

Starship: Excelsior
"Bound to the Starless Midnight"
(Season 6, Episode 4)
by Joel Jordan

Transcribed by Peter Stine

Note: Lines in brackets were recorded but interrupted. The complete line is left here for fuller context:

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SCENE 6D-01a (The Birth of Romulus)

LOCATION: TAL SHIRA'S HOME

(A traditional Vulcan home, two thousandish years ago.)

NARRATOR: *Many years ago...*

KHA'IL SALINE: *They say that Romulus was born in fire and passion. (pause) But they are wrong. Fire came later. Romulus was born... in silence.*

(The front door rolls open, admitting the hot desert wind and three Vulcan men: an inquisitor and two personal guards, armed with *lirpas*.)

TAL SHIRA: I welcome thee and thine guards and offer thee the fire and water of my home.

KHA'IL SALINE: *Her name was Tal Shira.*

S'TASK: I come to serve.

KHA'IL SALINE: *He was called S'Task. There are many tales of S'Task, but this one is true.*

TAL SHIRA: Thee honors me by thy service.

KHA'IL SALINE: *The Mother World -- Min'shara -- Vulcan in the mouths of the profane, had entered an age of Puritan darkness.*

LOCATION: SALINE ESTATE, ROMULUS (NEAR PRESENT-DAY)

YOUNG MAIEK: Because of Surak?

KHA'IL SALINE: No, Maiek! No! Surak was a great man, a font of wisdom, and Romulus would do well to learn from him if the Senate weren't so afraid! But Surak's followers...

LOCATION: TAL SHIRA'S HOME

SFX: Three of the four Vulcans are walking over to Tal Shira's kitchen table. The other guard (GUARD #1) stands by at the door.

S'TASK: We wish to ask a few questions.

KHA'IL SALINE: *Within a century of Surak's rise, his movement's inquisitors were everywhere.*

SFX: As she speaks, Tal Shira takes her seat in a modest, wooden chair (fine piece of carpentry) on one side of her wooden kitchen table. S'Task and his remaining guard sit down opposite.

TAL SHIRA

You wish to know my whereabouts on the Kalends of Charis, especially at or around the third phase after sunfall.

KHA'IL SALINE: *None was more feared than S'Task.*

S'TASK: It is curious that you identify that precise time. Please elaborate.

KHA'IL SALINE: *S'Task was Surak's greatest disciple, but he had been captured, treated brutally. He'd changed -- his passions reawakened, though not yet his honor. There was no inquisitor more ruthless, nor more efficient.*

TAL SHIRA: That was the hour of a break-in at the offices of the Bureau of Social Inquiry for this segment.

S'TASK: That has not been publicly reported.

TAL SHIRA: Indeed not. Here are my home network's biometric and traffic records from that hour. (she hands him a Vulcan PADD) Internal and external surveillance footage verifying my presence here throughout that time. (another PADD) The guest list of a dinner party I was hosting for school friends, including several well-known loyalists, all of whom appear in the footage. (another PADD)

S'TASK: The Bureau does not use connotative terms like "loyalist" and "Passionist."

TAL SHIRA: Nevertheless, the elaborate euphemisms you do use have similar effect. My application to join the security services was rejected zero point eight six years ago because of doubts about my loyalty. Your obfuscation is both inefficient and illogical.

S'TASK: You question my logic?

TAL SHIRA: "I question no man's logic. I question only logic itself." Surak, *The Guidelines*, codex three point two point two.

S'TASK: Flawlessly logical. I commend thee.

TAL SHIRA: I accept thine commendation. I have worked for some months to ensure the success of this interview.

S'TASK: Months? The break-in occurred only days ago. I myself scheduled this interview only last phase.

TAL SHIRA: It was virtually certain that the Passionist movement would retaliate against the Bureau's recent activity. On the Kalends, they did. Any competent investigator would eventually interview me, because my father is Varel. The Bureau suspects that Varel is a leader of the resistance against Logic, that his suspected indulgence of Passion makes him an imminent threat to public safety, and has for some months sought grounds to exile him into the desert.

S'TASK: Then perhaps you anticipate my next question.

TAL SHIRA: Yes. On the night in question, my father was breaking into the Bureau offices. Here is a list of those who participated in the break-in. (another PADD) Here is a list of those who provided material aid to the attempt. (another PADD) You will observe several powerful loyalists on that list, including the Segment First Minister and three members of your own Bureau.

S'TASK: Is the Bureau simply to take your word for this? Perhaps your father has chosen to sacrifice himself to bring scandal on honest men.

TAL SHIRA: Corroborating evidence is attached. I believe you will find it conclusive. Moreover, the man you left to guard my door is on that list, he has been listening, and he is about to try to kill you. Duck.

(S'Task gasps.)

(S'Task dives out of his chair (which falls to the floor) just in time for GUARD #1 to drive the blade of his lirpa into the wooden kitchen table, splitting it more or less in two.)

ANCIENT VULCAN GUARD #6D-0: HAAAAA!

(Guard #1 jerks the lirpa backwards, so the blunt end smashes into Guard #2's face. Guard #2 collapses.)

ANCIENT VULCAN GUARD #6D-02: UH!

S'TASK: Sirol, stop!

ANCIENT VULCAN GUARD #6D-01: You sent my brother's family out into the Plains of Gol to die! He'd never hurt anyone! He just didn't think laughing should be a crime! Now, in the name of the Raptor's Wing, I [commend thee likewise!]

(Six semi-automatic pistol shots, in rapid succession! The Vulcan guard draws a ragged breath and collapses.)

TAL SHIRA: I believe that constitutes adequate corroboration, Inquirer S'Task, both as to my allegations and as to my loyalty.

S'TASK: As to the charges, I must concur, Citizen Tal Shira. As to your zeal for the Way of Logic... the evidence is substantial.

TAL SHIRA: But you do not find it compelling.

S'TASK: Your acts today protected yourself.

TAL SHIRA: I could have done so far more easily, and without saving your life. I have given you every Passionist in our segment, including my own father. They will all die in the desert.

S'TASK: A foreseen but unintended consequence of their exile.

TAL SHIRA: That distinction is relevant to ethicists at the knee of Surak; less so to the ones dying of thirst. Or to their daughters. It would be illogical for a Passionist to sacrifice so many of her comrades unprompted.

(Pause.)

KHA'IL SALINE: *There! Listen! The silence!*

TAL SHIRA: ...would it not?

KHA'IL SALINE: *In that pause, that moment's caesura, S'Task knew Tal Shira for what she was: driven by a passion so fierce she had sacrificed every Passionist in her district, just to infiltrate the security service. And yet he saw the beauty of her logic, the passionlessness of her passionate love for Min'shara; of her hatred for Surak and his logic. (pause) And when the day of the Sundering finally came, when the Vulcans drove us at last off the blood-soaked plains of our beloved homeworld two thousand years ago, S'Task stood at the prow of the Rea's Helm as the Father of Romulus... alongside his wife, Tal Shira, our mother.*

SCENE 6D-01b (LOCATION: SALINE ESTATE)

LOCATION: SALINE ESTATE

KHA'IL SALINE: So, too, her namesakes, the secret agents of the Tal Shiar, protect and nourish Romulus like a mother, willing to sacrifice anything to protect her from the Vulcans.

YOUNG RADEK SALINE: But isn't our enemy the Federation?

KHA'IL SALINE: Puppets of the Vulcans. The "Federation" was formed as soon as they needed a scapegoat to hide behind. They may send poor humans to die in the Neutral Zone, but remember it is Vulcan that has spent two centuries trying to destroy us -- from that first terrible war, to the Tomed Incident -- did you notice Uhura's first officer was a Vulcan? Kirk's, too. -- to these Vulcan infiltrators in the capital, poisoning our youth with lies of "reunification."

YOUNG MAIEK SALINE: Father, how can we be sure that Ambassador Spock and his followers are lying? They say our ancestors were not driven from Vulcan -- that they chose to leave.

KHA'IL SALINE: We are sure because Mister Spock is a Vulcan! If you remember only one thing your father taught you, remember that, Maiek: Vulcans. Always. Lie.

(A big wooden door knocker slams several times.)

KHA'IL SALINE: Radek, please answer [the door; I believe Mister Voronosev is here.]

(Radek runs off with Maiek close behind.)

YOUNG RADEK SALINE: Uncle Voron!

YOUNG MAIEK SALINE: Uncle Voronoseeeeeev!

(The door is already being opened by a manservant and Radek runs into Voronosev's arms.)

YOUNG RADEK SALINE: Uncle Voron! Where's Tagus?

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Unloading the shuttle. He's been looking forward to this for weeks.

YOUNG MAIEK SALINE: So have we, Uncle!

(Kha'il walks in.)

KHA'IL SALINE: I see my children precede me, Citizen Voronosev.

VORONOSEV: My lord, I and all my household are honored to share a meal with one so great as [you.]

KHA'IL SALINE: Oh, nonsense, old friend! Do you know what they call an equestrian who loses his connection to the People? Deposed! You do me a greater service than you know, certainly worth more than the fancy meals I put on for you a few times a year. And that's before I count the pleasure of your company! Come in, come in...

SCENE 6D-02 (The Death of Romulus)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE

(The background red alert klaxon is sounding.)

NARRATOR: *Eighteen months after the Parudon Media Coup. The present day.*

LORHROK: Report.

NEEVA: Thirteen thousand, four hundred and seven evacuees aboard, sir. We'll hit capacity in twenty minutes.

LORHROK: Okay. Elbrun, signal Ki Baratan Central Hospital that we're ready for their Very Important Patient. Sly, you have that least-time course to Vashti?

ELBRUN: Aye, sir.

SYLVESTE: Straight through a neutron wave, sir, but at five nines we'll be there in thirty minutes.

YUBARI: Then we try to keep the crew awake for another offload cycle?

LORHROK: I have Doctor Maiek handing out stimulants like candy.

NEEVA: Sir, they can't run on stimulants forever. They'll blow apart.

LORHROK: The Romulan star system will blow apart in six days. We can nap after the supernova.

LORHROK: *Acting captain's log, Stardate Six Four Six Four Four Point One. Although the Federation Council withdrew from the Romulan evacuation over a year ago, the Excelsior just happened to be on unscheduled patrol near the Neutral Zone last week, where we encountered twenty-six other starships and one hundred four merchant vessels that also just happened to be on unscheduled patrol. When we received a distress call from Romulus, we were duty-bound to investigate. Reserve Admiral Picard has given Captain Underwood a battlefield commission as Commodore and assigned him to command the civilian flotilla. Personal note: the Federation Council can go straight to the Ten Thousandth Hell, and probably will. But Starfleet won't let these people down.*

SYLVESTE: Sir, did you mean to put a personal note in your official log?

LORHROK: Yep.

YUBARI: Good man.

LORHROK: Any word from Ambassador Spock?

ELBRUN: Nothing yet, but he's scheduled to deploy the red matter any minute.

NEEVA: Of course, if he does stop the supernova, we'll just have to put all these people back.

YUBARI: We'll nap first. Transporter Room reports Chairman Koval is in a stasis pod and he and his escort are ready to beam aboard.

LORHROK: Bridge to Doctor Maiek. You have everything you need?

MAIEK: *Medically? Yes.*

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR - TRANSPORTER ROOM

MAIEK: Psychologically? We'll see.

