

STAR TREK: RENAISSANCE

Lines in the Sand

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. EARTH

From a clear blue sky, we pan down to the city of Lisbon, home of Earth planetary operations and temporary headquarters of Starfleet.

CUT TO:

INT. STARFLEET HQ -- ADMIRAL PIERSON'S OFFICE

Behind his desk sits Admiral THOM PIERSON, a tall, middle-aged man with dark and penetrating eyes. But instead of working, the Admiral is staring intently at a small biological sample dish.

His concentration, however, is interrupted by a chiming sound.

Pierson jerks his head up, and we see Admiral ELIZABETH DELFUNE enter his office. Pierson quickly stands up and greets her.

PIERSON

Admiral Delfune. Thank you for seeing me on such short notice.

DELFUNE

Of course, Admiral. What can I do for you?

PIERSON

Can I offer you a drink before we get down to business?

DELFUNE

No thank you, I'm fine.

PIERSON

Very well.

They both sit down, Pierson behind his desk and Delfune in a chair facing it.

DELFUNE

So what is this all about?

Pierson nods, seeing Delfune means business.

PIERSON

May I see your comm. badge please?

Delfune looks slightly bewildered by Pierson's request, but she complies nonetheless.

Without saying a word, Pierson lays her comm. badge on his desk. Then, taking a pair of tweezers from his drawer, he picks up a tiny green speck from the biological samples dish and places it on Delfune's comm. badge.

PIERSON

I presume you've heard about the 'incident' between the Mitsukake and the Romulan Warbird in the Dorias sector?

DELFUNE

I have. Anyone would think a certain former Commander Talora might have something to do with it.

PIERSON

One might. But these are uncertain times that we live in.

DELFUNE

(raises an eyebrow)

I don't know about you, Admiral, but I'm not aware of any other Romulans sympathetic to Cross's cause.

PIERSON

And I'm not sure about you, Admiral, but I wasn't aware we had any reliable intelligence on Cross's 'cause'.

Beat.

DELFUNE

I meant generally speaking.

PIERSON

Of course you did.

(beat)

Generally speaking one might say that.

DELFUNE

These are strange times that we live in.

PIERSON

"Uncertain times"? That's an understatement if ever I heard one. Imagine explaining the astro-political climate in the Alpha Quadrant to someone from 30 years ago: the Cardassians are a minor power, The Klingons are engaged in a civil war, the Federation is putting down a rebellion, and the Romulans aren't even taking advantage of the situation.

A beat.

PIERSON

Strange times indeed.

Delfune looks over at him, confused.

DELFUNE

What's this all about, Admiral?

PIERSON

Oh... nothing. I'm just biding my time.

Delfune looks at him, confused, before Pierson looks down at his desk and Delfune follows his gaze.

Her confusion grows when she sees what is happening to her comm. badge: while they have been talking the green speck has begun expanding, and as we watch the growth rate increased until it covers the whole comm. badge and then begins to eat away at it like an acid.

PIERSON

What do you think of the Federation capital being relocated to Rome?

Delfune, focused on her comm. badge, ignores him. Pierson is unfazed.

PIERSON

Personally, I'm against it. Now don't get me wrong, I certainly don't have anything against The Eternal City. But there is just something about Paris in the springtime...or Paris in any other season for that matter! I wish I could get there more often. Although, I must say, I am enjoying Lisbon quite a lot. Good scenery... good weather... good women.

By this time, Delfune's comm. badge has vanished completely and Delfune has not even heard Pierson's last remark. There is nothing left but a small, green pile of dust on the center of Pierson's desk. As Delfune continues to stare at it, Pierson looks at it for the first time.

PIERSON

Funny, isn't it? Toldarian rock mold. Eats through gold like acid. What do you think?

DELFUNE

I think I'll need a new comm. badge.

Pierson laughs.

PIERSON

The destruction of your comm. badge could have been easily avoided in those first few seconds simply by blowing the mold off the comm. Badge.

Pierson rises from his desk, adjusts his uniform, and begins pacing around the room. Delfune's eyes follow him.

PIERSON

(becoming more and more frustrated)

But what did we do? We did nothing. We allowed the mold to stay. To grow. To secure a foothold. Once it began to spread in earnest, it was too late. What could have been avoided with a simple flick of the hand now becomes a complicated effort requiring a much larger effort.

DELFUNE

(sarcastically)

I wonder where this is going...

PIERSON

I've spent a great deal of time these last few weeks thinking about Neil Cross and his band of merry men over in the Dorias Sector. It seems to me that while this little rebellion might not pose much of a threat to us right now, Starfleet Command doesn't seem to be looking at the larger picture. Cross could simply remain nothing more than a nuisance, that's true. But perhaps his rebellion could grow, spread, and consume the entire Federation.

(beat)

I suppose we could always wait. Take care of that problem when and if it becomes a threat.

Pierson sits back down behind his desk, and uses his dark and penetrating eyes to stare right at Delfune.

PIERSON

Or, Admiral, we could crush the Dorias rebellion right now. I don't think I need to tell you which option I prefer.

DELFUNE

If only you could convince a few more Admirals of that...

PIERSON

Do you really think I'd bring you here for nothing, Admiral?

(beat)

I don't need your help. Earlier today, with the approval of Starfleet Command, I began assembling a task force to deal with this rebellion in a swift and definitive manner.

DELFUNE

Excellent. But why bring me all the way to Lisbon just to tell me about your little task force in person?

PIERSON

Because you, Elizabeth, are going to be on it.

Delfune sits stone-faced. She isn't happy.

PIERSON

Say something Elizabeth.

DELFUNE

Why me? Why aren't you going to be out there with them?

Pierson just looks at her, carefully considering his reply.

PIERSON

Think of it as a request. For a friend.

DELFUNE

We're not friends, Admiral. We're colleagues who respect each other. Now why don't you just stop playing your silly little mind games and start telling me what's going on?

PIERSON

Oh, Elizabeth... I've told you nothing but the truth. If you're not going to do this for me, do it for the Federation! Surely you can understand that?

Delfune doesn't respond, she just looks at Pierson with a look of suspicion in her eyes.

PIERSON

I'll take that as a yes.

Pierson looks at Delfune, trying to get her to smile or at least react.

PIERSON

I'll put your name down for my little pleasure cruise.

(beat, then calmly)

Don't worry, Elizabeth. We're going to destroy them. Neil Cross is a dead man.

As Delfune looks cynically back at Pierson, we slowly

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO -- EVENING

Close on the face of NEIL CROSS as he walks through the quiet streets of San Francisco one fine evening. Children play all around him, their parents look on smiling and laughing. An elderly couple walks past him, holding hands, whilst a younger couple sit on a bench, the man holding the woman in his arms.

Suddenly, all of this comes to a complete and sudden stop.

Almost instinctively Cross suddenly looks behind him to see the Golden Gate Bridge in its familiar position along side Starfleet Command. In the sky above the bridge we hear a large BOOM and see a fantastic explosion as debris begins to rain down from the sky.

Cross begins to walk away from this, faster and faster, but as he does so the harder and harder it becomes, as if gravity is rapidly increasing.

Finally he drops to his knees and looks to the sky. He sees what remains of the explosion, and the debris that continues to rain down from the sky.

All around, we see people screaming, the same people from earlier but with huge wounds across their faces and bodies. Though they scream but their mouths make no sound, we can only hear low pitched muffled screaming sounds in the distance.

