

STAR TREK: RENAISSANCE

"Shores of Elba"

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TEASER

FADE IN:

SEQ: Scene from "Land of the Free."

INT. READY ROOM (FLASHBACK)

ADMIRAL PORTMAN is on Cross's computer screen.

PORTMAN

I put you on the Enterprise for a reason, Neil. The Federation is heading into a dark age. I need you on that ship to keep things straight. I know you have the morals to get through what's coming. Hell, the fact we're having this conversation proves it. If you let these few people live now, billions could die later.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. PRISON

We slowly come up on a towering, ominous structure. Grey is the predominant and only color. It looks utilitarian, but formidable.

SUPER: NEW ZEALAND PENAL COLONY -- STARDATE 79116.3.

We move towards the massive, rectangular front doors and the ARCTURIAN standing guard notices us. He pressed a panel, and soundlessly -- this eerie in itself -- the doors slide aside.

INT. NZ PENAL -- CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

We pan inside to long, featureless, grey corridors, lit from above. Footsteps are all we can hear. Here and there we take a right, and the guards that observe us look on with nonchalance.

CUT TO:

INT. NZ PENAL -- CELL

Darkness. We can see absolutely nothing. Then a door slides open, and light shafts inside. We see a man in grey overalls and with a bag on his shoulder, but his face is just out of view. He presses a button to the side of the door, and the room is illuminated.

Featureless and grey. A nondescript shelf, a generic bed. Grating for ceiling. There is something sinister about this which looks unlived in, as if it is not for living in, but for dying -- a slow degenerative death, peeling first off sanity, and then the soul.

We close in on the man's chest. He wears a name-tag:
"Prisoner 871494."

Finally we pan upward past the collar and to the face. It is paler than we have ever seen it, more harrowed, worn, a shadow of everything we knew but it is unmistakable.

It is NEIL CROSS.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. CORRIDOR -- NZ PENAL

Cross walks through the corridor like a ghost, a mere shadow of a memory of a man. He passes by unheeded like a shadow.

CROSS (V.O.)

Log Entry. Day 1. It is like a dream -- no, a nightmare. I look at the guards, at the walls -- still I cannot believe it is true. In the course of my life, I have experienced many problems. But none such as this. This I would not have dared to anticipate.

(beat)

And despite all that, here I am. A convict. A prisoner. Bound by grey walls that barricade my existence. Here, it seems, is intended to be my final resting place. For the crime I am convicted of, the term rehabilitation is meaningless. Nothing more than a euphemism.

(beat)

I did what I had to do, under the circumstances. We had been attacked, and needed to counterattack. Well, I provided that counterattack. History can be my judge. And my only hope is that someone will realize I have been wrongly judged and help me be set free.

(beat)

Is it a hope, or a hopeless fantasy?

CUT TO:

INT. NZ PENAL -- DINING HALL

Cross slips through the room towards a replicator.

CROSS

(to replicator)

Hot chocolate, with a touch of mint.

The mentioned beverage materializes. Cross picks it up, and begins to move across the room before a man drapes an over-familiar arm around Cross's shoulder.

MAN

You look new here. Tell me, who'dya be?

Cross glances at the man, who seems lean and is in his mid-thirties. He speaks with an inner city Irish accent. There is a disreputable air about him -- not surprising, given the environment. Lean, with darting, rolling eyes, a little slithery.

CROSS

Cross. Neil Cross. If you excuse me...

He begins to move through the crowd, away from the man but the man follows.

MAN

Cross, huh? Name's Lorenzo. Andy Lorenzo. Want a cigar, Cross?
(when Cross doesn't respond)
It's Saurian -- best make!

CROSS

(polite, but nonplussed)
No thanks.

Lorenzo shrugs.

LORENZO

Suit yourself.

Lorenzo produces a grey, featureless, metallic cylinder. He sucks on it, and it glows like a lava lamp.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

(as if slightly intoxicated)
Ahhh... that's the stuff.

Cross moves to leave, but Lorenzo stops him.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

Lookit here, if there's anything you want, anything you can't get on the premises... contact yer old pal, Andy Lorenzo. You name it, I get it, you got it?

Cross smiles politely, but is clearly rather irritated.

CROSS

I'll keep that in mind.

Cross edges away from Lorenzo. He wanders through the crowd, mostly unnoticed, until he meets a WOMAN. She is somewhere in her late thirties, haggard and looking distinctly glazed over, not all there. She does not walk, but slouches through the crowds. She looks at him with a weird blankness.

The most noticeable thing about her is her grey eyes, which look like they focus and see on nothing in particular. She looks distantly, then recognizes that he's there, and giggles for no apparent reason, then stumbles away. Cross watches her go as he goes the opposite way until he bumps into another man, a huge burly and muscular lump of flesh. First impression is that of a thug.

CROSS (CONT'D)

I'm terribly sorry.

THUG

(low, threatening
whisper)

There's no mistaking your kind.

CROSS

Pardon?

THUG

(whispered, harsh)

The look, the eyes, the hair... yes,
even the smell!

(contemptuous)

You're a Political.

Cross moves to get away from the thug, but the thug grabs Cross by the shoulder with his hand. Cross winces under the pressure exerted.

THUG (CONT'D)

(deadly whisper)

Not so fast, Political. I'll let
you go this one time, Political, but
if you cross me again...

He then forcefully pushes Cross away and snorts. Cross, noticing the commotion caused and not wishing to draw any more undue attention, sits at the furthest corner of the room, in a secluded segment. Slowly, he sips his hot chocolate.

VOICE

He means what he says.

CROSS LOOKS UP TO SEE

An OLDER MAN, somewhere, it seems, in his eighties. His hair is grey, he has brown eyes and dark skin. He has a soft, jovial expression, one rather easygoing... but there is something haunted about it, something unnatural in those brown eyes... something off. Hard to place.

CROSS

So I gathered.

OLDER MAN

Nathan carries out all his threats,
no matter how brutal they can be.
He's never failed yet because he's
never made a threat he couldn't
fulfill. The guards give him hell
about it and lock him up in
Confinement quite regularly...

(beat)

But if you ask me, they're afraid of
him too.

(changing topic)

May I sit down?

CROSS

Certainly.

The Older Man does so, and looks at Cross curiously.

OLDER MAN

You're new here.

CROSS

Yes...

OLDER MAN

What's your name?

CROSS

Neil Cross. Yours?

OLDER MAN

Asante.

CROSS

Asante...?

ASANTE

Asante.

Cross nods, but not wholly satisfied with that answer.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

You been here long yet?

Cross shakes his head.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

Met Andy Lorenzo?

Cross nods.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

Carrying anything valuable?

Cross shakes his head.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

All the better for you. Lorenzo's the best thief in town. You have any valuables on your person he'll know it in a minute -- and he'll have them, too.

CROSS

How did he get caught, then?

ASANTE

Reached too high. He's in here for trying to steal state secrets. In away, he's lucky the Federation got him first. God knows what the Klingons were going to do to him, and I doubt it was pleasant.

Cross has a repulsed reaction at the mention of the Klingons. Asante picks up on this.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

What's the matter? Something happen between you and the Klingons?

CROSS

I'd rather not talk about that.

ASANTE

(deciding not to press the issue)

Ah.

Cross takes another sip of chocolate.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

Is that what I think it is?

CROSS

And what do you think it is?

ASANTE

Hot chocolate.

CROSS

Yes.

ASANTE

I could never stomach the stuff, personally.

CROSS

Oh? I don't think I've ever met anyone who doesn't like hot chocolate. Human, that is.

Asante smiles. It's a pleasant smile, but against this man there's something a little oddly unnerving about it, something which can't be placed...

ASANTE

I was spoiled. Spent my childhood on a colony world, near the Romulan border. After tasting so many alien drinks I couldn't return to the bland and drab.

CROSS

(slightly incredulous)
You drank Romulan Ale as a boy?

ASANTE

No!
(winks)
That came later.

They laugh good-naturedly.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

No, I drank a lot of less sterner stuff. Vulcan Mocha, Melkotsian Tea... and T'lai wine. God, I could never get over T'lai wine. It's a beautiful drink. Beautiful. Made only for celebrations, I've heard, and god, is it worth a celebration.

