as before, but it is obvious that some time has passed. Toran types for a moment, pauses to take a drink from a nearby cup of water, then resumes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SICKBAY -- LATER

More time has passed. Toran, now looking exhausted, leans back in his chair and rubs his temples. He is clearly trying to think through his fatigue. We slowly zoom in on him for a moment.

Y'LAN (O.S.)

May I assist?

Toran JUMPS, startled. He looks up at the Q'tami, who is quietly standing next to him.

TORAN

Ambassador... How long have you been standing there?

Y'LAN

I just arrived.

TORAN

Are you always so quiet?

Y'LAN

I made no attempt at stealth. Having completed my research project on the value of self-preservation behaviors in humanoids, I wish now to offer my assistance in treating Doctor Elris. I believe my knowledge in molecular biology and chemistry may be useful.

TORAN

(sarcastically)

Naturally, though, your research project came first.

Y'LAN

Naturally. What progress have you made?

Toran hesitates a second, then nods.

TORAN

Okay, I suppose it can't do much harm. The good news is that I have isolated the biological agent which is causing her amnesia. It has a molecular structure unlike anything I've seen before.

He turns on the screen, revealing a three-dimensional schematic of a complex molecule. Y'lan peers at it.

Y'LAN

Nor have I seen its like.

TORAN

Great. The bad news is, we still haven't found a counteragent. From what I can tell, I'm not even sure one is possible. Its behavior so closely emulates that of certain key neurochemicals, we have to find a way to eliminate the agent without --

Y'lan's tentacles suddenly reach over to the console and FLICK RAPIDLY over it at superhuman speeds. Toran watches, jaw agape, as another molecular structure appears on the screen. The computer runs an analysis of the new molecule, then flashes the word "MATCH" on the screen. Toran looks at Y'lan, then at the nurse standing nearby. The nurse nods.

NURSE

Looks right to me, Doctor.

TORAN

(to Y'lan)  
How did you...?

Y'LAN

A simple matter of chemistry. You would eventually have arrived at the solution yourself, but only after an unacceptable amount of time had passed.

Pause.

TORAN

Right. Okay, let's look at this.

He studies the screen for a moment, working the console.

TORAN (CONT'D)

We can synthesize most of the chemical here, but there's one element we cannot synthesize: tridoxycycline.

Y'LAN

My equipment is not configured to synthesize such an element. A full medical lab would be required.

NURSE

Deep Space Nine?

TORAN

Good, but not good enough. I don't think Bajor can help either -- they can do it, but it would take days at least. We need a major Starfleet Medical center.

NURSE

Starbase 81 has the closest.

TORAN

(tapping a key)  
Toran to Bridge.

INTERCUT:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- BRIDGE

Cross and Talora are in their seats; ENSIGN STOLT at Helm, LT. CALE at Ops, ENSIGN BRUNN at Tactical.

CROSS

Yes, Doctor?

TORAN'S COMM VOICE

We found a cure for Doctor Elris, Captain, but there's an element we can't synthesize here. We need to proceed to Starbase 81 to pick up a quantity of tridoxycycline.

Cross deflates in his chair.

CROSS

We can't do that, Doctor. The Brik'tagh is still somewhere in this sector. We must remain here.

TORAN'S COMM VOICE

Captain, Doctor Elris will die unless we have that chemical. It's a medical certainty.

CROSS

(sighing)  
My hands are tied, Doctor. The best I can do is contact Starbase 81 and have them send a quantity out to us.

(MORE)

CROSS (CONT'D)

(to Brunn)

Ensign, make it so.

Brunn nods and taps keys at his console.

TORAN'S COMM VOICE

That's not good enough, Captain. It would take at least thirty hours for a warp ship to make the journey. We need the slipstream drive if we're going to make it in time to do any good.

Cross thinks for a moment.

CROSS

Stand by, Doctor. Ensign, get me Admiral Thel on subspace. I'll talk to him in my ready room.

BRUNN

Aye, sir.

Cross stands and walks to his ready room, Talora looking after him in some confusion.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM

Admiral Thel is once again on Cross's terminal screen. Cross sits at his desk, looking at him.

THEL

I'm sorry, Captain. I understand your situation, and I'd let you go if I could. But this rogue Klingon ship takes priority. Bajor must be protected.