As Cross is forced to stop running, he looks down to his feet. He notices something. He reaches for it...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. EPSILON -- CROSS'S QUARTERS

Cross quickly raises his upper body and wakes up in a cold sweat to find himself in his bed. He sits up, tries to regain his senses, and steps out of bed. Still in the dark, he walks over to a sink and splashes cold water on his face.

Cross looks at himself in the mirror, perhaps not entirely liking the man staring back at him, before noticing the small leather case seen in "Coalescence". Cross's response to it is positively Pavlovian, and he cringes in sadness at its sight. He then walks slowly to his bed and sits down.

CROSS

Computer, begin personal log.

A beat.

CROSS

It's been several months since the incident in San Francisco, and I thought these dreams would be over by now. What a foolish thing. When in my life has trauma ever simply gone away? When in anyone's life has trauma ever gone away? It doesn't work like that.

(beat)

This dream wasn't as bad as most. I didn't see Lea or my sister crying for help, and my teeth didn't start falling out of my mouth.

(beat)

Every waking moment I find myself wondering what it's all supposed to mean.

Another beat.

CROSS

Computer, what time is it?

COMPUTER VOICE

The time is 0649.

He sighs.

CROSS

Time to go to a meeting to figure out  
how to save the galaxy. Computer, end  
log.

He exits.

CUT TO:

INT. EPSILON COMMAND CENTRE

Bustling with activity and conversation, we see several dozen people in this room, including CARLA PETRUCCI, KIERAN MACGREGOR, TALORA, AIA, PETER HAMILTON, and the usual assortment of Councilors, dignitaries, etc. Sitting along the wall in the back of the room are two young Starfleet ensigns. One is a human male named BASTIAN SCHINDLER, the other a red-haired Bajoran female named MEXES NYA. If she weren't Bajoran, in fact, we might mistake her for a relative of MacGregor.

Both are waiting for the meeting to start, with Schindler fidgeting nervously in his chair.

SCHINDLER

So... why are you here?

(beat)

I mean... why did they get you to come to  
this meeting?

(beat)

That didn't sound right, did it?

Mexes smiles and laughs at Schindler's nervousness.

MEXES

I was assigned to be an orderly for  
Commander Talora and the Romulan  
delegation.

SCHINDLER

Really? I'm helping out Captain Cross.

MEXES

Just a... quick side note, but if you're working with the Captain, shouldn't you be with him instead of... in here?

SCHINDLER

He'll be here soon enough. Besides, he's in his quarters right now. He's barely said two words to me and I'm not stupid enough to disturb him when he's not on duty. Especially at 0700.

MEXES

Not on duty? If Commander Talora heard you saying that I think she'd... do whatever it is that Romulan's do when they're mad.

SCHINDLER

Glare at me?

MEXES

(smiles)

Something like that. Commander Talora says everyone's always on duty, now more than ever. And I agree with her completely.

SCHINDLER

I suppose. But I'm not sure I like these new "duties". On the Enterprise I flew a starship. Now I'm nothing more than a glorified errand boy.

MEXES

I know, but what can they do about it? You should just be grateful we weren't ordered to clean up that mystery goo on Deck 12.

Schindler can only smile at this. He doesn't want to play any part in the cleaning of the mystery goo.

MEXES

(grinning)

Besides, it's not so bad. I've always admired Talora.

Beat.

SCHINDLER

I guess I've always admired Cross.

MEXES

Why not? The man's only been held responsible for two massacres now.

Schindler gives her a look, it's obvious he's completely serious about this. Mexes responds to the look and tries to make nice again.

MEXES

I suppose you could do worse...

SCHINDLER

Cross is probably the reason why I came to this godforsaken station in the first place. I can't believe it: I'm out of the academy for a year and a half and already I've joined an armed rebellion against the Federation! This is definitely not what I had in mind when I enlisted in Starfleet.

A moment passes, and we can see on Schindler's face that he is a conflicted young man.

SCHINDLER

I just hope I haven't made a mistake...

Mexes doesn't make eye contact with Schindler. Instead, she is gazing admiringly at Talora, who is talking with a group of Councilors on the other side of the room.

MEXES

Well, I know I haven't.

Their conversation (which was ending anyway) is interrupted by Carla, who points to a large map as she addresses the room. All the dignitaries have taken their seats, and we notice Cross has joined them.

CARLA

Good morning everyone. I'm not one for pleasantries so I'll get right to the point.

CROSS

(whispering to Cross)

Not one for pleasantries? I'd have never guessed...

TALORA

(smiles)

Look who you're talking to.

Cross smiles back.

CARLA

I know we all would have liked to take things one step at a time, but it appears our hand is being forced. Intelligence reports I've received indicate a large buildup of starships outside the Dorias Sector. From what we can ascertain, it appears Starfleet is planning a preemptive strike against us.

An eruption of voices and even a few gasps emanate through the room as everyone reacts to the news in various ways.

MACGREGOR

Now wait a second. What do you mean our hand is being forced?

AIA

(signing)

And what do you mean by "intelligence reports"? I may have been misinformed, but I don't recall our little organization having a vast spy network at its disposal.

CARLA

(coldly)

I can assure you, Councilor, that my sources are one hundred percent accurate.

Talora looks over to Carla.

TALORA

It would seem to me, much more likely, that this is a precautionary buildup on the part of Starfleet Command. They know that the rebellion's active inside the Dorias sector and are positioning themselves to make their move as soon as we make ours.

CARLA

They wouldn't stand around and wait! They'd be in here looking for leads, trying to figure out where we're going to strike next!

TALORA

Would they?

CARLA

I would.

AIA

(signing)

Unfortunately for us, however, you are not in command of their taskforce. No matter what any of us suggest it will only be that: a suggestion.

More grumbling, rumbling, and general pontificating ensue before Hamilton stands up and begins to speak.

HAMILTON

Captain Cross, what do you think of all of this?

Cross takes a breath and sits forward in his chair a little, ready to address the table.

CROSS

Well first of all Councilor, I'm not a Captain anymore. And secondly, I tend to agree with Carla: I think this fleet movement most likely indicates a preemptive strike.

This revelation causes Talora to raise an eyebrow in her trademark way.

MACGREGOR

What makes you so confident?

CROSS

Because it's too quiet. We haven't seen a Centrist ship since Captain Paxton arrived. They're up to something or they'd be out here sweeping the sector with everything they have. They want to bring us down, they want to bring me down, and they're not going to do that by sitting around talking about it.

CARLA

The man's got a point.

AIA

(signing)

It could be a trap.

CROSS

Either way, we should be prepared for whatever it is they're going to throw at us, because I'm betting it's not going to be a pamphlet on how to defend ourselves from a fleet full of fascists.

MACGREGOR

That's certainly... an interesting way of looking at the situation.

AIA

But true.

CARLA

Then we're all in agreement: it appears the Centrists are planning some kind of strike or counterstrike. The question is...where?

CUT TO:

EXT. LISBON

A shot of the new headquarters of Starfleet, located in a very scenic part of the Portuguese city.

CUT TO:

INT. STARFLEET HQ -- CONFERENCE ROOM

A meeting of the rebellion task force. Pierson and Delfune are there, along with the rear admiral in charge of the Dorias Sector, Admiral JOSHUA PERKINS. Also present are several other high-ranking Starfleet bigwigs, as well as Captain Joel via subspace.

Perkins is standing pointing to a screen that shows the location of the fleet in the Dorias Sector. Everyone else is seated around a conference table listening to him.

PERKINS

...now as you can see, parts of the Fifth Fleet are massing outside the Dorias Sector. In addition, I've ordered the Iliad, the Normandy, and the Ataturk to rendezvous with them. That gives us a total of ten starships once those final three arrive.