Beat.

CROSS

I think I'll stick to hot chocolate.

Asante half smiles.

ASANTE

So what made you stomach that?

CROSS

Nothing in particular. I started drinking it a few years ago. In fact, it was recommended to me by Admiral...

He catches himself.

ASANTE

Admiral...?

CROSS

I'd rather not talk about that, either.

ASANTE

Ah.

Another sip.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

Mr. Cross, there's something about you that strikes me... do you read?

CROSS

Read what, exactly?

ASANTE

Literature. Tolstoy, Ba'fka'sis'beas, Kayto...

CROSS

Kayto. Didn't he write "Tron, Killer of Remus"?

ASANTE

Yes, he did. And "The Lukanalia," although there are disputes as to the authorship. Widely considered the two greatest Romulan epics.

Cross smiles.

CROSS

Definitely the two longest, anyway.

ASANTE

And if you listen to any Romulan literary critic, the two greatest epics ever conceivably written anywhere.

CROSS

I picked up "Tron" a while back on the recommendation of a friend. I'm still working my way through it.

ASANTE

Got very far?

CROSS

Hardly.

ASANTE

It's a great story, "Tron." Every Romulan schoolchild knows the beginning, middle and end before they've ever picked up a copy. And even when they know the outcome they find it filled with suspense and drama.

(MORE)

ASANTE (CONT'D)

A truly passionate tale of love,
war, and the emptiness of vengeance...

Cross is distinctly uncomfortable at the mention of the word "vengeance." Asante notices, and looks at him understandingly.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

(softly)

Don't tell me. I won't ask.

Cross makes no intentional response, but seems relieved.

CROSS

(thoughtful, quiet,
slow)

I once heard there was a greenery
here...

(beat)

A garden... you know anything about
that?

ASANTE

Yes. It's within the main complex.
Prisoners are allowed to visit
whenever they like. I've heard that
it is also one of the largest gardens
on this landmass.

Cross smiles, ever so slightly.

CROSS

(quietly, to himself)

Gilded cage...

ASANTE

(picking it up)

In a manner of speaking.

Cross is surprised that Asante was able to hear him.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

Perhaps we should go there -- you
and I.

CROSS

Perhaps.

A BEAT. Asante checks whatever people in the 25th century
use for wristwatches.

ASANTE

I need to be going. Until then?

CROSS

Until then.

Asante gets up and leaves, disappearing into the crowd. Cross looks on, as if searching for Asante departing, but there is no longer any sign of him.

CUT TO:

INT. NZ PENAL -- CROSS'S CELL

Cross is sitting on the bed, reading a leather bound book. It is titled "Tron, Killer of Remus, Volume I." Beneath that is the smaller type "Translated by H. Tusa." Cross has a bookmark placed into the book. The door chimes.

VOICE

Prisoner 871494, there is a ... being
... who wishes to see you, as a
visitor.

Cross, intrigued, puts the book down.

CROSS

Enter.

The ARCTURIAN seen before, owner of the VOICE we just heard, enters. A TAMARIAN and VULCAN, both guards, follow suit. The final person entering is the most distinctive -- Y'LAN.

Y'LAN's gaze flitters from one wall to another. His expressions are unreadable, but his movements are more jumpy, jittery, uncertain.

ARCTURIAN

Do you wish to see him?

Cross nods.

Y'LAN

(to Arcturian)

Thank you, Lar'oph-Mak'narga-Osil.

The Arcturian nods.

ARCTURIAN

As I said before, Ambassador, you
may address me as Lomnol.

LOMNOL exits, but the TAMARIAN and VULCAN remain.

CROSS

Y'lan. Well. I don't mean any
offence but you were the last person
I expected...

Y'LAN

(cryptically)

I have my reasons.

Cross looks at him, curiously.

CROSS

Yes. I'm sure that you do. And whatever they are, I thank you for coming to me. I could use the company. How do you find Earth?

Y'LAN

(uncharacteristically abrupt, still gazing around the room)

Fine, for one of your worlds.

CROSS

(noticing)

I see.

Y'LAN

Captain, are you well?

CROSS

As well as can be, under the circumstances. And it's not Cap-

Y'LAN

Any aches? Abnormal occurrences? Sleeplessness? Failing eye si-

CROSS

(exasperated)

Y'lan, what is going on?

Y'lan gives no vocal response, but his tentacles indicate the two guards standing behind them. Cross notes, and reluctantly accepts.

CROSS (CONT'D)

All right. I'm fine. I've experienced nothing abnormal and have had no bodily degradation.

Y'LAN

Has there been any problem with the ventilation system? Unusual noises? Objects repositioned without your knowledge

CROSS

Y'lan, to my knowledge, nothing out of the ordinary has happened to me or my surroundings, beyond the fact I am a prisoner.

Y'LAN

Captain, are you certain you have noticed nothing abnormal?

CROSS
(emphatically)
Yes. And it's not Captain anymore.
It's Neil. Or Mr. Cross.

Y'lan seems to pay little attention beyond the "yes" as if processing and evaluating a position.

Y'LAN
Mr. Cross, keep your eyes and ears open to anything out of the ordinary, no matter how unimportant. Treat everything with suspicion. If you get any indication of something abnormal, contact my residence at once.

CROSS
I'll do that.

Y'lan does a little bow.

Y'LAN
Thank you, Mr. Cross.

Y'lan EXITS. The Vulcan guard immediately follows. The Tamarian dallies behind for a moment, giving Cross an incredulous look.

Cross looks up and notices him.

CROSS
(trying to make a
joke out of it)
He's a Q'tami. You know what they're like. It's his way of saying "I hope you are well."

The Tamarian, amused, smiles slightly and leaves. Cross returns the smile. But when he is gone, Cross looks troubled. He is uneasy and disturbed by Y'lan's heightened and utterly unexplained sense of paranoia.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. NZ PENAL -- GARDEN -- DAY

A huge area of greenery, stretching out into the distance. There are trees and simple stone roads. Seemingly admiring the scenery, but still wafting through the environment like a ghost, Cross is contemplative.

CROSS (V.O.)

Log Entry. Day 5. Well, Asante and I have finally agreed to meet at the Garden. It is scenic, and beautiful, but still it seems slightly... off. Not quite right, natural. In this case, it is because it is a planned and artificial construct.

(beat)

But Asante is... I can't pin it down exactly. Maybe it's the way he looks at people, or walks, or talks, or laughs, but he is a puzzle. A mystery.

(beat)

Maybe I shouldn't bother myself about it. He did end up in a penal camp, and no doubt someone like that would have recesses and dark secrets.

(beat)

So does it really matter? And yet, it haunts me. A convict he may be, but that can't be it -- not it all. None of the others are like him. There is something different.

(beat)

But why look a gift horse in the mouth? Asante has been the only prisoner whose company I truly enjoy. Should I leave it at that?

(beat, ruefully)

Maybe I'm just thinking too much.

Cross notices NATHAN, the thug whom had attacked him before. The moment he does he veers away, but Nathan notices him and comes near him. He grabs Cross viciously. Cross does not resist.

NATHAN

(vicious)

I told you not to come near me!

CROSS

When I saw you, I moved away. It was an accident. I intended no offence --

NATHAN

Enough!

Cross silences

NATHAN (CONT'D)

(contemptuous, leering,
deathly quiet)Excuses. Apologies. Always is it
with you Politicals.

CROSS

And what is that supposed to mean?

Cross has clearly pressed the wrong button.

NATHAN

Do not toy with me, Political!

CROSS

(patiently, a little
bit aggravated)Look, I really do not understand
what this is about.

Nathan considers for a moment, and then snorts.

NATHAN

(disgusted)

You really are stupid, aren't you?

(beat)

When a Political kills, he kills for
this personal gain or that personal
gain. Does he care about the death
itself? Does he hunt with rigor and
excitement? No!

(beat)

Your killings are devoid of meaning.
You kill on wide scales, and never
once do you relish it.

CROSS

Relish?

NATHAN

I fought for causes. Revolutions.
Sweeping, broad and passionate strokes
that are so much more than your petty
struggles.