CROSS

Admiral, do you still believe that the ship poses a threat to Bajor?

THEL

We have no specific reason to think otherwise. Bajor must be protected, Captain. You must agree that takes priority.

CROSS

With all due respect, sir, protected against what? An obsolete Bird-of-Prey with no more than a couple dozen Klingons?

(MORE)

CROSS (CONT'D)

That's no match for the Enterprise, even with our repairs still underway. Bajor's own defense network could take it out if it showed up here.

THEL

Probably. But the Enterprise shall remain just the same. We feel it important for relations between Bajor and the Federation Center to maintain the strong presence of a Phoenix-class ship in their time of trouble.

Slowly, a look of comprehension dawns upon Cross's face.

CROSS

I think I'm beginning to understand.

THEL

(dryly)

I'm glad to hear it.

CROSS

Yes, sir. You're worried that the Bajorans will blame Starfleet for not protecting them adequately against the Q'tami attack. You wonder if they will think we should have prevented it from happening to begin with.

Thel looks at Cross stonily.

THEL

You obviously spend an inordinate amount of time on idle speculation, Captain Cross. Perhaps we're not keeping you busy enough.

CROSS

Admiral, I merely have the best interests of the Federation in mind. If what I have said is indeed the case, then you should know that allowing us to proceed to Starbase 81 is in the best interests of relations between Bajor and the Federation Center.

THEL

Oh? How so?

CROSS

(smiling a little)

Well, sir, it seems that Doctor Elris is becoming something of a folk hero among her people. The angel of mercy, the relentless doctor who would not quit, that sort of thing. Her name is starting to spread, quite literally across the planet. If word were to leak out that the Federation denied us the power to save her life...

A very long pause.

THEL

You're bluffing.

CROSS

Negative. But you need not take my word for it, Admiral. Talk to the Bajorans yourself.

Another long pause. The two stare at each other over the subspace circuit. Finally, Thel lets out a long, slow sigh.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SURGICAL BAY

Elris is still on the biobed, Quinlan still at her side, squeezing her hand and wiping the perspiration off her face with a cloth.

ELRIS

The monastery... Please, I need to get there...

Quinlan looks up, her eyes pleading with someone who isn't there.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise, in orbit above Bajor. We see her glide along her orbital path for a few seconds -- then suddenly pull up and away from the planet.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- BRIDGE

Cross is back at his seat, and the others still at their stations. Talora is looking at Cross with her eyebrows raised.

TALORA

A folk hero? Her name spreading across the planet?

CROSS

So I exaggerated just a little.

(beat)

Anyway, it damned well ought to be true. Didn't she give everything she had down there?

STOLT

Ready for slipstream drive, Captain.

CROSS

Initiate.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise flies past the camera and ZOOMS into slipstream.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- BRIDGE

As before.

TALORA

But Captain, what if we're wrong? What if the Brik'tagh does pose a threat to Bajor, and we're not there to --

CROSS

Unlikely.

TALORA

But possible.

CROSS

I weighed the risks.

TALORA

Captain, as your First Officer I must at least suggest the possibility that your personal feelings are interfering with your duty.

He suddenly turns on her, his eyes blazing.

CROSS

My duty? Talora, you know as well as anyone my past record with duty. How I've struggled with it. How I sometimes lost sight of it. You understand that about me, so you can understand this: my duty is to her.

(MORE)

CROSS (CONT'D)

That's all there is to it. I can't escape that duty -- and this time, I'll be damned before I even try!

Talora is taken aback. Cross looks at her fiercely for a moment, then turns back toward the viewscreen. A pause.

TALORA

That being the case, Captain, may I ask what you're still doing on the Bridge? She's in Sickbay.

Cross looks at her, confused at first, then with growing wonder and questioning. Talora smiles and nods slightly.

TALORA (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Go be with her, Neil. I've got the reins for now.

Cross, slightly befuddled, opens his mouth to say something -- but nothing comes out. Instead, he returns the smile, nods his thanks, and leaps out of his chair, heading for the turbolift.

Talora, taking a deep breath, assumes the center seat.

TALORA (CONT'D)

Maintain course.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SURGICAL BAY

Elris, her face still drenched in sweat, is in a state of pain and confusion. Quinlan is still at her side. Through the door into Sickbay, we can see Y'lan and Toran working together at a terminal.

