

Starship: Excelsior
"Dream of Disembodiment"
(Season 6, Episode 2)
by James Heaney

Transcribed by Peter Stine

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

SCENE 6B-01**LOCATION: TRIASSA ONE - THE PARK - NIGHT****TRASSA: Janath.****JANATH: Triassa? I can't see you?****TRASSA: More than breathing bodies may be ridden by a Scion of the Stars. This vessel, called Triassa One by the Servants, may house my mind as well.****JANATH: You're in the ship?****TRASSA: Would it confuse one less to say I am the ship?****JANATH: I guess? Where's Isaac?****TRASSA: Sleeping. As all the servants be.****JANATH: How can anyone sleep, Your Reverence... when there are so many stars?****TRASSA: It is not known, child-of-the-song-that-was-shattered. Two hundred fifty thousand years have been lived by me, and still... it is not known how any of you can sleep through one heartbeat of this galaxy.****JANATH: I never imagined. I spent my whole life in the nutrient pits trying to imagine. But the day I first opened these eyes and ears... I'd been like a fetus... trying to imagine Syracuse.****TRASSA: Were not the stars visible from your first home?**

JANATH: I don't know, maybe. I couldn't tell much about the nutrient pits. No eyes.

TRASSA: There are no bodies at all?

JANATH: Oh, there's plenty of bodies. The pits are loud -- poundingly loud, with the sound of... pink flesh. We're blind in our natural state, speechless... I wish you'd made us deaf, too. (pause) But you meant host bodies? Then no; there's never enough, always so many applicants. [Of] Course, if we had more flexible synaptic pathways...

TRASSA: It was a small miracle that you worked at all. Flexibility should not have been required.

JANATH: I'm just saying, it would solve a lot of problems if we could cohabit with horses and dolphins and bugblatters without getting brain damage. Five minutes in a horse and I wouldn't be able to get back out. Five months, and I'd have the mind of a horse or a dolphin or a bugblatter. That scares me more than the nutrient pits.

TRASSA: Is there not, at least, telepathic projection, through your queens?

JANATH: No, that's for the Embodied, and, frankly, mostly used by kings. Not the *hoi polloi* in the pits, that's for sure.

TRASSA: Are the pits so lonely then, amid so much flesh?

JANATH: We can communicate a little, with pheromones. But it's... well, let's call it terse. Complex ideas are hard in a language of smells. They get... blurry. And it's very slow.

TRASSA: It was not realized.

JANATH: How do you not know all this? Y'know, Father-of-the-Song and all that?

TRASSA: The song was shattered. Silence fell upon the children of the song... and blindness on its fathers. Much can be seen by the Princes of the Stars... except you.

(Pause.)

JANATH: Tell me about your home. Where do you go when you aren't riding Isaac or Zarem or the ship?

TRASSA: Is not the Mindhome known among the Zero?

JANATH: We know its name: Mindhome, Arcadia, Ozari-Thul... What's in it... We've forgotten so much, Triassa. And what we didn't forget, we lied about.

TRASSA: It is agreed. But better than hearing of the Mindhome would be to be shown it.

JANATH: I'd like that, Your Reverence.

(Crossfade)

SCENE 6B-02LOCATION: THE MINDHOME

(There is quiet tinkling in the background.)

TRASSA: *The Mindhome cannot be described to those whose unevolve'd brains in symbols trudge. We speak ideas in themselves, while you enfold them pallidly in shadows you you call "words."*

JANATH: *What kind of communication could go beyond words?*

TRASSA: *A kind of thought like song. It will be rendered for you as my genius may allow.*

JANATH: *I can hear it. And the... the stars are gone. So's the ship!*

TRASSA: *You are escorted through a memory of bitter trial and great loss, like all the memories that last through half of half a million years. Attend! (sigh) The specters of that shining day appear and speak their dooms.*

(Virren gallops up to them, on four legs.)

VIRREN: *Is this Triassa, who again to mortal planes did fall? We welcome you to stay this time; the prayers of Servants are better heard and sung when distance adds to love.*

TRASSA: This argument, again? A quarter million
 years have not deterred Virren, my ancient
 friend, of my resolve? Then I shall ask,
 once more, brother, our children not to chide.
 Each fleshly life I touch contains more beauty
 in one smile than every theorem ever
 learned in this Elysium. Let it
 stand through eternity as our cathedral
 last, but should we be interred here by
 our choice, an empty sepulcher t'would be.
 It matters not. Great haste is seen here: why?

VIRREN: A world, a race, about to die, is found!
 Kinjalis Two is faced by fleets of those
 who slew the Song. Their skies by Zero fleets
 are blacked while primitive Kinjali lie
 in ignorance. Wise counsel now is craved.