(beat)

And we are invigorated by our act,
we justly enjoy the sacrifices we
make for the forces of change!Nathan then, in a single, forceful movement, hurls Cross
onto the ground. We hear something snap. He spits on Cross
and stalks off.

Slowly, Cross staggers upright, wiping the spittle off. He is weak and there is some blood dripping from his mouth, but that's it.

He leans against a tree and gains his bearings.

ASANTE (O.S.)

You don't look so good.

Asante walks over to the weakened Cross.

CROSS

I'll say. I just had a run in with Nathan Pierre.

Asante winces, in sympathy.

ASANTE

That bad.

Cross nods.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

We could cancel our appointment Cross waves it aside.

CROSS

I'm all right.

ASANTE

After a beating like that, I'd hardly call anybody all right.

Cross smiles, weakly.

CROSS

I'll go for help later. Right now I'm fine.

Asante shakes his head.

ASANTE

I've never seen anyone react so well to one of Nathan's thrashings.

CROSS

That's not to say it's trivial, it wasn't. Nathan was very good at what he did -- too good.

(beat)

I didn't know he was a violent activist...

ASANTE

Not just a violent activist. He's a Hunter.

Cross looks up, a shade paler.

CROSS

A Hunter? So that's what he meant!
(beat)

But I thought that cult was destroyed
years ago.

ASANTE

It was. That's when he was put behind
bars. He had quite a distinguished
career. He was largely responsible
for giving the initially peaceful
Anti-Tech its bad name. You know
what happened on Galor Five?

CROSS

He organized that?

ASANTE

Organized isn't the right word.
Implies far more forethought than
there actually was. No, he didn't
organize it, but he was more
responsible than anyone else for the
pogrom it became.

CROSS

(pale)
My god... two hundred people...

Asante nods, somber.

ASANTE

He's proud of it, too. Boasts about
it, on occasion.

CROSS

That's disgusting.

Asante turns away from him slowly.

ASANTE

Yes...
(beat)
But there are worse men than him who
would not boast.

Cross NODS.

CROSS

I just hope I don't have to meet
any.

BEAT. After a while, Cross ruefully rubs his lip.

CROSS (CONT'D)

(changing topic)

I wonder whether or not I should tell Y'lan about this. It's hardly out of the ordinary -- given the circumstances -- but I'm hardly well, either...

ASANTE

Y'lan's that friend you mentioned?

Cross NODS.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

Then perhaps you should.

(beat)

Many people seem concerned for your welfare.

Cross HALF-SMILES.

CROSS

Does one count as many?

Asante considers, then:

ASANTE

One with that kind of consideration...

CROSS

Y'lan probably wouldn't have wanted me to tell you...

ASANTE

I see. I hope I do not sound too bold, Mr. Cross, but I wonder why is that? Is he a Klingon with one secret too many?

CROSS

(evasive)

Something like that.

Asante turns to face him.

ASANTE

If your friend did not wish it, why did you tell me?

Beat. Although an obvious question, not one Cross expected.

CROSS

I suppose I...

Beat. Cross looks uncertain, pondering the next word.

ASANTE

(blunt, but not harsh)
 "Trust" is not a word that comes
 easily to you.

Cross reacts, then:

CROSS

Trust is not something I easily
 bestow.

ASANTE

It's okay. I understand. Some of
 us cannot afford to trust those whom
 we know so little of.

CROSS

In a manner of speaking.

Beat. Asante seems to be maneuvering carefully, like someone skilled in the art of conversation, trying to push towards a goal.

ASANTE

(slowly)
 Something about your gait, Mr. Cross,
 tells me that you once did have people
 you could trust. People you could
 confide in.

CROSS

(cautious)
 And how did you arrive at that
 conclusion?

ASANTE

Oh, little things mainly. A quirk
 here, a mannerism there. Words both
 spoken and unspoken.

CROSS

Psychoanalysis is a hobby of yours?

ASANTE

Something like that.

Cross stops, turns.

CROSS

(accusing)
 ...or are you reading my mind?

ASANTE

With the advent of telepathy little
 things such as Human intuition have
 been largely ignored.

(MORE)

ASANTE (CONT'D)

With practice it can even rival telepathy, making telepathy itself redundant in occasions.

CROSS

Then tell me my answer for me.

Asante laughs.

ASANTE

I'm not that good.

A long beat, as the atmosphere becomes more serious and the previous statements sink in.

CROSS

Well, you're right. I did have people to lean on. To talk to.
(slightly distant)
Old friends...

Asante moves towards him.

ASANTE

(soft)

Do you need someone to talk to?

Cross turns around, a tad rapidly. It comes unexpected to Asante.

CROSS

Let me do a little bit of psychoanalysis of my own, Asante. You want me. To talk to you, and are maneuvering into a position to do so.

Asante seems genuinely pained.

ASANTE

No, that's not it at all. I act out of sympathy.

(beat, broaching a sensitive subject)

Mr. Cross, we all have our secrets. Things we never wish to reveal to anyone. But I feel something is greatly troubling you. Maybe something you need to talk about. If you like, I am all ears.

CROSS

And if I don't?

Asante tilts his head in acceptance.

ASANTE

In that case I understand.

Cross gives no immediate response. They stroll through the garden for a long BEAT, silent. Asante is contemplative, Cross is inwardly evaluating. The ball's in his court -- does he play it?

CROSS

Maybe you're right, Asante. Maybe you're right. Maybe I need to talk.
(beat)
You see, I did not commit any crime.

ASANTE

Oh?

CROSS

That's right.

ASANTE

Then why were you sent here?

CROSS

They want me out of the way, probably... or I am a convenient scapegoat. Something like that. They always had their reasons.

ASANTE

Who are "they"?

CROSS

Starfleet Command.

Asante's eyebrows raise.

ASANTE

I see. You were in the service?

Cross smiles slightly.

CROSS

Would you believe I was Captain of the Enterprise?

ASANTE

Seriously?

CROSS

Seriously.

Asante shrugs.

ASANTE

I would not have room to doubt it.
(MORE)

ASANTE (CONT'D)

I have not kept up with such events
and persona since...

He motions to the prison around him. Cross, more somber,
nods.

CROSS

I understand. I wouldn't, either.

A long beat. Something is at work in Asante's mind as before,
something carefully prepared...

ASANTE

What public reason did Starfleet
give?

CROSS

Hm?

ASANTE

For your imprisonment. Surely they
would need an excuse.

CROSS

Oh, they found one all right. It
was an incident I had committed during
the retaliation against the Klingons.

Click.

ASANTE

The Klingons again?

Cross smiles, temporarily relieved, and nods.

CROSS

And they have another civil war, to
boot.

Asante shakes his head in mock disrespect.

ASANTE

When it was said "If we don't learn
from history we are doomed to repeat
it," I don't think they meant so
exactly...

Beat.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

(softly)

What... kind... of incident was it?

Cross turns away from Asante. He looks up into the cloudless
sky above. His expression is decidedly mixed.

CROSS

The kind that can only be allowed in war.

(beat)

I attacked and destroyed one of their settlements. It wasn't too pretty, but that settlement was responsible for launching vicious attacks at us. It needed to be put out of operation if the border was to be secure.

(beat, firm)

I put it out of operation.

Slowly, Asante approaches from behind.

ASANTE

What kind of settlement was it? A military installation? A city?

CROSS

(somewhat bitter)

It was a military installation. But in a typical fashion they brought civilians along with them. It was a dirty trick. They hoped by doing so, no doubt, it would prevent us from attacking.

(beat, more emotional, distant)

They wanted to escape punishment for what they did. But no, they weren't going to get away. Not while I was in command. So I did what was necessary.

(beat)

I destroyed them.

Silence, Cross continues to look out to the heavens, his face angry and close to tears. Slowly Asante weighs the impact of what Cross just said. It strikes a deep chord in Asante, so deep it might surprise us.

ASANTE

(quietly)

That's why they sent you here.

CROSS

(bitterly)

It's their excuse.

ASANTE

Is it?

Cross whirls around, full of rage.

CROSS

(angry)

What are you implying?

Asante seems hurt and startled by Cross's reaction. He becomes defensive.

ASANTE

Nothing. I merely meant that the attack could have been part of their real motivation.

Beat. Cross sizes Asante up and down.

