

Starship: Excelsior
"Better Angels"
(Season 5, Episode 5)
by James Heaney

Transcribed by Peter Stine

Note: Lines in brackets were recorded but interrupted. The complete line is left here for fuller context:
Note: This episode was originally part of a single script with "E.U.L.A.", so the scene numbers reflect that.

SCENE 4K-09**LOCATION: THE AVIARY - ASTROMETRIC LAB**

(Klaxons are going off here.)

SYNOLL: Get those cameras back up! We need eyes!

TULIAN #1: We're trying, Strategos!

(Jerrin comes running down some metal stairs. Neeva is right behind him.)

JERRIN: Strategos! What's going on?

NEEVA: Kestra, you alright?

J'NAYA: Aye!

SYNOLL: I don't know how, but they got past the entire perimeter before they tripped a laser sensor.

JERRIN: The doors? We pay dearly for impenetrable security barriers.

SYNOLL: As far as I can tell, they just walked through.

JERRIN: That's impossible.

SYNOLL: I'd love to explain how, but we've lost control of surveillance and security throughout that whole wing.

JERRIN: Could she have something to do with it?

SYNOLL: What, Kestra? No.

JERRIN: Commander Neeva, Command J'naya, of course I don't imagine that you would wish us any harm, but, Commander, we did see you compromise our security system with your hand-scanner outside. Could that have had any adverse effects on the rest of the device network?

J'NAYA: I'm sorry, Shipmaster, but there's just no way. Every device has its own unique license key; I only cracked the one. And, if I'm reading Synoll's console correctly, some of the intruder control systems you've lost aren't even on the same network as your perimeter defenses.

JERRIN: I see, Commander. Secure the information core! Full manual lockdown! Pull the plug if you have to!

TULIAN #2: Yes, Shipmaster!

JERRIN: And, corporal?

TULIAN #1: Sir?

JERRIN: Take a squad down to secure the hot backup in the Orange Wing. Make it two squads; I have a feeling not all of the impressive plasma rifles for which we paid impressively are going to fire any actual plasma.

TULIAN #1: Sir!

(he scampers off to follow his orders.)

SYNOLL: I have a security feed back up. Tech lab three.

JERRIN: Didn't we convert that to a temporary medical bay for the burn victims?

J'NAYA: That's where you sent Doctor Sharp!

SYNOLL: Don't worry, Kestra.

NEEVA: She's down there!

SYNOLL: I'm sure she's alright. The Islanders aren't ["terrorists"] (pause) Uh, Kestra, what am I seeing?

J'NAYA: That's Cap--That's Alcar Dovan, one of our missing men.

NEEVA: And there's Alecz!

J'NAYA: I... I don't understand.

JERRIN: Funny, I understand perfectly. (He presses a button) Guards!

J'NAYA: What?

(Neeva hits her commbadge.)

NEEVA: Neeva to *Excelsior*.

JERRIN: I don't know what you're really here for, but I'm not going to let you help the Islanders compromise our relationship with Divitia.

(Neeva hits her combadge again.)

NEEVA: Away Team to *Excelsior*! Come in!

J'NAYA: The Aviary's shielded, Neeva. They can't hear us.

JERRIN: Guards, you will escort these officers to the executive bunker, beyond the range of even their starship's sensors.

SYNOLL: Prevent them from contacting their Islander allies. But do whatever else they ask of you; they are our guests.

NEEVA: Guests? So we're free to leave?

SYNOLL: For all our sakes, I sincerely hope you don't try.

TULIAN #3: Will you come with us, ma'am?

J'NAYA: Commander?

(Pause.)

NEEVA

Lead the way.

THEME SONG

SCENE 4K-10**LOCATION: AVIARY - SERVER ROOM**

LORHROK: And you had no idea we were here?

SHARP: No more than you did, apparently. We were led to believe you were on Judaat.

DOVAN: Mised, perchance?

SHARP: No, I don't think the Tulians knew, either.

ISLANDER #1: Beginning file copy of sector G.

DOVAN: Are your people almost finished yet?

THE MAN: We are combing through a large military database with nothing but off-the-shelf search software and a handful of flash memory sticks.

LORHROK: The Capitol's response force could be here any minute.

THE MAN: We could scan these drives a lot faster if you'd just let us use your tricorder again.

DOVAN: No. We're using our technology to save Neshent, and we have his medicine. Altering the course of your society is something you have to do for yourself.

LORHROK: Captain?

DOVAN: How you holding up, Lieutenant? Want me to take that backpack before it topples you over?

LORHROK: It needs to stay connected to the tricorder. These lithium ion cells can barely keep up with the power draw. Besides, the battery pack's only sixty kilos. Basic Training stuff. I'd actually like Doctor Sharp's commbadge.

SHARP: It's dead. Ever since the shield went up.

LORHROK: No, our combadges are dead. Yours is just blocked. And I think I can punch a short message through. Maybe one Starfleet signal code.

SHARP: So we could send Code Green, get them to beam us out?

DOVAN: Or Code Seven-Ten, quarantine the planet out of spite?

LORHROK: Well, if we call for beamout, they'll sweep up everyone around us to compensate for the shield.

DOVAN: And then we'd have a bunch of Islanders on the *Excelsior* and more Prime Directive paperwork than you can shake a stick at. Good point. We'll fly out of here from the launch bay, as planned.

LORHROK: I was thinking we just transmit our ID codes, so Yubari knows Melissa found us and we're okay.

DOVAN: This won't prevent us from cracking the Tulian DRM?

LORHROK: As long as I don't have to take down more than one device at a time? Won't be a problem.

DOVAN: Okay, do it.

(Sharp removes her combadge.)

SHARP: Here.

(Lorhrok takes Sharp's combadge and starts fiddling with the back.)

ISLANDER #1: Man! Sir!

THE MAN: Yes? What, Corporal?

ISLANDER #1: We have it! (Data starts scrolling across his screen) It's... it's everything, sir! More than a decade of atmosphere scans! They have a whole secret satellite network monitoring tetrazine levels over the islands!