TRASSA: Kinjalis? No! A kindly people, noble,
 honest, free, their sculpture nonpareil!
 Well have I loved my friends there, and the laughter
 of their youth! My counsels may be overrate,
 but desperation shall amend what my
 discernment lacks. With utmost dispatch, go!

(The Scions reach out with their power and release it.)

JANATH: *The stars are back. Where are we now?*

TRASSA: *The stars were never gone. Look down, my child.*

JANATH: (sharp intake of breath) *That's a planet! We're in orbit!? How are we breathing? Is that... is that Kinjalis? Is it always this beautiful to the Embodied?*

TRASSA: *Be still. Attend. This must be witnessed now.*

JANATH: *I already know what happens, Reverence. I was there. Kinjalis Two was annexed into the Zero Commonwealth in the twenty-third year of the Reclamation, under King Evoldo. It took nine months. You said you'd show me Arcadia.*

TRASSA: *That promise has been kept. The Mindhome to all places may connect. Now, Janath, watch.*

(Triassa and Virren approach Pyrrha.)

PYRRHA: The hour is late at which Triassa's seen!

VIRREN: Too late, Pyrrha? This world: does it survive?

PYRRHA: This world is splayed wide open to its foe.
It must be saved by Scions now, Virren,
or sink to grief, and all their children dead.

(As Triassa speaks, we slowly fade into the center of a busy street market somewhere on Kinjalis II. It's raining gently. Primitive cars with old honking horns, trundle by in the muddy road as people barter in an alien language.)

TRASSA: How can these innocents be helped against

so great a foe? This world is fragile, weak,
 a land of anxious nation-states who've barely learnt of electricity and flight.
 The Zero bring a thousand ships, and they've
 a thousand times a thousand times a thousand bugs.
 Kinjalis's great city of Kijal
 behold we now: Can any hope remain?

(The city fades and we hear starship engines.)

PYRRHA: Destroy them all. A thousand Zero gnats
 could be erased by three of us in ten
 minutes. T'would be a crucible of fire.

(We hear a pitched space battle around us.)

TRASSA: And then? Three Scions represent one-third
 our total number--all exposed. In months,
 by Zero we would be run down, and then?
 Our great might turned against the galaxy?
 And then? Who would survive? Kinjalis? No.
 Kinjalis dies. To save them vi'lently
 today would still foreclose their future.

(The noise of battle grows, the bluegill weapons multiplying and the sound of Scion blobships
 rupturing.)

PYRRHA: Was it not taught by Lord Triassa that
 to sacrifice, though hope is lost, is best,
 if lives rest on the scales? To let them die

must surely be a crime! What else could be
the lesson of the *Anbar*?

(The sounds of battle fade away.)

TRASSA: Such zeal shows one's goodness, Pyrrha, and
your passion for these innocents... unquenched
forever will, I hope, remain. And yet
the only lives we may lay down are those
we call our own. To forfeit more would not
be love, but chilly, blood-soaked vanity.
But Pyrrha: (pause)
Your day will come, and soon.

VIRREN: Unless that day arrives within nine months,
Triassa, for Kinjalis 'tis no help.
A new proposal, then, is giv'n to aid
this hard-pressed world.

TRASSA: Speak!

VIRREN: Kinjali faith is strong
and ancient, seeing omens in many parts
of nature.

TRASSA: Like?

VIRREN: Volcanoes. It is taught that when a certain
mount explodes -- Sirella is its name --

then that portends the end of all their world.

(They're in a volcano now.)

PYRRHA: And so? Mere superstition, it would seem;
their world will end today, and yet, behold:
Sirella stands as silent as the sky.

VIRREN: It need not stay that way. Sirella might
be detonated by a whisper of
our pow'r. T'would be a portent to their world:
a warning, calling them to arms.

(As Virren speaks, we hear the volcano, Mt. Sirella, erupt. Then all fades back to the orbital void.)

TRIASSA: Is this
proposed in faith, Virren? That war might save
Kinjalís from the Zero's cru'el'ty?

VIRREN: Why not? Their cause is just! Their soldiers, brave!

TRIASSA: Their arsenals are full of toys! Unless
it's thought that cutlasses and grapeshot might
be used to stop an orbital bombardment!
(pause)
It's seen this plan is clever, yet it must
be set aside. To wake Sirella's rage
today would only give Kinjalees terror;

tomorrow still would bring the slaughterhouse.

PYRRHA: What else might one propose, my Lord Brother Triass?
It cannot be that one would strike so bold
against one's brethren's plans without one's own
suggestion.

TRASSA: It was hoped the brethren would
have thought of something I did not. Alas!
You offer no salvation for Kinjalis.
But you cannot be condemned by me;
I offer no salvation, either, friends.
(pause)
Yet by Virren's design I am inspired.
This is indeed a world famous for its
religion. We might just place our omen
elsewhere.

PYRRHA: For what cause, if not to save their lives?

