

Starship: Excelsior

"No One Gets Out Alive"

(Season 2, Episode "B": The 2009 Boxing Day Special)

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SCENE S2EB-01

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR HOLODECK

(A referee's whistle is blown.)

KIBYR: (bored) Last round; the score is tied. Possession to Commander Dovan.

DOVAN: Let's move it along, ref! I wanna put the Commander out of her misery.

YUBARI: We'll see about that, sir. Inbound. Now.

DOVAN: Ref! You heard the lady!

KIBYR: Right, right.

(The Kibyr whistles and a game of Parrises Squares re-commences; There is a great amount of running, heavy breathing, and the sound of balls hitting walls and being hit by electrified mallets.)

LORHROK: Dovan's gonna score! Somebody--

YUBARI: I have him!

(A loud, metallic whack knocks the ball against the wall. Frantic running up the platform by Dovan, Yubari close behind him.)

ROL: Careful, sir!

DOVAN: I see her! Rol, on your left! I'll spike it!

YUBARI: Not a chance!

(The ball is deflected. A buzzer sounds, but play continues as Rol makes a successful offensive rebound.)

YUBARI: Ha! One down, one to go!

DOVAN: On your six, Rol!

ROL: I see — (A clanging sound as Rol tumbles head-over-heels to the ground, ion mallet rolling ahead of his sprawling body.) Ooof!

(Dovan runs up to Rol.)

DOVAN: Rol, you alright?

YUBARI: (curt) He's fine!

(Rol gets up on his own.)

ROL: I can take a little pain, sir.

(Dovan starts running.)

DOVAN: Then get up and flank her, Lieutenant!

YUBARI: (Angry) Hey, ref! What'd'you gotta do for a foul around here? Rol's out-of-bounds!

KIBYR: No foul! Clean action! The disc remains in play!

(Kibyr blows his whistle. Just as he does this, Dovan is running up the ramp again after the disc. Dovan's ion mallet magnetically sucks the disc in.)

DOVAN: Got it!

(He swings the mallet, releasing the disc, which hurtles into the goal. A victory alarm goes off.)

DOVAN: (excited!) Goal, score, and match poi-- whoa!

ROL: Commander! I'm right behind-- whaaa!

(Dovan falls like a felled tree, and lands right on top of Rol. Yubari, Lorhrok, and the Ref run to the

bottom of the ramp to see who's hurt.)

DOVAN: (mumbling) Jehoshaphat.

LORHROK: Are you two alright?

DOVAN: I... lost my footing on the ramp. Rol broke my fall.

ROL: (in pain) I live... to serve... sir...

DOVAN: If it helps, Lieutenant, we did win.

YUBARI: (very displeased) Yes. You did. That should have been a foul.

ROL: Hooray for victory. Now... could someone escort me to sickbay?

SCENE S2EB-02

LOCATION: USS EXCELSIOR BRIDGE

(A turbolift opens; Dovan exits and makes his way down to his seat on the Sovereign-class bridge. Cortez is standing, looking at the main viewer.)

CORTEZ: Commander Dovan! I'm glad you made it to the Bridge in one piece. It seems I missed quite a spirited match.

DOVAN: Yubari's hopping mad at the ref and everybody else, Rol's in sickbay with two broken ribs, and I just about split my head open. If that was a spirited round of Parrises Squares, I'd hate to see what it takes to qualify as violent. Incidentally, care to join us for the rematch?

CORTEZ: (with a laugh) Space is dangerous enough.

DOVAN: That's the easy way out. What's that big rock on the main viewer?

CORTEZ: We think it's a class-S planetoid.

DOVAN: We think?

CORTEZ: Our sensors can't seem to get a clear lock beneath the surface. Also... it's rogue.

DOVAN: I thought you said it was Class-S.

CORTEZ: I did.

DOVAN: Class-S planets can't go rogue. They break apart at the heliopause.

CORTEZ: Class-S planets also don't block sensors. Nonetheless...