THE MAN: So they knew?

ISLANDER #1: They knew!!

(Short Pause.)

THE MAN: Copy it, lock it, let's get out of here.

LORHROK: Hang on.

DOVAN: Alec?

(Pause.)

LORHROK: I have lifesigns. Heading right for us.

THE MAN: Sergeant?

ISLANDER #2: Yalma, Toog, cover the door; the rest of you, fan out, march!

(They collect their data sticks and march straight out of the server room, with the Starfleet people following alongside.)

LOCATION: AVIARY - CORRIDOR

ISLANDER #2: Launch bay's a straight shot to the other side of this wing. Any obstacles, Starfleet?

LORHROK: None showing on my scans. But there are a few dozen lifeforms converging on this area.

THE MAN: We're armed. Will they be?

LORHROK: Captain?

DOVAN: Any search parties that enter range, crack their guns and disable them.

LORHROK: We'll be helping the Islanders escape.

DOVAN: We are saving Neshent. If the Islanders happen to follow us out, that's their business.

SHARP: Sorry, medical doctor here. I'm confused. Won't that shut down the Islanders' guns, too?

THE MAN: These? Just old laser pistols. Public domain and three-dee printed. No DRM to crack.

SHARP: Too bad.

LORHROK: The first team's approaching. You need to keep them talking. It's a lot of guns for me to hack.

ISLANDER #2: Squad, ready!

(Everybody stops marching and raises/charges their guns.)

(Another squad comes marching around the corner.)

(Lorhrok begins playing with the tricorder.)

JERRIN: *Islanders! Starfleet! You are under arrest for trespassing. Is Viscount Kao in there?*

THE MAN: That is not my title. You are under arrest, Shipmaster Jerrin. You have concealed vital safety information from the Divitian Licensing Oversight Board--information that has cost lives.

JERRIN: We won't allow you to take unvetted, unfinished military research from this building to use as you please. You and the Oversight Board can read it in any scientific journal on the subscriber exchange when it's published--as soon as it's peer reviewed.

THE MAN: As soon as it's censored, you mean.

JERRIN: There's a second squad moving into position behind you. I think you'll find we now outnumber you. So come, lay down your arms, and let us reason this out.

DOVAN: Alec? Any time now.

LORHROK: There's a lot of them, sir.

THE MAN: We have no intention of disappearing into one of Strategos Synoll's black sites, Shipmaster.

DOVAN: Alecz...

JERRIN: Then you are resisting arrest.

THE MAN: So are you, Shipmaster.

LORHROK: Oh, spast. GET DOWN!

JERRIN: Fire!

(The Tulian squad opens up.)

(There are screams, but the Islanders dive for cover and return fire with their laser pistols.)

ISLANDER #1, ISLANDER #2, TULIAN #1, TULIAN #2, TULIAN #3

(screams, yells, arghs, cries of "reloading!" and "medic!", moans of the wounded, etc. Please improvise and give us quite a bit of material each... say, 30 seconds from each of you. Your cries will be the background material for this (short) battle, with various people getting hit, dying, grunting, and shouting. And who doesn't like acting out a death or five? The director will use some of it as appropriate. Have fun.)

ISLANDER #2: Return fire!

LORHROK: We need cover!

SHARP: No, we need to get out of here!

LORHROK: Captain?

(Pause.)

DOVAN: She's right! Dovan to *Excelsior*: Transporter Code Green!

(A whole bunch of transporter beams engage.)

SCENE 4K-11**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR - TRANSPORTER ROOM**

THE MAN: What power...?

(Sharp hits a comm panel.)

SHARP: Trauma team one, report to Sickbay! Alien casualties incoming! Chief!

MEYERS: Melissa!

SHARP: Beam me and my wounded directly to Sickbay! Energize!

MEYERS: Right quick!

(He beams them out.)

THE MAN: Why they're... half my men are gone.

DOVAN: Please be calm. You're on my starship.

THE MAN: Calm! I was underground! Now I'm an astronaut! This... magic... is enough to make the sanest man go mad! Where are my men?!

LORHROK: They're being cared for in our medical bay. Which, Captain--

DOVAN: Hold that thought for one minute, X.O.. Chief Meyers... where's Mister Lorth?

MEYERS: I relieved him, sir. I needed to help get Commander J'naya back. Where is she?

DOVAN: I don't know, but, Chief, we will get her back. Now, lock on to the island city of Kao.

MEYERS: Aye, sir.

DOVAN: Mister Man, if you'll stay on the platform, you'll be returned to your city. Your wounded will follow once stabilized. I hate to show you the matron's boot, but...

THE MAN: I understand, Captain. Thank you.

DOVAN: Oh, please don't thank me. It just gets me in more trouble with the admirals. Energize.

(Lorth energizes. Dovan exits. Lorhrok follows close.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CORRIDOR

LORHROK: The admirals have a point, sir. We whisked a team of rebels out of a losing battle with the planetary government and are now giving them medical treatment leaps and bounds ahead of anything on their planet.

DOVAN: They were on a peaceful mission to gather data from a Capitol that is so bent on looking good for the Divitians that they have let Islanders burn to death by the hundreds. Besides, they were bleeding out on my transporter platform. Starfleet wouldn't tell me to let them die, would it?

LORHROK: No, sir. No, they wouldn't. But... well, let's just say this is turning into the kind of mission that shows up in Academy textbooks under the headline, "Paved With Good Intentions."

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR TURBOLIFT

DOVAN: You know that's another human saying. Bridge.

LORHROK: Academy textbook writers know their audience.

DOVAN: Zing. Dovan to Yubari.

YUBARI: *Sir, what the hell did you do down there?*

DOVAN: It's a long story.

YUBARI: *Then save it, we're busy up here. Do you still have both arms?*

DOVAN: And legs.

YUBARI: *Then you're fine, and I need this comm channel. Yubari out.*

LORHROK: This may be a stupid question, but did she sound unusually cheerful to you?

DOVAN: Always said she had command potential.

LORHROK: No you didn't.

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE

SYLVESTE: Captain on the bridge!