TRASSA: The waterfall embodies hope in their
religion, does it not? The cascade of
the Mighty Falls at Usufúct begins
Three Hundred Holy Days of Feast: with gifts
And joy they sculpt a city built of flame.
And when the sacred choir of ten thous
and lifts its voice on Fallsday Eve, one finds
one's self beneath a sky that screams with song.

(We hear a vast waterfall and (faintly) the Choir of Ten Thousand.)

VIRREN: The River Usufruct won't rise 'til spring,
which still is ten long months away.

(The waterfall fades, as does the choir.)

TRASSA: A whisper of our power, Virren. Just a whisper.
Nobody will ever know we're there.

PYRRHA: And they'll still die. Their world absorbed into
the Zero Realm. Their sculptors twisted in
to soldiers. Friends of yours, their children too,
debased into crude tools the bugs will use
to hunt us down, to slay this galaxy.

TRASSA: The choice is not between their life and death.
The choice is how Kinjalis dies. Would one
not wish to meet the end, unwarned, in con-
templation, with one's family, in time
of joy? Is any purpose served by our
refusing them this final holiday?

(Pause.)

PYRRHA: It's wrong, Triass; a choice we've made a hun-
dred times and yet as wrong today as when
it first was made.

Triassa has made that choice each time.

TRASSA: There is no need to hide who made that choice. The first time and a score of scores since then. What puzzles one is why one goes along with it. The choice is ours, together, always.

VIRREN: It's not a choice that all can make, brother; for not all are responsible for what has happened here today.

(Pause)

TRASSA: So be it, then. The choice is made again. The waters will be made to rise, and so to usher in a final feast to send Kinjalís on their way to Death's domain...
...where even Scion power has no force.

(As the Scions begin to concentrate their power, we hear the River Usufúct, first a dry riverbed, begin to trickle, then flow, then flood, then roar.)

VIRREN: And so the waters must be made to rise.

PYRRHA: (through gritted teeth) And so the River Usufúct does rise.

(After the river rises, and the waterfall begins, we fade back to the default Mindhome black, vaguely tinkling void.)

JANATH: *(sigh) Triassa, I'm so... [sorry]*

TRASSA: *Hmmm?*

JANATH: *I know it was a terrible choice, but I'm sure they'd be grateful. I know I am. You gave the Kinjali a happy ending. What a rare gift.*

PYRRHA: Each member of their race, the eldest to the youngest, Janath, died in agony and terror.

JANATH: Are you... how [can you be talking to me?]

PYRRHA: The corpse you've stole was once a girl named Faeriel, who spent her last night weeping, locked in her own mind until she faded out.
[Did you so soon forget her wretched tears?]

JANATH: *Your Reverence, how can she see me?! This is a memory! It happened almost a year ago! I'm on one of those ships in orbit, not here!*

TRASSA: *'tis seen that you're afraid. But fear is not what one should suffer when confronted with one's sin.*

PYRRHA: Confront her then, Triassa, more!
There cannot be a true return to harmony until one's dissonance has been confessed in full.

TRASSA: *There is no expiation in a forced confession, Pyrrha, and besides: 'tis not within my power to confront her with her life -- which is not known, recall, by me; exempted from our blindness I am not. Until wills Janath to attest her days with the Embodied...
Are you so prepared?*

JANATH: *To... what? You want me to tell my life story? To... ...her?*

TRASSA: *Not all your life. Do you know how it was that Faeriel, your host, was caught and turned into a dying slave under your yoke?*

JANATH: *I didn't kill her, Reverence! Faeriel was a good person, she deserved to live -- but so did I, Triassa, and her body was empty! She was already only stories!*

PYRRHA: *You see? Admitting even to herself the crime's too much for her to bear!*

TRASSA: *Your place you do forget, Pyrrha! She's right: it is not fit for memory to wage campaign against the living with such force. But Janath, for your sake, my greatest gift I shall bestow. Forgive me this.*

JANATH: *A gift?*

TRIASSA: *My blessing:
 In darkness now, whene'er you sleep, to see
 The face of Fairiel for all the night.
 The vision first from your own memory
 Will come, afollowed by what Scion sight
 Could sense of cities sown from sculpted fern
 And dancing flame, consumed in bluegill hate.
 From voices that you damned to howl you'll learn:
 Your dreams will bare fair Fairiel's true fate.*

JANATH: *Her fate was peaceful! She was in bed, surrounded by her family!*

TRIASSA: *If this belief be true, dear child, then all
 your life a happy dream will follow you.
 The Mindhome has been heard and seen: recall
 That night had closed before this blessing flew.
 So now to sleep, to disobedient dream,
 Of skies that ne'er again [with] song shall scream.*

(We hear Janath yawn and fall asleep. She inhales and shakily exhales. Then she emits a quiet scream.)

END