(Pause.)

DOVAN: Huh. That's weird. When's the away team beaming down?

CORTEZ: As soon as you assemble one, Commander. Not quite as exciting as Parrises Squares, but--

DOVAN: (interrupting) That's a chance I'm willing to take, Captain.

CORTEZ: Helm, plot a course for that planetoid. Best speed.

THEME SONG

DOVAN: Space. The final frontier. These are the voyages of the-- Oh, who am I kidding? This is the Starship Excelsior. We use an ancient Gateway to explore the farthest reaches of the galaxy. Our assignment is to find out what we can and come back alive. The rest is rhetoric.

SCENE S2EB-03

LOCATION: TUNNEL

(The away team beams in. There is a slight hum from the life-support belts and a more alien hum from the other equipment in the room.)

ROL: Well, this is a surprise.

DOVAN: Agreed. Lieutenant, are you detecting an atmosphere in here?

(Yubari opens her tricorder and begins to scan.)

YUBARI: Yes, sir.

DOVAN: Can we breathe it?

YUBARI: (surprised) Yes, sir. It's as dry as a desert and too warm by half... but the oxygen/nitrogen balance is perfect. We'll be fine.

DOVAN: Good enough. Deactivate life support belts.

(They disable their belts. At the same time, Dovan taps his combadge.)

DOVAN: Dovan to *Excelsior*: can you hear me?

CORTEZ: (Garbled to incomprehensibility) *Commander? Is that you?*

YUBARI: Rol, help me set up those signal enhancers.

ROL: Yes'm.

(The enhancers are placed with whirrs, clicks, and then a steady hum.)

DOVAN: How's that, Captain?

CORTEZ: *Much better. Report, Commander.*

DOVAN: That natural subterranean tunnel we picked as our beamdown site? Not natural. It's big, artificial, and poorly lit. And all the lighting's red.

CORTEZ: Red's not usually a good sign.

DOVAN: Unless you happen to like emergencies.

CORTEZ: Is there breathable atmosphere?

DOVAN: Yes, Captain.

CORTEZ: Then we can rule out life support failure as the cause.

DOVAN: Unless they were argon/helium breathers who suffocated in an oxygen atmosphere.

CORTEZ: Are you trying to be difficult, Commander?

DOVAN: Usually.

CORTEZ: If we rule out life support failure, it means that whatever caused the emergency could still be present. Proceed with caution. We'll monitor you from here.

DOVAN: Yes, Captain. (to the others) Yubari? Rol? Let's move out.

(They start walking down the tunnel.)

ROL: So, Lieutenant. When's our rematch?

YUBARI: Right after you tell me how many credits you paid for the game this morning.

ROL: Paid?

YUBARI: To buy the ref.

(Dovan stops in his tracks.)

DOVAN: Hold up and cut the chatter.

YUBARI: (annoyed) Wha--? (surprised) Oh.

CORTEZ: *Dovan? You found something?*

DOVAN: The tunnel just opened up into a large cavern.

CORTEZ: *How large?*

DOVAN: You ever been to the Temple of Agrajag in the Iconian Ruins on Union?

CORTEZ: *No.*

DOVAN: Oh. Well... it's very big. Pretty much like this cavern.

CORTEZ: *What else?*

DOVAN: I'm seeing dozens of pillars around the chamber, spaced at regular intervals. They're almost opaque, but I can make out humanoid shapes in the nearest one.

CORTEZ: *Suspended animation?*

(Yubari runs more tricorder scans, followed by several rapid beeps.)

YUBARI: Unknown. Tricorders still aren't getting through whatever they used to build this place.

CORTEZ: *One moment.*

SCENE S2EB - 04

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR ENGINEERING

(Lorhrok is doing a diagnostic of the warp core.)

LORHROK: Ensign Nebison? When you get the chance, would you mind running--

(The intercom beeps.)

CORTEZ: *Cortez to Engineering.*

LORHROK: Never mind, Ensign. Lorhrok here, Captain.