LORHROK: *I know your feelings about treating the head of the Tal Shiar.*

MAIEK: A profound irony to be saving the man who tried so many times to kill me after I defected.

LORHROK: *The Romulan fleet is low on medical supplies and you're Starfleet's leading expert on Tuvan Syndrome. He probably won't even wake up on the trip to Vashti.*

MAIEK: He's not the one I'm worried about.

LORTH: Sir?

MAIEK: Go ahead. Energize.

(Three Romulans and a beeping medical gurney beam onto the *Excelsior* transporter pad.)

MAIEK: (coldly) Hello, Radek.

RADE: (coldly) I have no greeting for a traitor.

MAIEK: A traitor who's saving you and everyone else on the Hearthworlds from a supernova.

RADEK: (scoffing) Oh, yes, very generous. Who do you think caused that supernova?

MAIEK: According to the Vulcan Science Academy, most likely a Romulan experiment with quantum phase inhibitors that went wrong.

RADEK: Oh, yes, the Vulcans would try to blame us, wouldn't they?

CELEVIRE: You know each other?

MAIEK: What Romulan does not know the great Radek Saline, the Praetor's son and the Tal Shiar's favorite errand boy?

RADEK: And who could overlook Maiek Saline, traitor to Romulus, traitor to the Tal Shiar, and traitor to his own blood?

MAIEK: Who are you? We only expected one guard for Koval.

CELEVIRE: I am Proconsul Celevire, governor of Remus and secretary of the Senate. Koval is a... friend.

MAIEK: We'd better get your "friend" to sickbay. Nurse?

(Nurse Hennessy bounds up to the transporter pad to take hold of the gurney.)

NURSE HENNESSY: I've got him, Doctor.

(He wheels the gurney out the door en route to sickbay.)

(The ship shakes suddenly. The red alert klaxon goes off.)

(Maiek smacks his combadge.)

MAIEK: Bridge! What was that? Are we under attack?

RADEK: I'm going up there!

LORHROK: *We don't know, Doctor.*

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE

LORHROK: We'll keep you informed. Bridge out! Neeva, same question as the doc!

(Her console is going crazy, naturally.)

NEEVA: That was a subspace shockwave, sir.

LORHROK: Shockwave? What from? Can't be natural.

NEEVA: I'm still tracing the source.

(An alert beeps.)

NEEVA: Uh-oh. Brace for impact!

(The ship really rocks. Neeva, Lorchrok, Yubari, and Sylveste make exclamations as they are thrown around some out of their chairs.)

(They recover enough to read their consoles which are already spitting out data and alerts)

NEEVA: Sir, that was the leading edge of the supernova.

LORHROK: Supernovas don't do that.

NEEVA: This one did.

SYLVESTE: Ambassador Spock's mission? Maybe something went wrong.

ELBRUN: We can't ask. That shockwave fried all long-range communications within a light-year.

(Radek arrives on the bridge.)

RADEK: Commander Lorhrok, in the name of the Continuing Committ[ee, I demand to know what is happening!]

NEEVA: Sir, it's a lot worse than comm interference.

LORHROK: What's wrong?

NEEVA: I'm recalulating the rate of stellar decay and the supernova's velocity, now including the subspace tensors. It will destroy Romulus and Remus in about... (the computer blinks a final result) ...three hundred seconds.

YUBARI: What.

RADEK: What?

LORHROK: That's not even six minutes! Neeva, we were supposed to have six days!

NEEVA: You think I don't know that?! My board shows hundreds of millions of people still down there!

LORHROK: How many evac ships in-system right now?

YUBARI: Romulan navy has twenty-two. We have eight Federation, a Ferengi, a Cardassian, and a Klingon warship, plus civilian craft. Underwood and Riker are halfway to Vashti, sir. You're ranking officer.

LORHROK: Signal all Alliance ships to prepare for warp on my mark -- and continue the evacuation!

SYLVESTE: We're not leaving now?

LORHROK: No, Mister Sylveste, we're not. Three hundred seconds... enough time to save one thousand, three hundred, forty-seven men and women and children. Every one of them worth a galaxy. Commander, hail the Praetor.

NEEVA: Hailing frequencies open.

(Viewscreen switches on.)

PRAETOR KHA'IL SALINE: *Excelsior*, I fear something terrible has happened.

LORHROK: It has, sir. Ambassador Spock's mission must have failed.

KHA'IL SALINE: (scoffs) Oh, just that? I suppose I never truly expected him to try... although I allowed myself to hope... Alas. We will continue the evacuation as planned.

LORHROK: Sir, it... something has gone very, very wrong. The supernova has accelerated. Praetor, it will destroy your homeworlds in just over four minutes.

(Pause.)

KHA'IL SALINE: (mirthless, cynical chuckle then a full -- but still mirthless -- chuckle) I knew I was a fool to ask for Starfleet's help, but even I only thought Vulcan wanted our homes destroyed. I naively thought extermination was beyond them.

LORHROK: Whatever happened here, sir, it was an accident.

KHA'IL SALINE: I don't expect you to know better, Captain. You're only a Trill. You don't know Surak's disciples like we do.

(Another hit, sparks go off.)

LORHROK: Compensate for the shockwaves, Sly! Praetor, I need to beam you aboard. Now. We have to get you to safety.

KHA'IL SALINE: I'm afraid not.

RADEK: Praetor--!

KHA'IL SALINE: Radek... Captain, perhaps that is the way among your people, for a leader to flee while his people suffer behind him. But that is not our way. We are creatures of duty, captain... and my duty is to the Senate and the People of Romulus.

RADEK: No, Praetor! We need you! More than ever!

KHA'IL SALINE: Radek, you have earned your place, you shall be Praetor, and you will thrive. Everything we've discussed, our new future for Romulus, must still happen... only you must carry it out, not I.

RADEK: Celevire will try to make herself Praetor. She is proconsul.

KHA'IL SALINE: In time of crisis, succession falls to the line of Tal Shira, not the line of Jolan Tru. We have never faced a greater crisis. Celevire may still try, but she will not wield the Sword of S'Task. *Hteij 'rhae! Hna'h!*

(Romulan transporter activates on the viewscreen, dematerializes a sword from a wall, then activates right here on the bridge, materializing that same sword in Radek's hand.)

RADEK: Even with the mightiest blade of our people, I cannot replace you, Father.

KHA'IL SALINE: No, my son. You will exceed me. I love you -- both of you. Tell him, will you?

RADEK: He does not deserve it.

KHA'IL SALINE: He deserves death, but passion does not hug the shores of merit. Remember that, and you will do well. Jolan Tru, Praetor Radek Saline.

(The screen turns off.)

RADEK: (choked up) Jolan tru, aefvadh.³

NEEVA: Sir, supernova hits in one minute.

(The ship takes another blow. but it never really stops. From here on out, there's a rumble, and it keeps getting louder.)

"Transporters on! Energize!"

Good-bye, and welcome (to the afterlife).

LORHROK: Keep beaming! Beam them straight to the bridge if you have to, but save those Romulans!

SYLVESTE: Sir, if this thing gets much closer, it'll scramble my warp plot, and we're in a gravity well. By the time we can see it, we're already dead.

LORHROK: Just a few more seconds...

YUBARI: Sir, we have to go now! (pause.) Sly, hit it!

SYLVESTE: Yes, ma'am! Hang on!

LOCATION: SPACE

(The Excelsior jumps to warp, just ahead of a shockwave racing through the system like the Amargosa star in *Generations*, or the Praxis shockwave but this shockwave destroys two planets, Romulus and Remus.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE

SYLVESTE: ETA at Vashti zero-three-eighteen. We've left the Romulus star system.

NEEVA: There is no Romulus star system.

SYLVESTE: I'm picking up most of the fleet just ahead... but no transponder from IRW *Terix* or *Goraxus*.

YUBARI: I don't think they made it.

LORHROK: Operations... Tell me how many people were left down there.

NEEVA: No, sir. I will not.

6D-99: THEME SONG

LORHROK: Space... the final frontier. These are the voyages of the *Starship Excelsior*.

We're here to learn.

We're here to help.

We're here to build bridges with the people we find here, to celebrate under stars we've never seen before.

Starship Excelsior: A Star Trek Fan Production.

Starring Samuel Gillis as Captain Alecz Lorhrok

YUBARI: With Caitlin Heaney as First Officer Yubari Asuka

SALINE: And Robert Haddon as Doctor Maiek Saline

SCENE 6D-03 (An Endangered Species)

LOCATION: EVACUATION BAY THREE - IRW ROVARAN

(The Romulan refugees are making a cacophony of noises. Some demanding things, others wailing about their fate)

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: (to a refugee) Yes, I'll speak to the Centurion about food. (to another) There are doctors coming around to all the refugee bays. (to a third) Don't worry, the *Rovaran* has the best in the Imperial Fleet.

(He raises his hands, climbs up a short ladder onto a nearby cargo container, and tries to address them all.)

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Good people! Good people! I am your Tribune! Hear me!

(The people do, in fact, quiet down.)

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: We are lost and we are afraid. This agony we face... My boy, Tagus, and his mother... they wanted to spend today at the Firefalls, one last time, before our evacuation tomorrow. And now... (pause) No one has ever suffered like this before. No one. I am the Tribune of the Plebians. I can't tell you there's nobility in our grief, or that our loss serves a higher purpose. Because I'm the one man on Romulus who must never tell a lie. (pause) What is true is that we will survive. I don't know how. Our beloved Praetor is dead, but the Continuing Committee continues. And someday, somehow... this anguish... will end. (pause) I will help you as I can. Miss, what did you say was your mother's name?

REFUGEE #6D-01: Nevala.

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: I will try to find her. The rest of you, go to your families, those who still have them. They need you. Those who don't, go to each other. You need them.

(The crowd starts to disperse, murmuring.)

(Someone else has climbed a different ladder to mount the same cargo container.)

LRAAC OVDAN: Good job. Here.

(Ovdan thrusts a tray into the Tribune's hands, but the Tribune doesn't take it.)

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: What is this?

OVDAN: You gotta eat.

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: No, Bolian. They "gotta eat." I'm Tribune. I eat when they've eaten.

OVDAN: Oh, very noble. Also stupid. You're the only thing holding them together. And this T.F.K. sandwich is the only thing holding you together--or will be, once you eat it. And drink this.

(Ovdan thrusts him a glass of Romulan *kali-fal*. Again, no dice.)

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: You know nothing of the Romulan heart, Bolian.

OVDAN: Yeah, that's fair.

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Who are you?

OVDAN: Lraac Ovdan, friends call me L. My boss Lio put me on detached service from the *Excelsior* bar a week ago, thought I could give some aid and comfort to the refugees. But... Jehosephat, Tribune, I'm so sorry.

(Voron stands and crosses the cargo container to climb down.)

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Give that sandwich to one of the children.

OVDAN: And where are you going?

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: I promised I'd find Nevala.

OVDAN: Tribune--!

(The tribune is already walking out the cargo bay doors by the time Ovdan jumps down and chases after him. Ovdan slips through the bay doors just as they're closing.)

LOCATION: IRW ROVARAN - CORRIDOR

OVDAN: Look, I know not all Romulans are this stubborn, because the doctor on my ship [played Diplomacy with us once.]