DELFUNE

We should operate under the assumption that they know those ships are out there – they might not have any long range sensors that we know of, but we do know that Cross is highly resourceful.

PIERSON

Agreed.

(to Perkins)

Excellent work Admiral. But now we have this presence so close to the rebellion we need a target.

(beat)

I'm open to suggestions.

DELFUNE

Divide the fleet. Send a few ships to each known rebel world and take police action to bring them back in line.

PIERSON

(shakes his head)

Civilians on those worlds could become even more uncooperative if perceived oppression becomes more immediate and apparent.

DELFUNE

Anyone would think they were being oppressed...

Pierson briefly smiles.

PIERSON

We have to be able to make a definitive strike that can bring down at least one rebel stronghold, without igniting the fuse on the others. It's not going to be easy.

PERKINS

Then why bother? My suggestion would be to just wait them out. They're definitely not going to sit around forever, and, as far as we know, they have no idea we're out there. We let them make their move, then we pounce on them once they do. There's no way they'll be able to fight off ten starships.

Joel, relaxing in her chair on the monitor, half laughs at this suggestion.

PERKINS

(bitterly)

I don't recall making a joke, Captain.

JOEL

With all due respect Admiral, I'm not going to sit around while Neil Cross tries to overthrow the Federation. Swift action is needed.

PERKINS

Coming from the woman who's directly responsible for the man escaping on no less than four separate occasions I hardly think that holds up much weight, Captain.

Various mutterings of agreement from around the room as Joel bitterly stares back at the monitor.

JOEL

If we sit around and do nothing Cross will do nothing but build up his forces. We have to take action now while he's weak.

PERKINS

With you and your crew poised to let the man do a runner yet again no doubt?

Joel's anger looks as though it is about to erupt, but Delfune steps in to calm the situation.

DELFUNE

Admiral, I can't deny that Cross has escaped the Leviathan on a frequent number of embarrassing occasions... but Captain Joel knows Captain Cross. We should hear her out.

Joel still doesn't look especially pleased by Delfune's words and is dealt an even harsher blow when Delfune shoots a cold glare in her direction.

PERKINS

If she knows him so well you'd have thought she'd have managed to figure out one of his escape plans by now...

Silence.

PIERSON

What did you have in mind, Captain?

JOEL

Simple: throw everything we have at one single world.

The room turns deathly silent as the Starfleet brass ponders Joel's suggestion.

Delfune lowers her head into her hands.

JOEL

Think about it: the rebellion will be forced to make an all-or-nothing decision. Either they abandon that world, or they bring their entire fleet out into the open.

PERKINS

We can't do that...

At this comment Pierson holds up a hand, continuing to look at Joel.

PIERSON

Carry on, Captain...

But before she can Delfune interrupts.

DELFUNNE

Admiral, Captain Joel's plan could lead to the unprovoked mass slaughter of a civilian population. Do we really want to even risk that?

JOEL

They had it coming!

PIERSON

(condescendingly)

Ladies, ladies. Please calm down. Captain Joel's suggestion has merit... what's important is how we orchestrate it to stop that kind of thing from happening.

Delfune looks at him, amazed.

DELFUNNE

I refuse to be a part of this. Ten Starfleet ships against one world? Have you all lost your minds?

She looks at them for a second before standing to leave.

PIERSON

Sit down, Admiral.

Delfune turns to look at him.

DELFUNE

No, Admiral, I won't...

Pierson sighs, looks at her.

PIERSON

Could I talk to you outside for a moment?

Delfune looks at him, realizing she has no choice in the matter and makes her way towards the door.

INT. STARFLEET HQ - CORRIDOR

Delfune stands outside the door and is quickly joined by Pierson.

PIERSON

What the hell do you think you're doing?

DELFUNE

Refusing to be a part of an operation that could lead to the mass slaughter of millions. You?

PIERSON

It won't.

DELFUNE

How do you know that, Admiral?

A beat, Pierson doesn't reply.

PIERSON

We have to put up a united front in there, Elizabeth. We can't afford to be divided now... the Federation is split up enough.

DELFUNE

Then don't let Joel's plan go ahead.

PIERSON

I can't promise that...

DELFUNE

Can't promise? Admiral, you're not even going to be on the task force! If you want me out there, we do this my way.

A beat as Pierson looks at her.

PIERSON

We'll see about that.

DELFUNE

What's that supposed to mean?

A beat.

PIERSON

Are you ready to go back inside?

Delfune sighs, before turning her back and walking away down the corridor.

From this we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN

EXT. SPACE

Epsilon, drifting amongst the asteroids.

CUT TO:

INT. EPSILON -- LOUNGE

At a lounge on Epsilon, Cross and the freighter ship captain GEORG PAXTON are sitting at a table sharing a meal and a conversation.

PAXTON

So how have you taken to all this?  
Switching from Starfleet to Renegade  
can't be easy.

Cross half smiles, looks down at his food.

CROSS

Almost as easy as this is to digest.

PAXTON

Still not used to it then?

CROSS

It's a little hard to get acquainted  
when there's a fleet full of fuckwits  
trying to kill you every five minutes.

(beat)

It's difficult to get attached, even to  
this.

He sighs as he indicates the station around them.

CROSS

Why get attached when they could come  
in and destroy it at any moment?

PAXTON

The fleet's still building?

CROSS

Eight ships and counting.

PAXTON

Can we tell what they're up to yet?

CROSS

All we know for certain is that there are eight starships right on our doorstep. We don't know what they're going to do.

PAXTON

I guess it could be worse.

CROSS

Oh, yeah. There could be twenty. Or thirty.

He smiles.

PAXTON

(nodding, sarcastically)

I'm happy with eight.

CROSS

Any update on more ships coming to join us?

PAXTON

Probably not as many as you're hoping for. Just a handful, two for certain, third's a possibility.

CROSS

That brings us up to fifty-eight ships.

PAXTON

Fifty-eight to ten... at least it sounds good.

CROSS

Shame about fifty of our ships is equal  
to about one of theirs.

PAXTON

Ever feel that someone up there just  
doesn't like you?

CROSS

More times than I care to remember.

He sighs.

CROSS

But alas, we fight on.

Paxton begins eating his food again, before carrying on  
with the conversation.

PAXTON

You know, I almost joined Starfleet  
when I was younger.

(beat)

When I was little I used to dream about  
being in command of my own starship.

CROSS

So why didn't you?

PAXTON

I was rejected, simple as that. Wasn't  
good enough for the Academy.

CROSS

I'm sorry to hear that... but then,  
Starfleet seems to be making quite a  
lot of mistakes lately.

PAXTON

You're right, I don't care anymore. I haven't for a long time. No offence Captain, but this generation of Starfleet captains isn't anything like the one that I grew up reading about. There aren't people like Picard, Winter, or hell, even Janeway out there anymore. It's a different world that we live in.

CROSS

I agree with you completely.

PAXTON

Anyway, being a freighter captain, you have so much freedom you can pretty much do whatever you want. I wouldn't trade that for the world.

CROSS

Glad to hear it.

PAXTON

Of course, it's not the safest job in the world. Luckily for me, I ran into a friendly Romulan warbird. Now there's something I never thought I'd hear myself say...

They both laugh again. Cross is about to speak, but they are interrupted by a nervous Ensign Schindler, who has just walked up to the table.

SCHINDLER

Sorry to bother you sir, but Commander Pettrucci sent me. She needs to speak with you.

CROSS

Did she say it was urgent?

SCHINDLER

Yes, sir.