CORTEZ: *There's a small situation on the planetoid. We need to increase our sensor resolution – by a significant margin – in order to break through some interference.*

(Lorhrok steps to another console and starts working.)

LORHROK: Sensors are running pretty close to the maximum already, Captain. I can squeeze out a few billion more pixels for you, but it'll mean a physical modification on the main deflector.

CORTEZ: *Sounds like you'll have to do a cakewalk. Get on it immediately.*

LORHROK: Sorry, captain. Cakewalk?

CORTEZ: *Did I say that? I'm sorry; I meant spacewalk. My drill sergeant at the Academy said I moved through zero-gee with such ease that I made a spacewalk look like a cakewalk.*

LORHROK: Really? My Academy spacewalks usually ended up looking like lunch. At least, that was the only thing I could see on the inside of my helmet.

(Cortez laughs.)

LORHROK: I'll let you know when we're finished. Give us an hour. Lorhrok out. (to the engineers in the bay) Adow, Harkless, Ermez, and... Ro'ta. Suit up. We're going for a walk.

SCENE S2EB-05

LOCATION: CAVE.

(The away team is busily scanning with tricorders.)

ROL: What do you make of it?

DOVAN: For all the world, it looks like a sickbay to me. And no matter how much I try to look at it otherwise, I keep seeing the ward level on Starbase Nine-One-One.

ROL: Most hospitals don't have this many biobeds on one level. Can you imagine the din in here if they were all filled with patients? There have to be hundreds of them.

DOVAN: Maybe it was a hospital for the mute. Or maybe not. Have you ever seen this many sharp edges in a hospital bay?

ROL: Only in Klingon hospitals.

DOVAN: Klingons aren't my ideal practitioners of medicine.

YUBARI: (calling out excitedly) Commander! Over here!

(Dovan makes his way over to her, closing his own tricorder.)

DOVAN: What have you got?

YUBARI: I found a data terminal over here. There's still a little power running to it.

DOVAN: What do you make of it?

YUBARI: If I had to guess? I'd say... origin is the Delta Quadrant.

DOVAN: (sharp, sarcastic) Oh, very astute, Lieutenant. A piece of Delta Quadrant technology here in the middle of the Delta Quadrant. However, I feel a hunch coming on. Delta Quadrant species, specimens in stasis, large operating room... Are you thinking what I'm thinking, Lieutenant?

YUBARI: I'm thinking that the next time we play Parrises Squares I'm checking to see if you're using a regulation mallet.

DOVAN: Very funny, Lieutenant. By the way, it was fifty credits and an ice-cold bottle of kanar.

YUBARI: (confused) What?

DOVAN: You asked how much the referee cost. But I digress. Dovan to Cortez.

CORTEZ: *Cortez here.*

DOVAN: I think these are the ruins of a Vidiian base.

CORTEZ: *Vidiian? This is pretty far outside their core territory, Commander. No one's even seen them since Voyager came home. Can you confirm?*

DOVAN: We're going to try tying into a data terminal we found. Stand by. (to Yubari) Okay, Lieutenant. Fire it up.

(Device boots up. Panel activates with noises and scans of the surroundings. An image, what appears to be a Vidiian hologram, materializes right in front of the terminal.)

GAVI: Azeron korannan-- --eel fenrath litariel-- (nine quick, irregular clicks of the tongue) -- and ready for instruction. Translation protocol established and locked. Repeating. Medical program Gavi online. Damage detected: operational efficiency estimated at forty-seven percent. All core system functions are stable and ready for instruction.

DOVAN: Captain, a medical hologram just appeared in front of us.

GAVI: Negative. Holograms are obsolete. I am Gavi. I am a product of particle synthesis, a new technique for dynamic A.I. projection pioneered by Dr. Inara Lesotha. As a prototype, I represent a thirty-percent increase in tactile and spatial sensitivity over the most advanced holographics available.