(Tribune Voron stops in his tracks.)

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: You know Doctor Saline?

LRAAC OVDAN: You think Maiek's the only Romulan doctor in Starfleet?

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Is he... happy?

LRAAC OVDAN: You... know him, don't you? Not just by reputation.

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: I miss him, Bolian. We all did. Kha'il alone... he was never the same. But I cannot indulge this now, when my people's pain is so much greater. Just tell Maiek to stay out of his brother's way. I must go.

LRAAC OVDAN: Wait, his brother? Maiek has a brother?!

(The Tribune has walked straight through another set of doors.)

SCENE 6D-04 (How Would You Like A Trip To...?)

LOCATION: SICKBAY - SURGICAL WARD

(Lorhrok enters. Maiek is performing some medical procedure on a Romulan refugee way off to the side.)

LORHROK: Doctor Saline?

MAIEK SALINE: Nurse, take over.

NURSE HENNESSY: Yes, Doctor.

(Maiek walks over.)

MAIEK SALINE: Sir?

LORHROK: I'm beaming over to the Warbird *Kilurov* to talk to what's left of the Romulan government. I want you with me.

MAIEK SALINE: Respectfully, Commander, I don't think I'd be helpful to you. My defection from the Empire was not... I don't think I'd be helpful.

LORHROK: (takes a breath) Alright. But I'd like you close by, at least. I'm sure the refugees on the *Kilurov* could use another doctor.

MAIEK SALINE: So could the refugees here. There are thousands of people aboard the *Excelsior*, sir -- none of whom have ever seen a Starfleet ship before. I'm responsible for their health!

LORHROK: Maiek... I know you're not comfortable with this. But I need you. Captain's instinct. Please.

MAIEK SALINE: You're the acting captain. You could just order me.

LORHROK: But I'm not.

(Pause.)

MAIEK SALINE: (sigh) (he starts walking) I have to close up this patient. Five minutes.

LORHROK: And, Maiek --

(Maiek stops)

LORHROK: I know this can't mean much, but I'm so sorry. It was a beautiful world.

(Pause.)

MAIEK SALINE: I... tried... for so long... to pretend it wasn't mine. And now when I close my eyes... a sailing trip with my father across the Apnex Sea when I was nine, just me and him and my brother. And I keep asking: how can a whole ocean be gone?

LORHROK: I can't imagine.

(he turns to leave and takes a step toward the door)

MAIEK SALINE: Commander.

LORHROK: Yes?

MAIEK SALINE: You said... what's left of the government. Will the Praetor be there? Was he evacuated?

LORHROK: (swallows) No, he gave up his place so we could save more civilians.

MAIEK SALINE: I see. Um... five minutes, sir.

(Lorhrok exits.)

SCENE 6D-05 (A Coup is in the Eye of the Beholder)

LOCATION: IRW *KILUROV* - VIP QUARTERS

CELEVIRE: This emergency session of the Continuing Committee of the Romulan Senate is called to order in Cabin Ael-5 of Imperial Warbird *Kilurov*.

TOVIR: There's still Starfleet in the room, Proconsul.

CELEVIRE: Starfleet will remain. We can no longer stand apart, Tovir. Better Commander Lohrok than some... Klingon.

RADEK SALINE: Not all of the Committee agrees with your assessment, Celevire.

CELEVIRE: You'd rather the Klingons?

RADEK SALINE: I'd rather the Romulan Star Empire, Proconsul. (pause) We have little time before Vashti, so I will be brief. You have no right to chair this meeting, Celevire, because you are not the Praetor.

CELEVIRE: I'm very sorry about your father, Radek. But the Praetor is dead.

RADEK SALINE: The Praetor is speaking.

(He draws the Sword of S'Task and sets it on the table.)

TOVIR: The Sword of our Father!

ROMULAN CHORUS: (surprised, impressed murmurs)

CELEVIRE: A blade does not a Praetor make, young Radek.

RADEK SALINE: Nor does an empty title bought through patronage, my elder Proconsul.

CELEVIRE: Can't this wait, Deputy Chairman? Our people stand on the edge of obliteration and you crave my office?

RADEK SALINE: I don't want an office, Celevire. I want an answer.

CELEVIRE: To what question?

RADEK SALINE: What do you plan to do about the destruction of our Hearthworlds?

CELEVIRE: Our Empire no longer has the time nor resources to spare on frippery--intrigues, speeches, keeping the Remans in line. Resettle, rebuild. Nothing else matters.

RADEK SALINE: With the outsiders "by our side" at every step, no doubt?

CELEVIRE: There is no alternative.

LORHROK: And we extend our greatest resp[ect to the sovereignty of the Romulan Star Empire.]

RADEK SALINE: There is one alternative, Celevire. Resettle, rebuild. Revenge. (he picks up the Sword of S'Task) That was my father's new future for Romulus, his vision, after we learned of the Vulcan plot to destroy us -- and his mission is a mantle I reluctantly accept.

ROMULAN CHORUS: (surprised, impressed murmurs)

CELEVIRE: You don't seriously expect the Continuing Committee to confirm you in this... madness, Radek. The Vulcans? What? Our best scientists [confirm that the supernova was most likely caused by one of our own experiments.]

RADEK SALINE: I have the greatest respect for this committee. But I claim this burden not by their authority, but by the authority of Tal Shira and of S'Task. The ancient privileges are mine.

ROMULAN CHORUS: (concerned, nervous, but not exactly alarmed murmurs -- this a kinda-coup some of them are sympathetic with)

CELEVIRE: You are here to speak for Chairman Koval's Tal Shiar, Deputy Chairman! You aren't even on this committee!

RADEK SALINE: This committee does not have the power of the sword. Observe.

(He presses a button on the Sword. The engines of the warbird change direction.)

LORHROK: We've changed course.

(Tovir opens a Romulan intercom channel.)

TOVIR: Bridge, this is Tovir. Report.

ADMIRAL GARRUS: *Senator, the Kilurov has just turned toward Federation space. I did not order this. I am receiving reports that all Romulan ships in the convoy have just changed course as well. All by themselves!*

RADEK SALINE: Not by themselves, Admiral. By the will of your Praetor. Close intercom.

(the computer closes the intercom)

RADEK SALINE: Members of the Committee, just as Proconsul Celevire says: our intrigues can wait. Our people stand on the point of obliteration. When the crisis is past, I will humbly submit myself to this body for the confirmation of my office. Until then...

ROMULAN CHORUS: (murmurs of shock and a surprising amount of acceptance)

RADEK SALINE: Starfleet!

LORHROK: Me?

RADEK SALINE: You are now a hostage of the Romulan Star Empire, as I lead it toward salvation.

LORHROK: And where, exactly, is that?

RADEK SALINE: On the homeworld.

LORHROK: Romulus is gone, sir!

RADEK SALINE: Romulus was never our homeworld.

SCENE 6D-06 (A Wild Hanas Has Appeared!)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE

ELBRUN: Ma'am, now they're cloaking!

YUBARI: Yellow alert.

NEEVA: Incoming message from Capt--er, Commodore Underwood.

YUBARI: On screen.

UNDERWOOD: *Reports are coming in from everywhere, Commander. All Romulan ships have changed course.*

YUBARI: All ships in the convoy or all ships in the sector?

UNDERWOOD: *It seems... all Romulan ships in the universe. Admiral Picard is coordinating with Starfleet, trying to set up a tachyon grid now that they've cloaked, only they're not too happy with him at the moment for saving the Romulans in the first place.*

YUBARI: Starfleet will do the right thing.

UNDERWOOD: *Meantime, I'm supposed to find out where they're all going. Sly, you have a course plot for me?*

SYLVESTE: Triangulating with the data you sent over... it's hard to tell because they cloaked so quickly.

UNDERWOOD: *That's why we pay you the big bucks, Leftenant.*

SYLVESTE: Not that we care about such things in this century.

UNDERWOOD: *Leftenant...*

SYLVESTE: Yes, sir, I know... I have a general heading, just narrowing it down to... oh.

YUBARI: Report.

SYLVESTE: They're going to Vulcan. The entire Romulan navy is on a direct course to Vulcan.

NEEVA: Two thousand years after they left in anger...

HANAS: *They're coming home to roost.*

YUBARI: (takes a breath) General Hanas. We didn't expect you on this comm frequency. What an unpleasant surprise.

HANAS: *Not as unpleasant as what your gang of outlaw do-gooders just unleashed on the galaxy. The largest Romulan fleet in history, pointed straight at a founding Federation planet. I hope you're proud of yourselves. Starfleet Command is not.*

YUBARI: *Starfleet Command is wrong sometimes. For example, they hired you.*

HANAS: General Isaac Brahms hired me, Asuka [AHs-ka].

UNDERWOOD: But what are you doing here? And, for that matter, where actually are you?

HANAS: The *Sentinel* is under cloak. We've been here all along. Like every other military strategist for the past two centuries, we know we can't just take Romulans at their word--a lesson you and Picard forgot, and look where it's got us.

(Neeva's console boops.)

NEEVA: I have something.

YUBARI: What?

NEEVA: A transmission from the *Kilurov*, sent just before the course change. Very short, just a few bytes. Hiding in routine subspace traffic.

YUBARI: What's it say?

NEEVA: It's encoded, and too short to decrypt. But my guess is... ..it was a trigger. It said, "Do the thing, and do it now." It wasn't long enough to include details or coordinates for Vulcan or anything.

SYLVESTE: Which means...

NEEVA: Somebody, probably somebody on the *Kilurov*, planned this course change -- a long time ago.

SCENE 6D-07 (Relatio)

LOCATION: EVACUATION BAY THREE - IRW ROVARAN

(As before, but perhaps somewhat more settled. The crowd packed here is more of a murmur than a cacophany.)

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Very well. Then I need you to show me how to make a fleetwide communication.

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-01: I'm sorry, Tribune, I can't give you fleetwide.

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Then I will speak to Commander V[elal myself.]

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-01: It's not the Commander. We... can't get through. I can give you shipwide. And whoever is controlling the ships, we think they're listening in. But, beyond that...

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Very well. You've done your duty. And the people? How do you find them?

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-01: Um, the people are loyal!

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Centurion, I know honesty does not come easily, but remember, I am Tribune.

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-01: ...The people are afraid.

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: And they've every right to be. Open the channel.

(The Romulan Crewman punches open a Romulan comm channel.)

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-01: Channel open.

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Good people of Romulus, if you would honor your lowly tribune, hearken. The rumors we have all been hearing are true: the *Rovaran* has changed course. So have the other ships. Commander Velal -- a good man -- is at a loss; some powerful imperial directive has taken control of our ship.

ROMULAN CHORUS: (reaction; light crowd groans, dismay)

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: You have suffered enough today. You need soft beds and warm food more than anything, and this ship provides neither. I do not know why we have diverted from Vashti Colony, which has both in ample supply -- but it is my honor as your tribune to find out, and to speed us toward what little comfort we have left. Praetor Celevire, or whoever is listening, whoever has seized control of the Romulan Empire: the Tribune on behalf of the People demands the Right of *Relatio*. Explain your actions, to our satisfaction, or be deposed.

ROMULAN CHORUS: (reaction; the crowd is surprised, there are some gasps, and they're too beaten down by the day to clap or anything... but they are respectfully pleased. The Tribune's demand is forceful indeed.)