Elris's eyes flutter. She turns her head weakly and looks at Quinlan. When she speaks, her voice is weak and shaky.

ELRIS

Who...?

QUINLAN

It's okay. It's me.

ELRIS

Who...are you?

QUINLAN

(with a heavy sigh)

That's right, I guess you would have forgotten me by now. But I'm your friend. I'm here for you, Lea.

Elris nods -- accepting, if not understanding -- and turns back to the ceiling. Cross then walks in. Quinlan stands to greet him, and Elris turns her head to focus on him. Her eyes widen in recognition.

ELRIS

You... son of a bitch!

Cross looks from her to Quinlan.

CROSS

How is she?

QUINLAN

She's lost several years now. Doctor Toran says that she's passing in and out of delirium, so that she's not fully aware of the here and now.

CROSS

But she recognizes me.

ELRIS

What the... hell are you doing here?

CROSS

Quinlan, would you excuse us, please?

Quinlan looks reluctant, but she sees the look in his eyes, and nods.

QUINLAN

I should probably head back to the Bridge.

She smiles at Elris and gives her hand a final squeeze, then leaves the surgical bay. Cross slowly walks over to the chair she has vacated and sits down, Elris glaring at him all the while.

ELRIS

You just couldn't... leave well enough alone, could you?

CROSS

(slowly)

A great deal has happened that you don't remember. We're friends now, Lea.

ELRIS

Don't call me that! You lost the right to use my given name... a long time ago!

CROSS

I'm sorry. I won't if you don't want me to. But I'm telling you the truth.

ELRIS

The truth, my foot.

CROSS

All right, then look me in the eye. Tell me I'm lying.

She looks him in the eye. Her expression changes from anger to confusion, to incredulity.

ELRIS

How can you sit there... and tell me that we're friends when we haven't... even talked in --

CROSS

You don't remember?

ELRIS

(bitterly)  
I remember all too well.

CROSS

We've been friends and shipmates for over two years now.

ELRIS

Shipmates...?

CROSS

Shipmates. I had you transferred under my command when I took command of the Enterprise.

ELRIS

What? I thought the Enterprise disappeared... some years ago.

CROSS

Enterprise-G. I guess you've gone back to before she was named. But I command her, and you came with me.

ELRIS

Why would I want to be on any ship... let alone on a ship with you?

CROSS

Because I --

He stops, and is quiet for a long second, looking at her. Finally, he looks away.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Because I wanted to patch things up.  
I wanted us to be friends again.

She looks up at him. Slowly, very slowly, her face begins to soften.

ELRIS

Neil... you really mean it, don't you?

CROSS

Yes.

Pause.

ELRIS

So much has happened between us, though. I don't... I don't know if I'm ready for that.

CROSS

(with a smile)

Trust me. You're ready for things you wouldn't have thought possible a few years ago. You've come a long way, and you mean so much to this ship.

(beat)

And to me. In fact, our positions were once reversed -- you were there for me when I was in trouble.

She frowns.

ELRIS

But my research... I can't just leave it to join a starship. That means a lot to me, Neil.

CROSS

I know.

He tries to think of something else to say... but before he can, Elris's head rolls back, and she is overcome by another seizure. Cross bends across to help her as she clenches her fists and gasps for breath, but it is over quickly. Elris is then as we saw her at the beginning of the scene: confused and in pain, drenched in sweat, breathing heavily. She looks at Cross, who looks down at her with concern. Her eyes widen in recognition.

ELRIS

You... son of a bitch!

Cross looks at her wearily.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- QUANTUM SLIPSTREAM

The Enterprise, flying through the quantum slipstream.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SICKBAY

Cross, Toran and Y'lan all stand near Toran's workstation as he finishes typing something in and wipes off his brow.

TORAN

That's as much as I can do until we receive the tridoxycycline. Once we have that, it will be a simple matter.

CROSS

We're still over four hours away.

TORAN

I know.

He sighs deeply and rubs the bridge of his nose.

CROSS

In any case, I want you to know that I appreciate the hard work you've done for Doctor Elris. Both of you.

Y'LAN

You are welcome.

Cross gives Y'lan an odd look at this courtesy.

TORAN

I just wish I could have done more for her.

(beat)

You'd think that doctors would be more dispassionate about our work. We're exposed to death and illness every day. I know I've seen more people die than most of the soldiers in the Sheliak War. You'd think it would burn me out, but it hasn't.