CORTEZ: *Tactile sensitivity? Sounds like a surgical hologram.*

DOVAN: Looks like flesh and blood. Gavi, can you please hold out your hand? (pause) Feels like flesh and blood, too. Remarkable. Gavi... not to be blunt, but where is everyone?

(Suddenly, a white light appears. It sweeps across the away team. It is quick but fairly loud. At the end of the sweep, there is a single loud beep.)

DOVAN: What the--?

ROL: What was that?

DOVAN: Captain, we were just swept by some kind of—

CORTEZ: A bright white light. It happened here, too. I'm upgrading to Yellow Alert.

GAVI: Combat measures will not be necessary. Your officers have been... scanned. That is all.

DOVAN: Scanned by who? You?

GAVI: It is not within my ability to answer that question.

ROL: Let me guess: "Database corruption is extensive."

DOVAN: (Confused) Lieutenant?

ROL: Never mind, sir.

GAVI: Please wait for the completion of current diagnostic-and-correction program before requesting additional restricted information.

DOVAN: Great.

SCENE S2EB – 06

LOCAITON: EXCELSIOR DEFLECTOR DISH

(Lorhrok and his team are modifying the deflector. Welding is heard as well as keystrokes on a computer panel. A person in an EVA suit is approaching from afar.)

LORHROK: Harkless! The time?

HARKLESS: Uh... oh-nine-twenty-two, sir.

LORHROK: That means we have barely forty minutes left to finish up this job. Let's push a little harder, people. Harkless, continue to monitor the available bandwidth between the deflector and the computer core. Adow, make sure the EPS conduits don't blow up in my face while I'm routing plasma from the deflector grid. Wait. On second thought, Adow, I think you want me dead, so let's put you on anti-proton duty with Harkless. Ro'ta, you monitor the EPS bleedoff. And... somebody hand me a hyperspanner.

(The approaching person arrives.)

CORTEZ: You sure a megaspanner won't do the trick, Lieutenant?

LORHROK: Captain! Fancy meeting you out here! Uh... did you lose something?

CORTEZ: Just my self-control. I couldn't resist the chance at a spacewalk. Plus, if I start bragging about cakewalks without proving myself out here, I won't have the credibility to last eighteen months on this ship.

(Pause.)

LORHROK: Captain, while it's very nice to see you out here, the modifications we're making to the deflector are delicate and, quite frankly, dangerous. We're already working under a time constraint; I don't want to have to worry about your safety on top of that.

CORTEZ: Hm. I was hoping you could use some help. (reluctant) But, the one thing you shouldn't have to worry about is my safety. I'll head in and de-suit. But if those modifications aren't ready in

the thirty-six minutes, twelve seconds you promised me...

LORHROK: Understood, Captain!

CORTEZ: Now, are you sure you want a hyperspanner?

LORHROK: Megaspanner will do just fine.

(A chirrup inside Cortez's helmet.)

DOVAN: (a bit startled) *Dovan to Excelsior!*

CORTEZ: Cortez here. What's happened, Commander?

LOCATION: CAVE

(There is a screeching sound in the background.)

DOVAN: Captain, the pillars just opened up!

CORTEZ: *The stasis pods?*

DOVAN: They're not stasis pods, Captain.

CORTEZ: *Then what are they?*

DOVAN: Bodies, Captain! It's dead bodies all the way down!

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR DEFLECTOR DISH

LORHROK: (quietly) Great prophet...

CORTEZ: Calm down, Dovan! What do you mean... bodies?

DOVAN: *Sorry, Captain. Forty or fifty bodies in a pillar. Close to a thousand, total. All different*

species. All different ages, genders. And they're all in different stages of dissection. Chest cavities open, exposed musculature tearing... some are... completely shredded. Dismembered. And the look on their faces says they were awake for this.

CORTEZ: Stand by, Commander. I'll be right down. Cortez out. (Pause.) Lieutenant Lorhrok, I'll have to take my leave of you. Contact me when your modifications are complete.

LORHROK: Aye, Captain.

