

STAR TREK

RENAISSANCE

"The Case of the Vedek's Lost Robes"

Written By
Rob Jelley

Episode #: 3x03
Published September 30, 2003

This teleplay is originally from
www.startrekrenaissance.com

"Star Trek" and related names are registered
trademarks of Paramount Pictures, Inc.
This original work of fiction is
written solely for non-profit purposes.
Copyright 2003 by The Renaissance Group.
All Rights Reserved.

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CARTER'S QUARTERS

Carter storms into his quarters and punches the screen opposite his wall that activates.

He walks over to his bed, clearly in a bad mood, and sits down on it watching the screen.

The Federation News Network logo appears and Carter intensely watches the screen:

ANNOUNCER

Good evening and welcome to the Federation News Network! Tonight's "Carter Investigates" has been replaced by "Vulcan Nights," an investigation into the aftereffects of Vulcan massages.

Carter looks on in shock and as the announcement continues...

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Carter Investigates will rejoin us later in the year after a short hiatus.

As he hits some controls on his terminal we...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

BLACKNESS

A caption appears:

ONE WEEK EARLIER

EXT. JUNGLE

Running feet. Pull up to see a STARFLEET MARINE through the dense foliage of an alien jungle, running for his life from an unseen hunter.

We cut back to watching his feet, until he trips and lands flat on his face.

Cut behind the hunter, a dangerous looking four legged TARG looking as fierce as ever, its eyes blazing, its jagged fur flying behind it like a bat out of hell, getting closer and closer to our hero...

...Until the picture FREEZES and a MAN in a suit walks in front of the scene.

MAN

Is this you? Life as a Starfleet Marine is a dangerous business and you can never know when you might next stare death in the face.

Cut to the Targ looking at the man head on.

MAN (CONT'D)

Eugh. Don't be distracted when it comes to the crunch. Drink Galactic Lightning, the new energy drink from Disima.

The man hands our hero a bottle of GALACTIC LIGHTNING before disappearing and the Marine takes a sip before the image resumes, and the Marine draws his PHASER from his belt and VAPORIZES the Targ straight in front of us.

The man reappears, and outstretches his hand to the proud marine, putting his other arm around his shoulder.

MAN (CONT'D)

Galactic Lightning! The only energy drink endorsed by Starfleet Medical. Galactic Lightning! Order it from your replicator today!

Pull out from this to reveal that we are actually in...

INT. ENTERPRISE -- REC DECK

...as the FNN (Federation News Network) Logo flashes into view. We continue pulling out to see HAL stood at the bar.

HAL

(shouts)

And remember, people! For a limited time only I'm offering a free Galactic Lightning with every Black Hole sold!

Continue pulling out to see ELRIS shaking her head as she watches Hal going about his work, before seeing TALORA enter from the doors opposite.

Talora looks over to an empty table, before tuning around and walking to leave.

ELRIS

Commander!

Talora turns to see who has called her, and Elris waves at her to come over.

Talora is a lot colder than she is usually, almost going back to the early days of Renaissance, when she was regarded as nothing more than a strict rule keeper.

TALORA

Doctor. What can I do for you?

ELRIS

Not a lot. I thought we could talk.

TALORA

(takes a seat)

What's on your mind?

ELRIS

Well, if the Romulan version of that advert was anywhere near as bad as the Starfleet version, definitely not Galactic Lightning.

TALORA

Would you like me to purchase drinks, Doctor?

ELRIS

No, no. I was joking.

TALORA

I see. Is that all?

Elris shakes her head, taken aback by Talora's attitude.

ELRIS

What's wrong with you today, Talora?

TALORA

Nothing is wrong with me.

ELRIS

Oh come on. I know Jen usually calls you the ice queen, but you're not usually... this icy.

TALORA

Perhaps the temperature has dropped a little recently?

She looks over at the empty table.

ELRIS

Dojar?

Talora nods, and seems to relax a little, but is still obviously quite worried about the Dojar situation.

TALORA

He hasn't shown up for our breakfast two weeks in a row.

ELRIS

Well, he told us all that he needed some time to sort himself out after what happening with the Q'tami.

TALORA

That is true. But I didn't anticipate that time to be this long.

ELRIS

(knowingly)

I know it's hard, Commander, believe me -- I've been there. But I think that sometimes, when someone says that they need some space, you've just got to give them it or you can risk making things a lot worse.

TALORA

It is difficult.

ELRIS

You two were a lot closer than most of us realized, weren't you?

There is a pause.

TALORA

Perhaps even more so.

Elris looks slightly surprised, Talora instantly regrets what she has just said.

TALORA (CONT'D)

Or, rather I'd hoped... I would have liked to...

Fortunately, Hal dims the lights and turns the sound up on the holoprojector as CARTER INVESTIGATES begins to transmit. Elris ceases the opportunity to dig the proud Talora out of the rather sizable hole she has dug for herself.

ELRIS

Let's see what he's got to say this week.

Talora remains silent, sat awkwardly as the rest of the crew watch with baited breath as Carter's report begins.

CARTER

In the wake of the Q'tami's merciless attack on Bajor, the entire Federation has been asking what could have been done to prevent it, and how our defenses could be upgraded to stop it from happening again. In the first of tonight's special reports, I spoke to President Drell about the matter, and asked him why he thought the Enterprise always managed to land itself in such deep water.

The gathered crew BOO from various corners of the room. Talora does not join in, Elris smiles, but quickly stops after seeing Talora's expression.

DRELL

I really don't think it's a matter of putting more defenses around every inhabited planet the Enterprise comes within two light years of...

More booing from the crowd. We hear various sarcastic remarks such as "More like ten!" etc. from the crowd, before someone shouts out "Hear him out."

ELRIS

Don't think he'll be getting any votes from this ship.

DRELL

...also played a pivotal part in the defense of the Federation. The Enterprise crew's efforts at Utopia Planitia...

Cheers from the gathered crowd.

TALORA

Perhaps not.

DRELL

...for Captain Cross's assistance,
both at Utopia Planitia and Bajor,
who knows what more damage could
have been done?

More cheers.

CARTER

And to prevent this from happening
again, Mr. President, what are you
planning on doing...

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise in orbit of Bajor.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM

CROSS enters his Ready Room, followed by VEDEK NIMELLA ROSAI,
a female Bajoran with more days behind her than in front.

CROSS

Rosai, it's so good to see you again.
You've been a great help to us since
the attack.

NIMELLA

And you too, Captain. If it was not
for the Enterprise, Bajor would not
be recovering as quickly as it is.

Cross nods appreciatively.

CROSS

Lea's been talking a lot about what
you're doing down there... you'd
have thought that you were running
the entire relief effort single-
handedly if you listened to her.

NIMELLA

She always did exaggerate.
(pause)
How long has it been since we last
spoke, Captain?

Cross ponders this for a second, before pulling a face.

CROSS

(uncomfortably)
The wedding, I think.

NIMELLA

Still a sensitive subject I see?

CROSS

No, no. We've just been... reliving
it of late.

NIMELLA

(confused)

We can only walk the Prophets lay
out for us.

CROSS

Of course.

NIMELLA

Even without reading your pagh I can
see that you don't really believe
that, Captain.

CROSS

(smiles)

Each to his own.

NIMELLA

If truth be told...
(leans in closer)
neither do I.

She smiles.

CROSS

(surprised)

And they say you're in with a chance
of succeeding the Kai...

NIMELLA

(half joking)

I'd appreciate it if you didn't tell
anyone.

CROSS

So if you don't believe in the
Prophets, what are you doing in the
Vedek Assembly?

NIMELLA

Oh no, you misunderstand. I believe
in the Prophets, their name be
praised, but I would like to believe
that we all control our own destinies;
that each decision we make is ours
to make and ours alone.

CROSS

So much for my theory that fate's
just brutally unfair.

NIMELLA

Over the years I have learned that it is best not to regard life as something that is already set in stone, but something that is more flexible. If one believes the former, I believe that one tends to put a lot less thought into the decisions they are making.

CROSS

And you've had your fair share of decisions.

NIMELLA

Oh, not too many.

CROSS

The Federation's in your debt. If it wasn't for you, I very much doubt whether Bajor would have become a member.

NIMELLA

You flatter me, Captain. There were many others involved in the annexation as well as I.

CROSS

Still. And that's really why I've asked you here.

NIMELLA

Oh? I thought we were to talk about the damage to the water supply?

CROSS

Yeah, but what's a little white lie between friends?

Nimella looks intrigued.

CROSS (CONT'D)

I've been informed by President Drell's chief of staff, that you're being considered for the Mark of Landon.

NIMELLA

The Mark of Landon?

CROSS

Yes, it's one of the Federation's highest honors, awarded to those who...

NIMELLA

Yes, yes. I realize what it is,
Captain, but I do not believe that I
am worthy of such an honor.

From here on in, Cross attempts to ease Nimella into accepting
the honor.

CROSS

Some people seem to think otherwise.

NIMELLA

More than likely, Drell's just trying
to get some more votes for the
elections.

CROSS

(smiles)

Vedek, though I doubt the system
more than anyone, even I have more
faith in it than that.

Nimella takes time to think for a second.