Y'LAN

Then you place value on your emotional reactions to the dead and dying?

TORAN

(chuckling a little)

That's a very interesting way of putting it, Y'lan, but I think it's true.

(MORE)

TORAN (CONT'D)

My compassion, my capacity for feeling what I do, helps to define who I am -- both as a doctor and as a person. But you know, all I can think about right now is the unfairness of it all. Someone as wonderful as her shouldn't --

He breaks off, casting a sideways glance at Cross. Cross looks at him, then looks away. A very awkward moment.

The moment is broken by the Sickbay doors opening and an out of breath, wide-eyed LEWIS CARTER entering. With his camera.

CARTER

Captain, Doctor. I wonder if I could ask a favor.

CROSS

This a very bad time, Carter.

CARTER

I realize that, sir, but I wonder if I could just take a couple minutes to interview Doctor Elris.

Pause.

CROSS

What!?

CARTER

Captain, I did some research. There is no record of any Bajoran ever suffering from any sort of progressive amnesia. She's the first. Besides which, this makes for a great human-interest story -- Tamulna's Angel of Mercy, stricken down while she was performing her duty. So I'd just like to talk to her for a couple minutes, take some footage of her courage and her dignity in the face of her fatal illness. I want to show the galaxy what a heroic person she is. Would that be okay?

Cross, Toran and Y'lan look at Carter for a long moment. Then, as one, they look at each other.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

We look down the corridor as, some distance away, the doors to Sickbay open. For a second we see nothing.

Then, a brief glimpse of tentacles, and Carter's screaming body FLIES through the door, down the corridor toward us, and lands in front of us with a satisfying thud.

After a second, another glimpse of tentacles, and the camera flies out and lands near him. The doors close.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SICKBAY

Cross, Toran and Y'lan are as before.

TORAN

I take it that's Q'tami for "no."

Y'LAN

Only in the present context.

CROSS

(shaking his head)

"Human-interest." Doesn't he know that term isn't politically --

He is interrupted by the sound of an alarm going off in the surgical bay. Cross and Toran immediately run toward it.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SURGICAL BAY -- CONTINUOUS

Elris is having another seizure. Y'lan, wisely staying out of the way, watches from the door as Cross and Toran restrain her. Her body spasms and shakes for a moment, then settles down... and she starts to cry. Toran picks up a tricorder and scans her as Cross looks at her.

TORAN

It's not good. The seizures are getting worse, and her memory lapses are growing larger and larger.

CROSS

How far back has she gone?

TORAN

Judging from her anisomycin levels, about eight years now.

Cross's face falls. He slowly looks down at Elris, who is still crying and whimpering something indistinct.

Slowly, the pain growing on his own face, Cross kneels down at her side.

CROSS

(whispering)

Lea?

ELRIS

(sobbing)

I'm so sorry... I couldn't...

She is almost choking on her sobs. Toran, looking confused and helpless, watches as Cross -- almost crying himself now -- takes her hand in both of his and holds it tightly.

CROSS

Lea, it wasn't your fault. Do you hear me? It wasn't.

ELRIS

I couldn't... Daniel...

CROSS

You did all you could. Nobody could have saved him.

ELRIS

No, I...

CROSS

It wasn't your fault.

She breaks down completely. Cross clenches his teeth, shakes his head in anger, sorrow and frustration. Toran and Y'lan can only watch, as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise, sailing along in the quantum slipstream. Suddenly, it flies OUT of the slipstream and into normal space.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- ENGINEERING

From inside an auxiliary compartment beneath one of the control panels, we see Grey remove the compartment panel and stick his head inside, peering around with a flashlight. Dojar, wearing civvies, is kneeling down beside him.

GREY

Yeah... these relays are shot. No wonder we couldn't send a diagnostic command earlier. Damn it, we were so close.

(taps his commbadge)

Grey to Bridge.

TALORA'S COMM VOICE

Report.

GREY

It's the deflector power relays, Commander. We didn't have enough time to completely repair them before leaving. We'll have to proceed at warp using the shields for a deflector until we get them fixed.

TALORA'S COMM VOICE

How long?

GREY

Three hours minimum. I already have people on it. It's a textbook procedure, but not something that can be rushed.