(Cortez walks away.)

ERMEZ: What are we going to do, sir?

LORHROK: First thing we're going to do is take this megaspanner and hurl it into the depths of space. Next thing we're going to do is someone's going to get my a hyperspanner. We're going to make our deadline; the dead bodies are somebody else's problem.

SCENE S2EB – 07

LOCAITON: CAVE

(Transporter beam.)

DOVAN: Captain.

CORTEZ: Commander.

DOVAN: There. I've never seen such sadism. The Jem'Hadar were butchers, but they just wanted you dead; they didn't care one way or another if you felt the pain.

CORTEZ: For a race as medically advanced as the Vidiians, I have to say I agree. This is barbaric. The Vidiians stole organs, kidnapped healthy people, conducted wildly unethical experiments... but this looks like torture for torture's sake. I thought this was beyond them.

DOVAN: They were all dying of the same disease. What was that line of Trassiss the Urbane? "The two great insanities are love and death"?

ROL: Excuse me, sirs. I, uh...

CORTEZ: Speak up, Lieutenant.

ROL: My chest hurts... quite a bit. I'm not sure how, but I think I must have accidentally rebroken the ribs Doctor Sharp fixed this morning. With your permission, I'd like to return to the ship.

DOVAN: I can escort him up, Captain.

CORTEZ: Perfect. I need someone on the ship in any case; I've decided to stay down here to investigate this... Gavi. Make it so.

SCENE S2EB – 08

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR SICKBAY

SHARP: Now, Ensign Dess. You're going to have to take this ADR supplement twice a day until your forepaw is fully healed. Otherwise – let me make this very clear – your immune system will attack the stitches and your paw will go completely bald. I know how much that matters to Caitians. And, of course, no more tennis while the treatment lasts. You're the second sports-related injury I've seen today. The first one was--

(The door opens. Rol walks in.)

ROL: Doctor Sharp?

SHARP: Well, speak of the devil. We were just talking about you, Rol. What brings you back here? Did Yubari beat you in the rematch?

ROL: Not this side of Antares' Bend! But... I'm having some pains in my chest.

SHARP: And you're a pain in my rump. Hop up on the biobed.

(The biobed activates, running its usual scan. At the same time, Sharp opens her medical tricorder and starts a sweep.)

SHARP: You're running a fever. How bad are the aches?

ROL: Oh, they were a lot worse when I beamed up. Now, they're not so ba — AIIIGH!

(He collapses, falling off the bed to the ground, unconscious.)

SHARP: Rol! Are you okay? Can you get up? I need some help in here! Rol, can you hear me?

SCENE S2EB – 09

LOCATION: CAVE

(Tricorder hums away as Gavi continues projecting.)

CORTEZ: Gavi, my name is Captain Rachel Cortez. I'm from the United Federation Starship Excelsior. What can you tell me about this facility? Is it Vidiian?

GAVI: Unable to answer query. Please hold for additional 1% program advancement.

YUBARI: I think what she meant to say was, "Hold on a sec."

CORTEZ: I'd rather not. This place gives my human half the willies.

SHARP: *Sharp to Cortez.*

(Cortez taps her combadge.)

CORTEZ: Cortez here. Go ahead, Doctor.

SHARP: *We have a serious problem, Captain.*

(A quiet – yet ugly – alert sounds in the background.)

GAVI: Program progress at fifty percent. I am now able to answer a limited number of your questions.

SHARP: *What was that?*

CORTEZ: It's not important. Your report, Doctor?

SHARP: *Rol has fallen ill. My scans are reporting something I can't believe.*

CORTEZ: Out with it, Doctor!

SHARP: *Lieutenant Rol has contracted the Vidiian Phage.*

CORTEZ: What?

SHARP: *I've confirmed the diagnosis three times, Captain. Rol is infected with the same disease that devastated the entire Vidiian race.*

CORTEZ: Impossible! Only Vidiians can contract the Phage!