NIMELLA

It is a very kind gesture, Captain,
but I'm afraid that I must decline.
I do not wish to be caught up in any
of the Federation's political agendas.

CROSS

It's to recognize your work in the
aftermath of the Q'tami attack, in
bringing Bajor into the Federation,
to...

NIMELLA

No. I do not wish to be honored.
Now if you'll excuse me, Captain, I
have an appointment with a Federation
News Reporter and I do not wish to
be late.

CROSS

A news rep...?
(beat, realizing)
Oh no.

NIMELLA

Excuse me?

CROSS

You may want to reconsider that
interview if you don't want to be
caught up in any political agendas.

Nimella looks back, confused.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- REC DECK

Chants of "Zaygre!" fill the room, as an apparently rather unpopular interview with SENATOR ZAYGRE plays on the holoprojector.

Talora still looks uncomfortable, but Elris is now smiling, unfazed by Talora's bad mood.

The interview finally ends and Carter's face appears once again, in the background the devastated Bajoran city attacked by the Q'tami.

The room gradually grows quiet as Carter speaks.

CARTER (V.O.)

And so as Bajor continues to recover from the tremendous devastation caused by the alien aggressors, I leave you for another week asking the question why weren't we ready, and how many more attacks like this will it take before we are? This is Lewis Carter, in B'Hala, signing off.

And with that the image fades to black.

Pull down to reveal the doors to the Rec Deck opening, and CARTER himself entering to mixed reactions from the crowd, with BOYLE on his arm. Some congratulate him on a good program, others openly boo him while others just remain quiet and ignore his presence.

If it wasn't for this, you would have thought that Carter had just walked into a room of admiring fans.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Thank you, thank you. It was a difficult one to pull off this time, what with all the candidates to get around and Captain Cross breathing down my neck, but hey, just look at it. I always find it humbling how...

CREWMAN 1

Oh, shut up!

CREWMAN 2

Yeah, Carter, whose career are you going to destroy next?

CREWMAN 1

His own, with a bit of luck.

They laugh while Carter openly glares at them.

CARTER

Actually, some among you may be particularly interested in next week's program. Especially you, Doctor.

He walks over to Elris.

ELRIS

And why's that?

CARTER

I'll be exclusively interviewing Vedek Nimella Rosai...

Elris reacts.

CARTER (CONT'D)

According to my sources she's being considered for the Mark of Landon.

ELRIS

(sighs)
Prophets.

CARTER

No, no. She is being considered for the award...

ELRIS

Would you excuse me, Commander?

TALORA

I think I'll join you.

They stand and walk out, past Carter.

ELRIS

(sarcastically, as she exits)
I'm looking forward to it already.

They exit.

CARTER

I'll put you down for a seat then, shall I?

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- TRANSPORTER ROOM

Cross and Nimella are both present, as is NARV OZRAN, who stands at the transporter console.

CROSS

I wish I could persuade you to reconsider.

A pause.

NIMELLA

You and I both, Captain. Truth be told, I would be honored to receive the award. But in the end, what I want and what I need are two entirely different things. The Federation is...

(pause)

The Federation is very different to how it was when we joined it fifteen years ago.

Cross nods.

He says the following solemnly, yet firmly.

CROSS

Nothing stays the same forever.

NIMELLA

If only it could.

She smiles.

CROSS

I wish you well, Vedek.

NIMELLA

And you also, Captain. And on behalf of the people of Bajor, my thanks again for all of your assistance.

She steps on to the transporter pad.

NIMELLA (CONT'D)

Do you have the time, please?

OZRAN

2032, Ma'am.

The Vedek looks at the doors to the transporter room, before looking back at Cross.

CROSS

Something wrong, Vedek?

NIMELLA

No, no. Mr. Carter is late.

CROSS

Ah.

And with that the doors to the transporter room slide open, but it is not Carter who enters. It is Elris.

NIMELLA
(surprised)
Lea! How good to see you!

ELRIS
(politely)
You also, Vedek.

Before turning to look at Cross.

ELRIS (CONT'D)
(serious, annoyed)
Where is he?

Cross opens his mouth to speak, but...

NIMELLA
Your Captain has informed me of the
situation with Mr. Carter.

Elris breathes a sigh of relief.

ELRIS
So the interview's been called off?

NIMELLA
On the contrary. As soon as Mr.
Carter arrives, we will beam down
and the interview will begin.

ELRIS
I really think that you need to
reconsider.

NIMELLA
I don't believe that I do.

The doors part again, and Carter enters, hauling his equipment
into the transporter room.

CARTER
Good evening, Vedek. Captain.
Doctor.

NIMELLA
You're late.

Carter speaks like to a true gentleman, much to the chagrin
of Cross and Elris.

CARTER
Many apologies. My programs mean a
great deal to me and I do appreciate
the feedback from the crew.

NIMELLA
And all went well, I trust?

CARTER

I'd say it was a good response, yes.

Carter has now made his way on to the pad, and is also ready to go.

NIMELLA

(to Elris)

I am sorry that we have had not had a chance to converse, Lea. Perhaps another time?

ELRIS

I'd be delighted.

Nimella nods at Cross.

NIMELLA

Thank you for your hospitality, Captain Cross. I hope to see you again some time.

CROSS

As do I, Vedek.
(pause)
Energize, Mr. Ozran.

And with that they dematerialize.

Cross and Elris turn and exit.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Cross and Elris enter from the transporter room and begin walking down the corridor.

ELRIS

She's going to regret it.

CROSS

I know.

ELRIS

Didn't you... warn her?

CROSS

Of course I did. And considering she doesn't want to be caught up in politics, she's got a funny way of staying out of the way.

ELRIS

What do you mean?

CROSS

She didn't accept the award.

ELRIS

What?

CROSS

She didn't accept.

Elris sighs.

ELRIS

Well that will give Carter something safe to talk about anyway. If he does anything that damages her reputation, I swear I'll kick him out of the airlock.

CROSS

(jokingly)

You've never stuck up for me like that.

ELRIS

I'm serious, Neil. If he does anything...

(sighs)

Rosai's been a great friend to me. She's always been there when I needed someone.

Cross nods. A beat.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Speaking of which, have you spoken to Talora lately?

CROSS

Not so much. Why?

ELRIS

She's having a hard time... dealing with Dojar.

CROSS

Oh? She seems okay on duty.

ELRIS

She's a good officer. She's supposed to be "okay" on duty.

CROSS

I didn't think that I needed to be concerned about it.

ELRIS

You don't. Yet.

Cross looks at her.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Have you seen Dojar lately?

CROSS

No. He's been spending a lot of time with Y'lan. And understandably so.

ELRIS

Try all of his time. He hasn't been to his last two checkups. Granted, I wasn't too well myself for one of them, but...

CROSS

All right. I'll talk to him.

ELRIS

And Talora.

CROSS

(pause)

I'll see what I can do.

ELRIS

Thanks.

She leaves to enter sickbay while Cross carries on walking.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

Talora is standing outside Y'lan's lab looking at the door. She takes a breath and moves to press the chime, but stops and holds back.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- Y'LAN'S LAB

Start on Dojar who is sat on a chair, pull out to reveal that both he and Y'lan are looking at something in the center of the room, though we don't find out what it is just yet.

Y'LAN

I disagree.

DOJAR

Y'lan, it looks so much better! And now you don't have to worry about getting your tentacles stuck in all the neural circuitry any more!

Y'LAN

It looks... quaint.

DOJAR

Quaint?!

Pull back even further to reveal that they are looking at Y'lan's table. It is different to how we usually see it, the usual mass of circuitry that is usually visible in and around it has gone and we now see that it has to be altered to look more modern. It is round and metallic and the only aperture on it is the space on the top and the various points around the edge where Y'lan occasionally inserts his tentacles.

Y'LAN

I fail to see the relevance of having an organic table if it is surrounded by this alloy.

DOJAR

It makes your lab look more... stylish.

Y'LAN

I do not care for style. You should not concern yourself with such primitive notions.

DOJAR

I can't say I'm the ship's greatest trend-setter.

Y'LAN

Then why do you wish for my laboratory to look better?

DOJAR

I... don't know. I thought I'd picked it up from you.

Y'LAN

Negative.

DOJAR

Intriguing.

Y'LAN

Indeed.

The door chimes.

Y'LAN & DOJAR

Enter.

They look at one another, before Dojar looks away to see Talora standing in the doorway.

DOJAR

Commander... what can I do for you?

TALORA

I want to talk.

Y'LAN

Can it not wait? We are in the middle
of something.

Talora looks at him and is about to answer, when Dojar butts
in and points at the table.

DOJAR

Consider the table, Commander. Does
it not look better then it did before.

Talora looks at the table.

TALORA

It is... different.

Dojar and Y'lan both look at her.

TALORA (CONT'D)

It is a table.

They both sigh, or at least Y'lan does the Q'tami equivalent
of a sigh. Perhaps his tentacles drop a little.

TALORA (CONT'D)

But that is not the reason I came to
speak to you.

DOJAR

Right.

Y'LAN

What do you wish to discuss,
Commander?

TALORA

Actually... I wanted to talk to Dojar,
more than I wanted to talk to you.