A long pause.

TALORA'S COMM VOICE

Understood, Commander. Do the best you can.

GREY

Acknowledged. Out.

DOJAR

(to Grey)

Can't you simply replace the relays?

GREY

Yes, but that would take even longer.  
So as long as you're paying a social  
visit, lend a hand and pass me that  
IL modulator.

Dojar grabs a nearby tool and hands it in to Grey. He starts work on something.

GREY (CONT'D)

What's the flux reading on the  
circuit?

DOJAR

(glancing up)  
Four point two.

GREY

Perfect.

A silence falls as Grey continues to work.

GREY (CONT'D)

Heard anything?

DOJAR

Y'lan is keeping me updated. It's  
not good.

Grey pauses in his work for a moment, a look of worry crossing his face. Then, gritting his teeth, he attacks his work with a vengeance.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SURGICAL BAY

Cross, looking exhausted, half-dozes in the chair next to Elris's bed, while Toran works at a station built into the nearby wall. Elris, who seems to be just waking up from her own nap, looks worse than ever -- her skin is drawn and pale, her eyes bloodshot, her movements slow and uncertain. She turns her head to look at Cross.

She blinks, then slowly smiles. The smile, unbelievably, lights up her face, making her look almost pretty again. When she speaks, her voice is quiet and shaky, but happy.

ELRIS

Hey, handsome.

Cross jumps, as though waking from a dream, and looks at her. At the wall, Toran half-turns his head to look, then quickly looks back at his console. He looks a bit embarrassed...but for the rest of this scene, we can tell by the look on his face and the slow movement of his hands that he is eavesdropping.

CROSS

What?

ELRIS

How long have you been sitting there?

CROSS

How long... Lea, you remember my being here?

ELRIS

No, but from the look on your face, you've been here quite a while.

(beat)

Where is here, anyway? Are we back on the station?

She looks around in some confusion, then looks back at him.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

And what's happened to you, Neil? You look like you've aged more than a decade?

CROSS

(leaning forward)

I know, and it's a long story. Lea, what's the last thing you remember?

She looks at him and smiles again.

ELRIS

Talking with you on the runabout. Then everything went black, and I woke up here. I must have fainted, right?

CROSS

Which runabout? Where?

ELRIS

The one from Bajor. From our honeymoon.

Cross lets out a long, slow breath -- he seems to deflate in his chair. He looks down, unable to meet her eyes.

CROSS

That was so long ago, I'd almost forgotten.

ELRIS

Neil, what are you talking about? We just left an hour ago.

CROSS

It's been much longer than that.

ELRIS

How long was I out?

CROSS

You didn't faint, Lea. You just don't remember the last fifteen years.

She stares at him, confusion slowly giving way to shock.

ELRIS

Neil... how can that be? I remember this last week vividly.

CROSS

(looking up)

Our marriage, Bajor, our life together, it was all many years ago. You're suffering from a disease which causes memory loss. You don't remember.

She takes this in.

ELRIS

That's... why you look so much older, right? I must be older too, then. But you're right, I can't remember any of it.

(beat)

But it's okay, right? You're here, and I'm here, so we must be all right.

Cross looks away, unable to say anything. Elris looks at him, and tries to lift her head, but is too weak to lift it much.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Neil? We're all right, aren't we? We still love each other, don't we?

Cross opens his mouth, tries to say something, but no words come out. Elris closes her eyes and rests her head back, biting back tears. There is a long silence.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Do you have any idea what this is like, Neil? To find your dream shattered before it's even begun?

CROSS

There were other things. Other dreams for you to follow. Believe me, you would be proud of how much you've done. You've made a difference in the lives of so many people.

(MORE)

CROSS (CONT'D)

Especially this last week. Lea,  
you've come such a long way, and  
you're happy with your life.

She turns her head abruptly and looks at him.

ELRIS

How can I be? Neil, how can I ever  
be happy without you?

CROSS

I realize you mean that now. To  
you, we were just married a week  
ago, and we had our whole life in  
front of us. But things have changed  
too much.

She pauses for a long moment. Then, with an obvious strain  
of effort, she slowly shifts her body across the biobed toward  
him and leans over. Cross quickly half-stands and tries to  
stop her.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Lea, no, you're too weak--

ELRIS

Look at me.