GAVI: I am afraid your information is no longer the case, Captain. I have a message for you from the last survivors of the Vidiian people: (ominious) No One Gets Out Alive.

SCENE S2EB – 10

LOCATION: SPACE

(Excelsior passes by slowly.)

CORTEZ: Captain's Log, Supplemental: The Vidiian surgical program Gavi has informed us – belatedly – that this entire planetoid is a Vidiian booby trap. I now have an officer in sickbay dying from a disease for which we have no cure. Officers Rol and Dovan have both been confined to sickbay until we can determine the strength, infectiousness, and vector of the contagion. Meanwhile, we hope to learn as much as we can from the Vidiian computer system.

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR DEFLECTOR DISH

LORHROK: Lorhrok to Sickbay... I have another suggestion – we could probably increase the sensitivity in the biofilter by taking the targeting sensors off-line and placing them in a redundancy buffer that would allow for multiple signal analyses without signal degradation.

SHARP: *You know that that kind of modification would be well beyond my technical ability, even if you hadn't made up half those words just so you could convince me to let you back on the ship.*

LORHROK: I can keep my EVA suit on and--

SHARP: *Sorry, Alec. Those are my orders. You and your Engineering team stays outside, and that's the safest place for you to be right now. What's the matter? Not enjoying your cakewalk?*

LORHROK: I didn't say that; the captain did! Who told you about that? Hello? Doctor? Damn.

HARKLESS: Sir, do you want your megaspanner back?

LORHROK: Shut up, Harkless.

SCENE S2EB – 11

LOCATION: CAVE

GAVI: I am now able to tell you everything you wish to know about this facility, Captain. This base was constructed by the last members of the Vidiian race.

CORTEZ: What do you mean, last? We assumed this base was a derelict – because the Phage was cured almost ten years ago, thanks to the work of Dr. Denara Pel and the Think Tank.

GAVI: (almost bitterly) The Think Tank “cure” proved to be no more than a stop-gap measure – something to push the Phage into remission long enough for the Think Tank to make off with its expensive payment and leave us to our fates. When the Phage returned, it was mutated, and a hundred times worse. This base was established as the last refuge of the Vidiian race, in a last-ditch attempt to return the disease to its earlier, less virulent form before the Vidiian gene pool became too small to reproduce itself. We were not successful.

CORTEZ: Did the mutation allow the Phage to infect non-Vidiians?

GAVI: Not initially.

CORTEZ: Not “initially?”

GAVI: Scientists working at this research base deliberately induced a second mutation, which allowed for cross-species infection.

CORTEZ: What?

YUBARI: You monsters!

GAVI: Some believed that bringing the Phage to every humanoid race would force the galaxy to focus all its collective energy and intelligence on a cure. Others simply wanted to inflict the pain they felt in their death throes upon all the billions of lifeforms who had never lifted a finger to help the dying Vidiian race.

CORTEZ: They tried to develop a means to infect people from a distance? A long-range Phage-

deployment weapon?

GAVI: Affirmative.

CORTEZ: Were they successful?

GAVI: Negative. Several avenues of research appeared promising. The only technique implemented in field testing was the infection of patients via subspace carrier wave, but its effectiveness proved limited to short-range.

(Pause.)

CORTEZ: How short is short-range?

SCENE S2EB – 12

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR DEFLECTOR DISH

LORHROK: Okay. I've thought about this long and hard, and here it goes. The best meal I ever had was my mom's spiceless hasperat.

ADOW: Alright, first: "spiceless hasperat"? What the hell does that even mean? It's not something any Bajoran'd recognize as hasperat. Second, your answer doesn't count. I've never eaten your mommy's cooking. We were talking about the best meals we've had at restaurants.

LORHROK: I've never really been one for eating out.

ADOW: Then what did you do on dates?

LORHROK: (embarrassed) I was never much of a dater, either.

ERMEZ: Best meal I ever had was the house gumbo at Sisko's.

LORHROK: Is that on Risa?