DOVAN: Status!

YUBARI: Nothing from Commanders Neeva or J'naya. We were able to break through the shield and get a lock on their commbadges a minute ago.

DOVAN: Beam them up, now.

YUBARI: We did, sir. We got the commbadges, but not the commanders. The Capitol says they've been taken into protective custody.

LORHROK: Protecting who from what, exactly?

YUBARI: Ask them yourself. Sylveste, unmute audio.

SYLVESTE: Aye.

JERRIN: *Excelsior, I repeat for the last time, you will immediately release into our custody the criminal trespassers whom you have unlawfully spirited away, as well as the data they stole from our facility!*

SYLVESTE: Captain, their fleet is moving to encircle us. Charging weapons.

DOVAN: Shields up. All I have on my ship are wounded -- and a full complement of quantum torpedoes ready to defend my crew. Load torpedoes and lock on, Yubari.

YUBARI: Sir.

SHIPMASTER JERRIN: *You're playing a dangerous game, Excelsior. Not only do you make me deal with some lackey, but you have the gall to make him one of the very criminals I'm going to apprehend. I demand to speak to Captain Yubari before this situation escalates beyond my control!*

DOVAN: Oh, fer...

YUBARI: This is Yubari. Captain Dovan, meet Shipmaster Jerrin. He got us the power that saved the flotilla at Divitia. Shipmaster, this is Captain Alcar Dovan. Thank you for helping us find him. Now I strongly advise you to talk to him, because he's good at that and I swear to you an attack on this ship will get you nothing but casualties.

DOVAN: Thank you, Lieutenant Commander. Shipmaster, is it? The Federation has no interest in your internal conflict with the Islanders. That's for you to settle. You're holding two members of my crew. Release them, and we'll leave you to it.

SHIPMASTER JERRIN: *That won't be possible, "Captain." They've been charged with espionage. Their trial is at sunrise.*

YUBARI: You can't do that! I've been briefed: your laws give them two days to vet the evidence and the jury.

SHIPMASTER JERRIN: *The evidence is classified dangerous and will not be released. So the case must be decided by the High Court of Secrets.*

YUBARI: A show trial.

DOVAN: Is it really a show trial if it's all done in secret?

LORHROK: What if they're convicted, what's the penalty?

SHIPMASTER JERRIN: *Death.*

YUBARI: Death.

(Pause)

LORHROK: Shipmaster, I offer myself in their place. Release them, and you can put me on trial.

DOVAN: And me. We're the ones who did the real spying anyway. We'd make much better propaganda.

SHIPMASTER JERRIN: *No! There will be no clemency, no substitutions! There will be justice. For them and for you.*

DOVAN: Then you leave me with very little choice but to consider military options to rescue my people.

SHIPMASTER JERRIN: *Don't you people get it? When the data you stole is leaked to the public, the Divitians will suspend our licenses within an hour. It doesn't matter whether the data's accurate or not; Divitia deactivates everything during a license investigation as a precaution. Our hospitals will be closed, our factories shuttered, our colonies on the edge of starvation! So send all the soldiers you want, Dovan! Once that data goes public, Tulia falls anyway.*

DOVAN: We don't have the data, never did. The Islanders do.

SHIPMASTER JERRIN: *Then I suggest you get it back, Captain. If the disks and all copies were destroyed, we would have no case against your spies. They'd be free to go.*

YUBARI: Is that your legal opinion or a diplomatic guarantee?

STRATEGOS SYNOLL: *This is Strategos Synoll. It's a fact, Commander Yubari. Another fact is that your officers' sentence will be carried out upon conviction. We'll leave you to consider your position. Capitol out.*

(viewscreen off.)

DOVAN: How long to get a message to Starfleet Command?

SYLVESTE: Normally about three days. In this diffraction soup? More like three years.

DOVAN: Hm. Get me transporter room. I need to figure out how long we'll need to drop shields.

LORHROK: Why's that, sir?

DOVAN: I need another word with The Man.

SCENE 4K-12**LOCATION: THE AVIARY - PRISON LOUNGE**

(Kestra sits down on a couch.)

J'NAYA: Well, at least the couch is comfy.

NEEVA: For a prison cell.

J'NAYA: You want anything to drink?

NEEVA: Pass.

J'NAYA: Could be our last meal. I'm going to look for some [cake mix.]

(The door opens.)

J'NAYA: Synoll!

NEEVA: Strategos.

SYNOLL: Ladies.

J'NAYA: I assume you're here to tell us we're free to go.

SYNOLL: Not... just yet, Kestra. Doc Obol here is going to perform a medical examination on both of you. Nothing invasive, just for our records, so we can certify to your shipmates that you were in good health when we, ah...

NEEVA: When you imprisoned us.

DOC OBOL: May I have your arm, please, Commander?

NEEVA: You may not.

DOC OBOL: Strategos...

SYNOLL: I'd hate to involve the guards.

NEEVA: My best friend growing up was a Klingon. I'd love to involve your guards.

J'NAYA: Neeva...

NEEVA: Fine. Take your blood sample.

(She rolls up her sleeve.)

J'NAYA: Sy. You know we're not spies. You know this is all some horrible misunderstanding.

SYNOLL: Jerrin doesn't believe in coincidence. Not coincidences that large, anyway.

J'NAYA: But you do?

SYNOLL: I believe I spent the afternoon with you, and there were... possibilities.

J'NAYA: Sy, they're talking about executing us!

SYNOLL: It won't come to that.

NEEVA: It better not. Our starship will do whatever it takes to get us out of here alive.

SYNOLL: We're counting on that.

J'NAYA: What?

DOC OBOL

They have until morning to give back the data you stole.

NEEVA: And if they don't, you'll turn your patients over to the executioner?

DOC OBOL: Commander, I am a patriot, and you're threatening our entire way of life. I am your executioner. (pause) Now. Deep breath, please.

SCENE 4K-13**LOCATION: SICKBAY**

(Dovan enters.)

DOVAN: Mister Man? I was expecting you in the stateroom, but then I was paged to sickbay. Are you alright?