CROSS

Perhaps.

Asante continues to stride through the garden and Cross follows. He examines the surroundings.

ASANTE

(indicating it is
time to part)

It was a nice walk.

CROSS

(neutral)

Yes.

ASANTE

We must do it again sometime.

CROSS

Sometime.

ASANTE

(somewhat cryptic)

Sleep on it.

Cross looks at him curiously, pondering the meaning.

CROSS

I will.

Asante leaves Cross. Cross watches him go, but as he does he notices something. A CALDONIAN, dressed as a guard, is watching him. When he sees Cross he turns away. When Cross flicks a glance to behind himself he sees a RHANDARRAN guard doing the same.

Cross, purposefully, strides away.

CUT TO:

INT. NZ PENAL -- LOMNOL'S OFFICE

LOMNOL, the Arcturian, is sitting in a nondescript office. Like most of the buildings we have seen in NZ Penal, it is mostly featureless with a grey decor. However, it looks quite lived in and on a shelf is an orangeish-brown structure about the size of a fishbowl, octagonal in shape -- presumably an art-form.

VOICE

Sir, a prisoner wishes to see you.

LOMNOL

(nonchalant)

Send him in.

The door parts to reveal Cross. He steps inside. Lomnol looks up at him with an air of indifference.

LOMNOL (CONT'D)

Ah, Prisoner 871494.

CROSS

My name is Cross.

LOMNOL

So I am aware of, Prisoner.

CROSS

(pointedly)

And are you also aware I am under surveillance?

Lomnol folds his hands and makes his posture more officious, as if this statement has determined both nature and result of the following conversation -- as if following a path all too clear. He folds his hands.

LOMNOL

(cool, precise,
disciplined)

I am. All Prisoners are kept under constant surveillance.

CROSS

(galvanized)

You have no right --

LOMNOL

(cold, quiet, harsh)

Any such rights you had in this regard you lost when you put on that uniform,

(MORE)

LOMNOL (CONT'D)

Prisoner. "Prisoners are to be kept under constant surveillance." Page 108, Paragraph 3, line 6, document "On Prison Regulation."

Cross bites his lip, hard.

LOMNOL (CONT'D)

(noting Cross's injury)

You look pretty bad. You're lucky Prisoner 702104 didn't hit you harder. Take a trip to the Ward.

Cross turns to leave, beaten -- then pauses, as something occurs to him.

CROSS

(quiet, venomous)

You like it.

Lomnol's brow furrows.

LOMNOL

Excuse me?

Cross turns around.

CROSS

This isn't just a job to you.

(beat)

You enjoy it, don't you?

LOMNOL

I am proud of my work.

CROSS

(on the warpath)

More than proud. You didn't need to look at my name tag to tell me my number. And you knew Nathan's off by bat.

LOMNOL

I pride accuracy. Arcturian memory is good.

CROSS

Good, but not that good. Not unless it's important, of utmost importance to the person in question.

LOMNOL

My job is important to me.

CROSS

But it's not just that kind of
importance it takes.

(beat, harsh)

In a blissful utopia, the prison is
the last abode of the sadist.

Lomnol raises to his feet. He is calm. Deathly calm. The
very coolness of his character is frightening. A calm before
a storm.

LOMNOL

The Sheliak obliterate prisoners the
moment they extract all available
data by mind-probe. The Gorn leave
them to roam in their deadly desert
savannas, full of beasts which could
tear a humanoid limb from limb without
another thought and catalogues worth
of poisons. God only knows what the
Romulans do, but seldom are their
prisoners seen ever again. The
Idanians don't even acknowledge the
existence of their prisoners.

(beat, more pointedly)

Worse still has happened in the past.
The Cardassians, the Dominion.

Cross winces.

LOMNOL (CONT'D)

Oh, I know all about that. And what
about the Klingons? They torture
all prisoners on sight! Sometimes
they reduce the prisoners to nothing
more than mindless bodies. I've
read the report, and the treatment
the Klingons gave you is nicer than
ever would be expected for someone
of your crime.

CROSS

Then even my past has no privacy?

LOMNOL

You deserve none.

(beat)

NZ Penal is one of the most humane
rehabilitation facilities in the
Alpha Quadrant -- in all the known
galaxy. This is the best treatment
you'd ever get.

(beat)

And maybe that's more than you
deserve.

A long BEAT.

CROSS

Then you'll send me to Confinement?

LOMNOL

I will do no such thing. The rules
forbid it. And unlike you, Prisoner,
I live by the rules.

Cross turns away from Lomnol, pauses, and heads towards the
door. He EXITS.

After a moment, Lomnol calls to the air.

LOMNOL (CONT'D)

Zir-i'ka, show me Confinement,
Prisoner 702104.

On Lomnol, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. NZ PENAL -- CROSS'S CELL

Cross puts "Tron, Killer of Remus, Volume I" on a shelf and leaves the room.

CROSS (V.O.)

Log Entry. Day 11. Routine. Routine
is the core of all my existence now.

INT. NZ PENAL -- CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Shot of Cross walking down the corridor.

CROSS (V.O.)

Bland, empty routine. A shell of
life. A mockery of life. So this
is Federation Rehabilitation. We
have better service, treatments,
morality in our prison system, but
what does it really mean?

(beat)

Empty additions. Like combating
rust on a bridge with a new coat of
paint. Luxuries. Irrelevant luxuries
better suited for the Outside, that
the minds of the Outside thought
we'd need. But they hide the real
problem.

(beat)

The Prison. Four walls barricading
us in. Four walls that are the limits
of our horizon. The guards that
dutifully stand watch, giving that
symbolism a reality. All they have
done is to fluff up a living death.

(beat)

Living? I move, I breathe, I talk.
But am I still alive? Does it count
as being alive if one's very soul
feels dead?

(beat)

And do I deserve it? Lomnol seems
to think I deserve worse. No... how
could I deserve even this?

Cross enters the Dining Hall.

INT. NZ PENAL -- DINING HALL -- CONTINUOUS

Same as before. Cross enters and begins to make his way
across the room before he is interrupted by Lorenzo. He
swaggers his way into Cross's position.

LORENZO

Cross, innt?

Cross begins to move away, but Lorenzo blocks his path.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

You ain't looking so good, pal.

Cross moves, Lorenzo blocks.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

You looking like you need help, pal.
And I got all the help yer gonna
need! Gloup. Makes yer worries
fade away! Once ya tried Gloup,
you'll wonder what you ever did
without it.

The WOMAN seen earlier suddenly stumbles towards Lorenzo far more determined then she was seen earlier, driven by an inhuman craving.

WOMAN

I need it!

This comes as a very unpleasant surprise to Lorenzo, and he reacts badly.

LORENZO

Lookit, I told you --

WOMAN

Give it to me!

She pawns at him, and Lorenzo tries to keep him off... Cross's eyes narrow, suspicious, and with recognition.

CROSS

Gloup? As in...

(beat)

Gloupaufnag'ra? That's poison.
It's lethal.

Lorenzo is caught off-guard and totally taken aback by Cross's knowledgeable response, but quickly rebounds while still keeping the woman at arm's distance.

LORENZO

(virtually inaudible,
but forceful)

If you don't stop you won't get
anything!

This seems to have an instant psychological impact on the Woman. She stumbles upright, looks at him with her glazed eyes, and whimpers off. Lorenzo, relieved, turns to Cross.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

Only to Saurians, pal, only to 'em.
On Humans --

CROSS

(finishing for him)
-- it acts as an addiction. A
narcotic. How on Earth did you get
anything like that into the compound?

Lorenzo, for once, is silent.

CROSS (CONT'D)

That's it. I'll inform the guards --

LORENZO

(now substantially
more formal, quiet)
You got no information, pal. You
see Gloup? I don't see Gloup. What
is this "Gloup," anyways? Nevah
heard of it.

CROSS

But you would have it somewhere.
And they'd find out.

LORENZO

Would they, pal?

Cross stares at the so quietly but firmly self-confident individual.

CROSS

You're bluffing.

LORENZO

Pal, in a game like this ya never
bluff.

CROSS

Then I'm calling.

Cross turns sharply away, before Lorenzo could utter another word, and walks towards a not so nearby BOLIAN guard.