(Silence)

(the crewman closes the channel.)

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-01: Channel closed.

LRAAC OVDAN: You think they'll listen?

TRIBUNE VORONOSSEV: If they know their history, if they know what happened to those who have fought the tribune's intercession... then they will either listen... or they will destroy this ship to silence me.

(Pause.)

LRAAC OVDAN: Kinda wish I'd talked you out of it now.

SCENE 6D-08 (Maiek Apprehended)

LOCATION: IRW KILUROV - VIP QUARTERS

(Door opens, guards enter, dragging Maiek.)

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-02: Praetor! Look what we found roaming among the plebians.

LORHROK: Maiek!

TOVIR: A traitor.

CELEVIRE: ...who has come home.

RADEK: Only to face judgment.

MAIEK: Uhhng...

LORHROK: Doctor!

MAIEK: I'm... alright. Just... why'd you hit me? I was coming peacefully!

RADEK: He probably thought you were a Vulcan.

MAIEK: We all look like Vulcans.

RADEK: Yes, but you talk like one. And this is a dark day for Vulcans. The Guardsmen are coming out of the shadows at last. The truth of our Sundering shall finally be known!

MAIEK: (snorts) The Guardsmen? You're still playing at that? I thought you made Deputy Chairman or something.

RADEK: The Guardsmen have always been the true power on Romulus. For centuries, we've worn the Tal Shiar like a mask. Made it serve us.

LORHROK: Maiek, what's he talking about?

MAIEK: The Tal Shiar is full of little secret fantasy clubs. They compete for power, which is what makes the Tal Shiar act like a paranoid schizophrenic computer half the time. You ever heard of the Zhat Vash?

LORHROK: Uh, no?

MAIEK: Oh, good, then at least someone in the galaxy hasn't. The Guardsmen are just another cult with delusions of purpose.

RADEK: The Guardsmen have kept the flame of truth burning for almost two thousand years -- the truth of why we left Min'shara, of who drove us from our native sands.

MAIEK: Oh, please, Radek, I've been to Vulcan. Do you wanna know how Romulus was really born, two thousand years ago? It wasn't in silence!

SCENE 6D-09 (The Passionists)

LOCATION: TAL SHIRA'S HOME

MENDUS THE PASSIONIST: That's outrageous! They wouldn't dare do that in Raal!

TAL SHIRA: Frankly, it beggars belief.

VAREL: I'm afraid it's even worse than that, gentlemen... daughter. Our friends in the Ministry smuggled me this tidbit last night: the Central Bureau of Education is sending an auditor to Raal segment. We know what that means.

GOVAS THE PASSIONIST: The same thing as happened in Vulcana Regar. They're going to indoctrinate our kids with Logic! A takeover of the schools.

LOCATION: IRW KILUROV - VIP QUARTERS

MAIEK: False. Records show no audit in Raal until two years later. And the auditor sent to Vulcana Regar was there to address falling math scores, not to purge heretics.

LOCATION: TAL SHIRA'S HOME

VAREL: It gets worse. There are rumors--rumors only, but they come from sources on the mindtrees that everyone should take very seriously, and you should research it yourself if you're interested--but they say there's a strong chance the Adepts of Seleya will ban love matches by the end of the year.

MENDUS THE PASSIONIST: What! If the Surak-worshippers want arranged marriages for their own children, fine, if they think it's "logical" to spend the rest of your life with someone you don't love. But my sons will marry the loves of their lives!

LOCATION: IRW KILUROV - VIP QUARTERS

MAIEK: Never happened. Customs change, but Vulcan law has stayed neutral on the marriage question for millennia.

LOCATION: TAL SHIRA'S HOME

VAREL: Yes, it is love, Mendus, that most perfect act of unreason, that shall be our children's final refutation of logic. My daughter, too, shall marry for love.

TAL SHIRA: Father, I will do whatever is necessary to protect our way of life.

VAREL: Tal Shira, I love your passion even more than I love that you are so eager to share fire and water with our Brotherhood. Is there more ale?

TAL SHIRA: For Mendus? Yes. For you? Mm-mm. You get any more tipsy and you'll be stopped by an Inquirer long before you manage to break into the Bureau.

VAREL: Ha! You're not wrong, daughter.

GOVAS THE PASSIONIST: Varel, are you certain about the Inquirers? They might be just what the Ministry says they are. What if we don't need to fear them?

VAREL: Have faith, Govas. Great things are moving, just out of sight. Our enemies are wily, and many are deceived, but our Brotherhood is wide awake to their lies. Look closely. Look not just at the things, but at the connections between the things. Then you will know the truth.

SCENE 6D-10 (As Conquerers)

LOCATION: IRW KILUROV - VIP QUARTERS

MAIEK: That part's not even wrong; it's just words strung together. But those words were enough to suck this young man Govas into their cult. Days later, they attacked the local Bureau of Social Inquiry, leaving two dead. Their insurrection spread across the world -- but Logic spread faster, until the Brotherhood of the Raptor's Wing was so outnumbered they decided they had no choice but to leave the planet. (pause) Romulus was born in the warped brains of a few old men gullible enough to believe anything that made them feel like the good guys-- even if they had to make it up themselves! They fled a persecution of their own imagining!

TOVIR: Praetor, word from the bridge. The Tribune has contacted us -- he demands *relatio*.

RADEK: Ha! Good for Uncle Voron. Then we'll let the fleet see our discussion.

(He draws the sword partway out of its sheath and his thumb squeezes a button near the top of the hilt.)

RADEK: It's sad, Maiek, truly sad. You'll believe anything the Vulcans tell you, won't you?

MAIEK: You mean, will I trust a two-thousand-year-old preserved computer log I personally inspected in the Vulcan Archives over some bigoted oral tradition Father handed down to us?

LORHROK: "Father"?

RADEK: "Vulcans always lie." Can't you remember how sure he was? Didn't you ever wonder why?

MAIEK: Do Vulcans seem like the sort of people who'd lie about an education audit twenty centuries ago? Radek, have you ever actually talked to a Vulcan?

CELEVIRE: He has a point, Radek.

RADEK: Proconsul, are you still here? You defected, Maiek. You haven't seen the proof. Manuscripts, penned in S'Task's own hand. Accounts of the Inquisitors' brutal re-education centers. *Katras*, soul-proofs, which we have been gathering and guarding for centuries, waiting for the day when the truth could finally be proven!

MAIEK: Fine, I have an open mind. Show me your proof. Where is it?

RADEK: In the Black Vault ten thousand meters below the Senate floor on Romulus.

MAIEK: So what you're saying is your "proof"'s gone. Vaporized in the supernova. (pause) Convenient.

RADEK: Yes. Very convenient for the Vulcans, who worked so hard to destroy the evidence--to destroy Romulus--and today finally succeeded. But rest assured, brother, I have seen the truth with my own eyes. If you won't have faith in your family, then have faith in your Praetor.

LORHROK: Praetor, I think you should have some faith in your people.

RADEK: The Federation wishes to address the Empire? Remember, Commander: (he briefly, partly draws his sword, then lets it fall back in its sheath) The People are listening.

LORHROK: You're responsible for millions of refugees. You're taking them--if I understand you--to invade Vulcan, a fortified world at the heart of Federation space.

MAIEK: They need food! And shelter! Starfleet is helping provide that -- and it's there on Vashti!

LORHROK: You're the Praetor, of course; it is your right to make war where you would and to order your troops where you may.

RADEK: You are so gracious, Starfleet.

LORHROK: But what about your people? You haven't given them a choice. You've seized control of their ships. I think you should release them. Or do you not trust them to follow you freely?

RADEK: The one I don't trust is you, Starfleet. You're trying to divide my invasion force so that the Vulcans can finish the job of exterminating my people piecemeal!

LORHROK: Look, I don't know what happened two thousand years ago, but you can't seriously believe the Vulcans caused the supernova that destroyed Romulus!

RADEK: I don't "believe" it; I know it! I have seen in the Black Vault the proofs of their treachery, their hatred for us! And today I find they have achieved all they ever wanted: the death of Romulus!

LORHROK: You can't charge and sentence a race for genocide without an ounce of hard evidence!

RADEK: I have no need of evidence; I have eyesight! Look at what's in front of your face, Captain! The mysterious death of our star, the Vulcan Federation offering help and then withdrawing in our most dire hour... and then, just when Starfleet intervenes at the last moment to save us, the Vulcans suddenly offer their miracle "red matter", which they just

happen to have ready, but they deploy it just a few minutes too late to actually save us! My brother here would now turn back to those murderers and beg for scraps! Food and a bed in exchange for an Empire... NO! We will go to our homeworld, the world the Vulcans stole from us, and we will demand their blood, their soil, their lives in payment for our families and our homes! And if they will not surrender...

LORHROK: Praetor, please. The Federation never wants a war, but the Romulan people wouldn't even survive one right now. We have to find a peaceful, sane solution.

RADEK: You talk of sanity, like I'm some madman and not the Deputy Chairman of the Tal Shiar! Like this isn't what every Romulan knows in his bones from the day of his Unclouding! Our Vulcan cousins banished us from our homeworld and sent us out into the cold of space to die. But when we found a better world and forged a galactic empire unrivaled by any, they hid behind humanity's skirts. We flourished, they languished. And when they saw our greatness, they sought to destroy us. But they will not, because my people are not refugees, they are not hostages -- they are Romulans! We will return to Vulcan this day, not as supplicants, not as brethren... but as conquerers.

SCENE 6D-11 (Enter Hanas)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE

RADEK: *...Not as supplicants, not as brethren... but as conquerers.*

(Hailing frequencies close.)

SYLVESTE: That's it, ma'am. That's all we got.

YUBARI: Well, he's nuts.

NEEVA: That speech went out to everyone, Asuka. Every comm relay from here to Bajor picked it up.

SYLVESTE: Speaking of the Neutral Zone... we're going to enter it in a few minutes. If their fleet is holding course...

YUBARI: Then the Federation will be at war in a few minutes.

SYLVESTE: Incoming message from General Hanas!

YUBARI: She's going to want to shoot them.

NEEVA: There's hundreds of thousands of innocent people on those ships!

YUBARI: That's why we need a better option, Neeva. Use science. Use engineering. Hell, use technobabble if you have to.

NEEVA: I'll do my best.

YUBARI: Okay, Sly.

SYLVESTE: On screen.

(The viewscreen activates.)

HANAS: Acting Captain Yubari. Or should I say Acting Acting Captain?

YUBARI: General, you want to shoot them, right? And you're calling to make sure we'll you help shoot them?

HANAS: Only if they violate Federation space.

YUBARI: General, if I had a newspaper, I'd smack you with it.

HANAS: Commander, I am acting on the direct authority of the Fed[eration Council and Starfleet Command in this matter!]

YUBARI: No. End transmission.

(viewscreen deactivates.)

YUBARI: That saved some time. Neeva?

NEEVA: I'm going to try to cancel the remote control signal. The encryption is tricky, but we have a good guess at the plaintext. If I can reverse it, it'll free the fleet. Radek will be just another madman, and the Romulans can arrest him when we reach Vashti.

YUBARI: Sure. How long?

NEEVA: Ah, now... that's the trick, right?