CROSS

Oh well, I don't see any red alert lights flashing, I'm sure it can wait.

SCHINDLER

That's probably because most of them are broken, Sir.

Cross gives him a look.

CROSS

Commander Pettrucci has been known, from time to time, to be a bit melodramatic. Isn't that something you've noticed Schmelling?

Beat.

SCHINDLER

Schindler, sir.

CROSS

Schindler, sorry. I knew that.

SCHINDLER

That's okay sir.

CROSS

Why don't you sit down and join us Ensign? Grab a chair.

Needing no further prompting, Schindler sits down with Paxton and Cross.

CROSS

Ensign, this is George Paxton. He's a freighter pilot from...

Unsure of where he is from, Cross looks at Paxton to complete the sentence.

PAXTON

Cassandra V, it's a planet here in the Dorias Sector actually. Got a wife and two kids back home.

CROSS

Excellent. And George, this is Ensign Schindler...

SCHINDLER

Pleasure to meet you, Sir.

Schindler extends his hand.

CROSS

And he is from...

Again Cross does not know the answer, so he gazes at Schindler.

SCHINDLER

Liechtenstein, sir.

PAXTON

Liechtenstein? I think I've heard of that. It's near Trill isn't it?

SCHINDLER

Um, no sir. It's on Earth actually. It's a tiny country in Europe.

PAXTON

Oh I see, my apologies, Schmelling.

Schindler resists rolling his eyes.

PAXTON (CONT'D)

You see, my ancestors have been away from Earth for quite some time. But they sure made a hell of an impact before they left! Have you ever heard of Patrick Henry?

SCHINDLER

The name sounds familiar...

CROSS

He was an eighteenth century diplomat,  
if I recall. He played quite a crucial  
role in the development of democracy on  
Earth.

He looks over to Paxton for reassurance, who gives him it  
by finishing the history lesson.

PAXTON

(nods)

He spoke out against slavery,  
colonialism, and the monarchy. It may  
not seem like much today, but those  
were radical ideas for his times.

(beat)

His most famous quote was "Give me  
liberty or give me death"...

Paxton looks as though he is going to conclude the thought,  
but as soon as the words roll off his tongue he finishes,  
and there's a long beat as Henry's words sink in.

Finally, Schindler breaks the silence.

SCHINDLER

Inspiring words, sir.

PAXTON

You're damn right. That's a creed my  
family has lived by for generations.

CROSS

(pointing to Paxton)

No wonder he joined the rebellion.

Paxton smiles proudly at Cross's compliment, but looks over  
to Schindler for a second.

PAXTON

And do me a favor, stop calling me  
'Sir' would you? I'm just a freighter  
Captain.

Schindler opens his mouth to reply, but before he can,  
Cross stands and interrupts.

CROSS

As you pointed out earlier, out here,  
we're all freighter captains. And if  
these idiots won't quit calling me  
Captain, I'm sure they're not going to  
quit calling you Sir any time soon  
either.

He smiles and Paxton smiles back

CROSS

Anyway, Ensign, we better get going.  
Best not to keep Miss Pettrucci waiting  
too long.

Schindler stands up as well.

SCHINDLER

I agree sir.

PAXTON

Nice meeting you Ensign. And good luck  
to you Neil.

CROSS

Thanks. I think I'm going to need it.  
Good day George.

Cross and Schindler walk out of the lounge and into the  
untidy corridors of Epsilon.

CUT TO:

EXT. ZOL PRIME

A shot of a Bajoran shuttlecraft as it orbits the planet.

CUT TO:

INT. BAJORAN SHUTTLECRAFT -- COCKPIT

TORAN NOA sits at the controls as a tired-looking ELRIS LEA walks in. She yawns and puts her arms around him. She also gives him a kiss on the cheek, a gesture Toran does not return.

ELRIS

What's up with you?

TORAN

Oh... nothing, I'm just a little tired.

Elris sighs and walks around to the front of him, before seating herself on his knee.

ELRIS

I've already told you, you should get some rest. I can take over here for a while.

Toran sighs, but says nothing. Elris looks a little confused.

A beat.

ELRIS

Any word from the informant yet?

TORAN

Nothing yet. Be patient.

ELRIS

We've been here from three days, Noa. Maybe we should just head over to the Dorias Sector and start over?

TORAN

(agitated)

We've been through this before, Lea! It would be like searching for a needle in a haystack. If Starfleet can't find them, what luck would we have?

(beat, he calms himself)

We're best off just waiting here.

ELRIS

You really do need some sleep, don't you?

Beat.

TORAN

Look. As soon as I've met with my contact, I promise I'll get some sleep. Happy?

ELRIS

Mostly.

She leans forward and kisses him.

ELRIS

I just hate it when you're all grumpy.

Beat.

TORAN

I'm sorry.

Elris smiles at him and gives him a hug.

ELRIS

You just concentrate on finding your contact... then start worrying about the fact that I'll be driving.

Toran half smiles, but moments later a close shot of his troubled face reveals that he is hiding something.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR — REMOTE PLANET

All types are drinking and socializing in a dimly-lit bar. In a corner, a screen is showing an FNN newscast about how the Centre is clamping down on military presence in outlying worlds.

Beneath the screen sit three traders. One of them, a man known only as ROCCO, is complaining to his friends (and anyone else within earshot for that matter).

ROCCO

Damn restrictions make it impossible for me to do my job. Medical supplies are running low, and my daughter is scared to death because there are soldiers roaming the streets outside our home. So much for the Federation!

TRADER #1

If you're so bothered about it, Rocco, why don't you get off your ass and do something about it like those guys?

He points to the screen.

TRADER #2

Join the rebels? Are you crazy?

(beat)

He can barely make it ten steps out of the door without someone holding him up.

Various laughs from around the bar and a beat as Rocco attempts to regain his pride. He stands, addressing those who were laughing at him.

ROCCO

Well why the hell not? They're raising a fleet and going up against Starfleet.

TRADER #3

And how long's that going to last? What chance does their fleet of cargo ships stand against a Federation starship?

TRADER #4

I heard a rogue Romulan warbird had joined them.

TRADER #3

Like one warbird's going to make any difference!

ROCCO

It doesn't matter whether they die fighting, it's the principle of what they're doing that matters.

Rocco walks forward, resting against the bar for support.

ROCCO

Listen! We're gonna have to choose sides sometime anyway. Better to go with the one I can feel good about when I get up in the morning!

TRADER #2

I'm surprised he can feel anything at all in the morning.

More drunken laughter.

TRADER #1

So just like that you've made up your mind and you're gone?

ROCCO

I guess so. Hell, I've always been the impulsive type. What do you say?

He stands up and raises a glass.

ROCCO (CONT'D)

Are you guys in?

Shortly after saying this he loses his balance and almost falls to the floor, only catching himself on the bar beside him.

The rest of the traders smile, shaking their heads in disbelief.

CUT TO:

EXT. LISBON -- A PARK

Pierson is sitting alone by a fountain when he is joined by Delfune. Pierson gets up and greets her, and they both start walking.

PIERSON

Tell me Elizabeth... what's your impression of Neil Cross?

DELFUNE

You already know what I think of him.

PIERSON

Remind me.

A beat.

DELFUNE

I don't care for his methods and I don't care for what he stands for.

PIERSON

Considering all that's happened, don't you wish we had kept him locked up after Coular?

Delfune pauses to consider her response.

DELFUNE

We can't second guess ourselves at this point. I think we should worry about the future, not the past. We made the best decision we could at the time.