Y'LAN

Myself and Dojar are one, Commander.

DOJAR

He will find out sooner or later,
whether he is present or not.

TALORA

I would still prefer to speak to you
alone.

DOJAR

I'd prefer to do it here.

Y'lan looks over at him.

Y'LAN

Do you wish me to leave?

DOJAR

No, it's all right, Y'lan. I'd like you to stay.

Y'LAN

But you just requested that...

DOJAR

I know.

Y'LAN

But...

DOJAR

It was to... no, I didn't intend to... all right, all right.

Beat as Talora looks at Dojar.

Y'LAN

State your business, Commander.

Dojar glares over at him.

TALORA

I wondered why you hadn't come to our last two breakfasts.

(beat)

I was concerned.

Y'LAN

He was with me.

DOJAR

I... honestly didn't realize, Commander. I must have lost...

Y'LAN

(to Dojar)

Why? You did not.

Dojar sighs.

DOJAR

Maybe we had better do this another time.

TALORA

If the time is inconvenient, perhaps we could arrange them for another day?

DOJAR

Perhaps. But another time, Commander.

Pause for a moment as they look at each other.

Dojar outstretches his arm towards the door.

DOJAR (CONT'D)

Another time.

Talora nods and walks out, then, as the doors close...

DOJAR (CONT'D)

Goodbye...

From this we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. BAJOR -- B'HAVRAL -- DAY

An establishing shot of B'Havral, one of Bajor's great cities, but not the one that was attacked in "The Lost." (We briefly saw it way back in last season's "Homecoming.")

INT. NIMELLA'S APARTMENTS

A luxurious yet slightly Spartan apartment building, with stonewalls and floors and huge arches which look out over the city we just saw. The only thing we can hear other than their voices is the sound of water from an elaborate water feature that flows through the apartment.

The main room, where we are, leads off to a balcony, which is situated behind the arches, a bedroom and another room.

The main room is decorated with ancient Bajoran artifacts, which somehow add to the Spartan feel of the room. Two tables, one small and one large, three darkly colored sofa like chairs and a group of normal chairs at the larger table are all that decorate the room.

Carter seems completely at ease as he sets up his equipment, while Nimella seats herself on one of the sofas, distinctly uncomfortable.

NIMELLA

Tell me, Mr. Carter, why do your shipmates label you with such a reputation?

CARTER

(good humored)

I think their exact words would be "thorn in our side."

NIMELLA

Ah.

CARTER

No doubt you have seen the sections of my program that report on the Enterprise's activities?

NIMELLA

No, actually.

CARTER

Right.

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

Well, I was put on the Enterprise by Admiral Delfune -- to keep an eye on Captain Cross, I suppose. You could say that I'm the Admiral's eyes and ears on that ship -- anything that happens, I'm there for. Mostly.

(pause)

Even if it's only for a brief second before I'm kicked out, but nevertheless, I see everything that happens. Shattered relationships, nervous breakdowns, life and death situations, I'm there for it all. And that's only Captain Cross.

NIMELLA

I see.

CARTER

I'm very enthusiastic about my work. I pride myself on telling the truth and finding the human side of every story, giving each one a face, you know?

NIMELLA

You sound like a good man, Mr. Carter.

CARTER

Quite right.

Over the following dialogue, Carter moves Nimella so that she is positioned in the best spot for light in the room.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Now, if you'd just care to take a seat over here... no, back a bit, slightly that way, yes, just a little more... that's it, well done. And now we can get on with the interview.

He smiles. Nimella smiles back uneasily as Carter attaches a microphone to her collar.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Don't worry. We'll have this out the way in no time.

(pause)

I'll introduce the interview somewhere else, so we don't have to worry about that. Just give me some lead in time and then I'll ask the first question.

He puts his camera headset on, and after a brief pause, the interview begins.

CARTER (CONT'D)

So Vedek, I understand that within the past day you have been honored with the Mark of Landon. How does it feel to be awarded one of the Federation's highest honors?

NIMELLA

Actually, I turned down the honor.

Carter frowns.

CARTER

Could you tell me why?

NIMELLA

I believe that the Mark is being given out for political reasons so that the Federation may achieve certain political objectives. I cannot believe for a second that on this occasion it is to recognize strength and valor in the hearts of its citizens.

CARTER

You seem like a very modest person, Vedek, but a lot of other people see you as one of the main reasons why Bajor is in the Federation and a hero in the aftermath of the Q'tami attack on Tamulna.

NIMELLA

I assure you, I'm not.

CARTER

Then what do you believe the Federation's political objectives are through honoring you? No offense, Vedek, but the Mark of Landon doesn't strike me as something that politicians might lose sleep over.

NIMELLA

No, but terrifying alien attacks are. The Federation knows that Bajor is a planet of high strategic importance and what they will lose sleep over is the fact that no Federation starships were here to protect us in our hour of need! Indeed, the only protection we did receive was from the two starships that instigated the entire Q'tami situation in the first place!

CARTER

Appalling. So you're saying that because Bajor had no protection, the Federation feels that it's standing has been damaged on Bajor and so it's awarding you the Mark of Landon to compensate for this?

NIMELLA

Spot on, Mr. Carter, well done.

CARTER

It's an interesting theory you have there, Vedek, but I'm interested in how you felt when you heard about the attack itself.

There is a pause as the Vedek deliberates over whether or not to press on the current line of conversation, before coming back with the following, in a deep, stern tone that we have not heard from her yet.

NIMELLA

Betrayed, shocked and saddened. When I was campaigning for Bajor to join the Federation I thought that I would be helping to strengthen it, not encouraging foreign creatures to enter our atmosphere and scar us like has happened so many times before.

CARTER

I think we're going off topic here, Vedek, I'm much more interested in your feelings rather than your opinions.

NIMELLA

And why is that, Mr. Carter? Because your Federation won't let you air such opinions on it's news channel? I hope that you do show this, in fact, I want you to show it, because every Bajoran in this planet, if not the galaxy, is thinking what I'm saying, only they don't have the voice to allow people to hear it.

Carter looks quite stunned by this affirmation, and attempts to regroup as the Vedek continues to sternly look back at him.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise in orbit of Bajor.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

Talora stands at a turbolift waiting for it to arrive. Momentarily we hear the lift arrive and the doors hiss open. Cross is standing inside.

TALORA
Captain.

CROSS
Commander.

She steps inside as the lift begins moving.

TALORA
Did you receive this evening's status report?

Cross holds out his hand, revealing a PADD that he is holding.

CROSS
Got it right here.

She half smiles.

A beat.

CROSS (CONT'D)
How's Dojar?

There is another beat.

TALORA
Well.

CROSS
I hear that you haven't spoken for a while.

TALORA
On the contrary, I went to visit him last night.

CROSS
How was he?

TALORA
Like I said, well.

CROSS
And Y'lan?

TALORA

The same. Exactly the same.

CROSS

And how do you feel about that?

TALORA

Why do I get the feeling that someone has asked you to talk to me about this?

CROSS

Well you're feeling something, so that's a start!

The turbolift stops and...

INT. ENTERPRISE -- BRIDGE -- CONTINUOUS

...the doors open on to the Bridge. The two exit and walk out on to it.

CROSS

Do you want to continue this in my ready room?

TALORA

If you wish.

Cross cocks his head and heads over to the ready room, Talora follows.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The doors open and Cross and Talora enter.

CROSS

Is there anything we can do to help Dojar's transition... smoother?

TALORA

Leave him alone. Apparently.

CROSS

He said that?

TALORA

Not in so many words.

CROSS

I see. Have you spoken to him about it?

TALORA

Briefly. He seems distracted by Y'lan.

CROSS
(half jokingly)
Maybe you should ask both of them to
dinner.

A pause.

TALORA
That may be the only option.

Cross winces.

CROSS
Dinner with Y'lan?

Talora nods.

TALORA
(confirming)
Dinner with Y'lan.

Off Cross's reaction...

CUT TO:

INT. NIMELLA'S APARTMENTS

Carter seems to have succeeded in calming Nimella down some,
and they are now talking Federation politics.

CARTER
Your political relationship with
Senator Zaygre was cited as one of
the elements that really united the
Federation and Bajor prior to the
referendum. What are your feelings
now that he's running for the
Presidency?

There is a pause for a moment, as Nimella contemplates her
answer to the question.

NIMELLA
I wish him the best of luck with the
elections in December.

CARTER
Is that all?

NIMELLA
What else is there to say? In the
end, it is the voters who will decide,
and he has to win them over.

CARTER
I suspect that Karrian Mariel may
win many of those votes.

NIMELLA

And I wish the Councilor luck also.

CARTER

Would you say that she was a strong contender for the Presidency?

NIMELLA

To get as far as she has is an impressive achievement.

CARTER

But in your opinion?

NIMELLA

It is still an impressive opinion.

Carter smiles.

CARTER

She seemed quite... controversial during her stay on the Enterprise.

NIMELLA

I wouldn't know.

CARTER

How about President Drell? There's been a lot of talk about strong words but no actions -- that people want to return to the glory days of President O'Sullivan.