THE MAN: Me? Fine, perfectly. But this citizen...

DOVAN: Neshent!

(Dovan's walk changes to a run and we hear the sounds of medical technology in crisis as we approach.)

SHARP: Mike, get the E.M.P. lamps in here!

NURSE HENNESSY: They're in Engineering!

SHARP: Then beam them up!

NESHENT: Captain Dovan.

SHARP: Quickly, Mike. These nanites are eating him alive.

NURSE HENNESSY: Right away.

(Hennessy runs off.)

DOVAN: Neshent... we got you the *kromgel*.

NESHENT: Ah, when I woke up, still alive somehow, I knew it was too good to be true.

DOVAN: It's the genuine article, Neshent! Direct from the Aviary. Didn't you use it?

SHARP: The *kromgel* is what's killing him, Alcar.

DOVAN: No.

THE MAN: It's our fault, really. You cracked the copy protection, loaded Neshent's profile, we injected it. Neshent immediately started to heal, and we let it work.

NESHENT: But the Capitol was too smart for us. (he coughs and pounds his chest) You're probably used to that, Mister Man. But I should have been more careful.

THE MAN: The *kromgel* phoned home to a Divitian licensing server. It reset the profile.

SHARP: The nanites went nuts, and the Islanders couldn't turn them off. I don't even think it was malicious, just a bug, and the system protects intellectual property first, patients second, so they couldn't override it. By the time they got him up here so we could re-crack the nanites, it was... um...

(Pause.)

NESHENT: It was what, Doctor?

SHARP: I'm sorry, Neshent. (pause) It was too late. The damage is catastrophic. I can make you comfortable, but you have... maybe a couple minutes.

NESHENT: (exhales) (pause) Thank you, Doctor.

SHARP: I'm sorry.

NESHENT: (takes a deep breath) It's alright. I'm old enough now that nobody'll call my death a tragedy. (coughs)

SHARP: Your natural lifespan [would probably have made you a centenarian.]

NESHENT: Is about two minutes. Kao, have you contacted my family yet?

THE MAN: We contacted the refugee camps, but we don't expect to have full survivor lists until tonight.

NESHENT: Damn. (cough) Would have (cough) liked to see my nephew.

DOVAN: This should have worked. After everything you survived, everything we set in motion to save you... it can't end like this.

NESHENT: So sorry I didn't get to live up to your expectations, Dovan. Or at all.

DOVAN: I didn't mean-- I'm sorry, Neshent. You've been caught in the middle all along. We should have [done more].

(The bio-monitors suddenly go NUTS.)

SHARP: He's crashing! Nurse!

NURSE HENNESSY: (running back) I'm on it!

SHARP: Cortical stimulator! And clear the O.R.!

THE MAN: Doctor, he's in pain. You can't help him.

SHARP: He is my patient and I will get him every nanosecond he has left. Now CLEAR the operating room!

DOVAN: Come on.

(The Man and Dovon exit the surgical theatre, all the way out into the corridor.)

NURSE HENNESSY: Current feeds interlocked.

SHARP: Sensitivity five-eight! Go!

(The cortical stimulator emits a little zapping noise.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CORRIDOR

(They walk in silence for a minute.)

THE MAN: I assume you called me back to your starship for a reason, Captain?

DOVAN: Yes, I did. (pause) We need the data back.

(Pause.)

THE MAN: No. (pause) If that's all, you can send me back now. I apologize for taking up your time.

DOVAN: I can't do that. It's... gotten complicated.

(He stops walking. the Man also stops walking)

(Pause)

DOVAN: They have two of my officers. They're going to be tried for treason.

(The Man starts walking again.)

THE MAN: I'm sorry for your loss.

(Dovan hurries to catch up.)

DOVAN: But we still can fix it. We give back the data, my people come home.

(Now it's the Man's turn to stop. He stops Dovan.)

THE MAN: And my people burn.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: I'll tell you what I told the Shipmaster: your internal conflict is your own affair. We're going to return things to status quo... and then we'll leave.

THE MAN: After the fire, there is no "status quo" for Elpam. For your man Neshent. People are dying, and you're asking me to give up my only defense.

DOVAN: Who said anything about asking? I am going to get my people out of there, alive. If that means I take back the data I helped you steal, so be it.

(Silence.)

(The Man starts walking again. Dovan eventually follows.)

THE MAN: (scoffs) Good luck. I've made a hundred copies, distributed to the Man of every island in the League. We send the most damning parts to Divitia at sunrise. You'd have an easier time storming the Aviary than getting our copies back.

(Pause)

(They enter a turbolift and stop)

LOCATION: TURBOLIFT

THE MAN: Tell me, Captain, what would you do in my position?

DOVAN: My people have hours to live; I'm not going to waste it debating some... casuist hypothetical[al with you!]

THE MAN: Thousands of your people on the line, you have the tool you need to save them, and some stranger asks you to give it back?

DOVAN: Bridge.

(The lift starts to move)

(Pause)

DOVAN: You realize it won't help, don't you? The Divitians know.

THE MAN: (scoffs) Know what?

DOVAN: It's basic science. Verterons, tetrazine, ka-boom. If they've managed to convince themselves to listen to the Tulians for this long, nothing's going to change their mind.

(Pause.)

THE MAN: So what would you have me do? Tell my people to lay down and die?

DOVAN: I don't know. But you could at least help me save my officers.

THE MAN: That's all you care about, isn't it?

DOVAN: It's all I'm allowed to care about. (pause) I am sorry.

THE MAN: Hmp. I'll take my chances with the Council, Captain. Unless... no.

DOVAN: Uh-uh. Not falling for that again. You want something, ask.

THE MAN: The Aviary is enormous, its wings bristle with guns, and its lower levels are impervious to scans, so you don't know where to start looking for your officers. Even with all your firepower, you'd never get them out. Not alive.

DOVAN: What do you know about our firepower?

THE MAN: Not a thing! But if your strategists thought a direct assault could work, you wouldn't have come begging to me.

DOVAN: And you have, what, a map?