PIERSON

Yes, and thousand of people in San Francisco died for it.

(beat)

But you are right. The question is not what might have been, but what to do now. I am obligated to protect the Federation, and I can't think of a surer way to do that than with Captain Joel's plan. Can you?

Another beat, as again Delfune considers her answer.

DELFUNE

I can think of better ways of taking out one man then potentially taking thousands of innocent civilians with him.

PIERSON

You haven't voiced them.

DELFUNE

That's because they don't involve outright attacking one of our own planets!

PIERSON

But it's not our planet any more..

Pierson notices the unsure look on Delfune's face.

PIERSON (CONT'D)

You don't sympathize with Cross and the rebels, do you, Elizabeth?

DELFUNE

Of course not.

(beat)

I just wish things could have turned out differently.

PIERSON

Don't we all.

A beat.

PIERSON

It's the only way we can flush Cross out of wherever it is he's hiding. He either exposes himself, or he alienates the rest of his coalition.

DELFUNE

You can say it until your blue in the face, Thom. I still won't like it.

A beat. Pierson's tone becomes more stern.

PIERSON

The reason why Cross has created this mess is because the admiralty lacked a consensus as to what to do about him. Because of that, San Fransisco has been wiped off the face of the earth. It's why he's evaded us time and again since then. Even before the San Fransisco incident, we had discord over Cross. We could have stopped it right then.

DELFUNE

This isn't my fault.

PIERSON

The last thing we need right now is discord. What will the rest of the quadrant think if we can't agree on how to deal with one man?

Delfune becomes a bit tense as she realizes where this is leading.

PIERSON

We need a ranking admiral to lead this, Elizabeth. You know him. I can't think of anyone better to lead this fight. But this whole plan will fall apart if we can't agree on it.

A beat. Delfune sighs.

DELFUNE

Fine. But let me make one thing clear. No matter what happens, we will not attack that planet.

A beat. Pierson gives off a slight smile.

PIERSON

I'm glad we could come to an arrangement...

Pierson and Delfune continue walking until they are offscreen, at which time we notice an outdoor screen in which an FNN REPORTER is speaking.

REPORTER

Tonight: the return of Lewis Carter, with an exclusive on the continuing crisis on Bajor!

CUT TO:

INT. EPSILON -- CORRIDOR

Schindler is walking hurriedly down the corridors of the run-down station when he suddenly bumps into Ensign Mexes.

SCHINDLER

Ensign Mexes, I'm sorry. I didn't see you there.

MEXES

Don't worry about it. Where are you headed?

SCHINDLER

Well the Captain is in another meeting right now, so I don't really have anywhere to be.

MEXES

Then you have some free time.

SCHINDLER

Uh-huh.

MEXES

Good. Walk with me?

Schindler runs his hands through his hair, then answers with a nervous smile.

SCHINDLER

Sure, why not?

They begin to walk side by side down the corridor.

MEXES

I've been thinking... we served on the Enterprise for six months together, yet we barely said two words to each other until we arrived on this station.

SCHINDLER

Well the Enterprise was a big ship. Besides, I was a helmsman and you were a security officer. Our paths didn't exactly cross that much.

MEXES

Not until now.

SCHINDLER

Do you miss the Enterprise, Nya?

A beat.

MEXES

You know what? I don't I think I do. We're out here on the front lines of a rebellion... I don't think I could be much happier!

SCHINDLER

How can you be so flippant about all of this? We took an oath of loyalty to the Federation, and we've broken it.

MEXES

Thanks for reminding me. Besides, we're already traitors in the eyes of Starfleet... you couldn't go back there even if you wanted to.

Schindler considers this, and then looks like he is about to throw up.

MEXES

Besides...I'm Bajoran. Rebellion's in my blood. I think my generation feels a bit guilty, you know... We're the first generation to come of age in a time when The Occupation, any Occupation, is just a memory... And now that I'm here, fighting for what I believe the Federation really stands for, I finally feel like I'm truly serving Bajor.

SCHINDLER

You can't seriously be comparing the Federation to the Cardassians.

MEXES

I'm not. But you have to realize that the Federation we swore our allegiance to no longer exists.

Schindler does not like this opinion either.

SCHINDLER

I agree the Federation has lost its way  
a little bit, but...

At this Mexes stops in her tracks and swings around to face Schindler, blocking his path.

MEXES

(interrupting)

It's lost it more than just a bit. It's  
gone, Bastian. Are all humans as naive  
about their governments as you?

Schindler tries in vain to respond, but Mexes again talks over him. She is, apparently, a very impatient woman when she has something to say.

MEXES

The thing you have to realize is that  
we're not fighting against the  
Federation, we're fighting to restore  
what it was. We're fighting for it.

With that, Mexes walks away, leaving Schindler alone in the corridor.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Federation task force, ten ships strong, warping through space.

INT. LEVIATHAN -- CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

Joel is sitting behind her desk talking to Admrial Perkins on a viewscreen. We can see from the background that Perkins is on a starship that is also in the task force.

PERKINS

I must say Captain, I don't have much faith in your plan. They will almost certainly have more ships than us. It doesn't make much sense for the Leviathan only to be focused on one.

JOEL

You forget, Admiral, that we're not fighting starships. These rebels will have ships that are barely capable of leaving drydock.

PERKINS

Even so... The Leviathan is the most advanced ship in the fleet. Why waste that advantage by going after a solitary ship?

JOEL

Because that solitary ship will have Neil Cross aboard and without him, this rebellion will crumble.

A beat.

PERKINS

I don't know about everyone else out there, Captain, but I'm in no mood for dying. I just hope you're not chasing a whale.

JOEL

(smirking)

Call me Ishmael...

With that, Joel smiles and ends the transmission. As if on cue, a comm voice fills the ready room.

COMM VOICE

Captain, we're approaching Cassandra V.

JOEL

ETA?

COMM VOICE

Less than ten minutes, Captain.

JOEL

Excellent.

As we slowly move to a close up of Joel's face, we see the piercing eyes of a person who is obsessed.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. ZOL PRIME

Another shot of the Bajoran shuttlecraft as it orbits the planet.

CUT TO:

INT. BAJORAN SHUTTLECRAFT -- COCKPIT

Toran sits at the controls while Elris sleeps on his shoulder. He is half reading one of many PADDs that are scattered across the console and it's obvious that he's been waiting for a long time, and we can see he is beginning to get impatient.

Suddenly, a beeping sound fills the cockpit. Toran looks down at his station as Elris wakes up.

ELRIS

What's happening?

TORAN

(reading the message)

It's my informant... He's asked me to meet him on the surface.

ELRIS

What do we need?

She stands and walks towards an equipment locker, but before she can open it Toran has turned to face her.

TORAN

I'm doing this on my own, Lea. I can't risk putting you in danger.

ELRIS

What?

TORAN

It's too dangerous... I don't know what's waiting for me down there.

ELRIS

It's never stopped me doing anything in the past.

Toran sighs.

TORAN

Lea. I'm asking you, as a friend, as your partner, to let me do this on my own.

(beat)

If anything ever happened to you I'd..

Elris looks at him but he doesn't complete the sentence. She sighs and nods, and he heads over to the equipment locker, before walking to the back of the cockpit and dematerializing.

Elris sits and stares at the transporter pad for a moment, apparently still in the process of waking up, before turning around and looking down at the console Toran was working at previously.

She begins to look through some of the readings on the console when suddenly, Toran rematerializes in the back of the cockpit.

Without saying anything, he sits at his station and begins pressing buttons.

ELRIS

That was quick. What did he say?