NIMELLA

I think that President Drell's a fine man, but like you say, I think that he has a lot of tremendous visions and that he isn't quite sure on how to make them a reality.

CARTER

But then he did have a lot to live up to.

NIMELLA

He did. But I think that the President has had ample opportunity to prove himself. What he had to live up to was perfectly within his grasp -- only he did not reach out far enough to take hold of it.

CARTER

So you don't think that President Drell will be back for a third term?

Another pause.

NIMELLA

Not now. No.

CARTER

I see.

(pause)

Would you ever consider running for
the Presidency, Vedek?

Nimella looks back slightly stunned.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Given the opportunity, I mean.

NIMELLA

Certainly not. Politics at the
Federation's level is too big a stage
for me to embrace.

CARTER

But the next Kai perhaps?

NIMELLA

That is for the Prophets to decide.

She smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise in orbit of Bajor once again.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

Talora taps the control on the entrance to Dojar's quarters.
The doors part and Y'lan stands in the entrance.

Y'LAN

Commander Talora, we meet again.

TALORA

We do.

Dojar steps forward, smiling.

DOJAR

I told him to say that.

TALORA

Amusing.

DOJAR

What can I do for you?

TALORA

Could we take a walk?

Dojar shrugs.

DOJAR

I don't see why not. Come on Y'lan.

Dojar walks on to the corridor and starts walking next to Talora, followed by Y'lan who scuttles along behind them, well aware that Talora doesn't really want him there.

Talora speaks with a lowered voice so that Y'lan can't hear them, but it's obvious that he is finding out what she is saying anyway.

DOJAR (CONT'D)

How's it going?

TALORA

Well. I wanted to ask you to dinner.

DOJAR

Talora, I've already told you that...

TALORA

Not just you. Y'lan as well.

Y'LAN

I do not eat.

TALORA

What does that matter?

DOJAR

He'd be uncomfortable.

TALORA

No more than I would be.

Dojar sighs.

DOJAR

I appreciate the gesture, Talora, really I do, but...

Y'LAN

We do not have time for such insignificant social exchanges.

Talora glares back at Y'lan.

DOJAR

I wasn't going to say that.

Talora looks back.

DOJAR (CONT'D)

I was going to say that I don't know if I'm ready for something like that. I don't want to make things... more difficult than they already are.

TALORA

We could always... postpone the meal for another occasion if it became that difficult.

DOJAR

We could.

Y'lan scuttles forward.

Y'LAN

I do not wish to attend. We will not be accepting your offer, Talora.

Talora looks disappointed.

DOJAR

We have not yet discussed it. I will get back to you.

Y'lan glares at Dojar and begins to scutter off, back the way they came. Dojar hangs back.

DOJAR (CONT'D)

You know what he's like. I'll get back to you.

Dojar follows Y'lan as Talora stands watching.

Y'LAN

Know what I am like?

They proceed to argue like an old couple, and Talora sighs.

CUT TO:

INT. NIMELLA'S APARTMENTS

Same as before.

CARTER

I'm going to start to wind this up now, Vedek... but with the exception of recent events, do you regret bringing Bajor into the Federation?

NIMELLA

That is difficult to answer under current circumstances.

CARTER

But if it wasn't for the current
circumstances?

She pauses.

NIMELLA

Perhaps it is too soon to be...

(beat, then slowly,
tripping over words)

It isn't really that simple, is it?
An entire city is in ruins, more
than half of its population dead or
injured because of our "protector's"
ignorance. Do I regret having a
hand in brining Bajor into the
Federation? Right now, yes I do.
We always knew that Bajor could become
the site of a great battleground
but...

(beat)

I never really thought that...

(beat)

I don't regret bringing Bajor into
the Federation. But I think that
the United Federation of Planets, as
a whole, needs to take an urgent,
good look at itself in the mirror
and either decide to start doing
something about how it looks... or
to find a new mirror.

CARTER

That's an interesting perspective.
One finale question before I leave...
what would you like your legacy to
be to Bajor? You've done so much
for it, what would you say was your
greatest achievement?

NIMELLA

Legacy and achievement are two
entirely different things, Mr. Carter.
My greatest achievement would have
to be working with Senator Zaygre on
removing the final scars of the
Occupation.

CARTER

Which would not have been possible
had it not been for the Federation.

NIMELLA

This was before Bajor joined the
Federation.

Carter nods.

NIMELLA (CONT'D)

But as for my legacy? I enjoy nothing more than my role as a messenger of the Prophets. Serving Them gives me a joy greater than anything else in my life. I hope that people will remember me for my contributions to the faith over anything else that I may have done -- be it for better or worse. That is all.

CARTER

Vedek, thank you.

Nimella nods.

We hold on this for a moment before Carter turns the camera off and removes the headset from his head.

CARTER (CONT'D)

That was brilliant. Well done!

NIMELLA

(mournfully)

I truly hope that you captured the human side of the story.

CARTER

Oh, I think that I will.

NIMELLA

Will you use the section where I spoke badly upon the Federation?

CARTER

I wouldn't have a problem with my censors if that's what your asking... but it is definitely meaty stuff.

NIMELLA

Is that a good thing?

CARTER

It could be.

At this point we hear the familiar sound of a transporter from outside the apartment, and Elris enters.

ELRIS

All done?

Nimella nods and indicates for the door. By this point Carter has begun to pack up his gear.

NIMELLA

I trust you will be able to see yourself out, Mr. Carter?

CARTER

I can't see it being a problem.

Nimella nods, and she and Elris EXIT.

We hold on Carter packing away for a moment, before curiosity gets the better of him and he follows the two women outside.

EXT. BAJOR -- NIMELLA'S APARTMENTS -- CONTINUOUS

We watch as Carter walks to catch up with Elris and Nimella, but stays a safe distance away so not to be seen or heard by either of them.

ELRIS

The grounds seem to get ever more beautiful.

NIMELLA

They do, don't they. But I don't know how much longer I will be staying here.

ELRIS

What do you mean?

NIMELLA

The attack on Tamulna has opened my eyes to the poverty on Bajor. I feel that, spiritually, that is where I should be focusing my attention.

ELRIS

Everyone needs to take a step back from that once in a while.

NIMELLA

Yes, but unfortunately for those who I wish to help -- they can't, and so neither must I. I have to help rebuild, I have to help the dead's families.

(emphasizes)

I have to help rebuild those Bajoran families again. I can't justify coming back here and stepping outside into all of this... raw beauty.

(beat)

I need to be with the damage inflicted upon the soul -- so that I may make it beautiful again.

ELRIS

If I didn't know you better, I'd say you were doing more than what's expected of you.

NIMELLA

Don't be ridiculous. This is my duty!

ELRIS

I don't think it's me you need to convince. It's not your duty to give up your home, and you know it you've earned it.

NIMELLA

But I made Bajor join the Federation! It's my fault that we're in this situation!

ELRIS

We're all in it together.

NIMELLA

But I did so much more than just help! I regret everything I had to do with that damn referendum!

ELRIS

What do you mean?

NIMELLA

Bajor never would have joined the Federation had it not been for my ignorance. Whatever did I think I was doing?

The camera closes in on a wide eyed Carter.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

Another establishing shot, as the Enterprise orbits Bajor.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- TRANSPORTER ROOM

Carter beams back aboard the Enterprise looking subdued. He nods at Ozran before solemnly exiting the Transporter room and into the corridor, carrying his equipment with him.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Carter enters from the corridor and begins to walk down it. He begins to round a corner when Elris, who has been standing against the opposite wall out of his sight, steps forwards. As she speaks Carter stops dead in his tracks.

ELRIS

Tell me you didn't do anything to hurt her.

CARTER

(quiet, subdued)

No. I didn't.

And with that he carries on walking as Elris grows further and further away into the background before he rounds another corner and both characters go out of sight, leaving us looking at the bare corridor. From this we slowly...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CARTER'S QUARTERS

Open on an EXTREME CLOSE of Carter's eyes that have the reflection of mixed bright colors playing across them. Slowly pull out to see that he is working at a computer terminal with various information, as well as data about the Vedek, on the screen.

Suddenly he stops working and stares blankly at the screen. The camera turns around to see ACCESS DENIED flashing on the screen. Carter curses before standing up and exiting.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- ENGINEERING

Carter enters and we follow him around as he looks for someone, until we see QUINLAN, who is working inside a panel, assisted by GREY.

CARTER

Lieutenant.

They both turn around, and as soon as they see who it is:

QUINLAN & GREY

What do you want?

CARTER

(to Quinlan)

Could I have a word?

Quinlan mock thinks for a second before coming back with a stern:

QUINLAN

Erm, let me think. No.

CARTER

I really need your help with something.

QUINLAN

And why would I give you my help?

CARTER

Because it concerns Federation security.

QUINLAN

(mockingly)

Dawww. Has someone stolen Lewis's anti-allergy hypospray again?

GREY

Perhaps you should take this slightly more seriously?

QUINLAN

This man has been nothing but a menace since he came aboard and then he comes to me asking for help! Give me one good reason why I should help him when he comes running to me crying about Federation security.

Beat.

GREY

Because you're the Chief of Security now?

Quinlan rolls her eyes and sighs.