ERMEZ: Earth. New Orleans.

LORHROK: I'll have to remember that. Sisko's. I could always use a new recipe for the replicator.

ERMEZ: Sisko's doesn't give out recipes. Last time I talked to the manager, he called replicators "a menace to taste buds." (wryly) Bit like spiceless hasperat.

LORHROK: (sigh) Alright, I can see when I'm outnumbered. But this Sisko fellow sounds a bit too eccentric for me. What do you recommend, Ro'ta?

P'CHK'RO'TA: I believe it is generally acknowledged that the best restaurant in the universe is a place called... Milliways.

LORHROK: I don't know that one.

ADOW: Neither do I.

P'CHK'RO'TA: I suppose Milliways is a bit off the beaten path. Then, the best Earth food I ever consumed... I believe it'd be the lingonberry mousse at Beth House, across the San Francisco Bridge near the Vulcan memorial. They do give out their recipes.

LORHROK: Sounds more like my kind of place. How about you, Harkless? Got a best meal of your life?

ERMEZ: I think Harkless fell asleep.

(Lorhrok and Ermez clomp and clang their way over to Harkless in their magnetic boots.)

LORHROK:
Harkless? Not sleeping on the job, are you?

(Silence. Lorhrok taps the side of Harkless's helmet. It makes a faint, hollow, plasticky noise.)

LORHROK: Harkless?

(Silence.)

LORHROK: (concerned) Chief, hand me a tricorder.

ERMEZ: What's the mat--

LORHROK: (surprisingly sharp) Tricorder. Now.

(Ermez hands Lorhrok the tricorder. Lorhrok opens it up and the results are nearly instantaneous: flatline.)

LORHROK: (utter dread and horror) Oh, no.

SCENE S2EB – 12B

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR SICKBAY

(Chaos. Sickbay is overwhelmed and loud with moans, monitors, and shouting medical staff.)

SHARP: Terakine! I need more terakine!

NURSE #1: We're out, doctor! Replicators can't keep up with the demand!

SHARP: How long for the new batch?

NURSE #1: Ten minutes, doctor. But if new patients keep streaming in at this rate...

SHARP: I know! It'll be gone before we can cover half the sickbay. Damn! Alright, everyone! Switch us to terasol and hope that tides us over until the patient wave stops! Alcar! Grab a hypospray and make yourself useful!

DOVAN: Yes, ma'am!

SHARP: Melissa! My name is Melissa!

(The door opens.)

KIBYR: Doctor! Help me!

SHARP: Another one! Aidela! Get him on a biobed! Then put him on the queue for painkillers!

SHARP: Rol, you must have come into contact with something – someone – on your way to sickbay.

ROL: Doctor, I promise – there was no one. Commander Dovan was with me; he can vouch for that.

SHARP: There are twenty-three people in here who started showing symptoms of the Phage at exactly the same time, and we're getting another one every sixty seconds. If they didn't get it from you, where the hell did it come from?

ROL: Doctor, I promise! What did you find in the transporter biofilters? Any sign of the Phage?

(Pause.)

SHARP: Biofilters turned up blank, which means either you caught the Phage here on the Excelsior, which doesn't seem likely, or the Phage can't be detected before infection has fully set in. So we're back where we started. I'm sorry. We're still pursuing other avenues.

ROL: I know you are. But, right this moment, since there's no cure in the offing, I really need some more pain meds.

SHARP: I'm sorry, Alex. You've already had quite a bit, and there's not enough to go around.

ROL: Doctor, you don't understand. The pain is so intense I can't see your face clearly. There's got to be something —

(The doors open.)

RANDOM CREWPERSON #1: (moans) Help.

(The crewperson collapses, unconscious.)

SHARP: I've got him! Keep working! I'm sorry, Alex. Alcar! I need help getting this man on a biobed!

(The comm beeps.)

LORHROK: *Lorhrok to Sharp.*

SHARP: Lieutenant, I don't have time to listen to another one of your —

LORHROK: *Crewman Harkless is dead.*

(Pause.)