FADE TO:

INT. NZ PENAL -- DINING HALL -- LATER

At table. Asante and Cross are eating. Both are thoroughly enjoying their meals, which they are both more or less midway through. Asante pauses.

ASANTE

They won't find anything.

Cross looks up.

CROSS

They might. I can't believe there would be no trace.

ASANTE

Then you don't know Andy Lorenzo. They've made countless raids on his cell. Lomnol is convinced he smuggles things in. So is everyone. But other the smuggled material itself and it's effect --

CROSS

Though wouldn't that be enough? That woman -- what was her name again? The one with the grey eyes?

ASANTE

Fabiano.

Cross nods.

CROSS

(continuing)

Fabiano, is clearly addicted to Gloup, right?

ASANTE

Right.

CROSS

And that would show up in a medical examination. And she clearly attacked Lorenzo looking for it.

Asante nods.

ASANTE

Yes, it's known that Fabiano takes Gloup, and she's only one of Lorenzo's "customers." But while there's sufficient evidence to prove she has Gloup, she's addicted to Gloup, and she's getting more Gloup on a more or less monthly basis -- and when raids steal her Gloup she demands more from Lorenzo -- that isn't sufficient pretext for the charge. It goes very close, but not close enough. Lorenzo is very fond of pleading circumstantial position. Indeed he's quite fond of alleging that the people in question are wrongly accusing him.

(MORE)

ASANTE (CONT'D)

And he gets away with it, too. But other than that smuggled material there's not a scrap of proof.

CROSS

But there are a lot of people with material that they've specifically said they got from Lorenzo. Lebutu, Cheng -- hell, even Leighton got a card set!

Asante smiles, shakes his head.

ASANTE

In which case it's a conspiracy, if one listens to Lorenzo.

CROSS

There would be something. Maybe statements recorded by the cameras...

ASANTE

Andy is always just out of range of the cameras when any transactions take place. He sets the time and the place, and spurns anyone who doesn't comply. They've tried cameras on guards, but he's all quiet when they do. So they reverted back to the normal fashion in an attempt to catch him red-handed. But he's always just out of earshot, or out of that guard's field of vision. A master at deception, really. And how he smuggles things in nobody knows, 'sept Andy, and maybe whoever does it.

CROSS

Still, he wouldn't be in this prison if he hadn't been caught. And evidence can't be completely erased.

ASANTE

True. Why did you do it, though?

CROSS

I don't understand.

ASANTE

Tell on Andy Lorenzo.

CROSS

It's the law. If you mean to imply that it is folly --

ASANTE

No, not that. It's just that generally people in here aren't always the most law-abiding folk.

CROSS

I am.

ASANTE

Even now?

CROSS

Even now.

ASANTE

Then tell me, Mr. Cross... aside from why you are here, have you ever broken the law?

Cross thinks for a moment.

CROSS

I did -- but I had reasons. Good reasons.

ASANTE

What is more important then the law?

CROSS

Morals.

ASANTE

Ah.

Beat. Both of them return to focusing on eating their meals.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

(not looking up)

Anything higher than that?

CROSS

Than morals?

ASANTE

Precisely.

Cross looks up, thinks.

CROSS

I don't think I ever gave it that much thought. At least, not from that angle. I suppose there are some things that I consider more important than morals. Liberty, freedom.

ASANTE

Duty?

Beat.

CROSS

Under circumstances... no, I take that back. Duty is never as important as these.

ASANTE

Very well. How about loyalty?

CROSS

That would depend on whom or what the loyalty lies. And even then, I would not know.

ASANTE

Personal loyalty?

CROSS

It's the same thing in that regard, only more specific.

Asante thinks, weighing that.

ASANTE

I do not mean to be rude, but have you ever had anyone close to you? A spouse, perhaps?

A long beat. The implication is like a dagger in Cross's heart, bringing back memories of a life that seems a universe away.

CROSS

(quietly, moved)
Yes. Once...

ASANTE

Would you count it more than law, morality, liberty and freedom?

CROSS

I kept my personal and professional lives separate in that regard.

ASANTE

But what if both paths crossed? What then?

CROSS

Why all these questions, Asante?

ASANTE

They are issues that I have often been interested in. That I deem important. Worthy of discussion. It is rare that I find someone whom I might talk about it with.

CROSS

Another hobby?

ASANTE

In a manner of speaking. And now, my question.

A long beat as Cross considers. This is probably the hardest one of them all.

CROSS

(soft)

I am glad I never had to make that choice.

Asante nods.

ASANTE

And that, perhaps, is the best answer.

CROSS

What are your views on the subject, Asante?

ASANTE

After having a long time to think about it...

(beat)

Morality is more important than law and equal to liberty and freedom. Duty, perhaps, is not as important as it seems.

CROSS

I see.

ASANTE

But often there is no time to consider this. You must act on impulse. Have you ever had had impulses you regretted?

Cross thinks.

CROSS

Some. I suppose we all do, at some point.

ASANTE

So did I. But have impulses ever clouded your judgment on issues such as these?

A long BEAT.

CROSS

(slowly)

They might have, at times. In little ways. But whenever it is truly important, my rational will always prevails.

ASANTE

Ah. Into all these factors what do you think of emotion? Is it a hindrance?

CROSS

Never. Vulcans might believe so, but I don't. Emotion helps set things in perspective. To clarify reasons. Emotion is an important part of reasoning.

ASANTE

But if it could become central, pushed to the fore, say, by impulse

CROSS

That is something I would try not to. Things should remain balanced and clear.

ASANTE

So you believe it can be perverted?

CROSS

I believe everything can be perverted.

ASANTE

Do you feel there are situations where emotion is more important than the other aspects of reasoning?

Cross considers.

CROSS

These are all quite well thought out and constructed questions, Asante. What is your... motive... in all of this?

Asante smiles, faintly. There is something about that smile, something... memorable.

ASANTE

Nothing more ulterior than curiosity, Mr. Cross. As I have said, I have rarely got a chance to discuss this subject. I have many things to catch up on.

Cross returns the smile, more formally and politely then genuine amusement.

CROSS

I'm sure you do. To answer your question, I don't think emotion is ever more important then other faculties.

ASANTE

But it is always important in the deciding process?

CROSS

In issues like these? Always.

ASANTE

In the deciding and the driving process are there situations where emotion is more important then some or all of the others? More of a factor?

Beat.

CROSS

(slowly)

In some circumstances emotion's relevance has varying importance. It is more relevant, generally speaking, in a personal decision of this nature, as opposed to a professional one.

ASANTE

(carefully)

And thence we return to personal and professional lives. Do you think, Mr. Cross, that there are situations, individual, specific situations of substantial importance, there are professional decisions which are more influenced, intended to be influenced by, emotion, more then at least one similar personal situation?

CROSS

That's a fairly long winded way of putting it.

ASANTE

(with "that" smile)

Unfortunately there are few ways of stating it more clearly.

A long beat, longer then the others.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

(concerned)

Is this too personal a question, Mr. Cross? If so, I withdraw it.

CROSS

No, it just required a bit of thought. And yes, I think there are exceptions to every rule, even this one.

ASANTE

Ah. Do you think emotion should ever lead such things? Become the main focus?

CROSS

As in revenge?

ASANTE

I did not think or imply so specifically, but yes, revenge would be one example.

CROSS

(blunt)

I believe in justice. Not revenge.

ASANTE

I see. But on the broader perspective...?

CROSS

(firm)

Just the same. Emotion, always tempered by rationale. There is a reason. And good ones. For what I did.

(beat, back-peddling)

What I might have done, that is, in this theoretical situation.

ASANTE

Ah. Do you think, under the right circumstances, such belief could be corrupted?

CROSS

(now more detached)

Yes. I think it is possible that anything can be corrupted.

ASANTE

And the person being corrupted all the while believing what he or she is doing is just and right, even to the end?

CROSS

(conceding)

It is possible.

ASANTE

You said you feel perversion could happen to anything. Tell me, do you think it could happen to anyone?

Beat.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

(as an afterthought)

Under the varying and in some cases exceptional circumstances.

A long beat.

CROSS

It might be so, perhaps, theoretically. Under certain circumstances. Some might not break so easily as others.