QUINLAN

Oh, why didn't you just say so? Come on, you little rascal.

She affectionately rubs him on his head, slightly messing his hair up.

QUINLAN (CONT'D)

(to Grey)

I'll see you later.

GREY

(smiles)

You too.

And with that Grey goes back to work as Quinlan and Carter exit.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- MISSION OPS

Quinlan and Carter enter and make their way up the stairway to the computers on the upper level.

QUINLAN

So what exactly are you looking for?

CARTER

I'm not really all that sure yet.

QUINLAN

You must have some idea if you need my help.

CARTER

I do. But I don't know what I'll find once I get to the file, or where I need to go next.

QUINLAN

Okay. So what do you want me to pull up?

CARTER

Nimella Rosai's personal bank account.

QUINLAN

What?

CARTER

Her bank account.

QUINLAN

I can't just do that.

CARTER

I'm sure that you can.

QUINLAN

Not when I don't know what you're up to.

CARTER

(half joking)

Whatever happened to freedom of the press?

QUINLAN

I'm not doing anything until you tell me what you're doing.

CARTER

You have to promise that you won't tell anyone.

QUINLAN

I won't -- so long as Federation security isn't really at stake like you say it is.

CARTER

It isn't...

QUINLAN

(interrupts)

Not helping then.

Carter pulls a stop kidding around face at her.

CARTER
(dead serious)
This is big. I need your help.

QUINLAN
(sighs)
Fine. Tell me.

CARTER
I think that the Bajoran accession referendum was rigged.

QUINLAN
What?

CARTER
And I think that Vedek Nimella had something to do with it.

QUINLAN
You think she was bribed?

CARTER
But I don't have any proof. Yet.

QUINLAN
Right.

CARTER
So are you going to let me see her account?

Quinlan sighs.

QUINLAN
This is ridiculous, the voting wasn't rigged!

CARTER
Then you don't have anything to worry about.

Quinlan looks at him doubtfully.

QUINLAN
Fine. But it's on your head. Not mine.

CARTER
Fine by me.

QUINLAN
Okay. Let's see what we can find.

She taps some keys and the Vedek's account pops up.

CARTER

Go back to the records from 2379.

QUINLAN

The year of the referendum.

CARTER

With dates six months before and after it.

She works for a second before. There is a beep, and she looks up, reassured and not as worried as a moment ago.

QUINLAN

There. Nothing. Are you happy now?

A pause as Carter examines the screen.

CARTER

No. Pull up the records for that transfer.

QUINLAN

That's an expense.

CARTER

I know, but look, it was immediately returned back into the account two days later.

QUINLAN

So what?

CARTER

Why would that happen?

QUINLAN

A refund... a coincidence?

CARTER

Just pull it up?

Quinlan looks at him dubiously, but carries on working. After a second or so, the records appear on the screen and Carter reads from the screen.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Transferred to the Vedek Assembly.

QUINLAN

Nothing wrong with that.

CARTER

Pull up all transfers to and from the Vedek Assembly.

QUINLAN
Same time frame?

CARTER
Mmhm.

She works again and transaction details appear on the screen.
A lot of transaction details.

CARTER (CONT'D)
That's a lot of transactions.

QUINLAN
(dubiously)
It is, isn't it?

CARTER
Starting to believe that there might
be something just a little awry are
we?

QUINLAN
I haven't started to believe anything.

CARTER
But the seeds of doubt have been
sewn.

QUINLAN
That they have.

CARTER
Want to give them a little water?

Quinlan looks at him and sighs.

QUINLAN
What next, your majesty?

CARTER
Pull up the Vedek Assembly's bank
details.

QUINLAN
No.

CARTER
Why not?

QUINLAN
Because it's illegal!

She says it a little too loudly and Carter hushes her.

QUINLAN (CONT'D)

I don't do things like this to help you... I do it when I'm alone in my quarters when I'm bored.

CARTER

I'm sure it's not the only thing you do when you're alone in your quarters and bored.

Quinlan hits him across the back of his head.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Ow! Okay, okay.

He puts his hand on her arm and looks her in the eyes -- Quinlan does NOT look impressed.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Jen. Come on, please. Just this once. Please.

QUINLAN

Take your hand off my arm and don't call me that again.

He complies.

CARTER

Will you do it?

She thinks for a moment.

QUINLAN

If anyone asks... you did it yourself with some cheap hacking software, understood?

Carter nods as Quinlan begins to work again.

QUINLAN (CONT'D)

If it wasn't for my inane interest with gossip, I wouldn't even bother.

Another screen appears and they both examine it -- the dates are from the same period. They both look a little shocked from the results they are seeing on the screen.

CARTER

Well, well...

(pause)

Looks like the Federation has been busy...

Quinlan sighs.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM

Close up on Elris's shocked face.

CROSS (O.S.)

We thought you should know.

Pull out to reveal we are in the ready room, Cross and Quinlan are also present.

ELRIS

It can't be true... there must be something wrong.

CROSS

We've checked and double checked. I only wish there was.

ELRIS

What made him start digging?

CROSS

That's what I wanted to talk to you about. Did you know?

ELRIS

Would you say from how I reacted that I knew?

CROSS

No, but...

ELRIS

Then I didn't.

CROSS

Okay.

ELRIS

You thought I knew, didn't you?

CROSS

I couldn't rule that out.

ELRIS

Why not?

Beat.

CROSS

Carter listened in your conversation with the Vedek on Bajor.

ELRIS

(outraged)

What?

CROSS

Something that you said convinced him that the referendum was rigged.

ELRIS

He shouldn't have been listening!

(beat)

Nimella was upset -- I listened to her. She said she wished she's never had anything to do with the Referendum, that she was involved more than...

She stops mid-sentence.

CROSS

More than what?

ELRIS

More than anyone knows.

CROSS

In those exact words?

ELRIS

Not exactly, but...

CROSS

Didn't you find that slightly strange?

ELRIS

She was upset, Neil! I was comforting her!

CROSS

Do you think she could have done it?

ELRIS

I wouldn't like to think so.

Cross sighs.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Has anyone told her yet?

CROSS

Not yet. All the evidence seems to be pretty circumstantial so far, so she's not going to be arrested or anything.

ELRIS

But there'll be an investigation?

CROSS

Right.

ELRIS

Can I talk to her?

CROSS

I don't see why not. But if you do decide to tell her... you can't tell her about Carter's involvement in all of this. The Federation still hasn't decided what to do about him or any of this yet.

Elris nods and indicates the terminal sat on Cross's desk.

ELRIS

May I?

CROSS

Of course. I'll be on the Bridge.

He stands to exit with Quinlan behind him.

ELRIS

Oh, and Neil?

CROSS

Yeah?

ELRIS

I'd get some security on Carter if I were you.

CROSS

Noted.

He exits.

After a moment, Elris composes herself and touches some buttons on the desktop comm unit. After a moment, the distressed face of Nimella appears on the screen.

NIMELLA

Lea. It's good to see a friendly face.

Elris looks at her solemnly.

ELRIS

Tell me what they're saying isn't true.

NIMELLA

It appears to be open to interpretation.

ELRIS

Either it is or it isn't...

NIMELLA

It isn't true.

ELRIS

Then that's all I need to know.

NIMELLA

Do you believe it?

ELRIS

I believe in you.

NIMELLA

That is reassuring to hear.

(sighs)

Oh, Lea. What have I done to deserve this?

ELRIS

Just take it easy, okay? I can't get any leave at the moment, but I'll be down there as soon as I can.

Nimella nods.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Have you got anyone you can stay with?

NIMELLA

I prefer to be alone in times of torment, to seek guidance from the Prophets so that my path may become apparent to me.

ELRIS

I hope you find what you're looking for.

NIMELLA

I doubt that I will. After all, people very rarely do.

Elris smiles.

ELRIS

I'll speak to you tomorrow.

NIMELLA

I look forward to it.

ELRIS

Elris out.

The Federation logo replaces the Vedek's face on the screen, and she instantly stops smiling...

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise cruises past.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- Y'LAN'S LAB

Dojar and Y'lan sit staring at each other, then, after a moment or so:

DOJAR

This is ridiculous. I can't stand it anymore. Either you speak out loud or we don't speak at all.

Y'LAN

I'll always be in your mind, Gril. You'd be surprised how difficult it is to stop ones thought patterns entirely.

DOJAR

But I don't want you in my mind all of the time!

Y'LAN

Unfortunate.

Beat.

DOJAR

Y'lan, listen to me. Talora is trying to make our friendship work. She's going all out to try and make it work and I don't need you brushing it all aside when she does so.

Y'LAN

I do not wish to go to the social exchange. I have made my views on the topic clear and thus we will not attend.

DOJAR

There you go with that "we" again! I'm going. I don't care whether you are or not.

Y'LAN

I will make it uncomfortable for you.

DOJAR

You'd do that just to be bitter?

Y'LAN

I enjoy our time together.

DOJAR

But we spend nothing but time together, Y'lan! I need to talk to other people as well if I'm going to understand this.

Y'LAN

But I will still be present.

Beat.

DOJAR

I know. But it's still better than nothing.

They look at each other.