SCENE 6D-12 (Prisoners of the Romulans Conniving)

LOCATION: IRW *KILUROV* - VIP QUARTERS

TOVIR: Reports indicate the Federation massing forces at Outpost Sierra Six.

RADEK: Abandoning our people on Vashti and the other evac worlds, no doubt!

CELEVIRE: There is Klingon assistance en route as well.

RADEK: Then we'll have to brush the Star-fleet aside before their dogs arrive.

CELEVIRE: And when they do arrive, we'll fight them off with what?

RADEK: Proconsul...

LORHROK: You'll have a fleet full of civilians who've just been through the worst star battle in a dozen years!

TOVIR: Guard! Move the prisoners to the bedroom and soundproof it!

(The guard steps over to Maiek and Lorchrok.)

ROMULAN CREWMEMBER #6D-02: In there. Now.

LORHROK: Praetor, we have a chance for peace here! But we won't once the shooting starts!

(The guard pulls his disruptor and turns it on, pointing it straight at Lorchrok.)

ROMULAN CREWMEMBER #6D-02: Now.

MAIEK: Okay, we're going.

Maiek and Lorhrok walk through an automatic door into the bedroom.

LOCATION: IRW KILUROV - VIP QUARTERS - THE BEDROOM

LORHROK: So, now that we're alone...

MAIEK: Yes?

LORHROK: Did I hear all that correctly? I knew you had younger siblings, but that man is your brother?

MAIEK: He was. I hardly recognize him. But I think that's because I've changed, not him. Everything he says... I believed all that, not even that long ago.

LORHROK: But if Radek is your brother, then your father...

MAIEK: (sigh) Was the last Praetor, yes. But he was just a Tal Shiar Colonel when I was growing up.

LORHROK: And the fact that you were the crown prince of the Romulan Star Empire... just never came up in conversation?

MAIEK: I was thoroughly debriefed when I defected. My Starfleet file lists my place and date of birth. I never lied to any of my shipmates.

LORHROK: You never exactly told the truth, either.

MAIEK: Do you routinely volunteer the truth about your least favorite parts of yourself, sir?

LORHROK: ...okay, you're right. Sorry.

MAIEK: I wanted you to know me as a doctor. A doctor who did some bad things for the Tal Shiar and is trying to make up for them. That's who I am today, sir. Not that raving lunatic (the door opens) in the other room.

CELEVIRE: I assume you're not referring to me.

LORHROK: Pronconsul Celevire. To what do we owe the pleasure?

CELEVIRE: I only have a minute. I told that little snot the bedroom hadn't been security swept yet.

LORHROK: I'm listening.

CELEVIRE: If I could get you to a comm relay, could you transmit our cloaking frequency to your starship?

LORHROK: Without being detected, I assume?

CELEVIRE: If our intent is to remove Deputy Chairman Saline from power... not being caught would be ideal.

LORHROK: (sigh) Alright, glad to hear that. I'll just need to coax your antenna to force a feedback loop in the *Excelsior's* deflectors, and [then find some way to get them to notice it.]

(Lorhrok is beamed out of the bedroom!)

SCENE 6D-13 (Legitimate Leader of the Empire)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE

(Lorhrok beams into the middle of the bridge floor. They're at red alert.)

LORHROK: What the...?

J'NAYA: It worked!

YUBARI: Captain, the *Excelsior* is yours.

LORHROK: Huh?

NEEVA: You'd better hurry, sir. We just took down the whole Romulan remote control system.

LORHROK: Good job, ladies. I shouldn't be surprised you got me out of there.

J'NAYA: Really probably should have stopped being surprised after about the fourth time we saved you and Captain Underwood.

LORHROK: The Romulan ships are all free?

YUBARI: Yes, sir.

LORHROK: Open hailing frequencies.

SYLVESTE: Hailing frequencies open.

LORHROK: To all Romulan ships, this is Captain Lorhrok of the *Starship Excelsior*. The remote control has been broken. You're free!

SYLVESTE: Another signal coming in!

CELEVIRE: *Brothers and sisters of Romulus: I, Celevire, your true Praetor, with the help of our allies, have foiled the pretender Radek and restored independent control of your ship! Rise up! Take back your ships from Radek's spies! Then we can return to Vashti, and begin the hard work of reclaiming the glory of the Romulan Empire! Stand with me, children of S'Task!*

(Pause.)

LORHROK: Her speech was better than mine.

NEEVA: She had an unfair advantage: legitimacy.

YUBARI: Are we sure of that? I don't know much Romulan succession law.

NEEVA: You just told me Radek's nuts.

YUBARI: Oh, yeah, he's definitely nuts. But is he the praetor?

LORHROK: Of course not. He's going to get all those people killed. Why don't we ask Maiek? Where'd you beam him?

NEEVA: Wait, Maiek was with you?

LORHROK: Wait, you didn't get him?!

ELBRUN: Sorry, sir. Sensors couldn't pick him out -- too many other Romulans.

SYLVESTE: We're starting to receive responses from Romulan ships from all over the sector, sir.

LORHROK: Well, I guess Maiek won't have to worry once the Romulans take back their fleet.
On speakers.

SUBCOMMANDER TELEREN: *This is Subcommander Teleren of the IRW Charvanek. We await the orders of Praetor Radek Saline.*

ROMULAN MOTHER: *I am Jovera, a mother and daughter of Romulus. Our ship stands with Praetor Saline.*

LORHROK: Oh... stars.

ROMULAN OLD MAN: *I am Korik. I gave my leg and eye for Romulus in the Gorn War -- and I am glad to give Praetor Saline my life for the survival of our race.*

ROMULAN PARENT (MALE) #6D-01: *Now, Hess.*

HESSERAN: *Now?*

ROMULAN PARENT (FEMALE) #6D-02: *Yes.*

HESSERAN: *My name is Hesseran. I, um, I speak for my ship. I am seven years old. Justice for Romulus.*

ROMULAN OLD MAN: *Justice for Romulus!*

ROMULAN CHORUS: *Justice for Romulus!*

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: *This is Voron, Tribune of the People! I and only I speak for all the People of Romulus. Praetor Radek Saline, you would lead your people to war in the midst of their darkest hour. (pause) And the People are honored to be so led. Let's take back our true home, Radek.*

YUBARI: That's enough. Close channel.

(The channel closes.)

SYLVESTE: If the cloaked ships held their last known course... the lead Romulan ships just entered the Neutral Zone.

YUBARI: Then they've made their choice. Hanas was right.

LORHROK: (quietly) No.

SCENE 6D-14 (Ovdan Arrested)

LOCATION: IRW ROVARAN - CORRIDOR

(Ovdan catches up with Voronosev.)

OVDAN: What have you done, Tribune?!

(Voron doesn't stop.)

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: What had to be done, Bolian. Get out of here. Save your skin.

OVDAN: What, you were too scared to stand up to those people on the comm? You could have put a stop to this!!

(Now Voron stops and faces Ovdan directly. Ovdan stops, too.)

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: If they had been silent I would have spoken for the Praetor! My whole family died today, and now I learn it was at the hands of the Vulcans?!

OVDAN: You believe that nonsense?! Are you out of your mind?! He's using you! All of you!

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: I have known Radek Saline since he suckled at his wet nurse's breast. A passionate man, yes, and a cunning keeper-of-secrets -- but no fraud! But you, Bolian -- you lie about the Praetor like every Federation spy. Now run home to your Vulcan masters. Tell them we are coming.

(Voron turns and walks...)

(...but Ovdan grabs him!)

OVDAN: Oh, no, you're not leaving this spot until you've fixed this, Tribune. Get back here.

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Unhand me, dog! GUARDS!

(Two guards come running.)

OVDAN: I thought we were alone.

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: The Tribune of Romulus is sacrosanct, Bolian, and you laid forceful hands on me. I told you to escape! Now you'll either die in our brig during the battle... or I'll see you thrown to the *sehlats* in Vulcan's Forge, after we win. Take him away!

SCENE 6D-15 (Hella Bro Talk)

LOCATION: IRW KILUROV - VIP QUARTERS - THE BEDROOM

(Radek enters, sits across from Maiek.)

RADEK: Brother.

MAIEK: Brother.

RADEK: Perhaps I should start by thanking you.

MAIEK: What for?

RADEK: If your captain hadn't broken my control, I never would have known that Romulus stood with me. You gave them a choice, and they rejected your weakness. What greater gift for a Praetor? Still. You're a traitor, and your captain broke my hostage arrangement. I should shoot you.

MAIEK: Okay.

RADEK: You don't think I would?

MAIEK: Radek, you punched a teacher when you were seven years old. There's a lot of things your soul is missing, but rashness isn't one of them.

RADEK: Instructor Tremair was destroying you! For his own gain!

MAIEK: Yes, he was. I can never repay you for that.

(Pause.)

RADEK: Come home, Maiek.

MAIEK: You'd have me?

RADEK: No. I hate you, brother. I can't change that anymore. But Father... he never recovered from your leaving.

MAIEK: He sent assassins after me!

RADEK: He did what he had to do as Praetor. But he wanted you back. He wanted his son back. Come home, Maiek. I'll wipe the slate. For him.

MAIEK: I can't. You're reckless. It saved me, Radek -- but it's going to destroy our people. And for nothing. An ancient bigotry our father taught us.

RADEK: You sit in a room with your people, your brother, with the lies of Vulcan at last exposed to all Romulus, and still you only hear what the Vulcans tell you! I've known call girls who showed more backbone to their pimps! Rot in hell, Maiek. And remind yourself every hour that the only reason you're still breathing is the love of a father you betrayed!

(Radek exits.)

SCENE 6D-16 (Presidential Conference)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR HOLODECK - EMPTY

(Lorhrok enters)

LORHROK: Computer, activate holo-communicator. Destination: the Presidential Palace on Earth.

(The hologrid activates. They are now in the presidential suite of Presidential Palace in Paris, on Earth. The Federation Anthem is playing on the lawn, and we can hear it through an open window along with the other sounds of Paris.)

LOCATION: PRESIDENTIAL SUITE

ADMIRAL PARKER: Mister Lorhrok, good. The President will be here in a moment.

LORHROK: Admiral Parker.

UNDERWOOD: Glad they got you back safe, Exec.

HANAS: You might not be, after the Federation Council is through with you.

LORHROK: The Federation Council did more to fuel the Romulans' anger than any [tinpot dictator their political system could muster.]

(The President opens the door and enters the room, alongside the Vulcan First Minister.)

ADMIRAL PARKER: Ten-hut.

(All Starfleet officers snap to attention and click their heels together while saluting.)

(The President's return salute is just to get it over with.)

THE NEW PRESIDENT: At ease. Take a seat.

(Everyone sits, including the President, who gets the presidential chair.)

THE NEW PRESIDENT: This is Sulan, the Vulcan First Minister.

FIRST MINISTER SULAN: Peace and long life.

THE NEW PRESIDENT: Alright, gentlemen. I'd like to start this off with a question. (pause) Just who in the hell do you people think you are?

(Pause.)

UNDERWOOD: Um, pardon me, sir?

THE NEW PRESIDENT: The Federation Council made a decision to leave Romulus alone. You might not like it. I might not like it. But it was the Council's decision to make -- and you all defied it.

LORHROK: Mister President, their decision was wrong. It was immoral.