He closes her eyes, not wanting to meet hers. She slowly  
reaches up and takes his hands.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Neil Alexander Cross, you open your  
eyes and look at me.

He does. He looks into eyes that we have never before seen  
on Elris Lea, except in flashbacks -- eyes that are warm,  
caring, hopeful, unconditionally loving. Cross tries to  
look away, but can't.

CROSS

Please don't look at me like that.

ELRIS

I'm your wife. I'll look at you  
however I want.

CROSS

Lea, don't...

ELRIS

I love you, Neil.

The dam breaks. Cross's jaw shakes, and tears well up in  
his eyes.

CROSS

Lea...

ELRIS

I'm not finished. There may be a great deal that I can't remember... and yes, perhaps things have changed. But Neil Cross, not for one second can I imagine that my feelings about you would ever change.

(beat)

And I can see it in your eyes. You've grown older, and you seem like you've been through hell. But I can see that, deep down, you're still the same man I fell in love with. I think you still feel the same way about me.

(beat)

So I don't care what's happened, and I don't care who's to blame. I'm going to get better, we're going to work through this, and we're going to find a way to move on together. Do you hear me? Whatever came between us, we're going to find a way.

Cross looks at her in shock and sorrow. At the wall console, Toran -- whom we nearly forgot about -- has been listening to it all. He looks uncomfortable, uncertain. There is another long pause, during which Elris's burning eyes never leave Cross's. Finally, Cross opens his mouth to say something...

...but before he can, there is the sound of an EXPLOSION and the room shakes. All three look around in confusion. Cross taps his commbadge.

CROSS

Cross to Bridge. Report.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise, still at warp, flies past the camera -- followed by an old Klingon Bird-of-Prey, firing its phasers at the Federation ship.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- BRIDGE

Talora, Quinlan, Stolt and Cale are at their respective posts.

QUINLAN

Confirmed, Commander. It's the Brik'tagh. They're firing again.

Another explosion is heard, and the Bridge rocks from the impact.

CALE

Looks like we were their target, not Bajor. But to take on the Enterprise alone... why would they?

TALORA

We can speculate on their motives another time, Lieutenant.

QUINLAN

Aft shield down to forty percent. They're not moving from our tail, Commander. Recommend we drop out of warp.

TALORA

Negative. Remain on course, and hail the Bird-of-Prey.

She does so.

QUINLAN

No response. I don't think they want to talk.

As if on cue, the Bridge shakes again under an explosion.

QUINLAN (CONT'D)

Aft shield down to seventeen percent. With respect, Commander, we can't reach Starbase 81 if they cripple us.

Talora hesitates, but only for an instant.

TALORA

Very well. Take us to impulse, Ensign, and stand by evasive maneuvers. Quinlan, prepare to return fire.

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise drops out of warp, and immediately swings around in an effort to shake the Klingon loose. The Bird-of-Prey follows, still firing. We watch as one of its phaser shots HITS the Enterprise.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SURGICAL BAY

Cross, Elris and Toran are as before as the room shakes under the phaser impact.

Cross looks around him, then down at Elris, who is looking back with wide, unrecognizing eyes.

ELRIS

Who are you? What's going on?

TORAN

Sounds like we're under attack.  
Captain, perhaps you should be on  
the Bridge.

CROSS

Talora can handle it. I need to be  
here.

His tone, and the look in his eyes, precludes any discussion on the matter. Toran nods, as the room shakes once again.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- BRIDGE

As before.

QUINLAN

Permission to return fire?

TALORA

This makes no sense. We're reading  
no refit, no advanced technology.  
They must know that we can destroy  
them easily.

QUINLAN

Whoever said that a burning desire  
for revenge against the Captain had  
to be rational?

TALORA

That can't be it. There's  
irrationality, and then there's  
suicide. Try hailing them again.

She does.

QUINLAN

Still no response.

The Bridge shakes under yet another phaser impact. Talora looks around, as though searching for answers, then sighs.

TALORA

Very well. Return fi --

CALE

Commander! Federation ship  
approaching, Scimitar class.

EXT. SPACE

A Scimitar class ship is approaching the Bird-of-Prey, firing its torpedoes. The Bird-of-Prey, after taking several hits to the shields, comes about and flies away, cloaking as it does so.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- BRIDGE

Everyone gazes at the viewscreen in disbelief.