DOJAR (CONT'D)

No! You're not!

Y'LAN

Commander Talora invited me also.

DOJAR

She did it to be polite!

Y'LAN

I do not care. I too shall be attending.

DOJAR

Would you attend if I did not?

Y'LAN

No.

Dojar sighs.

DOJAR

You are beginning to irritate me.

Y'LAN

How so?

Dojar just looks at him for a second and turns away and begins working on something else inside the lab. Y'lan looks at him, disconcerted, but eventually walks away and begins working on something else also.

There is a pause as they continue to work.

DOJAR
Tomorrow night, 2100.

Another pause.

Y'LAN
I won't be.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- BRIEFING ROOM

All of the senior staff (minus Dojar) are gathered around the table, with Cross at the head. Also present is Carter.

CROSS
And so it's up to us to decide what to do about it. Do we let Mr. Carter here present his report and deny all involvement in it... or do we inform Starfleet Intelligence and start an inquiry into the admission of the Federation's most valuable new member in the last thirty years?

CARTER
You can't inform Starfleet.

GREY
Why not?

CARTER
You just can't! I'm a member of the press, I am granted certain rights.

CROSS
But you brought the story to a Starfleet officer, therefore it has to be reported.

CARTER
I brought it to you in confidence!

CROSS
Not a wise choice then.

Carter sighs.

ELRIS
We could always just let it go. No one beyond this room knows about it yet... they don't have to.

CARTER
I'd be willing to live with that.

Elris glares at him.

CROSS

Unfortunately, I can't. Something like this is serious and I can't just look the other way.

ELRIS

It sounds like you've already made your decision.

CROSS

I know what I'm supposed to do.

ELRIS

Inform Starfleet Intelligence.

Cross nods.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Then do what you have to do. Don't delay the inevitable.

QUINLAN

What are you going to say about how we found out about it?

Cross looks over at Carter.

CROSS

Obviously, I can't say that we found out through you.

CARTER

Obviously.

ELRIS

Hold on, why not? I don't understand.

CROSS

Mr. Carter found out about the transactions illegally.

ELRIS

All the more reason not to tell Starfleet then!

CROSS

Informing Starfleet isn't open to discussion anymore, you said so yourself.

ELRIS

But why are we protecting this... this rat? What has he done for us that deserves our protection?

Cross looks at Carter.

CARTER

Nothing. But journalism is my life.
You all know that. I can't put that
at risk.

Elris sighs, Cross rubs his hands through his hair. He looks
over at Talora.

CROSS

Any ideas, Commander?

TALORA

An anonymous source. If Starfleet
presses for details inform them that
the Government you obtained the
information from does not wish to be
named.

CROSS

Anyone with half a brain cell will
automatically suspect Romulus.

TALORA

That does not matter, my government
will deny it and yours will be
satisfied.

Cross nods.

CROSS

Sounds good.

CARTER

I'd still rather not tell anyone
about it.

QUINLAN

If you weren't going to report what
you found, why did you start
investigating?

Carter ponders this for a moment.

CARTER

I would have.
(beat)
I don't want you stealing my fire.

CROSS

I think you need to leave now, Mr.
Carter.

CARTER

But...

He sees the look of resolve on Cross and the rest of the
gathered crew's faces.

He looks at them, especially Elris and sighs.

CARTER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

Beat.

Elris looks at him with a firm, resolved expression in her eyes.

ELRIS

I think you've outdone yourself over
this last week, don't you?

With that, Carter slowly exits.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- BRIDGE -- CONTINUOUS

The Briefing Room doors slide open and Carter exits out on to the Bridge walking out around the outside of the Bridge looking at the view of Bajor that is currently displayed on the viewscreen.

He walks to the turbolift doors and as he turns around, after stepping inside, the doors close.

CLOSE ON TURBOLIFT DOORS

Match to previous shot.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

Still on the turbolift doors, when they open and we pull back to follow Carter walking down the empty corridor.

He turns a corner and we watch him enter his quarters.

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

Carter enters and walks over to the bathroom. He takes off his tie and unfastens the top button of his shirt.

He looks at his reflection straight in the eyes before splashing his face with water.

He shivers.

He turns and walks through to the bedroom and throws himself on his bed.

As we watch the rotation of Bajor outside of his window speeds up and the systems sun comes around plunging the Enterprise into light, indicating the passage of time.

The lights of the quarters come back up.

COMPUTER

The time is 0630 hours.

Carter groans and turns in his bed. He reaches out for a control pad next to him and a screen opposite the bed activates.

It takes him a while to come around from sleep, but Carter's focus gradually returns and he looks at the screen displaying FNN footage.

We notice that it is of the Vedek's grounds, the same grounds that her and Elris walked through earlier in the episode. There seems to be a lot of activity from the local police/militia and a banner is displayed across the bottom of the screen. It reads:

BODY OF VEDEK NIMELLA ROSAI FOUND ON BAJOR.

On Carter's tired, shocked and saddened face we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise glides past the camera in orbit of Bajor.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM

Cross is sat working at his desk when the door CHIMES.

CROSS

Enter.

The doors slide open and Carter enters. Cross looks up from what he is doing before returning to it, not acknowledging the reporter at all.

Carter seems very eager to talk to Cross, in an uneasy, nervous kind of way, where as Cross seemingly couldn't care less.

CARTER

(awkwardly)

May I speak to you, Captain?

CROSS

I'm working on a speech for the Vedek's memorial service, so I'd rather you didn't interrupt me.

CARTER

It would only take a minute.

Cross sighs.

CROSS

A minute.

Carter nods.

CARTER

I wanted to thank you.

CROSS

What for?

CARTER

For recommending that my involvement in all of this was not drawn to the attention of the general public.

Cross stops working and looks up at him.

CARTER (CONT'D)

At least something has... turned out
for the best out of a very... bad
situation.

A beat as Cross sits looking at him.

CROSS

Excuse me?

Beat.

CARTER

(awkwardly)

I... I said thank you, Sir.

From here until the end of the scene Cross gets more and more worked up until he is struggling very hard to control his rage.

CROSS

I know what you said I just can't
believe that you're saying it.

CARTER

I don't understand.

CROSS

The universe isn't all about you.
Someone died today because of your
actions, someone who happened to be
very close to myself and Doctor Elris.
And the first thing that you say to
me is that your grateful that your
careers still intact? Do you think
that I give a damn about whether
your career had reached an all time
high or has... blown itself a hole
in the deepest mine on Andor? I
couldn't give a damn, Carter, not
now, not ever. Now get out of my
sight.

CARTER

I wasn't suggesting that...

CROSS

(furious)

You're excused, Mr. Carter.

Carter sighs and turns his back to leave.

CARTER

(as he exits)

I'm very sorry on your loss.

Cross looks up at him leaving through the door and sighs, before getting back to work.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- REC DECK

Start off on the doors to the Rec Deck to see Quinlan enter. She looks over to see Elris sitting opposite the huge windows, and walks over to her.

QUINLAN

Hey.

ELRIS

Hey.

QUINLAN

I'm sorry about the Vedek.

ELRIS

Thank you.

QUINLAN

I hope that there's no bad blood between us.

ELRIS

Why would there be bad blood?

QUINLAN

I helped Carter...

(sighs)

..."dig up the dirt" on her. He asked me to help him and I didn't really know what I was getting myself into until it was too late.

ELRIS

You didn't have to tell me that.

QUINLAN

I know. But I feel like I'm responsible. That I killed her.

Elris visibly holds herself back (towards what Carter has done) during the following piece of dialogue.

ELRIS

But you didn't kill her. Neither did Carter. I hate him for what he did to her, I hope that he holds himself entirely responsible for what happened but it wasn't his fault. And Nimella would have been the first person to have said that. I have to respect that.

QUINLAN

But what about you?

ELRIS

I want him to leave.

She sighs.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

I was thinking. He's nothing more than a glorified hologram really, is he? I mean, what does he actually do for the crew?

QUINLAN

Nothing.

ELRIS

Exactly. All that matters to him is his next story and he doesn't care what lengths he has to go to to get it.

(beat)

How can anyone live like that, Jen? We've dedicated our lives to helping people, and he's dedicated his to making dirt out of them.

She sighs and stands to leave.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

I'll see you later.

QUINLAN

Yeah.

As Elris exits, Quinlan sighs and look over to a table on the upper level where Talora, Dojar and Y'lan are all seated. The camera pans up to where an awkward conversation is place as Talora and Dojar eat, while Y'lan watches.

TALORA

How's the Hegemony, Y'lan?

Y'LAN

It has returned to a form of normality.

DOJAR

But only just.

TALORA

I see.

(beat)

They went off in quite a hurry after the portal was destroyed.

Y'LAN

Can you place blame on them?

TALORA

Not really.

There is a long pause. Dojar looks at Y'lan for a moment.

Y'LAN

Would you like another drink,
Commander?

Talora looks at her glass, it is only three-quarters empty.

TALORA

This will suffice. I'm on duty in
two hours.

Dojar looks at Y'lan again.

Y'LAN

I insist. The same drink once more?

She looks over at Dojar who nods.

TALORA

Please.

Y'lan walks off down the stairs leaving Talora and Dojar
alone together.