TORAN

Nothing. He tried to kill me.

He sees Elris has been working at his console.

TORAN (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Elris is visibly shocked by his previous statement and pays no attention to his question.

ELRIS

What? Why?

TORAN

(angry)

I don't know Lea! Will you please just get off my back!

ELRIS

What?

TORAN

Ever since we left Bajor you've been at me! I'm starting to think...

He trails off.

ELRIS

Think what?

A beat.

TORAN

It's nothing.

ELRIS

It doesn't sound like nothing. Tell me.

TORAN

Leave it, Lea.

ELRIS

No, Noa, I won't. I'm getting sick and tired of you telling me to leave it, to get out of your way, to leave everything to you. I don't feel like I have your trust.

TORAN

And I don't feel like I have yours  
right now either.

ELRIS

From the way you've been treating me  
are you really that surprised?

A beat.

TORAN

I'm just trying to help you, Lea.

Elris sighs and turns to face the window as the shuttle  
begins to leave orbit.

ELRIS

Are they following us?

Toran examines the shuttle's sensor readings.

TORAN

I don't think so.

They both sit in silence briefly, Toran looking frustrated  
and Elris looking worried again.

ELRIS

What happened down there?

TORAN

I don't know. I beamed down and the  
next thing I know I had a phaser  
pointing at me.

A beat.

TORAN

There's an asteroid belt a few light  
years from here. We can hide out there  
just in case. The shuttle's on  
autopilot... wake me when we reach it.

He stands to leave, there's a short beat.

ELRIS

How are we going to find Neil now?

TORAN

(angry)

I don't know! I was almost killed down there, so right now, Neil Cross is the last thing on my mind!

ELRIS

(angry)

Well it seems to me that he's been the last thing on your mind for quite some time!

TORAN

What the hell's that supposed to mean?

ELRIS

Tell me, Noa, are you really all that bothered about finding him?

TORAN

I don't have to answer that!

ELRIS

Don't worry, I think you already have. We're just going around in circles!

TORAN

Well if you have any better ideas, feel free to speak up, because the only thing I've heard from you so far is whining and trying to get me to go to the damn Dorias sector!

ELRIS

It's better than hiding in an asteroid field!

TORAN

Well if you think you can do better, feel free and go ahead!

He wipes his assorted PADDs off the console and they go flying to the floor... Elris watches them go and looks back at him, shocked, before suddenly looking back across to where the PADDs have fallen, having spotted something.

We watch as she walks towards something as Toran looks on.

TORAN

Lea?

Elris finally reaches whatever it is she has spotted, and bends down to the floor to it, picking it up.

She turns around with a triumphant smile on her face...

ELRIS

I think I just got a better idea.

She holds up Carter's button cam from the previous episode.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

Another shot of Epsilon.

CUT TO:

INT. EPSILON -- COMMAND CENTRE

Cross gets off the turbolift to find the CC bustling with activity as red alert lights flicker on and off all around them. Talora, Macgregor, Schindler, Mexes and several others are all there, most of them running around in a frantic manner.

Just as Cross steps off the turbolift, a very angry-looking Carla steps right in front of Cross.

CARLA

Where have you been?

CROSS

Out and about. What's happening?

CARLA

The Centrist Fleet's on the move,  
heading towards Cassandra V.

SCHINDLER

That's Captain Paxton's homeworld...

CARLA

And a major member of the Coalition.  
We're moving out at once to counter the  
attack.

CROSS

Understood. What are we dealing with  
here?

CARLA

At least ten starships, all I know is  
what we had earlier.

TALORA

It could be a trap.

CARLA

Or Cassandra V could really need us.

A beat, but Talora nods in agreement.

CROSS

They're sending their entire fleet  
against one target?

CARLA

It looks that way.

SCHINDLER

We don't stand a chance...

CARLA

(with conviction)

No one ever said this was going to be easy.

CROSS

Right, we can't just abandon Cassandra V. We have to get going. Schindler, you're with me. Carla, tell everyone of the station to get to their ships.

CARLA

I'm already on it.

As Cross and Schindler run across the CC towards the docking bay, Schindler accidentally bumps into Ensign Mexes and knocks her over.

SCHINDLER

Ensign Mexes! I'm sorry.

MEXES

Thanks, it's okay. Funny how we just keep running into each other!

They both laugh at her joke, if nothing else to relax the tense mood.

Schindler then grabs her arm and helps her up.

MEXES

I can't believe it: Talora actually wants me to go aboard the Karthos with her! Isn't this exciting?

SCHINDLER

Well I'm not sure if exciting is the word I'd use for it...

MEXES

Then why exactly are you here?

We see a puzzled look on Schindler's face as he ponders the question. He appears troubled, as if he himself doesn't realize why is about to risk his life. Suddenly, a serene look of confidence replaces his grim expression as we realize he has had something of an epiphany.

He calmly says the only thing that comes to his mind.

SCHINDLER

Give me liberty, or give me death.

Mexes doesn't reply, but instead stands silently in thought, she herself pondering Schindler's response. It seems to impress her. Before she can respond, however, Talora, along with MIRO and TARVEK, appear by her side.

TALORA

Ensign Mexes! We're going now!

MEXES

Coming!

The four of them run off. Seconds later, Schindler runs off in the opposite direction to catch up with Cross.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- EPSILON

The Rubicon inside Epsilon's main hangar bay, preparing to depart.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBICON -- COCKPIT

Cross is at the controls, Carla is beside him, and a few others are behind them pressing buttons at their stations. Quickly an out-of-breath Schindler joins them and takes his seat at the conn.

CROSS

Schindler, good of you to join us.

SCHINDLER

Sorry, sir.

There is a hint of apprehension in Schindler's voice which Cross immediately picks up on.

CROSS

Better late than never. I'm just glad you did make it; you're certainly a better pilot than I am.

SCHINDLER

(trying to contain his pride)

Thank you, sir.

CROSS

Are you ready Schindler?

Schindler turns to face Cross, and replies with a confidence we have not seen in him previously.

SCHINDLER

Absolutely, sir.

CUT TO:

INT. EPSILON DOCKING BAY

We see the Rubicon power up its engines, lift off, and fly out of the docking bay into...

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

...a haphazard fleet of ships (and one impressive looking Warbird) surrounding Epsilon Station. They're ready to go to warp.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE -- NEAR CASSANDRA V

The Federalist fleet drops out of warp to find, sure enough, ten starships are waiting for them.

CUT TO:

INT. KARTHOS -- BRIDGE

Talora is sitting in her command chair, Miro is at tactical, and various other Romulans are wandering around looking busy.

TALORA

(sarcastically)

Karthos to Rubicon, I think we may about to be ambushed.

CROSS'S COMM VOICE

I concur Commander.

INT. RUBICON -- COCKPIT

Close on Cross.

CROSS

Cross to all ships, take up defensive position omega nine.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The ships begin to move into a new formation as the Centrists draw closer..

INT. RUBICON -- COCKPIT

The crew is stationed as before.

CREWMAN #1

We're being hailed, Captain.

A beat.

CROSS

I wonder who this could be. On speakers.

JOEL'S COMM VOICE

Hello Neil, I'm so glad to see you again. Too bad you had to show up and rain on my little parade.

CROSS

If your idea of a parade is bombing civilians, remind me not to spend Thanksgiving with you.

JOEL'S COMM VOICE

Well I never really wanted to kill all these people. There's only one man I want dead, and I think you know who he is.

CROSS

Really? I had assumed you'd already killed whoever was unfortunate enough to be your ex-husband.