THE NEW PRESIDENT: Oh, I see. That leads me to another question, then: Who? In the hell? Do you think you are?! The Federation Council is the democratically elected government of the United Federation of Planets. Every one of them secured at least sixteen billion votes to take that seat. Who voted for you, Mister... Mister... I don't even know who you are!

PARKER: Acting Captain Aleczhander Lorhrok commands the *Starship Excelsior*, Mister President. He was held captive by the new Praetor, until a few minutes ago.

THE NEW PRESIDENT: And this no-name saw fit to drag the Federation into a war. The Starfleet has gone too far, Admiral, and I swear this time you will be brought to heel. This is a democratic republic, not a military junta.

PARKER: Yes, Mister President.

THE NEW PRESIDENT: But first I apparently have a war to win. Admiral Riker has been demoted to Captain and assigned to patrol the Glintara Sector, which leaves you as ranking local officer, Athos. I've just heard from Ambassador Korg that the Klingon Fourth Strike Fleet is prepared to meet our forces at Outpost Six, just inside the gravitic perimeter.

UNDERWOOD: That's plenty of firepower, but will it get here in time?

HANAS: We don't need it to. Send the Klingons to Salem-One, stage there, then join the battle in progress. They should be able to catch the Romulans in a pincer.

PARKER: That'll be an awfully bloody business, General.

HANAS: We have the numbers. Casualties will be [within acceptable parameters.]

LORHROK: With all due respect, General, Admiral, Mister President--until the Romulans cross the border, I am still the senior officer on the scene. I was in charge of the Romulus evacuation when they lost their world, and I believe I still am.

HANAS: We're a bit beyond evacuation, Acting Captain; try and keep up.

LORHROK: As far as I'm concerned, Mister President, I am still responsible for saving those Romulan lives, and I am not about to quit.

UNDERWOOD: Haven't the Romulans have made that choice for us, Exec?

LORHROK: No, sir, there's still a better way! We can't fail these people! We can't fail ourselves.

THE NEW PRESIDENT: I thought I'd made myself perfectly clear, Mister: Starfleet does not set policy in this room.

LORHROK: Mister President, what if Earth was rubble orbiting a supernova? What if someone... an Admiral Cartwright, a Mussolini, a MuhCauley Enzor... told us that Romulus was responsible? Would we... frightened, broken, and homeless... would we still fight for peace? Would we be able to trust our enemies after two centuries of fear?

THE NEW PRESIDENT: Hypotheticals are not the issue here, Mister! A Rom[ulan invasion fleet is!]

FIRST MINISTER SULAN: The government of Vulcan agrees with the acting captain.

(Pause.)

PARKER: First Minister, with respect, that fleet is coming to conquer your planet.

FIRST MINISTER SULAN: The *Excelsior* needs time to rectify the situation. Vulcan requests that the response fleet, excepting a small picket force, pull back from the Neutral Zone to the Vulcan home system. That will give you sufficient time for a peaceful alternative, Acting Captain Lorchrok?

LORHROK: I swear it.

FIRST MINISTER SULAN: If you must.

HANAS: You can't be-- [serious] If we have to hold off the assault inside the Vulcan star system, First Minister, we can't guarantee Vulcan's safety. In fact, we can pretty much guarantee that millions of innocent Vulcans will be killed.

PARKER: I must agree with the General, sir.

FIRST MINISTER SULAN: Admiral, has Starfleet ever attacked an inhabited star system?

PARKER: Only when absolutely necessary to help end an armed conflict, First Minister. The risk to civilians is too great otherwise.

FIRST MINISTER SULAN: At the heart of logic is Surak's most austere teaching: wage peace. You would risk an alien world to end a war, Admiral. The Vulcan people would risk their own world to prevent one.

THE NEW PRESIDENT: Look, I don't want a war. I don't want state funerals. If there's a chance to stop this, and the Vulcans are alright with it... fine. Starfleet, your orders are to rendezvous at Vulcan and defend it at all costs.

PARKER: (saluting) Sir, yes, sir!

HANAS: But, Mister President, [you have to consider the full defensive picture!]

THE NEW PRESIDENT: End transmission.

(The holoprogram dissolves immediately, back to the hologrid.)

LORHROK: (exhaling) Now I've just got to find a way to get the Romulans talking.

SCENE 6D-17 (Prisoner Exchange)

LOCATION: IRW KILUROV - VIP QUARTERS - THE BEDROOM

(Radek enters.)

MAIEK: (sigh) Don't you have a fleet to run, Radek? Do you have time for more sibling bickering?

RADEK: I only came down to warn you, brother, never to show so much as a toenail in Romulan territory again. You will not survive. (he presses an intercom button.) *Starship Excelsior*, drop your shields and perform prisoner exchange in four. Three.

MAIEK: Wait, what?

RADEK: Two. One. Activate.

(Maiek is beamed out, and materializes on...)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE

NEEVA: Welcome back, Doctor Saline.

SYLVESTE: Or do we need to call you "princeling," now?

MAIEK: How did I...?

YUBARI: We made a deal with Radek.

NEEVA: A prisoner exchange.

MAIEK: Who did we have that he wanted that badly?

YUBARI: That's the part I really didn't like.

SCENE 6D-18 (Treachery, Faith, and Dear Old Dad)

LOCATION: IRW KILUROV - CORRIDOR

(Lorhrok is pleading his case to Radek here, followed by guards.)

LORHROK: Praetor, I don't want you to do or not do anything that would limit your options. I'm just asking for a conversation. I'm just asking you to think.

RADEK: Something I noticed working for the Tal Shiar: when you Federation types ask for conversation, what you really want to do is lecture.

(Radek enters the bridge with Lorhrok just behind.)

LOCATION: IRW KILUROV - BRIDGE

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-02: Praetor on the bridge!

RADEK: At ease.

LORHROK: Okay, I know you trust your dad, and you trust the Tal Shiar, and you say there's evidence I haven't seen. Fine. But isn't it just possible, even if it's just one-in-a-million, that you're wrong? What if you lead your people into extinction?

RADEK: You know nothing of faith, do you, Captain? You've never believed in anything -- except what you can see and feel. How lonely you must be! (pause) Well, you'll have something to see soon enough. They've destroyed our world, but we learned long ago that the Vulcan mind-witches of Seleya, in their arrogance, have their own records of what really happened. It is kept in a secret, shielded chamber at the pinnacle of the Hall of Ancient Thought, opened only once each year for a changing of the guard. And soon Seleya will be our capitol.

CELEVIRE: Praetor, it is dangerous for the entire Continuing Committee to stay aboard one ship. Permission to disembark.

RADEK: So you can stab me in the back, Proconsul? I think not.

CELEVIRE: There are few warbirds as powerful as the *Kilurov*, Praetor. Send me to the *Cretak*. It's no match for you.

RADEK: No. To her sister ship, the *Rovaran*. And two other higher-ranking senators will accompany you. You will not be replacing me today.

CELEVIRE: As you wish, Praetor.

(She exits.)

LORHROK: You're right, I don't put my faith in many things, sir. But I do have faith in one thing, and that's always been enough.

RADEK: And what's that?

LORHROK: Peace. We can find the truth -- even punish the guilty, if you're correct -- without bloodshed.

RADEK: You know, I think my father might have agreed with you, Captain? He knew what really mattered. That's what made him such a good praetor.

LORHROK: Then why not follow his lead?

RADEK: Because my father was murdered, along with countless millions of his people. You see peace as a choice - an aspiration. But you're wrong. Peace is a memory -- achingly sweet to look upon, but from us separated by a chasm vaster than the universe itself.

SCENE 6D-19 (Celevire Makes Contact)

LOCATION: U.S.S. EXCELSIOR - JEFFRIES TUBE

(J'Naya is working with various engineering tools.)

J'NAYA: Oh, come on, old girl, I need to get back to engineering, don't you know what's happening out there?

(The computer makes a disgruntled sound.)

J'NAYA: Alright, fine, but I don't know why you had to develop a feedback loop in the deflector assembly now. (she pulls an isolinear computer chip from its housing) (an electrical flickering begins, in a definite pattern) Hold on. That should have shut you down. What's... what is that pattern? That's not one of our command pathways... It looks a lot like... some kind of data packet...

(She presses some buttons)

CELEVIRE: (slightly distorted) *This is Proconsul Celevire to U.S.S. Excelsior. Please respond.*

J'NAYA: Okay, sorry, old girl. You were right -- as usual. (she presses a button to respond) Proconsul, this is Commander Kestra J'Naya, receiving your transmission. It was pretty clever using your transceiver to encode it in our deflector backwash, but you're really lucky we found it.

TRIBUNE: *That's what I said.*

CELEVIRE: *Tribune, please. The other senators will be back soon. (to J'Naya) Miss, I must speak to your commander. We have an opportunity, and little time to use it. Has your commander ever used a Rutian shifter?*

SCENE 6D-20 (Quickie)

LOCATION: IRW KILUROV - BRIDGE

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-02: Sirs! The *Excelsior* is no longer pacing our fleet. They're jumping to high warp, destination... Vulcan.

RADEK: So they're joining the combat fleet there. Seems your own crew has given up on this dream of peace.

LORHROK: Have a little faith, Praetor. I do.

SCENE 6D-21 (The Hall of Ancient Thought)

LOCATION: THE HALL OF ANCIENT THOUGHT - SEALED UPPER CHAMBER

(Two Vulcan guards trudge by and then pause.)

MODERN VULCAN GUARD #6D-01: Elder, the Chamber of Record remains empty.

MODERN VULCAN GUARD #6D-02: Younger, your report is noted. Come. It is time for the daily ration.

MODERN VULCAN GUARD #6D-01: That is logical.

(They trudge off.)

(As they do, just around the corner, Yubari, Hanas, Celevire, and Tribune Voron materialize via a Rutian Shifter.)

YUBARI: (low voice) Was that supposed to be a transporter?

CELEVIRE: (low voice) Not a transporter; this chamber is shielded. As I explained, we used a Rutian shifter to get through.

MAIEK: (low voice) And why don't we use these all the time?

HANAS: (low voice) Because if you use it six times, you die.

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: (low voice) I've started the recording. May we proceed? I would like the Vulcan treachery confirmed and our praetor vindicated as quickly as possible.

MAIEK: (low voice) If you say so, Uncle Voron.

HANAS: (low voice) Ha. The faster we can get your praetor's pack of lies out of the way, the faster we can negotiate the surrender of your invasion fleet.

YUBARI: (low voice) Any idea which way?

CELEVIRE: (low voice) I suggest we work our way toward the center.

YUBARI: (low voice) Makes sense to me.

(They begin to trudge)

SCENE 6D-22 (Arrival at Vulcan)

LOCATION: IRW KILUROV - BRIDGE

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-02: Now entering the Min'shara star system, sir. Detecting a large Federation force near Vulcan, including the *Excelsior*. They're at battle stations.

RADEK: Romulus shall answer their challenge. Drop cloak. Sound combat alert.

(Romulan combat alert klaxon goes off.)

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-02: Dropping cloak. Our comrades are doing the same. Praetor, we outnumber them, ship-for-ship.

LORHROK: But not pound-for-pound! You're counting Romulan cargo carriers armed with lasers against *Luna*-class starships! Please, there's still time!