DOJAR

Thank you for suggesting this, Talora.
It's been good to talk to you again.

TALORA

And you also.

DOJAR

But... I still meant what I said
before. This... thing with Y'lan.
I don't understand it and I just
feel this... need for him to be here
right now. And I don't know how
long it's going to last.

TALORA

I understand.

Dojar looks as though he is about to say "No you don't," but
holds back.

TALORA (CONT'D)

But, I hope that we can still continue
our friendship. I miss you, Gril.

(MORE)

TALORA (CONT'D)

I don't want to just let everything we've had together go because of this. Please tell me what we can still be friends.

DOJAR

Of course.

(pause)

I know that Y'lan's presence is... somewhat awkward. But I'm sure we can still continue what we had before.

Talora half smiles.

DOJAR (CONT'D)

It would not be the same if you did not continue to fulfill that role in my life.

He smiles. Talora looks uneasy.

TALORA

What are... the full implications of your mind link with Y'lan?

DOJAR

You've noticed the changes in my speech patterns?

TALORA

I have.

DOJAR

Like I said, I hope that it's only temporary. But then, I don't. I feel the link, Talora, I feel all the knowledge and all the power that's on offer to me and it's amazing. I feel Y'lan, I feel the Q'tami and they're such an extraordinary people -- I feel so privileged to be a part of that, and I don't want it to stop. Maybe it will, maybe it won't. I don't know.

There is a pause as Talora looks at Dojar, before:

TALORA

I see.

(beat)

It has been good to speak to you again.

She stands to leave.

DOJAR

I thought you said that you weren't on duty for another two hours?

TALORA

I have work to do.

Dojar looks at her doubtfully.

DOJAR

All right. I hope we can do this again. Soon.

TALORA

Soon.

She nods before exiting as Y'lan returns with the drinks.

Y'LAN

Is Commander Talora not remaining?

DOJAR

No. She's got work.

Y'LAN

And I have just bought drinks. How unfortunate.

(beat)

Then we can return to my laboratory.

DOJAR

Not just yet. I want to stay here. Look at the stars.

Y'LAN

I wish to return. You can look at the stars upon our arrival.

DOJAR

Then do so. I'm going to stay here.

Y'LAN

Not until you wish to return also.

DOJAR

Dammit, Y'lan, just go! I'll see you back there!

Y'lan looks at him for a second before exiting through the doors on the upper level.

Dojar stands up and walks down the stairs looking through the window as he does so. He stops approximately three quarters of the way down the stairs and continues staring into space. He sees Carter on the lower level, also looking out. He walks over to him.

DOJAR (CONT'D)

If it isn't the man of the hour.

CARTER

Not funny.

DOJAR

(half to himself)

Must be the mind link.

CARTER

What?

DOJAR

Nothing, nothing. How are you feeling?

CARTER

Not so good.

DOJAR

Your own self interest appears to be relatively intact and you don't seem to care for much else. Why aren't you happy?

CARTER

This little thing called guilt.

DOJAR

Apart from that?

CARTER

Nothing.

DOJAR

But guilt doesn't mean anything. All actions past, present and future are unchangeable -- what you feel for them must be nothing.

Carter looks confused.

CARTER

You sound like Y'lan.

DOJAR

Perhaps. But consider, I had effectively put my relationship with Commander Talora on hold due to my current circumstance. She invited me to dinner to renew our friendship and I initially refused -- if it had not been intended for me to renew my friendship with the Commander that, would not have happened, but I have,

(MORE)

DOJAR (CONT'D)
and our actions have drawn to a
satisfying conclusion.

CARTER
How does that relate to me, at all?

DOJAR
Sometimes you just have to look beyond
yourself and to the actions that are
forming around you because a lot of
the time, your consciousness puts up
safeguards to prevent you from finding
the action, that while risk heavy in
the short term, is the most worthwhile
in the long term.

CARTER
For the greater good?

DOJAR
Or for the lesser good. It depends
which way you look at it.

Dojar turns and walks away, leaving Carter looking out into
space.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

Carter walks down a corridor and towards Sickbay.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- SICKBAY -- CONTINUOUS

The doors part and he sees Elris working inside. He quietly
steps in and stands and watches her as she turns around.

ELRIS
What the hell are you doing here?

CARTER
I came to talk.

ELRIS
Why would I want to talk to you?

CARTER
Because I feel as bad as you do right
now.

ELRIS
Shouldn't you be feeling a lot worse?

CARTER
Why?

ELRIS

Oh, I don't know, those little pangs of guilt that any normal humanoid should feel.

CARTER

I feel that.

ELRIS

My God, there is a soul in there after all.

Carter sighs.

CARTER

I want to make it go away.

ELRIS

If only it were that simple.

CARTER

I want to dedicate my next program to her.

ELRIS

No way.

CARTER

What?

ELRIS

I said no way! There's no way she's being commemorated in a Carter Investigates.

CARTER

I want to do something to remember her by.

ELRIS

Then go and give some money to some Bajoran orphans or something, I couldn't care less.

CARTER

Whatever, but I'm going to do this with or without your help.

Elris stops for a minute.

ELRIS

What did you say?

CARTER

With or without your help. You could help me make it the memorial you want it to be.

ELRIS

And no doubt your biggest audience
since the show started.

CARTER

Perhaps.

Elris gives him a look.

CARTER (CONT'D)

(unsure of himself)

But that... doesn't matter?

Elris nods.

ELRIS

I'm going to lay down some ground
rules for this program, and if they're
not followed I might just ask
Lieutenant Grey to make some last
minute repairs to the subspace
communications array -- and its backup --
so listen up.

CARTER

Right. Listening.

ELRIS

One, you honor the Vedek's memory
with a touching tribute that will
make the people of Bajor
overwhelmingly proud of her. Two,
you will not cash in on having the
final interview with her, and three,
you will not mention anything what
you heard about the referendum,
because if you do, you won't be
welcome in this system for a long
time to come. And Captain Cross
tells me he hasn't got any plans to
leave it for quite some time. Got
me?

CARTER

(confidently)

I wouldn't worry.

ELRIS

Good. So when do we start?

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CARTER'S QUARTERS

The quarters are darkened as the doors opposite us part,
letting in a narrow shaft of light inside of which a
silhouette makes its way forward.

It heads towards the terminal and activates it, the light illuminates the silhouettes face and we see that it is Carter.

He begins to organize his equipment before calling up the title card for the next Carter Investigates. As we watch him work, a subtitle appears beneath it:

THE CASE OF THE VEDEK'S LOST ROBES

We let this hang for a moment before...

DISSOLVE TO:

SEQ: MONTAGE

We see clips from the interview with the Vedek, portraying her as a kind, warm hearted person whose political ideas were never in her own interest, but in the interest of her people.

Following this, we see some footage of Carter explaining how he got involved in the Vedek's story and how it developed into something that quickly spun out of control.

Following this, we see the images we sat at the end of Act Three of the beauty spot the Vedek's body was found at. We cut between this and a gradual closing in on Carter's eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise in orbit of Bajor.

Caption:

THREE DAYS LATER

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- REC DECK

The lounge doors open and Boyle and Carter enter. It's quite full in anticipation of the new program.

BOYLE

Looks like a good turn out.

Carter nods. He looks around and sees various crew members talking, but the main cast appear divided. Cross, Elris and Quinlan all sit alone, while Talora, Dojar and Y'lan all sit talking near the windows.

We pull out to see that everything is happening around Carter, leaving a large space around him in a perfect circle. Even Boyle has moved away from him, and he is alone.

We pull out and up and see that the lounge is packed full, except for the space around Carter, which is deserted until everyone begins to close in on him, getting closer and closer as though no one realizes he is there. Closer and closer they get to him before they all begin to crush him and as he screams for them to get away and unsuccessfully attempts to push them away from him they keep on getting closer and closer until...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CARTER'S QUARTERS

...Carter suddenly JOLTS AWAKE. He takes a breath and looks around him. We pull out to see that he is wearing a suit and laid on a sofa. Boyle stands over him.

BOYLE

You ready?

CARTER

Yeah. Sure.

He stands up and straightens his suit before exiting, Boyle by his side.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

Carter and Boyle walk down a corridor, Carter in a full suit, Boyle in smart civilian garb.

BOYLE

You don't have to worry about anything. You made the right choice.

CARTER

That's a great comfort coming from you.

BOYLE

Oh, thanks.

CARTER

(sighs)
I mean... I appreciate the sentiment...

BOYLE

No you don't.

CARTER

Because I don't feel that way. I just want to get this story out of the way and move on to something else.

BOYLE

I thought you said that you felt
attached to it?

CARTER

Not in a good way.

Boyle nods as they reach the entrance to the Rec Deck and enter.

INT. ENTERPRISE -- REC DECK -- CONTINUOUS

They enter, and like in his dream there is quite a crowd gathered.

BOYLE

Looks like a good turn out.

Beat.

CARTER

Stay close to me.

BOYLE

What do you mean?

CARTER

Just... don't walk away.

BOYLE

(confused)

Okay...

They walk towards a free table in the center of the room, seeing various crewmembers as they pass who acknowledge their presence.