Cross grins broadly, congratulating himself on that cunning remark. His smile is broken, though, when the Rubicon rocks violently.

CARLA

Direct hit, shields down to 83%.

The Rubicon rocks again.

CARLA

Make that 62%...

CROSS

That woman could never take a joke.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Leviathan breaks formation and charges straight into the Federalist formation, firing at the tiny Rubicon situated near the center front.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBICON -- COCKPIT

Lights begin to go out and a station explodes. Carla gets up and puts out a fire with an extinguisher.

JOEL'S COMM VOICE

That little ship of yours can't take much abuse, can it Neil?

CROSS

You know, if you put as much effort into commanding your ship as you did to trying to insult me, I'd be a dead man by now.

JOEL'S COMM VOICE

All in good time, Captain...

Cross raises an eyebrow at this.

CROSS

I never expected to hear you of all people call me that again.

JOEL'S COMM VOICE

Slip of the tongue. Besides, it's a bit hard for people to call you that without a ship, isn't it? Shame I blew it up.

Schindler gives Cross a concerned look, and Cross cannot hide the conceal and hurt on his face.

JOEL'S COMM VOICE

What's a matter Captain? Did I hit a nerve?

She begins to laugh at him.

CROSS

(to Schindler)

Turn that damn thing off.

SCHINDLER

Aye, sir.

Schindler punches a few buttons on his console before the Rubicon begins to rock again.

CROSS

We can't take much more of this.  
Talora! Get the Leviathan off my tail!

CUT TO:

INT. KARTHOS -- BRIDGE

Looks almost as damaged as the Rubicon. Medical crews are on the bridge tending to the many wounded Romulans while repair crews are tending to their wounded ship.

Mexes looks back towards Talora from her station.

MEXES

Commander, we've got four starships  
converging on our tail and aft shields  
are falling!

TALORA

It doesn't look like I'm going to be  
able to help you, Captain.

A massive explosion rocks the bridge, sending Mexes flying in front of Talora..

TALORA

Ensign Mexes, are you alright?

Mexes pulls herself to her feet, but it's obvious she's in pain and far from alright.

MEXES

Don't worry about me Commander, I'm fine.

Talora simply gives her a nod of approval, and this one gesture makes the pain the last thing on Mexes mind - she smiles as if it was the greatest compliment anyone has given her.

TALORA

What is the status of our hull?

Miro, who has also been knocked to the ground, gets up and looks at his damaged station. He frowns, unable to ascertain a precise answer.

MIRO

Difficult to say... not good...

Yet another direct hit rocks the bridge, and this time Miro's station explodes, and he is hit point blank by the blast.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBICON -- COCKPIT

Cross sits at his station and looks very worried.

CROSS

(to Schindler)

You have to get us out of here, buy us some time at least.

Schindler doesn't answer him, but instead begins to punch buttons at his station.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Leviathan is getting ever closer, and shows no signs of running out of torpedoes.

All of the sudden, the Rubicon changes course by pulling 180 degree hairpin turn and flying right toward the Leviathan.

The starship gets a few phaser shots off, but the Rubicon flies right beneath its hull and away from damage. The Leviathan turns in pursuit, but not until the Rubicon is fairly far away.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBICON -- COCKPIT

A relieved Cross is smiling.

CROSS

Nice flying Schindler. I knew I brought you along for a reason.

SCHINDLER

Thank you, sir.

PAXTON'S COMM VOICE

Captain Cross, I think I have an idea that might get those ships off your ass.

CROSS

Don't keep it to yourself, Captain.

PAXTON'S COMM VOICE

You're not going to like it.

CROSS

I don't have the luxury of not liking it... anything that can stop those ships advancing.

PAXTON'S COMM VOICE

Then we won't let that happen. Get ready, Captain.

Cross frowns.

CROSS

What's the plan, Captain?

PAXTON'S COMM VOICE

I'm calling it give me Operation Libery.

(beat)

One way or another, we have to win this fight... or pretty soon there won't be anything left to fight for...

(beat)

Good luck, Captain Cross.

Cross takes a breath and looks at the viewscreen where Paxton's ship hovers in space.

CROSS

Good luck, Captain Paxton. We won't let you down.

PAXTON

I know. Paxton out.

With that the comm. beeps and the line goes dead, as Cross continues to watch the viewscreen as the ships begin to move.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

An Akira class starship, the USS Madrid, fires phasers and torpedoes relentlessly at the Karthos. A small formation of freighters makes a strafing run against the Madrid, to little effect. The Madrid follows up to the distraction with a volley of torpedoes.

The freighters promptly scatter and distance themselves from the Madrid, then turn around and fly towards it.

INT. U.S.S. MADRID -- BRIDGE

A crew sits on the bridge. It looks damaged, but not nearly as bad as the Karthos and Rubicon. To the left of the CAPTAIN is Admiral Perkins.

MADRID CREWMAN

Sir, several freighters are headed right for us.

CAPTAIN

Let them come. Continue the attack on the Karthos.

EXT. SPACE

The ships continue to advance on the Madrid as it continues its own attack on the Karthos.

INT. U.S.S. MADRID -- BRIDGE

They both watch on the viewscreen as the freighters close in rapidly. Finally, the Captain decides to deal with them.

CAPTAIN

Target the lead ship.

EXT. SPACE

The Madrid targets the smaller ships, no longer firing at the Karthos.

INT. U.S.S. MADRID -- BRIDGE

MADRID CREWMAN

Direct hit. They're still coming, full impulse.

An alarm on his station sounds.

MADRID CREWMAN (CONT'D)

They're on a collision course!

The Captain and Admiral both look stunned. Only now do they realize the trouble they are in.

PERKINS

Get us out of here!

MADRID CREWMAN

We can't, our maneuvering thrusters were damaged during that last exchange with the Karthos.

CAPTAIN

Then destroy those freighters! OPEN FIRE!

MADRID CREWMAN

Firing phasers...it's no use, there's too many of them!

CAPTAIN

All hands abandon ship! Repeat, all hands...

He is cut off by a very large explosion.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

Several freighter ships head right towards the Madrid. It is firing everything it has at them, but there are simply too many of them.

The first freighter hits, causing a spectacular explosion, blasting away the entire shield facing it. Another ship hits the Madrid on the other side, shattering what remained of the shield. Overloaded from the catastrophic loss of its shields, the Madrid gets knocked off-course and takes a beating as debris left over hits its unprotected hull.

CUT TO:

INT. PAXTON'S SHIP -- BRIDGE

The bridge is in shambles, several crew members are dead. Paxton himself has taken the helm from the dead crewman that once manned it.

OFFICER

It worked! The Madrid's shields are totally gone!

PAXTON

Great work everyone. Now get the hell out of here, I can take this from here.

The officer recoils at what Paxton said.

OFFICER

(pleading)

George, No...

PAXTON

This ship won't fly itself into the Madrid, son! Go!

The officer takes a few steps back, looking on in awe at the grim determination on Paxton's face, and then runs out of the bridge.

EXT. SPACE

Paxton's ship careens towards the crippled Madrid. A nearby Sovereign class ship, the Iliad, begins firing on the ship, but is cut short when several Coalition ships ram it as well. Venting gases and plasma from several hull breaches.

Paxton's ship is seconds away from impact.

CUT TO:

INT. PAXTON'S SHIP -- BRIDGE

The bridge is now in flames, and Paxton bears several burns on his face and arms. He still steadfastly stares forward.