RADEK: Navigator, take us in.

SCENE 6D-23 (The Mural Is Found)

LOCATION: THE HALL OF ANCIENT THOUGHT - SEALED UPPER CHAMBER

CELEVIRE: I believe it will be just around this corner.

HANAS: You're basing this on, what, another hunch? I'm starting to believe this artifact doesn't even exist.

TRIBUNE VORONOSSEV: Then perhaps you'd better come around this corner.

YUBARI: Whoa. That is a really big mural.

CELEVIRE: Look closer. Those aren't lines of paint. They're words.

MAIEK: In ancient times, our great historians wrote their books like this, in the shape of art.

CELEVIRE: This is Vulcan's history of The Sundering.

YUBARI: Well, that's what we're looking for, right? So let's set up those pattern enhancers. Tribune, you still filming?

(Two guards speak from opposite sides of the chamber.)

MODERN VULCAN GUARD #6D-01: (politely) You are trespassing. Please do not move.

MODERN VULCAN GUARD #6D-02: (politely) Identify yourselves.

YUBARI: Sorry, boys, don't have time today. General?

HANAS: Phasers.

(Hanas pulls out her phaser, successfully powers it up, and presses the trigger, but it only beeps.)

HANAS: What? My phaser's dead!

(Yubar's phaser does the same)

YUBARI: Mine too.

MODERN VULCAN GUARD #6D-02: All energy weapons are disabled in this chamber. Only physical weapons, such as this *lirpa* blade, are operative.

(He swooshes the *lirpa* about for effect.)

YUBARI: Left?

HANAS: Right. Go!

(They both charge. We follow Hanas.)

MODERN VULCAN GUARD #6D-01: Please stand down. There is no need for -- oof!

(Hanas sneaks past the *lirpa* and lands a blow.)

(There is a short scuffle. Yubari manages to wrest the *lirpa* from her Vulcan on the other side of the room and bludgeons him unconscious with it.)

MODERN VULCAN GUARD #6D-02: Uhnf!

(Meanwhile, Hanas's Vulcan gets the better of Hanas and knocks her to the ground.)

HANAS: Yubari, a little help? Maybe use that *lirpa* you just grabbed?

YUBARI: Eh. Never much liked the *lirpa*. More of a javelin girl.

(she, grunts as she hurls the *lirpa* clear across the chamber, blunt end first. It sails across the chamber and smacks the other Vulcan Guard in the head. He's knocked out. Hanas stands up and dusts herself off.)

HANAS: I didn't know the *lirpa* could be thrown like that.

YUBARI: Ehhh, you're really not supposed to.

HANAS: You know, Commander, between breaking into the Hall of Ancient Thought and taking down a Kohlinahr monk, I might be starting to like you.

YUBARI: I grow on people. Like a disease, so I'm told. Let's get the pattern enhancers up so we can get a comm signal through.

MAIEK: I've got 'em.

(He unslings the pattern enhancers from his pack and starts setting up the first one.)

YUBARI: And, uh... does anyone actually know how to read Ancient Vulcan?

CELEVIRE: That will be me.

SCENE 6D-24 (The Bait Is Set)

LOCATION: IRW KILUROV - BRIDGE

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-02: Admiral. Praetor. We're detecting a Romulan signal on the planet surface.

RADEK: Romulan? What is it?

ROMULAN CREWMAN #6D-02: A pattern enhancer, sir. At the peak of Mount Seleya. And a communication!

RADEK: On speaker.

CELEVIRE: *Praetor, it is Pronconsul Celevire.*

RADEK: What are you doing on Vulcan territory, Celevire?!

CELEVIRE: *Making straight your paths, Radek. We have something you should see.*

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: *She won't breathe a word of it to me, and I can't read Ancient... but I'm getting it all on tape!*

RADEK: Uncle Vor-- I mean, Tribune? (intake of breath) You found it. You found the proof!

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: *Come on, Praetor. You should be here for your vindication.*

HANAS: *You mean his arrest, once he's proved a liar.*

YUBARI: *We granted safe passage, General.*

CELEVIRE: *I assure you, no one knows what this mural says except me, Praetor. You should see it for yourself, either way. Landing party, out.*

(Pause.)

TOVIR: Well, Praetor? Are you going?

RADEK: Hm. It could be a trap.

LORHROK: Coward.

RADEK: Excuse me?

LORHROK: You're not afraid of a trap. You know this fleet would only be stronger if you became a martyr. No, you're afraid of being wrong. You know Celevire would only invite you down if she had enough to prove you wrong: Vulcan didn't force the Romulans into exile, and Vulcan had nothing to do with the supernova at Romulus. And after all these years of conspiracy theories, you don't want to know. You want to lead this fleet to its destruction in ignorant bigotry. Now, I'm not too brave a man myself, Radek -- but if there's one cowardice I can't stand, it's ignorance.

RADEK: How dare you...

LORHROK: Vulcans didn't cause Romulan problems; ROMULANS did! I'd stake my life on it.

RADEK: You just did. Tovir, bring the Sword of S'Task! Navigator, prepare for transport!

TOVIR: Yes, sir! All hail our brave praetor!

SCENE 6D-25 (Reading the Mural)

LOCATION: HALL OF ANCIENT THOUGHT - SEALED UPPER CHAMBER

YUBARI: Maiek, you seriously can't read this?

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Ancient Vulcan? How could he?

HANAS: Romulans, Vulcans... it's the same race. Basically the same language, right?

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: (snorts derisively) Hmp!

MAIEK: General, how well can you read French?

HANAS: Actually, I took a few class[es in high school.]

MAIEK: *Eighth-century* French.

(Pause)

YUBARI: Point taken, Doctor.

MAIEK: Look, I know what it says: it's proof my family fell for a bunch of conspiracy theories.

HANAS: So you can read it!

MAIEK: No, I'm just not insane.

(Radek beams in, Lorhrok in manacles just behind him.)

YUBARI: Captain!

LORHROK: I'm alright.

RADEK: Shut up. Proconsul...

CELEVIRE: Welcome, Praetor. The mural is behind you.

(Radek turns and gasps.)

RADEK: It's huge!

CELEVIRE: The relevant portion begins at the ninth tessellation.

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Praetor, I beg permission to broadcast this glorious moment to the entire fleet.

RADEK: A moment, uncle.

(Silence.)

CELEVIRE: Praetor, if you're too scared to read it aloud, I will. Begin broadcasting, Tribune.

(The Tribune does something on his camera and it opens a transmission to the rest of the Romulan fleet)

CELEVIRE: It begins: "And as the dawn of the second century of the new age drew near, the people were troubled, for there were yet those who were dangerous and wild, who would not accept the gentle yoke of Logic. At last, our designs to win them by subtle acts of waging peace

came to nought, and we could afford the risk no longer. And so we drove them forth, from every home and every school,

RADEK: "...and every school, from ShiKahr to Seleya we banished the Brotherhood of the Raptor's Wing--man, woman, and child. We absorbed their retaliations as necessary penance, then sent them into the great deserts of our world. Then, at last, we saw to it that there was nowhere left for them but the last desert, the emptiness beyond Min'shara... where they will surely perish. (pause) "This we did because the logic of our survival demanded it. Yet that is not the logic our Father Surak taught. And it must not be the logic our children learn. Reader: let this plinth be the only true record of our terrible expedient, a reminder to ensure there is no other." (pause) I was RIGHT! The Vulcans wanted us dead from the start, and, when they found they'd failed, they started trying to finish the job! Tribune, the fleet saw this?!

(The great stone doors of the chamber begin to open and First Minister Sulan and High Priestess T'Vrill enter and approach the group at a walking pace.)

TRIBUNE VORONOSSEV: Yes, Radek! Every word! Your father would be so proud!

HANAS: Proconsul, why are you lying?

CELEVIRE: Excuse me?

MAIEK: The mural doesn't say that!

CELEVIRE: Why not?

HANAS: It can't!

(Sulan and T'vrill approach.)

FIRST MINISTER SULAN: And yet it does, General.

HIGH PRIESTESS T'VRILL: An excellent translation, Praetor. I should have been proud, had I had thee for a pupil.

RADEK: Vulcans! You reveal yourselves at last!

SULAN: We have removed the shielding. There is no purpose in hiding this place any longer.

MAIEK: Who are you?

SULAN: I am First Minister Sulan. This is T'Vrill, High Priestess. We welcome you, Praetor.

HIGH PRIESTESS T'VRILL : We offer thee the fire and water of our home. For now you know, this world is thine home as well.

YUBARI: Uh, isn't one of you supposed to be the designated survivor?

RADEK: All ships, target Mount Seleya! Where are your bodyguards, your armies? Surrounding the mountain as we speak?

HIGH PRIESTESS T'VRILL: We bring only ourselves. We wish to deal peace with thee, as our ancestors should have done two thousand years ago.

RADEK: ENOUGH! LIES! YOU THINK I WILL NOT USE THIS SWORD?

(He swishes the Sword of S'Task straight through her defenseless body. Blood spurts from her body, splashing on the ground.)

YUBARI: High priestess!

(T'Vrill gives her last, choking breath and Her body hits the floor.)

RADEK: That was but the first blow struck for our millions honored dead. And now, Minister, you'll tell us what your ploy is, or you'll be the second.

SULAN: You must do what you think best, of course. Yet we -- I -- bring no army against you. Only a handful of us knew what that mural said.

CELEVIRE: Ambassador, there is sufficient evidence on this plinth to conclude that Vulcan wants all Romulans dead... and only a fool would fail to notice how close you are to getting what you want. Vulcans made the "red matter" that nearly erased us. And you would have us believe you deal peace?

SULAN: We were trying to help Romulus, to begin to make up for what we did at the Sundering. But, logically, you cannot trust us. Your uncountable dead cry out for vengeance, and our forefathers have placed us in the wrong. Logically, the High Priestess and I concluded, there is only one solution: we surrender.

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: What?

HANAS: WHAT?

SULAN: Vulcan surrenders to the Romulan Star Empire, immediately and unconditionally. Your fleet is free to land.

HANAS: Excuse me... the Federation Fourth Fleet will allow no such thing! All ships, maintain position and fire on any Romulan vessel that enters the perimeter!

SULAN: The Vulcan people insist that Starfleet remove its military from our star system at once.

HANAS: The Vulcan people are reminded that they are members of the Federation, on a world filled with Federation citizens, and that the Federation defends its worlds--whether the local governor likes it or not!

SULAN: Then I regret, General, that you leave us no alternative. One hour ago, in closed session, the High Command passed Bill Four One One. I hereby exercise my authority under that law, and under Article Three of the Federation Charter, to withdraw planet Vulcan from the United Federation of Planets. Kroyk-yah!

HANAS: You can't do that.

YUBARI: They... actually can't? Can they?

LORHROK: I'm not a lawyer.

SULAN: Vulcan politics are slow, but they are simple, General. Remove Starfleet from Vulcan territory or the Vulcan Home Fleet will open fire.

YUBARI: On STARFLEET ships?!

HANAS: You're bluffing.

SULAN: General, you have made a sequence of predictions today. You were supremely confident in all of them. How many of your predictions proved correct?

HANAS: You can't...

(Pause.)