Notably absent are all of the main cast -- with the exception of Elris, who lingers in the background, watching Carter and Boyle enter.

They finally reach the table and take a seat.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

How are you feeling?

CARTER

Wrong.

BOYLE

Wrong?

CARTER

Yeah.

He looks like he may be about to say more, before he sees Elris approaching from behind Boyle.

Elris smiles sardonically upon seeing him.

ELRIS
Mind if I take a seat?

She doesn't wait for a reply and takes a seat from an adjacent table and seats herself.

BOYLE
Yes, actually.

ELRIS
I didn't ask you.

She looks over at Carter who is sweating slightly.

ELRIS (CONT'D)
How are you doing?

CARTER
I don't know.

ELRIS
Did you send the program?

CARTER
Of course I did.

ELRIS
So what's wrong?

He looks up at her.

CARTER
(angry)
How the hell am I supposed to know?
I don't have a clue what's going on
or how I'm supposed to feel, so just
do us all a favor and leave me alone
will you?
(beat)
If you'd excuse me, I think I'd prefer
to watch this edition alone.

He stands and leaves leaving Elris and Boyle sat together,
both looking awkward and confused.

BOYLE
He gets like that when he's stressed.
(beat)
Do you think you could give him
anything to relieve it? ...Actually,
to hell with that, whatever you'd
have given him, give it to me... I
have to live with him.

ELRIS

Come to Sickbay around 2100, I'm
sure I can stir up my deadliest
poison.

Boyle gives her a sarcastic look, before the lights dim down
and we hear the drum roll that is the signature of the
Federation News Network as the volume is cranked up.

ANNOUNCER

Good evening, and welcome to the
Federation News Network! Tonight's
"Carter Investigates" has been
replaced by "Vulcan Nights," an
investigation into the aftereffects
of Vulcan massages.

General confusion sets in as the crew look at each other,
wondering what is going on.

Boyle and Elris look at each other, confused.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CARTER'S QUARTERS

Carter looks on in shock and as the announcement continues...

ANNOUNCER

Carter Investigates will rejoin us
later in the year after a short
hiatus.

...He hits some controls on his terminal. A grumpy, old
looking man who stares Carter square in the eyes replaces
the opening credits of "Vulcan Nights."

His moustache twitches from time to time as he speaks, when
it appears obvious that he is holding something back.

PRODUCER

Ah, Lewis. I was expecting your
call.

CARTER

(furious)
I bet you were!

The Producer seems unfazed by Carter's outburst.

PRODUCER

What can I do for you?

CARTER

Isn't that obvious?

PRODUCER

Not to me.

CARTER

Maybe we could start with an explanation?

PRODUCER

Ah, well, you see Lewis, your programs are always controversial. Who can forget the "My Son's a Klingon-Tribble Hybrid" special? Happy days, my friend!

(beat)

But... this program was just a little too controversial, my friend. There are... people in high places who are big supporters of the FNN, who would be extremely upset if what you wrote got into the public domain. Thus, we could not use your latest article.

CARTER

Why didn't you tell me?

PRODUCER

Because we didn't have to.

Pause.

CARTER

You can't do this to me!

(beat)

It's my life.

PRODUCER

You need to understand, Lewis, this isn't about you. This was never about you. There are bigger things at stake than your career.

CARTER

Like what?

The producer looks at him, cynically.

PRODUCER

I don't know. But we can't show the program.

CARTER

I was put on this ship for a reason, dammit! What good am I doing here if you're not showing what's happening?

PRODUCER

You're not. We'll be in touch.

CARTER

But...

But it is too late, the screen has gone blank.

CARTER (CONT'D)

...what am I supposed to do now?

He looks at his reflection in the screen.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- READY ROOM

Cross and Talora sit chatting on the couches opposite Cross's desk.

TALORA

And he would like to do it again.
Soon.

CROSS

He said that?

Talora nods.

TALORA

I don't think that things will ever
be the same between us... and I
believe that I am only just beginning
to realize that. That I have been
deluding myself.

CROSS

Don't worry about it. Anyway, Dojar
doesn't seem to think so.

TALORA

Indeed. But the situation is
uncomfortable for me.

(beat)

Dojar is not the only person who
needs the space under these new
circumstances.

Cross smiles.

TALORA (CONT'D)

Doctor Elris warned me that I could
be making things worse for myself by
pursuing matters between us.

(pause)

I believe that I have done so.

CROSS

Wait and see, Commander... Wait and see.

Talora raises an intrigued eyebrow and looks out of the windows into space...

The door chimes.

CROSS (CONT'D)

This will be Doctor Elris. Enter.

The doors part and Elris enters.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Doctor, I'm glad you could join us.

ELRIS

Is this about Carter?

She walks in and seats herself.

CROSS

Mostly.

ELRIS

I take it you've seen that his program was pulled?

CROSS

Probably for the best.

ELRIS

On any other occasion.

CROSS

What do you mean?

ELRIS

The program that he made. It was about the Vedek. But it wasn't insulting and it didn't... pull her to pieces. It showed her how she was. And they pulled it. It was the type of program he should be making.

CROSS

That's... different.

ELRIS

Maybe you should ask him for a copy?

CROSS

Maybe I will.

ELRIS

Anyway... what did you call about?

Cross nods over towards Talora.

CROSS

Commander?

TALORA

Earlier this evening we received a report from Starfleet Intelligence. They have completed their initial investigation.

Elris looks at Cross, looking straight into his eyes.

ELRIS

It wasn't rigged, was it?

Cross shakes his head.

TALORA

The report indicates that the money was genuinely used to help the Bajoran people.

Elris looks at her blankly for a second, before turning to Cross.

At this point Elris begins to weep, and from here on down she begins to break down until her eyes are red from tears.

ELRIS

I don't understand. How can this be happening?

CROSS

As far as Intelligence can tell, no one was bribed and all of the votes are accounted for. There's nothing to suggest that the...

ELRIS

I know, I get that!

(beat)

But... if that didn't happen... why did she have to die? Why did she do what she did, why didn't she deny it?

CROSS

We don't know.

ELRIS

She took her life for nothing!

CROSS

Hey, hey, it's okay.

He holds her as she weeps and indicates for Talora to leave the room, she does so.

ELRIS

It's not okay, Neil! Nothing is okay! This planet... I... ever since I came back to it, nothing has been okay! The Q'tami, being stabbed and now this! What's wrong with me, Neil? I'm causing all this! What's wrong?

He looks out towards Bajor as he continues to hold her.

CROSS

We'll find out what happened. I promise.

From this we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CORRIDOR

Elris walks around the corner of a corridor, her eyes red from tears. She looks as though she is in quite a state.

REVERSE ANGLE

Carter exits his quarters and walks down the corridor, his head down. He seems lost in his thoughts and almost misses Elris passing him in the corridor.

He does not appear to have taken any notice of her tears.

CARTER

Hello.

ELRIS

(quietly)

Hey.

Carter finally notices that Elris has tears in her eyes.

CARTER

You've been crying.

ELRIS

(sarcastically)

A little.

CARTER

Are you all right?

ELRIS

(half laughs)

Not really.

(pause)

You know what? I just realized something. I was starting to believe it.

CARTER

Believe what?

ELRIS

(disbelieving)

Everything that you said. That the referendum was rigged, that Nimella was responsible... I was starting to believe it.

CARTER

Believe it. My program got canceled because of what was in that report.

ELRIS

Not anymore.

CARTER

Why not?

ELRIS

You're going to find out sooner or later -- Starfleet Intelligence completed their initial investigation. The voting wasn't rigged. There was no bribery.

CARTER

What?

ELRIS

None of what you reported was true.

CARTER

But... that's impossible. I was canceled for nothing!

ELRIS

(shouts)

She died for nothing!

Beat.

ELRIS (CONT'D)

You haven't changed at all, have you?

(MORE)

ELRIS (CONT'D)

Just when I was starting to think that you might change, and that you might take a look around you... I've never liked you, Lewis, but now I know why no one else does either. I had some hope for you. You obviously didn't deserve it.

CARTER

I have changed!

ELRIS

No you haven't! You're just you. That's it. Everyone else is the world around them. You can't understand that. And you never will.

Carter looks at her, distressed.

CARTER

But my last program...

ELRIS

I appreciate it... but in the end, you killed her and you have to live with that.

(beat)

I hope you die trying.

As she leaves we watch as Carter turns around and heads in the opposite direction.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- REC DECK

Carter enters and walks over towards the giant windows, currently looking out towards the surface of Bajor, and watches as a shuttle descends to the surface.

The camera closes in on him, as the last traces of sunlight disappear behind the planet and the room immediately adjacent to the window grows dark, leaving us only with the silhouette of Carter on the screen.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE -- CARTER'S QUARTERS

We watch Carter walk over to his bed and looks at the screen on the opposite wall.

He walks over to his terminal and looks at his camera which sits on the desk, peaceful, inanimate.

He picks it up, the same camera he filmed the interview with the Vedek with, and looks at it for a second, before throwing it with an uncontrollable rage at the screen.

It cracks as the broken camera sends sparks flying into the air as Carter crashes on to his bed.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END