THE MAN: Yes, but more than that. The Aviary garrison serves a wide area. When something goes wrong, they dispatch troops and supplies. The Islands maintain no army, Captain. We simply have... friends. Under the right circumstances, our "friends" could cause power outages, alerts, block wingways -- create chaos over half a continent.

DOVAN: Leaving the Aviary manned by a skeleton crew. We could walk in, rescue our people, and walk out.

(he turbolift arrives at the bridge and the doors open.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR - BRIDGE

LORHROK: Captain on the bridge.

DOVAN: As you were. (pause) Okay, Mister Man. What "circumstances" would your friends need?

THE MAN: We'd need... oh, about fifty of your tricorders.

DOVAN: Are you out of your mind? My office. Now.

(Dovan starts walking toward his ready room. The Man follows.)

THE MAN: We [only offer aid for aid.]

DOVAN: NOW. Lieutenant?

LORHROK: On my way, sir.

(Lorhrok rises from the command seat and follows them in.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR - READY ROOM

DOVAN: Maybe I didn't explain this well enough before, Man. We have a law against interfering in other societies. I pushed its limits by letting you help us get medical supplies for Neshent, and I allowed you to get some data on the side because you're the good guys on Tulia. But we can't give you advanced technology, especially not just to help you steal more from the Divitians!

THE MAN: Steal? I don't think so. The Divitians will still have all their blueprints safe in their databases.

DOVAN: You know what I mean.

THE MAN: Yes, but I'm not sure you do. Theft isn't the right metaphor. What your tricorders will take from the Divitians is not their property -- only their control. A better word might be... revolution.

DOVAN: (chuckles) Jehosephat. "No, Admiral Parker, I didn't abet a major theft. I masterminded a revolution." They'd throw away the key, Man!

THE MAN: (angry exhale) At least we can pay the Divitians. They have principles! But we can't arouse your pity on command! That's what your "Prime Directive" comes down to, doesn't it? You can condescend to us, but only if you're capricious about it!

DOVAN: Mister Man, what the Tulians are doing to you is wrong. We both know that. I've seen the skyfire, I've seen the bodies; I won't forget them any time soon. I *truly* wish we could help.

THE MAN: We're not asking you for atom bombs, Captain. We want a little machine that spits out some numbers that will let us seize control of an illegal and dangerous technology.

DOVAN: And when we leave? What? Do you starve the Tulian colonies? Secede from the Union? Start a war?

THE MAN: We're already at war. So are you! The Capitol has made it so. Now will you help us fight back... or consign us both to watching our friends die?

(Pause.)

DOVAN: I'm sorry. There's nothing the *Excelsior* or its crew can do for you. That is all.

THE MAN: (deep breath) Good day, Captain.

(The Man turns and storms out of the ready room.)

DOVAN: (groan) We need another way to save Neeva and Kestra.

LORHROK: Captain... are you sure about this?

DOVAN: If you can think of a loophole, Number One, I'll jump on it like a grenade. Right now, all I see when I close my eyes is the Prime Directive, written in stone letters twenty thousand meters high.

LORHROK: I know, and you're right, it's just... a long time ago, you told me if I ever have to decide between regulations and lives...

DOVAN: ...save the lives. (pause) I wasn't the captain, then. Can you imagine what Neeva would do to me if you saved her, but then had to go to prison with me? She'd never forgive either of us.

LORHROK: She'd be alive. (silence) It was the Dominion attack on Trill.

DOVAN: What?

LORHROK: You asked why I joined Starfleet. The battle for my homeworld lasted five months, and we were helpless down there. We watched the fleet battles through telescopes, ground troops staged terror strikes in the cities... my parents were wealthy, we had an estate in the mountains, but every day we woke up wondering if today was the day we'd be hit by a stray torpedo. Millions dead. Nothing we could do. Six days after the Eighth Fleet drove them back to Kalandra, I was on a shuttle to the Academy. Starfleet saved us when we couldn't save ourselves. That's why I joined.

DOVAN: Actually, I asked whether you regretted joining.

LORHROK: Never had occasion to, sir. Even when I lost Simon, and then Bev, it was because they believed in Starfleet's highest principle: "a just society must go to any lengths to defend others."

DOVAN: (exhale) You're not talking about Neeva and Kestra there, are you?

LORHROK: I saw the bodies after the skyfire too, sir.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: My first duty is to my crew, and that includes not getting you all imprisoned. We've got a few hours left. I'll keep working the diplomatic angle, see if I can shake up our circumstances before Capitol sunrise. Assume I'll fail. Work with Yubari and the Marines. Try and find an alternative.

LORHROK: Yes, sir.

DOVAN: Dismissed.

(Lorhrok exits.)

SCENE 4K-14**LOCATION: THE AVIARY - PRISON LOUNGE**

(Neeva's got a little computer control pad open and is pressing some buttons on it There's a little zap!)

NEEVA: Ow!

J'NAYA: Neeva? D'you mind if we switch back?

NEEVA: (sigh) No, I don't. I'm not making any more progress on this lock than you were. How about you? Any luck with the Code of Tulian Trial Law?

J'NAYA: I... I got a little bit hung up on one part in particular. Didn't find very much after that.

NEEVA: Which part?

J'NAYA: (gulps) The, uh... methods of execution.

NEEVA: Oh, stars above, Kestra. You can't think about it.

J'NAYA: We're going to be eaten by birds. That's how they do it here. Hoist us up on a tall pole and leave us there until one of the Big Brothers takes us for a snack.

NEEVA: We're going to escape. We just have to figure out how. Here... maybe you'll have more luck with -- (pause) Hold up! Someone's coming!

(The door unlocks...)

J'NAYA: What do I--?

NEEVA: Hide it!

(The door opens.)

SYNOLL: Ladies?

NEEVA: Strategos?

SYNOLL: I just came down to ask you to stop trying to override the door control. I appreciate you have a duty to escape, but we can all see it on the console upstairs. If Jerrin found out... It would look... bad.