UNDERWOOD: *This is Commodore Joshua Underood of the U.S.S. Excelsior. I'm ordering all ships to withdraw, repeat, all ships withdraw to the edge of Vulcan sovereignty.*

SULAN: Praetor, I invite you now to start bringing your survivors down to the surface.

RADEK: What about the Vulcan Home Fleet?

SULAN: Praetor, perhaps you do not understand. Vulcan has surrendered. You are its conquerer. The Home Fleet will obey your orders, not mine.

RADEK: Is that so?

SULAN: It is.

RADEK: And they can hear me?

SULAN: They can.

RADEK: Vulcan Home Fleet. Charge your weapons and target the Vulcan city of ShiKahr.

MAIEK: What? Radek!

VULCAN CREW #6D-01: *Order acknowledged.*

RADEK: Hold your fire.

(Radek draws the Sword of S'Task and brings it to Sulan's throat)

RADEK: My first responsibility is justice for Romulus. Yet we are merciful. We will not massacre your world. You, First Minister, will give the order to fire on ShiKahr, and then I will put you to death by the sword. That will be our justice.

MAIEK: Radek, no! Uncle, do something!

YUBARI: Lor, how many people live in Sher Khan or whatever?

LORHROK: About thirty million.

VULCAN CREW #6D-01: *Target is locked.*

HANAS: Is this what you wanted, Lorhrok? Is this the peace you promised?

LORHROK: Please! Praetor! (he walks toward Radek, slowly) You're a man of faith. So am I. And this Vulcan, the minister, has the same faith I do: peace. You called it a memory -- but we're in a hall of memory, where ancient truths can re-awaken. Please don't shatter my faith.

HANAS: You're a fool, Lorhrok.

RADEK: She's right. First Minister, give the order. Or I will find some Vulcan schoolgirl whose parents live in ShiKahr and force her to give the order.

FIRST MINISTER SULAN: Vulcan Home Fleet, I order y[ou to fire.]

TRIBUNE VORONOSOV: RELATIO! (pause) Praetor, on behalf of the people I demand *relatio*. Explain your actions.

RADEK: What are you talking about, Tribune? This is my father's plan, and the plan of the praetor before him: reunification... and revenge. This Vulcan made the red matter. This Vulcan destroyed our hearthworlds!

SULAN: Respectfully, [I did no such thing.]

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: We don't know who was involved in the plot to kill the hearthworlds yet -- but we know it wasn't the 30 million people who live in ShiKahr! It wasn't their children!

RADEK: Our families were just as innocent, and they're dead!

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: S'Task punished the dangerous. Tal Shira sacrificed the necessary. That city is neither. They surrendered. This is not our way.

RADEK: Are you sure? We can call the fleet. They're watching. Let the Romulan people tell us what they think!

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Ask the mob? They want blood, Radek -- but after their lust crescendos, the mob will fade. It is the nobility of the Romulan People that will sound through all eternity. That is why they elected me: I represent the People of Romulus on its best days, not the rabble at its worst. And I, Tribune, have demanded *relatio*. How do you reply?

RADEK: Uncle, they're Vulcans! They will dissemble and distract until we've all died of old age!

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Praetor, we are Romulans. We have more cunning in the points of our ears than the entire Vulcan High Command.

RADEK: I don't have time for this, old man.

(He shoves Tribune Voron aside, roughly.)

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Oof!

RADEK: I'll give the order myself. First Minister Sulan, I sentence you to [die by the sword for your crimes against Romulus.]

MAIEK: NO, BROTHER!

(Maiek tackles Radek. Radek drops the sword. They scuffle.)

RADEK: Traitor!

MAIEK: Murderer!

RADEK: Maiek, we trusted -- AGH!

(He's been shot!)

RADEK: Unnhhh...

(He falls to the floor.)

MAIEK: RADEK, NO!

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: Praetor!

(Both run toward him.)

LORHROK: Who fired that shot?!

CELEVIRE: The Vulcans said they lowered the shielding. Weren't you listening?

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: You've killed the praetor, Celevire!

(Maiek has his medkit open, frantically trying to save Radek.)

MAIEK: Radek, can you hear me?

RADEK: (out of breath) Father's right: it does not hug the shores... the shores...

TRIBUNE VORONOSEV: He's delirious. Maiek, you have to save him!

RADEK: Maiek... do you remember the Apnex Sea?

MAIEK: Radek, I can't stabilize you!

RADEK: We were so... loved.

(Tricorder flatlines.)

MAIEK: Why?!

CELEVIRE: Why did I shoot a praetor who refused the relatio? Who then used physical force against the Tribune's decree? Why did I save your life, Doctor Saline? These questions answer themselves. Praetor Celevire to the Vulcan Home Fleet. Your orders are to disperse and patrol the edge of this system. Ensure no Starfleet stragglers remain behind.

VULCAN CREW #6D-01: *Order acknowledged.*

CELEVIRE: Praetor Celevire to IRW *Charvanek*. Subcommander -- Teleren, I think? Your ship will coordinate the landings. We will establish our base at the point of our departure twenty centuries ago: Vulcan's Forge.

(Silence.)

SUBCOMMANDER TELEREN: It will be done, Praetor.

CELEVIRE: First Minister Sulan. You will retain your post within the new provisional occupation government. Your subjects are to immediately deliver food, drink, and temporary shelter to the edge of the Forge. More than is necessary. Enough for a million survivors to feast. We'll work out the details of reunification when my people are safe.

FIRST MINISTER SULAN: I will see to it... Praetor.

HANAS: If the Romulans continue this invasion, [the Federation's response will be swift and terrible.]

CELEVIRE: Starfleet, IRW *Honor Blade* is at your disposal. Make good use of it. Any Starfleet officers still in this system in ten minutes will be executed as enemies of the state.

(Hanas draws a gun.)

HANAS: I heard our phasers work now, "Praetor."

YUBARI: What are you doing? You want to kill the Romulan praetor with the entire Romulan Empire watching in orbit?

HANAS: She just did.

LORHROK: She's not a Federation general. Give me that.

(He snatches the phaser from her, which powers down)

LORHROK: We need to leave. Doctor Maiek, I'm so sorry for your loss, but we need to beam [up to the IRW Honor Blade right away.]

MAIEK: I'm not going, sir. I'm sorry, sir.

YUBARI: Maiek, what are you doing?

MAIEK: The first time I thought about defecting to the Federation, it was because the Federation told the truth -- something that's very expensive on Romulus. But I was lied to anyway. And worse, I believed it. My people need me. And, more than ever... I need them.

LORHROK: You'll be killed.

MAIEK: Not if I resign my commission. Good-bye, sir. Here's my combadge. Please tell everyone thank you for letting me serve with you.

(Maiek removes his combadge.)

ROMULAN CREWMEMBER #6D-04: IRW *Honor Blade* ready for transport.

MAIEK: Energize.

(Hanas, Yubari, and Lorchrok beam up.)

SCENE 6D-26 (Denouement)

LOCATION: SPACE STATION SALEM ONE - COMMANDER'S OFFICE

(Fade In)

UNDERWOOD: ...and, with that, this nightmare of a prisoner exchange is over. The *Excelsior* gets her barkeep's assistant back.

LORHROK: What is with that guy, anyway?

UNDERWOOD: I'm not entirely sure. L never seemed to be around whenever I needed a drink. All I can say is, Admiral Parker works in mysterious ways.

LORHROK: On that subject, sir, when can we expect your return to the ship?

UNDERWOOD: Well, actually, Exec, I've been meaning to raise that very point. I suppose, with all the heads that rolled at Starfleet Command, they either couldn't spare me or forgot about me entirely. It seems I'll be stationed here at Station Salem One managing refugees for the duration.

LORHROK: Spast. (pause) It's good news for the refugees, sir. I don't know how I'll break it to the crew, though.

UNDERWOOD: Well, I've confirmed my replacement on the *Excelsior*. I think he'll do alright. After all, I've been seasoning him for two and a half years. And he confirmed his place as next-in-line at the Taurus Nebula Affair six months ago.

LORHROK: Me, sir?

UNDERWOOD: You, Exec. I suppose I'd better break the habit of calling you that, now!

LORHROK: How?

UNDERWOOD: Don't get me wrong, the President wants you demoted. Or possibly dead. I'm not sure he's that particular. But, politically... what you did during the Reunification to keep the shooting from starting... it looked an awful lot like heroism, at least to enough of the press. With all the chaos of the past three weeks, the President has larger floors to mop, so a hero you remain.

LORHROK: I don't feel like one.

UNDERWOOD: And why not, Exec? You stuck to your ideals--even longer than I would've. Certainly longer than Dovan would've. And, between you and me, you were right. Peace was possible. Horribly costly, but, I think, less so than the war would have been. Lucky you were in the big chair that day, as I see it.

LORHROK: Frankly, sir, when I think about it... I'm frightened.

UNDERWOOD: Why?

LORHROK: The Romulan people rallied to a madman and almost launched a two-way massacre about something that happened two thousand years ago. It should never have been a question. And yet we just barely stopped the answer from being "two species die."

UNDERWOOD: They're talking about a new name, you know. For the planet, I mean. The Romulans won't call it Vulcan, but the Vulcans aren't willing to call it Min'Shara anymore. And, being honest, they may pop in and out of the Federation for a long time. Everyone's life on the planet -- in the sector -- is being turned inside out for this. It's a mess. (pause) That's what

frightens people. Not war. War is easy. War is familiar. Dying's a lot easier than changing.
(pause) That's what makes people like you and Ambassador Spock so valuable. I don't know if it's virtue or a brain defect, but you'd rather change. And as long as you're talking where people are listening... I think we'll be okay.

SCENE 6D-27 (Leaving Vulcan)

NARRATOR: *Two thousand years ago...*

LOCATION: ANCIENT VULCAN ROCKET SHIP - COCKPIT

(S'Task is flipping physical switches and the engines have definitely started spinning up.)

(Tal Shira enters, swinging down from a ladder to the floor.)

TAL SHIRA: The last supplies are aboard. The Logicians?

(He continues to work on switches and dials while Tal Shira fluidly moves to the front of the cramped cockpit, takes the co-pilot seat, and buckles herself in.)

S'TASK: Their gunships are in visual range. Pre-flight check complete.

TAL SHIRA: *And Rhea's Helm?*

S'TASK: Ready to break orbit once these supplies are aboard. We should take off immediately. Commence primary ignition.

TAL SHIRA: My love?

S'TASK: My wife, the ignition. They will open fire.

TAL SHIRA: Promise me we will return. Promise me I will see The Forge and Seleya again, and that they will be as beautiful as they are at this moment, in that sunset.

S'TASK: You will never see this world again, Tal Shira. We will die among the stars. But our children, or theirs... (exhales) I know now, my love, that logic is not enough. They will need us.

TAL SHIRA: And we will need them. You have shown me that, too. (pause Commencing primary ignition. Three... two... one... liftoff.

(The rocket engines roar to life as the countdown begins, and the ship actually lifts off, trembling as it does.)

TAL SHIRA: The night is very long... and Rigel shines.

S'TASK: My wife?

TAL SHIRA: A song my father used to sing to me. It's about the two-sided nature of things. An old art form, I can't recall the name...

S'TASK: *Ni var*. Surak spoke highly of it.

TAL SHIRA: Yes, that's it. *Ni var*.

(The rocket continues into orbit.)