ASANTE

True.

CROSS

(pointedly)

And some could face the same situations that broke others and remain unbroken.

ASANTE

Possibly, yes.

CROSS

And sometimes men may do things considered by others unjust but in fact just.

ASANTE

Depending on the circumstances. It would be, I think, something quite unusual.

CROSS

But not impossible.

ASANTE

That is true. But probably quite exceptional. It would require two widely differing views on the subject.

Beat.

CROSS

That it would.

ASANTE

And one must be wrong, then?

Beat.

CROSS

In cases. There might be a little of both, or one is right and the other half-right.

ASANTE

But still differing on the point of conflict, one being wrong in that regard?

CROSS

Inevitably, yes.

ASANTE

Ah. But do you not agree that on a whole most people who are deemed corrupted and so deemed by just men are?

CROSS

It would be the case of some and not with the others. Since it wanders off from philosophy into statistics I cannot say more than that.

ASANTE

Very well.

Beat. This segment of the conversation seems to be over. Both are now more focused on their meals. They finish.

CROSS

(with a concluding air)

You pick a heady topic for lunch, Asante.

Asante's "smile" returns.

ASANTE

Yes, I did, didn't I? But it is so refreshing to get such an opportunity.

CROSS

Likewise. An interesting way to
spend my lunch, most certainly.

ASANTE

And enjoyable?

CROSS

That too.

Cross checks whatever passes as a watch in the 25th century.

CROSS (CONT'D)

But now I must be off.

Asante does the same.

ASANTE

I also have things to do. Some time
tomorrow?

CROSS

Certainly.

Cross and Asante get up from the table and go off in their
separate ways. We follow Cross as he broods, contemplative.

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

Philosophy. A game, or a character
study?

On Cross we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. NZ PENAL -- CORRIDOR

Cross is walking down the corridor, a previously unseen woman in prisoner garb next to him.

WOMAN
(to Cross)
See ya.

Cross nods, politely, and she walks away. Cross continues on his route. At this point, LOMNOL appears behind Cross.

LOMNOL
(from behind)
Prisoner 871494. A word?

Cross stops dead in his tracks.

CROSS
(not turning around)
Yes?

Lomnol catches up with him.

LOMNOL
Some matter that might concern you.
Prisoner 702104 has been released
from his allotted time in Confinement.

CROSS
Ah.

Cross turns to go, but Lomnol stops him.

LOMNOL
That's not all.

CROSS
Oh?

LOMNOL
(slightly irritated)
A standard search was conducted of
Prisoner 794619's cell and person.
Security tapes have been monitored.
There is no indication he ever had
Gloupaufnag'ra.

Cross thinks, noticing Lomnol's reaction.

CROSS
You seem...
(MORE)

CROSS (CONT'D)

(beat)
...annoyed at me. My inquiry?

LOMNOL

It had to be followed up. The rules are the rules, and I shall say no more about it.

CROSS

(pointedly)
You don't need to. It shows through plainly. You weren't satisfied because you knew this search would turn up nothing because such searches never had against Lorenzo.

LOMNOL

If you knew nothing would be found --

CROSS

I didn't. But even if I did, I would have informed you. I have a code of my own, Lomnol.

(beat, insultingly)

Oh, and that isn't all I can read from you. You wanted a deeper search that wasn't permitted, didn't you?

(beat)

No, not just now, but for a long time. You wanted to keep your little world under your thumb, were furious that you could not -- because of that double-edged sword, the rulebook.

LOMNOL

(barely contained)

Enough! I have endured enough attacks from you, Prisoner! This is ironies of ironies! A murderer lecturing me on ethics! A hypocrite. Take your trash to someone else. And as I have always said:

(beat)

The rules are the rules, and I am proud of my job.

Lomnol stalks off.

CROSS

(calling after him,
loud)

I'm no murderer, no matter what anybody thinks! Don't you dare ever call me that again! Lomnol! Don't you dare!

There is no response. Cross stands in the corridor, simmering. He holds himself back, and makes his way through the corridor once more, his rapid pace trying to blow off steam.

CUT TO:

INT. NZ PENAL -- CORRIDOR -- LATER

After a while, he crosses a room with no door. Moments after he does he seems to have noticed something and turns back to the room, steps inside into the...

INT. NZ PENAL -- CHAPEL -- CONTINUOUS

The first interior room we have seen in NZ Penal that is not bleakly grey. It is brightly colored by "windows" -- window-shaped collections of thousands of little dots that shine red. The design feels very mixed, like a blending of many different styles. It draws from many Earth religious buildings Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity -- and also it seems, from mainly alien ones -- some of the chairs have a non-human feel to them, and there is a touch of Bajoran in decor -- more specifically some of the wall coloring, and the arches that support the ceiling.

But none of this interests Cross nearly as much as the lone figure kneeling before an unusual multi-faceted object that is vaguely reminiscent of an altar. His hands are clasped tight near his face, and it appears that he is praying.

Cross can only see his back, but he recognizes him well enough.

It is ASANTE.

Cross, surprised, slowly makes his way toward him from behind. Then, awkward, he turns to go...

ASANTE
(unmoving, almost a
whisper, raspy)
You need not leave.

Cross stops in his tracks. He turns back halfway to look at the kneeling Asante.

CROSS
There won't be a sermon for another
hour or so.

ASANTE
I know. And I am here simply for
sanctuary, for solitude. A peace of
mind.

CROSS

Then should I...

ASANTE

No. Not unless you wish it. I can have companions in my solitude.

CROSS

I... I don't know what to say.

ASANTE

Then don't.

Cross nods. He walks towards Asante, approaching from the side, and hunches down near him. We now see Asante's eyes are closed, but his hands still obscure his face. It is only now apparent to Cross that Asante is praying.

CROSS

I did not know that you believed...

Asante opens his eyes, looks up not at Cross, but upwards towards the heavens. His face is still largely obscured.

ASANTE

(hoarse, passionate)

In a God? Yes. I have done so for a long time...

Cross is silent, taking it in like a repository.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

Could such a wondrous thing as the universe exist by mere accident? Is there nothing more... no textures within textures... no higher meaning?

CROSS

Those are questions to which I cannot pretend to have any answer.

ASANTE

Yes... but questions each person must answer for themselves.

Cross looks up at the direction Asante is.

Beat.

CROSS

Sometimes I don't feel I can answer.

ASANTE

That, in itself, is an answer.

CROSS

Maybe the meaning of the universe...
is what we make of it.

(beat)

I know, I'm not making any sense

ASANTE

I understand.

CROSS

Sometimes I wonder if there is a
plan. A fate. Is my free will really
what it seems?

ASANTE

In the end you take what roads you
chose. A fate may so desire it, but
it is still you by whom the road is
taken.

CROSS

(subdued)

Yes...

ASANTE

All we have here, is questions.

CROSS

That may never be answered.

ASANTE

Or may be, in the next life. And
for some, no explanation is needed.
Only faith.

CROSS

I wonder...

ASANTE

That is where it begins. The path
to understanding lies along the route
of thought and wonder, I have felt.
And philosophy is like a beacon that
shows the way.

CROSS

But can understanding ever be reached
is the question. Take Science, for
example. We thought a General
Unification Theory could now be
irrevocably stated, but the Omegan
Theory smashed it to pieces. A cycle
long repeated in that profession.

ASANTE

Maybe it can, maybe it cannot.

(MORE)

ASANTE (CONT'D)

But until and if it can, one must decide best themselves. Place faith and trust where they feel it should go.

CROSS

That we should, I suspect. But if we learned the truth, on either front, what then? Would it really bring some sort of incredible wisdom? Or great revolution? I doubt both.

ASANTE

Perhaps not. But all are stops on the road to understanding ourselves.

Beat.

CROSS

But you still didn't come here for philosophical debate. You, come here often?

ASANTE

Every day.

CROSS

Ah.

ASANTE

No, this room, it soothes me. Like bathing in a light.

CROSS

Emotions dictated your actions.

ASANTE

As they should for these matters, Mr. Cross. Matters free of rationalizations.

CROSS

Perhaps.

Beat.

ASANTE

Have you ever tried?

CROSS

Hm?

ASANTE

To pray. To meditate.