NEEVA: Of course, how it looks doesn't really matter, because you'd never go through with putting us on trial and executing us... right?

J'NAYA: Sy, what she's trying to say is [how are you doing finding us another way out of here?]

NEEVA: No, no. We tried this your way once, Kestra. You said it wouldn't come to that, Strategos, but it looks like it's coming to that. It's time to decide: are you okay with our blood on your wings?

SYNOLL: (deep sigh) Do you know why we kept that data in the first place? Wouldn't it have been easier to just delete it and stop anyone from researching the atmosphere at all?

J'NAYA: I wondered about that. You went to great lengths to get our advanced sensors just to make better scans of your atmosphere... but your telemetry was getting locked in a basement.

SYNOLL: We were trying to help. (exhale) Licensees aren't allowed to modify the Divitian engines, but we tried anyway. Took months just to get our prototype off the grid without the Divitians noticing. We wanted to fix them, quietly, so they wouldn't react with the tetrazine and start the fires. Jerrin and the rest of the cabinet knew it put our whole license at risk if the Divitians detected our tampering, but they were willing to try.

NEEVA: So instead of making a big change and actually helping stop the skyfires, you took the smallest risk possible that let you feel like you were helping.

SYNOLL: We did as much as we could. The *Excelsior* sensors would have given us an early-warning system, to begin evacuations before the fires. That "freighter accident" we faked so we could bring in victims from Elpam and treat them with medical supplies the Islanders aren't subscribed to.

NEEVA: Oh, yeah, we have a word for that kind of help where I come from.

SYNOLL: You do?

NEEVA: Depraved indifference. Sentence is twenty-five to life.

(Pause.)

SYNOLL: So be it, Commander. I wish you peace in this life and the next.

(He exits.)

J'NAYA: Laid it on a bit thick there, don't you think?

NEEVA: Felt good, though. I think you can do better than him, Kestra.

J'NAYA: Y'know, I'm starting to think you're right?

NEEVA: You want me to set you up with Master Chief Meyers?

J'NAYA: What, Jack? You think he'd want... me?

NEEVA: (laughs) Kestra, are you blind?

SCENE 4K-15**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CORRIDOR**

(The door opens and The Man emerges. The doors don't close; he has several soldiers behind him.)

DOVAN: Mister Man.

THE MAN: Captain Dovan, Lieutenant Lorhrok. My men and I are ready to go home.

LORHROK: Transporter Room Eight is just up that way. We'll escort you.

THE MAN: Thank you.

(They start walking. The soldiers follow.)

DOVAN: Your soldiers. How are they?

THE MAN: (exhales) I won't let resentment get in the way of proper gratitude, Captain. Your doctor worked miracles on my men. Not one trooper under her care died. Sergeant?

ISLANDER #2: She even fixed some scars I've had since I was a boy. Me and the boys are thankful. So's our families.

DOVAN: I'm happy to hear that.

THE MAN: Of course, there'd be a lot more grateful families in Kao if you [reconsidered giving us those tricorders.]

DOVAN: I'm sorry, Mister Man. Our laws do not allow me to help you any further. We'll each have to fix our problems by ourselves.

THE MAN: I had to ask, one more time.

LORHROK: For what it's worth, if I were in your shoes, I'd do the same thing.

THE MAN: (very brief chuckle) Hm. I wonder. Would you do this, too?

(He stops in the corridor... and pulls a Starfleet phaser on them! It charges up. EVERYONE stops.)

LORHROK: Spast!

DOVAN: What?! That's one of our phasers! Where did you--AGGH!

(The Man shoots him! Dovan crumples to the floor. The red alert klaxon goes off.)

LORHROK: What are you doing?!

THE MAN: Fixing our own problems, Leftenant.

LORHROK: But we've been trying to help you!

THE MAN: And, despite your best efforts, you're about to succeed. Don't worry; it's set to stun.

LORHROK: (taps his combadge) Security! to Deck Ten, SectionAGH!

(He's shot, too. His body hits the deck.)

THE MAN: Sergeant! Empty medical lab down that ramp; supply locker at your ten o'clock! Grab every tricorder you can carry and then RUN. We have to be on that transporter pad and gone in eighty seconds or we're all nicked!

ISLANDER #2: Yalma, ramp!

ISLANDER #1: Sir!

ISLANDER #2: Rest of you, with me! MOVE!

(The soldiers run off their separate directions.)

(Pause.)

THE MAN: Thank you, Captain. We cannot repay this debt, but know you have made yourself a friend today. Good-bye.

SCENE 4K-16

LOCATION: NOWHERE

TULIAN PILOT: *Aviary Tower, this is Tulian Recon Flight Three-One-Two entering your sector.*

TULIAN TOWER: *Recon three-one-two, we have you on radar, maintain seven thousand units.*

TULIAN PILOT: *What the... how did that...?*

TULIAN TOWER: *Recon three-one-two, say again. We didn't catch that.*

TULIAN PILOT: *Tower, are you seeing this?*

TULIAN TOWER: *Maintain course, recon three-one-two, we have a situation with another plane.*

TULIAN PILOT: *The lights just went out in Olak! The whole city is dark! Wait, so's -- so's Faroh! How long has that -- What's -- something's -- there's something coming over the ocean! Tower, do you have anything on radar? Tower, do you read?*

TULIAN TOWER: *Recon three-one-two, do you copy?*

TULIAN PILOT: *Three-one-two copies. What's [going on down there?]*

TULIAN TOWER: *Do you see any other planes in your sector, three-one-two?*

TULIAN PILOT: *It's... dark, Tower. No, I... what?*

TULIAN TOWER: *Three-one-two, we just lost radio contact with all other flights in sector. Two of them dropped off radar. Are you seeing anything up there?*

TULIAN PILOT: *Negative. Negative, Tower. No planes in FOV. But no fireballs either. Clear to circle on vector kilo-mike? Tower? Requesting clearance to circle on kilo-mike. Tower! Your lights just went out! Are you alright? (a small alarm on his cockpit board) What the... Tower, I've lost satellite! Like the GPS just fell out of the sky! I have to turn back.*