STOLT

(softly)

Well, now what was that all about?

QUINLAN

It's the Katana, sir. They're hailing us.

TALORA

On screen.

Dojar taps a button, and the smiling face of CAPTAIN OLIN SURRHA appears on the viewscreen.

SURRHA

Neil?

Talora, a little uncertain, returns the smile.

TALORA

Commander Talora, sir.

SURRHA

Commander. Well, whoever they were, I guess they weren't in the mood to take us both on at once. We'll see if they come back now -- and we'll stay with you a while, just in case.

TALORA

Thank you, Captain, but it is urgent that we reach Starbase 81. Our Chief Medical Officer--

SURRHA

The tridoxycycline, I know. We brought it with us.

TALORA

(blinking)

Sir?

SURRHA

We happened to be near Starbase 81 when you sent your medical emergency

(MORE)

SURRHA (CONT'D)

call. Your Doctor sounds to be in a bad way, so we picked up the chemical and came out to meet you halfway. I've already informed your medical staff, and am having the chemical beamed directly to your Sickbay.

Talora smiles.

TALORA

Captain Surrha, we owe you one.

SURRHA

Don't mention it, Commander. And give my regards to your Captain. Katana out.

Surrha's face disappears from the screen.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SICKBAY

A sealed vial of some chemical is in the process of materializing on one of the worktables. Y'lan, who is nearest, picks it up and deftly tosses it to Toran at another workstation. Toran quickly places the vial into a replicator and taps keys.

TORAN

Computer, create twenty units of antigen Toran-one, incorporating this tridoxycycline.

COMPUTER

Processing.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SURGICAL BAY -- CONTINUOUS

Cross is kneeling next to Elris, who has slipped back into delirium.

She is shaking her head wildly, a look of sheer terror on her face.

ELRIS

Father? I can't see you... where are you?

CROSS

It's okay, Lea. You'll be all right soon.

She looks at Cross, unrecognizing.

ELRIS

What... what's wrong with me? Are you...

CROSS

Don't try to talk.

Toran runs into the room carrying two hyposprays, just as Elris starts having another seizure. Cross holds her down.

CROSS (CONT'D)

The stress from the explosions must have hastened the onset. Is that--?

Toran, without words, hands one hypospray to Cross and administers the other to Elris.

TORAN

Antigen.

He tosses the empty hypospray aside, takes the other one from Cross, and administers it to Elris, who is already starting to quiet down.

TORAN (CONT'D)

Anisomycin.

CROSS

When will we know if it worked?

TORAN

Should be right away.

They both look down at Elris, who is quiet and still now. Toran grabs a tricorder and scans her. Nothing happens for a long moment.

Then, suddenly, Elris's eyes flutter open. She blinks, looks up at the two men. Her eyes focus on both of them in turn. She smiles weakly.

ELRIS

Captain... Doctor Toran...

Cross exhales. Toran looks at him, smiles, then looks back down at Elris.

TORAN

How much do you remember?

ELRIS

Um... We were in... Tamulna yesterday... right?

TORAN

That's right.

ELRIS

I remember.

Her eyes shift, focus on Cross.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

I remember... everything.

Cross smiles down on her, a mix of relief and wonder on his face. Elris's eyes close, and she sighs -- it appears to have taken a great deal of effort just to talk.

TORAN

(to Cross)

She'll need a great deal of physical recovery. But she will recover.

Cross looks between Elris and Toran, his mouth open, searching for something to say. Finally, he simply extends his hand to Toran. Toran shakes it.

CROSS

Thank you, Doctor.

Toran only smiles and nods. With a last look at Elris, Cross steps out of the surgical bay. Toran looks back down at his patient, whose eyes have opened again. She is smiling up at him. He takes one of her hands in both of his and squeezes it.

TORAN

(whispering)

Welcome back, Lea.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SICKBAY -- CONTINUOUS

Cross has joined Y'lan, and they are slowly walking to the Sickbay exit together. Cross wipes off his brow, stretches out a bit, then gives what on Y'lan passes as a back a friendly slap.

CROSS

I do appreciate your help as well, Y'lan. We wouldn't have saved her without you.

Y'LAN

It is well that I was able to assist. Unfortunately, it has taken a great deal of time away from my other projects. I must return to my lab at once.

CROSS

Er, of course...