Beat. Cross reflects on the question.

CROSS

(thoughtful)

I have thought long and hard. Could that be called meditation, in this context?

ASANTE

No, not in this.

CROSS

Ah...

ASANTE

Do you think of life after death?

Cross shrugs.

CROSS

Not much, to be honest.

ASANTE

Well I do, sometimes. What will it be like? How will people be divided? Good and bad? Those who repent and those who do not? Faithful and unfaithful?

CROSS

If there is such a life at all.

ASANTE

Yes, if. And how much do our actions here reflect the life there?

CROSS

None, all... I would not know, nor would I claim to.

ASANTE

None should. Unless they truly do.

Beat.

CROSS

This is fascinating, Asante. I find your viewpoint very interesting.

Asante smiles, slightly, the tension of the scene alleviated.

ASANTE

I'll take that as a compliment.

A long beat.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

I wonder, Mr. Cross... have you ever seen my home?

CROSS

I might have. Only you've never
told me were it exactly was.

Asante smiles again.

ASANTE

Upatu.

Cross thinks for a moment.

CROSS

I can't say I have been there.

ASANTE

Then you don't know what you missed.

(beat, soft)

The night sky is unlike anything
else in the galaxy. You think Earth's
Aurora Borealis or the Antares
Maelstrom is impressive? Ah, you
should see the eruptions of the ice
mountains... beautiful...

(beat)

I'll never see it again. Tell me,
Mr. Cross, are there things, places,
maybe even people, that you miss
from the Outside?

Beat as Cross thinks slowly, sadly.

CROSS

(quiet)

More than I could begin to count.
But some of the dearest, I think, I
had already lost.

Tears well at the corners of Cross's eyes.

CROSS (CONT'D)

(choking on it)

My son... my little boy...

There is a long silence, which Asante dare not disturb.
Until, finally:

ASANTE

But that was not all.

CROSS

No. It wasn't.

ASANTE

(filling in the gaps)

Once you spoke of an Admiral...

Cross nods.

CROSS

Henry Portman. He was more than just a superior officer. He was my mentor. My friend.

ASANTE

Sometimes life seems so senseless, doesn't it?

A long BEAT.

CROSS

(slightly moved by memory, distant)

Yes. Justice was served, but it won't bring back the dead.

ASANTE

Death. Even after all we have done, it is a scourge that for us has not been cured.

CROSS

What about you, Asante? I know how you feel about home, but is there anything you miss in the past?

ASANTE

I miss not just parts of, but all my past with all my heart. I would give anything to return to it.

Beat. To that, Cross doesn't have anything he feels he should say.

CROSS

Is that why you came here? To ask this of deities?

Asante seems almost amused, but not quite, given the nature of the question and the surrounding circumstances.

ASANTE

I would never ask that from a deity. I seek things from deities, but that would not be one goal.

CROSS

What do you seek from a deity?

At first Asante does not respond. Slowly he clasps his hands and gazes upwards. We can now see his face properly for the first time -- and something immediately becomes apparent:

He is crying.

ASANTE

(hoarse)

Whatever He grants me to ask.

Cross kneels beside him.

CROSS

How much of it cannot be given to others?

ASANTE

(meaningful)

I ask only for forgiveness. If anyone can forgive me, it is him.

CROSS

Forgive you? For what?

Asante does not respond. Cross looks at him for a long beat, that cryptic, but worn face.

CROSS (CONT'D)

(quiet, but determined)

You once said we all have our secrets. And asked me to confide in you. I gave you mine.

(beat)

What are yours?

A long beat. It seems that Asante will not respond, then:

ASANTE

(slowly)

It has been a long time since anybody or thing has treated me with a shred of respect. The first being in a long time who did not loathe me.

CROSS

(whispered)

Asante...

ASANTE

(distant)

If you hear that secret, all that would change.

CROSS

You can't be sure of that.

ASANTE

I am. More than you could know. Would you pledge to the contrary?

Cross does not respond, slightly embarrassed.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

I did not think so. You would not be so hasty as to make a pledge you might turn your back on.

A long BEAT.

CROSS

What...?

He trails off, unable to bring himself to finish the question. But Asante does not need it to be fully voiced. Asante stands, and turns away from Cross, walking one or two steps. Cross stands up, looking on at the back of Asante.

ASANTE

(to himself)

I knew it had to come sooner or later. Such a thing could have been kept long hidden. Still, I hoped it would have been a longer duration.

Beat. Cross opens his mouth, but thinks better of it.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

You need not prod me. I will reveal that which you seek. Afterwards you will undoubtedly scorn me.

(beat)

Have you ever wondered why I am in this prison?

CROSS

I know that it couldn't be pleasant. But if that's what it is, I understand...

Asante whips around.

ASANTE

(suddenly angry)

You could not possibly understand! You have no idea what you are talking about!

Cross steps back.

CROSS

I meant no offense.

Asante struggles, and restrains himself, but he's still simmering.

ASANTE

I...

(MORE)

ASANTE (CONT'D)

(beat)

I apologize. This is a traumatic moment for me.

Numbly, Cross nods.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

Yes, the crime that got me in here is the secret that I have shrouded.

(beat)

But I will not even need to tell you my crime for you to know what it is. In fact, you know of it already.

CROSS

(baffled)

I don't understand.

ASANTE

You will, shortly. In fact, by answering a plainer and simpler question you once posed at me, you will know your answer.

Asante turns to face him, his eyes both fiery and pained. He strides towards Cross until he is right by him.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

"Asante...?" was the question you had asked. You wished to know if there was more to my name. A first name or a second name -- humans rarely if ever have one-word names these days, you know.

(beat)

And you were right. I do have a full name.

He pauses, silent. He looks into Cross's eyes with the unknown, mysterious air he can possess only moments longer.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

I am Asante Nkrumah.

Cross blinks for a second and then the realization hits him like a tidal wave. All the pieces falling together by their own will to construct a terrifying image. He recoils in horror, backing away from Asante, deathly pale. He raises a shaky but accusing finger at Asante.

Asante remains calm, and we can see this reaction is what he expected all along.

CROSS

(angry, shocked,
disgusted, unstable)

You're... oh Jesus Christ...

(beat)

You're...

(beat)

Oh my god. You're Admiral Asante
Nkrumah, butcher of Benzar! You
committed genocide! Twelve million
people dead!

(beat)

You're a murderer!

ASANTE

And so are you!

SMASH CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. NZ PENAL -- CHAPEL

Continuos action from the end of Act Four. Cross, doubly stunned, raises his hand to defend himself -- then suddenly, he stops. A change comes over him, as if something is happening to him. We can tell that it is a FLASHBACK to the events of "Shadows of a New Dawn." During the following, Cross's expression weakens, becomes more and more desolate, as if seeing it all in a new light.

SUKOTHAI (V.O.)

Negh'var is now four kilometers and closing. Two point eight... point three... one point five...

CROSS (V.O.)

Now Dojar!

Sounds of tractor beams... EXPLOSIONS.

At that Cross shows signs of anguish and pain. Desolation.

The sound fades...

TALORA (V.O.)

Shall I order the transporter room to beam aboard survivors, sir?

CROSS (V.O.)

Let it fall apart.

(beat)

Let them die.

It ECHOES and repeats itself, fading slowly, etching itself onto the mind. Reverberating. Shaking and breaking the man we once knew.

Beat. Cross's hand falls to his side and dangles. He is pale, deathly pale. He is more distraught then we would believe possible. Cross, as if the very essence of his existence was ripped out of him, slumps onto the nearby stool.

CROSS (CONT'D)

(faint, whisper, as if every word an effort, to himself)

Oh my God... what have I done?

He covers his face in his hands. He seems to be sobbing, only not quite. Grief? Terror? Does he even know?

There is a long BEAT of total silence. Cross does not stir. He is stone.

Slowly, his head is raised. Cross seems to have grown a decade older. He carries a burden so strong it seems it might overpower him. Lines and creases are etched through his face. He appears smaller, paler, weaker. A man far less certain of himself. As if humanity had been ripped from his bones and despair was all that remained.

CROSS (CONT'D)

(slowly, somber)

When I think of the name Asante
Nkrumah, I think of "a murderer" and
a long line like him. Kodos. Hitler.