THE MAN: *Unidentified aircraft. You are instructed to make an immediate emergency landing.*

TULIAN PILOT: *What? Negative on landing! We need to go get help!*

THE MAN: *You will make an immediate emergency landing. A safe location will be provided.*

TULIAN PILOT: *I've... I've lost control of my throttle! How are you doing this? Who are you?*

THE MAN: *We're your friendly Island neighbors. Why don't you come down and say hello?*

SCENE 4K-17**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CORRIDOR****YUBARI: Lorhrok!****THE MAJOR: I'll get the captain!****SHARP: Took you a while. I've been here five minutes.****THE MAJOR: Yes, well, the intruders didn't host the shootout on our front doorstep. Ma'am.****SHARP: Did you stop them?****THE MAJOR: Not one.****(Lorhrok groans)****YUBARI: We can't figure out how they broke through the transporter lockout so fast. This morning they thought it was magic.****SHARP: Who was on duty?****YUBARI: Meyers. Doctor Maiek is with him. Stunned.****SHARP: Just like the boys here.****YUBARI: Are they okay?****(Lorhrok groans again.)**

SHARP: Alecz's coming around. Alcar's a little older, little worse for wear -- but he'll be fine.

LORHROK: Uhhnnn... nine.

YUBARI: Nine?

LORHROK: That's the number of times I've been knocked unconscious since I joined this crew.

YUBARI: That's nine times you could have been killed. That's insanely lucky.

LORHROK: Uhn, doesn't feel lucky. How on Kobol did The Man get a phaser?

THE MAJOR: Operations is taking a full inventory now.

(Dovan groans)

YUBARI: They can't be checked out without three-factor authentication. We'll find out where it came from.

DOVAN: What if-- (heavy coughing)

SHARP: Take it easy, Alcar. You've just been shot.

DOVAN: Yeah, I noticed. (deep breath) Okay. What if the phaser was replicated?

YUBARI: Can't.

LORHROK: Sarium krellide power packs. Try replicating krellide and it blows up.

DOVAN: Alright. Finish the phaser inventory, but then suspend your investigation.

YUBARI: Captain?

DOVAN: The Islanders are about to destroy the balance of power in this entire sector. Can we stop them?

THE MAJOR: I don't see how, sir.

DOVAN: Agreed. Which means we have less than three hours left to save Neeva and J'naya, and the Tulians are about to blow the barn doors wide open.

LORHROK: That's another [human idiom, sir.]

DOVAN: --human idiom, I know...

SCENE 4K-18**LOCATION: AVIARY - PRISON LOUNGE - DEACTIVATED**

(The security door opens. Synoll, Jerrin, and a squad of guards enters.)

J'NAYA: Sy? The lights went out a few minutes ago.

SYNOLL: We think [your people did it.]

JERRIN: Strategos! It's time for your trial. Guards?

NEEVA: We'll come quietly.

(They follow Jerrin and the guards.)

LOCATION: AVIARY - CORRIDOR - DEACTIVATED

(The security door closes behind them, but they only get a couple steps before...)

YUBARI: Don't move! We have you covered!

(Marines move into position behind them. They charge their phasers.)

JERRIN: "Captain" Yubari. You and your comrades are under arrest. You're just in time for your trial.

LORHROK: We're armed, and you know we can disable your guns.

JERRIN: Guards! Fire a warning shot!

(A hail of bullets hits the wall near our heroes. We hear the the faint clinking of shell casings on the floor.)

JERRIN: Divitian surplus, certified DRM-free. Not as efficient, but even your tech can't stop lead and fire. With these, we can change the currents. Take back our darkened cities.

STRATEGOS SYNOLL: Now, please, let's everyone calm down. There's no need for more gunfire. As you can see, your officers are quite safe!

J'NAYA: That is technically true!

NEEVA: ...other than the guns pointed at our heads!

LORHROK: Shipmaster, if you harm a hair on her head -- either of their heads --

JERRIN: Their heads! Your friends the Islanders have overrun the coast, brought our civilization to the edge of collapse, and you expect no response? We won't let you destroy us!

YUBARI: Nobody's trying to destroy you! They're just trying to protect themselves -- from you!

JERRIN: WE'VE DONE NOTHING WRONG! (pause) Skyfires have burned for thousands of years! It is a natural phenomenon! All the Islands have left, in their pride, in their jealousy, is to blame us for every evil that befalls them -- and I will not allow them to bar us from the stars!

LORHROK: ...You really believe that, don't you?

STRATEGOS SYNOLL: Starfleet, we are decent men. Whatever else you may imagine, know that Shipmaster Jerrin never believed the Islands' propaganda.

YUBARI: And what about you, Strategos?

(Pause.)

LORHROK: Shipmaster, I don't know if you'll believe me or not, but what happened this morning was an accident. The tricorders the Islanders are using were stolen from us.

JERRIN: Whether through malice or negligence, it hardly matters! You have thrust us into a death-struggle to preserve our society's right to exist -- and we will accept nothing less than justice.

LORHROK: I understand your outrage. If you'll let our people leave, we will warp away from here, investi[gate the theft, apologize for the inconvenience, and eventually bring the right person to justice.]

JERRIN: You just want to leave! Hah! It's far too late for that, my friend. I repeat: you are under arrest. You have three seconds to surrender, or I will sentence Commander Neeva to summary execution.

(He cocks his gun. The marines all charge their phasers. there's a murmur in the ranks of the Tullan troops, who also re-aim their guns.)

JERRIN: Three.

SYNOLL: Jerrin, no!

LORHROK: Hold your fire, Major!

JERRIN: Two.

SYNOLL: Don't make me shoot you, Jerrin!

THE MAJOR: Fire on my orders only!

JERRIN: One.

(Pause.)

(Jerrin pulls the trigger. So does Synoll.)

(Nothing happens. Click. Click. Jerrin pulls his trigger again, and again. Click click click.)

JERRIN: You... my gun! How?

SYNOLL: Mine, too.

LORHROK: The Divitians sold you these DRM-free, right? Old models, dumb enough to license in bulk.