PAXTON

Give me liberty or give me--

His exclamation is cut short by the entire bridge erupting in fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

Paxton's ship plows headlong into the center of the Madrid's dorsal saucer, and embeds itself several decks in. The Madrid's entire spaceframe buckles under the impact before promptly exploding in a gigantic fireball!

As we pan out, we can see the tattered Iliad, missing an entire portion of its saucer, and another freighter colliding into one of its nacelle pylons. In the distance, we can see several other Starfleet ships afflicted by suicide attacks.

CUT TO:

INT. LEVIATHAN -- BRIDGE

Captain Joel stares intensely at the viewscreen, almost willing her starship to go faster so she can catch Cross.

LEVIATHAN CREWMAN #1

Captain, several freighters are...are ramming our ships.

Joel briefly looks up, then forward again to the viewscreen.

JOEL

Let them die. Continue pursuit of the Rubicon, I need more power to our thrusters.

The bridge crew stare at each other, unable to believe the callousness of Joel's statement.

LEVIATHAN CREWMAN #2

Captain, we have an incoming subspace message.

(beat)

It's Admiral Delfune.

Joel looks very annoyed by this interruption.

JOEL

Onscreen.

DELFUNE

Captain, we're calling off this attack at once. Pull back and rendezvous outside of the Dorias Sector.

JOEL

What?? Admiral, I almost have him!

DELFUNE

That's an order Captain! We can't afford to take any more losses. The Madrid and the Iliad have been destroyed, and the Rapier, the Shenandoah, and the Mandela are all badly damaged.

JOEL

Then don't let their deaths be in vain! We have them on the ropes! Please Admiral!

DELFUNE

Get a hold of yourself Erika! There'll be even more deaths on my conscience if we don't do something soon.

JOEL

They don't have enough ships to carry on like this! We can beat them!

DELFUNE

(bitter, quiet)

Listen to me, Captain. Some reporters smuggled themselves aboard some of our ships. The entire battle is being shown live on the FNN. The entire Federation watched one of our ships be blown apart from the inside. We need to fall back, wait for the dust to settle, and decide how we're going to spin this. Follow your orders. Delfune out.

Joel stares blankly ahead, and throws a datapad to the floor in anger.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBICON -- COCKPIT

Cross, Schindler, Carla, and the rest sit stunned watching the battle.

CARLA

The Centrist ships are pulling away...they're retreating.

A beat.

CROSS

Unbelievable.

CARLA

Incoming transmission. It's the Karthos.

CROSS

Onscreen.

A relieved Talora appears onscreen. In the background, we see Mexes helping with damage control and Miro being treated for facial burns.

TALORA

Captain, you'll be happy to know most of the freighter crews transported here before the impact.

CROSS

Most?

A beat.

TALORA

Yes, Sir. Many of the freighter  
Captains chose to go down with their  
ships.

(beat)

Including Captain Paxton.

A beat as Cross takes this news in.

CROSS

(dejected)

How many ships did we start out with?

TALORA

Sixty-one.

CROSS

And how many do we have now?

TALORA

Twenty-four.

Another long, agonizing beat.

CROSS

Set a course for Epsilon and take us to  
warp.

He turns, about to exit when Carla turns to him.

CARLA

They drew a line in the sand for us  
today.

Cross nods.

CROSS

And we've paid the price for crossing  
it.

CARLA

And look how strong we look because of  
it.

Cross shakes his head in disbelief.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Now there is no going back. Whatever  
doubts we have, we had better face up  
to them, because our very survival will  
depend on it.

A beat.

CROSS

Let's get out of here.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

What remains of the Federalist fleet goes into warp.

CUT TO:

INT. EPSILON — SHATTERED DOCKING RING

Close on Cross's face as he looks out into space, looking  
at something, though we cannot see what. We pull out to see  
that he is stood at the end of the damaged docking ring,  
looking out at remains of the Federalist fleet.

INT. EPSILON — DOCKING RING

As various N/Ds help their injured friends and colleagues  
off their ships. We pull out to see Cross watching as a  
body bag, being carried on a stretcher slowly goes past.  
Everyone present stands quietly as it passes.

INT. EPSILON -- CORRIDOR

Cross and Co. arrive back on Epsilon, sullenly walking back  
to their stations and quarters.

CUT TO:

INT. CROSS'S QUARTERS

Cross drags himself into his quarters, bumping into the enigmatic satchel on the way in. It falls and makes a dull clunk as it hits the bare metal floor. Cross pauses for a moment after bumping it, and then continues moping into the closet.

A moment later, he emerges, holding a set of pyjamas. As he starts changing into them, we fade to...

INT. CROSS'S QUARTERS (DARK)

Cross sleeps restlessly, tossing and turning as if experiencing a nightmare. He suddenly GASPS and shoots upright, waking from his tumultuous dream. After catching his breath, he turns on the lights and heads to the rest room.

As he rinses his face, he takes a long hard look at himself. The stress he's under has taken its toll on him, his face looks withered.

As he emerges from the restroom, he sees the bag, still knocked over on the floor. After staring at it for a moment, he takes a deep breath and heads over to the bag. He opens it and pulls out what looks like a metal sheet.

We track around to see what is on the other side. It is the dedication plaque from the Enterprise, bearing some slight damage.

He gently caresses the etched letters as he reminisces about his ship. Time seems to slow down as he gazes at all he has left of the Enterprise. For a moment, we see Cross smile slightly.

Cross snaps out of his reverie, and then begins scanning the room. Spying an empty sill on the wall, he walks over to it, and props the plaque up on the wall and stares at it.

MIX TO:

INT. EPSILON -- COMMAND CENTRE

Days have passed since the battle, and Cross, Carla, and Talora are standing in the middle of Ops discussing their next move.

CROSS

Why haven't they made another move against us? It's been a over a week and one of their ships hasn't even come close to the edge of the sector.

TALORA

Perhaps they're waiting for us to make a move against them.

CARLA

And it would be the perfect time for that.

CROSS

If only over half of our fleet wasn't destroyed in a single battle.

TALORA

We don't have the ability to launch any sort of offensive. It's probable that we don't even have the ability to defend the Coalition at this point.

Suddenly, Macgregor walks off the turbolift.

MACGREGOR

We just picked up a signal on subspace. They're demanding to speak to you.

Cross looks perplexed.

CROSS

Onscreen.

The smiling face of the impulsive trader Rocco appears.

ROCCO

Are you Neil Cross?

CROSS

I am. Who is this?

ROCCO

Name's Rocco, and I'm requesting  
permission to join the Federalist fleet.

Cross seems happy, but Carla does not.

CARLA

How did you get the coordinates to this  
station?

(beat, to a crewman)

Power up weapons, go to red alert...

ROCCO

You might regret doing that. Some  
friends of mine told me how to get here.

CROSS

What do you mean?

Rocco gets out of the way, and we see his empty chair on  
the viewscreen. Cross looks confused, but soon he is as  
relieved as we are to see the very familiar faces of ERIK  
GREY and JENNIFER QUINLAN

QUINLAN

Hello Captain. Heard you're throwing a  
little party out here!

CROSS

(smiling)

Something like that...

GREY

Wouldn't miss it for the world, Captain.

QUINLAN

You know how much he loves parties.

She playfully nudges Grey, who can only force a slight smile.

CROSS

So how many people did you invite to my little party?

QUINLAN

Oh, I wouldn't worry about it. Just a few close, personal friends.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

Rocco's ship, the impressive Ryujin, along with two others, appear beside Epsilon. Slowly, another ship drops out of warp, then another, and another...

After that, we pan around to see DOZENS of ships, small and large, all heading for Epsilon.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END