(beat, softly)

What will people think... when they
hear the name Neil Cross?

Asante moves towards him, moving for the first time.

ASANTE

(quietly)

You are closer to me than you think.

Cross looks up cold -- jolted by the notion.

CROSS

No. I'm nothing like...

He trails off as the memory returns to him, smothering his knee-jerk reaction. Asante turns away from him and peers into the distance, as if seeing the past in his mind's eye.

ASANTE

(quietly)

I remember it as clear as yesterday.
No, better than that. I remember it
more clearly than any other event in
my life. The President had personally
given me authority to restore order
in the Romulan half of Benzar.

(beat)

The rebels were calling for a unified
Benzar, one under the Federation.
No doubt the Romulans could have
stamped down on them themselves, but
we needed to prove we had nothing to
do with it...

He sighs and shakes his head. Tears trickle down his face. What he talks about disturbs the very core of his being.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

(always with a trace
of sadness)

We were given a sector to clear up
by the Romulans in conjunction.

(MORE)

ASANTE (CONT'D)

As you probably know, Benzites don't breathe the same air as we do, but medical advances have allowed them to function absolutely normally in our environment.

(beat)

What is not well known is that the reverse is far from the same. To cleanse areas of Bazar I had to send down troops clad in spacesuits there was no other way for them to breathe the environment. It crippled us. They'd been trained for situations, but it still considerably impaired their movement. And the atmosphere hung about them like a fog -- the Benzites could see through it well, but our soldiers might have well been blind. The topographical maps, no matter how well studied, were no substitute to an intimate knowledge of the terrain...

(beat)

It was a horrible battle. Not even a battle -- a massacre. It stood no hope of success... I could not lose these troops needlessly...

(beat)

While there was another option.

A long BEAT. Asante's features are intense, torn, anguished.

ASANTE (CONT'D)

(a deathly whisper)

Obliterate from space. Whole cities were wiped off the face of the planet, never to return. An entire continent... laid waste.

(beat)

To this day I ask myself if it was the only way. To this day I have no answer.

Asante turns around. He and Cross lock eyes, a sense of meaning and understanding between them never present before.

CROSS

(quietly)

You feel remorse?

ASANTE

More than remorse. Anguish. Torment. Every moment of every day lies in shadow, I feel the weight of millions of dead -- millions! -- tearing at

(MORE)

ASANTE (CONT'D)

my soul. In waking life the act
weighs down on me like...

(beat)

...no, there is nothing like it,
could ever be like it. And at night
it haunts me in my sleep.

Beat.

CROSS

I wonder if I look into a mirror
what face will look back at me.
Still Neil Cross -- but what has he
become? Can I still call myself
Human?

He looks up at Asante, meaningfully, troubled.

CROSS (CONT'D)

Is my face the face of a monster?

ASANTE

(hoarsely)

Oh, we are still human beings. In a
way what have done is most Human.
Cruelty is an ancient trait of our
species. Human... but is there
anything left of humaneness, of
decency?

(beat)

I look at myself and I see despair.
I see a shadow. But it is despair
that I must persist by. No matter
how I mourn my actions, it is I who
committed them. It is I who is
responsible for them.

CROSS

This guilt... does it ever...
Withdraw? Recede?

ASANTE

Never for a moment. Even when I am
discussing or doing something pleasant
it lurks in the back of my mind, a
phantom. A fury hounding my every
move. And if anything it has grown
more acute as the years have worn
on.

Cross looks to the ground, thinking. Gauging his actions,
and what he can hope to make of them.

CROSS

Revenge.

(MORE)

CROSS (CONT'D)

I goaded myself into thinking it was about justice, but it was all about revenge. All I could think of was appeasing the shade of Portman. Taking out my grief on others.

(beat)

All the while I never realized what I was doing. The reality of it never crossed my mind... not even when my officers objected...

(beat)

All I've done is repeat the crime that made me so angry. I spread the pain, the anguish and terror amongst others. Crime beset crime. I killed because others had killed.

(beat)

But two wrongs never make a right. Maybe if I had understood that there would have been a lot less killing. But I didn't.

(beat)

And there wasn't. My God...

Asante moves towards him, looking sympathetic and understanding.

ASANTE

(reassuring)

I tried to make you understand before. But you would not listen.

Cross LOOKS UP at him again.

CROSS

And maybe I never would have. Even since I committed that act I felt sure of my case. Looking back, it makes sense.

(beat)

I was hiding. There was some forgotten fiber of my being which knew the evil of my act. At first I fled from responsibility. And then from the truth.

(beat)

Emotion clouded my thinking. I was... incomplete. Depressed.

Cross looks up, apologetic.

CROSS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, is this making any sense?

Asante nods, somber.

ASANTE

Yes. Completely.

Cross breaks eye contact and becomes slightly brooding once more.

CROSS

I wonder how I will live now.

(quietly)

If I live at all.

ASANTE

You'll find it hard to kill yourself.

Lomnol sees to that.

(beat)

I do not know how I survive. It
eats at me, festering, like a disease.It is the worst sickness, that of
the soul. Self-loathing. Agony.

Horror.

(beat)

Perhaps I did not survive. Perhaps

I am already dead.

Cross looks around at his surroundings, weary, but sharp.

CROSS

Nothing will ever be the same again.

Slowly we pan forward Cross's face, getting closer and closer. We go to the face, and then the eye. Peering into his soul...

FADE TO:

INT. NZ PENAL -- CROSS'S CELL

It is dark. We focus on the ceiling, and then we pan down to see Cross in his bed. He is not sleeping soundly. He's thrashing from side to side, tormented.

CROSS

(bolting up)

NO!

Beat. Cross comes to his senses, and looks around the room. Tired -- but by no means willing to sleep -- Cross stumbles over to his chair and sits in it. He wipes his eyes, his motions slow, labored. He looks at the desk. There two items there, the first volume of "Tron, Killer of Remus" and a PADD. He looks at "Tron." He picks it up.

CROSS (CONT'D)

(blearily, half-awake)

No...

(beat)

No more killing.

He puts it to one side. He picks up the PADD and awkwardly begins to tap at it.

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

Log Entry. Day 24. The dreams come again. I was on the Bridge and I watched it happen. But now it seems like they were calling to me from above, screaming to me, begging me to not...

(beat)

Now I know what I was hiding from. The day is a passing shadow. The night is embroiling pain. This is the ultimate price of war. Not to die -- no, that's easy. To be killed is a simple affair.

(sounding increasingly disjointed)

But to kill... so many... so many voices...! Faces... lives! So many who plague my conscience... I killed them all... all of them... all dead... I did it... I DID IT!

(beat)

Sleep is no longer an option. Whenever I doze off, I think of them. Their memory, what I did to them, hangs over me like a... verdict. A condemnation. A prison of the mind.

(beat)

This is the burden I bare from my deed. It is far worse a burden then I could have ever dared to dread, far worse then any being could have given me.

(beat)

I killed for a man who wished no killing. No excuse of justice can I hide under. I am a war criminal, bereft of morals -- how could I be moral after committing so ghastly immoral acts?

(beat)

Nothing will ever be the same... ever be the same...

We PAN UP to the slits in the ceiling, and then...

FADE TO:

EXT. NZ PENAL COLONY

We pan right THROUGH them. We twist about to see that we are now just above NZ PENAL. From here, the prison in all its grim majesty is revealed to us.

A single story prison, formed of monotonous rectangles and other uniform, utilitarian shapes stretching outwards and covering a vast region. In the distance we can see the setting sun, slowly receding from this world.

A sun setting on this desolate place. Yet so near and yet so far, the last connection between the prison and the rest of the universe.

Then we pan across the ceiling of this prison, past all its morbid intricacies -- until we drop, and face another subject.

The FRONT DOORS, as seen in the teaser. Giant, shapeless, and foreboding. Now they rise above us -- we are at an angle looking up at them. Once we looked at them from the outside, now we are within. They stand tall, proud, ominous. Symbols of power... and of confinement.

Mighty gates that shut off their prisoners, mighty gates that ensnare them -- entrap them.

CROSS (V.O.)

I am a convict. Now I know I deserve
to be one.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

THE END