JERRIN: They lied!

LORHROK: Well, not quite. The guns are plain steel and plastic. But the ammunition...

JERRIN: It was in the contract!

(He throws his gun to the floor.)

LORHROK: There was just one little backdoor left -- a clipper chip that let the Divitians shut the bullets down if you tried shooting at them. Smart... right up until I found it. I guess you trusted the contract more than they did.

SYNOLL: Let them go! Of course, our government protests this jailbreak in the strongest possible terms.

NEEVA: Of course. What will you do next?

JERRIN: What choice have you left us? War, or surrender.

SYNOLL: That's up to the President, Shipmaster. We have always served Divitian interests... but perhaps our needs have changed. Starfleet, do you think... do you think the Man might be open to an alliance?

(Phasers power down.)

LORHROK: I think the Man is... I think we've done enough. Goodbye, Strategos. We... sincerely apologize.

J'NAYA: Good-bye, Sy.

SYNOLL: You see, Kestra? I told you I'd protect you.

J'NAYA: Yes. And, the moment it was convenient for you... you almost did.

(Transporters engage.)

SCENE 4K-19**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR - SHARP'S QUARTERS**

(Sharp enters and immediately heads to the replicator, replicating a cup of tea.)

SHARP: Ahhh, good to be home. Computer? Play some music. Surprise me.

(The computer boops agreement and starts playing "Paradise Saloon" from Star Trek V.)

SHARP: Huh. Weird. It'll do.

(The doorbell chimes.)

SHARP: Come!

(Dovan enters.)

DOVAN: Melissa. Lunch? Captain's mess, twelve-thirty?

SHARP: Sure. Oh, but can we make it noon? I have P.T. with Ensign Tigan at thirteen hundred.

DOVAN: (still practically grinning) That's fine, I'll tell the others.

SHARP: Alcar... What's wrong?

DOVAN: What? I feel great!

(The doorbell chimes.)

DOVAN: You expecting someone?

SHARP: No. Come in!

(Yubari enters.)

SHARP: Asuka?

YUBARI: Actually, I'm here to report to the captain.

DOVAN: Oh. You mind, Melissa?

SHARP: Not at all, Alcar. I'll just read my book.

(She sits on her couch and picks up a PADD, clicks a few buttons.)

DOVAN: Oh. You want to, um, stay?

SHARP: I don't mind at all, but if you want privacy, the closet is pretty soundproof.

DOVAN: ...hunh.

YUBARI: It's okay, Captain. The senior staff will be briefed anyway.

DOVAN: Um, alright. Your report?

YUBARI: We finished the phaser inventory.

DOVAN: So how did the Man get one?

YUBARI: (sigh) There were no phasers missing. Every armory and locker is fully accounted for.

DOVAN: Well, he shot me with something.

YUBARI: I know that. We're running down whether it could have been built.

DOVAN: What about the transporters? How did they override the lockout?

YUBARI: They stole someone's access codes.

DOVAN: Whose?

(Pause.)

YUBARI: Yours.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: How did they... Could they have forged it?

YUBARI: A bunch of island primitives? Not a chance. Neeva, Kestra, Lohrok, or I? Maybe.

DOVAN: Well, Neeva and Kestra were in jail, Lohrok's a boy scout... Yubari! You... you wouldn't.

YUBARI: No, sir, I would not violate the Prime Directive just to save a friend.

DOVAN: I knew that.

YUBARI: -- and, if I did, I wouldn't get caught. Back in Special Projects, we didn't have any use for forged access codes. No point; we'd get caught. So we had to make legitimate codes. Matter of time until we find out what The Man did instead.

DOVAN: Will that help?

YUBARI: Excuse me?

DOVAN: The way I see it, the sooner we put this behind us, the better. Whoever did this--The Man, one of his lieutenants, whoever--didn't just save Neeva and Kestra, but probably a lot of Islanders, too.

YUBARI: Or condemned them.

DOVAN: How do you mean?

YUBARI: The Perenthalthorias Council held an emergency session today.

DOVAN: Oh, and how did P-Counts handle finding out they don't have to stay beholden to the Divitians anymore?

YUBARI: They issued sanctions against the Tulians -- all the Tulians. The Divitians had already revoked the Capitol's licenses, all while insisting they'd never imagined the skyfires were caused by their engines. If sanctions don't stick -- and they won't, now that the Tulians have quantum computers -- the Divitians asked P-Counts to consider passing a Security Resolution.

DOVAN: War? Against a bunch of people who were just trying not to get burned to death?

YUBARI: There's no support for it in the assembly, and the Judoat threatened a veto. It's just posturing.

SHARP: For now. (she puts down her PADD. pause) The thing about saber-rattling is that there's no good way to stop it until somebody pulls a saber out.

DOVAN: How are you such a cynic, at your age, Melissa? You're supposed to be all doe-eyed and sparkly like my first officer.

SHARP: My gran said I was born old.

YUBARI: If there's nothing else, sir...

DOVAN: Do continue your investigation, Commander. It's worth knowing the truth. Just don't turn it a crusade. See you at lunch.

YUBARI: Yes, sir.

(She leaves. Pause.)

SHARP: You lied to her.

DOVAN: What, about lunch?

SHARP: No, it was... I'm not sure.

DOVAN: Melissa... That was a good, clean win. We don't get many of those. The admirals will yell at me for a while about being so careless that our tricorders got stolen, they'll bump me to the bottom of the promotion list, and it'll be over. Everybody home safe, the Islanders with a fighting chance, and Neshent won't have died in vain. Forgive me if I don't want to pick at the scab.

SHARP: You're happy they stole the tricorders, aren't you?

DOVAN: More like... relieved?

SHARP: I guess... I can't really argue with that, actually.

DOVAN: Then let's leave it. Perenalthorias space was as far out as we planned to go. Now we're starting to turn, and the rest of our two-year mission will take us back to Starbase Nine-One-One. There's so much left for us to explore out here in the next twelve months. Starting with lunch! See you then!

(Dovan leaves.)