They walk out together.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise, traveling at impulse power, glides serenely past the camera. The Katana hovers close nearby.

CROSS (V.O.)

Personal Log, Supplemental. Thanks to the tireless efforts of my crew, as well as the timely arrival of the Katana, Doctor Elris is expected to make a full recovery. We still have no idea why the Brik'tagh attacked us, and it has disappeared from view for the time being. I wouldn't bet against seeing her again.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM

Cross is sitting at the desk, leaning back in his chair, looking thoughtful as he dictates.

CROSS

For some reason, I am reminded of the old "nature versus nurture" debate -- this was before we discovered that genetics is responsible for only a small fraction of humanoid behavior. This leads one to believe that a person is the sum of her experiences, her memories. But after seeing Lea -- Doctor Elris go through what she did, I'm having a hard time with that.

(beat)

I looked into her eyes. I saw her for who she was. And whatever she may have remembered or forgotten, she was the same Elris Lea the whole time. The essence was there all along.

He pauses for a long moment, thinking. Then he chuckles softly.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Maybe I'm getting too philosophical for my own good. But I think that we're more than the sum of nature and nurture. I think that we transcend such simple equations altogether. Or perhaps--

The door chimes.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Computer, pause recording. Come in.

The door opens and Elris walks in, wearing a uniform. Her movements are a bit slow and shaky, but otherwise she looks none the worse for wear. Cross, smiling, stands to greet her.

ELRIS

Captain.

CROSS

Doctor. I'm glad to see you up and about.

ELRIS

I shouldn't be, actually -- I still need bed rest, or so I'm told. But I wanted to tell you that I'll be able to return to duty in a couple of days.

CROSS

There's no hurry, of course. Take whatever time you need to get well.

She nods. A pause.

ELRIS

I also... wanted to thank you for all you did. For being with me. I know it couldn't have been easy for you, but I want you to know that having you there was a great help to me. Under the circumstances, I mean.

CROSS

It was really nothing.

She nods. Another pause, this one stretching out to the point of awkwardness. Elris shuffles a little, looks at the floor, and tries to say something.

Finally, Cross steps around the desk and walks up to her, still smiling.

CROSS (CONT'D)

You went through a terrible ordeal, something that would tax the mental and emotional resources of anyone. It's understandable that you may have said things that, if you had all of your mental faculties, you would not have said. It was your condition that caused this, and you don't need to apologize or explain anything. I understand completely.

Elris looks at him in surprise for a second -- then looks relieved. She laughs a little.

ELRIS

I'm... glad you understand that.

CROSS

Of course.

They smile at each other, understanding passing between them. Another pause.

ELRIS

Well, I gave Noa my blood oath that I wouldn't get out of bed, so I'd better go before he catches me.

CROSS

(nodding)

Probably a good idea.

Elris hesitates... then steps up and gives Cross a small kiss on the cheek. Then she turns and walks out of the room, leaving Cross to look after her, only a faint ghost of the smile left on his face. He stands looking after her for several seconds.

QUINLAN'S COMM VOICE

Quinlan to Captain. Admiral Thel calling on subspace for you, sir.

Cross sighs. Back to work.

CROSS

I'll take it in here.

He returns to his seat behind the desk, and activates the terminal.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

The turbolift doors open and Elris exits. She walks down the corridor, looking thoughtful. As she passes a junction, we see Toran come out of another corridor behind her, reading a PADD as he walks. He looks up, sees her walking away. He opens his mouth to say something...

...but says nothing. Instead, he simply smiles and watches her recede down the corridor, eventually walking out of view. Still smiling, he walks through a nearby door into...

INT. ENTERPRISE -- TORAN'S QUARTERS -- CONTINUOUS

A modest-sized living quarters, containing a few traditional Bajoran decorations and set pieces, as well as a window

looking out at the stars. Toran finishes reading the PADD as the doors close behind him, then puts it on a table.

TORAN  
Computer, half lights.

The lights dim in the room, and the starlight jumps out at him. He slowly walks to the window and gazes out, the smile still on his face, his eyes glowing.

EXT. SPACE

We are zoomed in on the hull of the Enterprise. We see Toran at his window, gazing out at the stars. He remains there, unmoving, as we slowly pull back. The Enterprise drifts past us, finally moving offscreen altogether. On a last, lingering look at the stars, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END