SHARP: (stunned) What?

LORHROK: *He's dead, Doctor. Dead of the Phage.*

SCENE S2EB – 13

LOCATION: SPACE

(Slow partial *Excelsior* flyby.)

CORTEZ: *Captain's Log: The entire crew has been infected. The death toll now stands at twenty-four. In the Vidiian database, we search desperately for an answer.*

LOCATION: CAVE

CORTEZ: Alright, Gavi, let's try this again. From the top. What is a complete list of known symptoms of the Phage?

GAVI: Stage one: severe to excruciating joint pain. Stage two: internal organs undergo necrotizing fasciitis.

YUBARI: What's that mean?

GAVI: The afflicted's internal organs dissolve and are either vomited or excreted involuntarily.

YUBARI: Now we're getting somewhere.

CORTEZ: How many stages are there?

GAVI: In theory, there are four.

CORTEZ: In theory?

GAVI: No victim has ever survived Stage Two. Most Vidiians euthanized themselves as soon as Stage One was fully developed. Those who chose to persist typically died of pain before Stage Three could begin.

CORTEZ: Was there any treatment?

GAVI: In addition to various pills, injections, and chemical inhibitors, necrotic tissue was typically

debrided from the body.

CORTEZ: Skin removal.

GAVI: Affirmative.

YUBARI: That explains why they always looked like mummies. Skin grafts, for their entire lives. But where did they get all that much uninfected tissue?

CORTEZ: From whomever they could steal it, I suspect.

GAVI: Affirmative.

YUBARI: How long do we have?

GAVI: Typical lifespan following the onset of traditional Phage ranged between four-point-two minutes and seventy-nine years. Following the onset of the mutated Phage resulting from the Think Thank's mutation, the maximum lifespan was three weeks, one hour. Following the onset of alien-affective Phage propagated via short-range subspace carrier waves: unknown.

CORTEZ: Unknown.

GAVI: The strain was never tested.

CORTEZ: Do you have access to simulator results, academic papers, anything of that sort?

GAVI: Some. Would you like me to upload our database to your vessel's computer banks?

CORTEZ: Your entire database?

GAVI: Affirmative.

CORTEZ: That would be... invaluable. Please do.

GAVI: I comply.

(Cortez taps her combadge.)

CORTEZ: Cortez to Sharp. We're transmitting data to you now. It should be the entire Vidiian medical database. If we're lucky, you'll find the key to the sickness in there.

SHARP: *We're receiving it. And, thank God, the first file in here is a recipe for a stronger painkiller. The terakine's becoming ineffective, and terasol isn't even touching it anymore. I'll start replication right away.*

CORTEZ: Very well. Is there anything else I need to be made aware of, Doctor?

SHARP: *Since quarantine is useless, I've let the engineers come in from the deflector dish. And I've converted main shuttlebay to a triage facility. Standard procedure, Captain.*

CORTEZ: Understood. If you need anything else, Doctor, take it to Commander Dovan. Yubari and I are going through this data as quickly as we can, and we can't afford any unnecessary interruptions.

SHARP: *Yes, Captain. I have to get back to my patients.*

CORTEZ: Of course. Cortez out. Lieutenant, are you okay?

YUBARI: I'm fine, sir.

CORTEZ: Your skin's pale and you're grinding your teeth so hard sparks are shooting out of your mouth.

YUBARI: I am fine.

CORTEZ: Head back up to the *Excelsior* and get some rest. That's an ord--

YUBARI: Captain! Please, captain. If I'm one of the unlucky ones — if I die —

CORTEZ: You're not going to die, Lieutenant.

YUBARI: If I die... it's important that I die on my feet, Captain. Working. Doing my job.

(Pause.)

CORTEZ: Sharp is whipping up some fresh painkillers. When she sends down the first batch, I want you to take both hyposprays. Are we clear?

YUBARI: Both – ? But, Captain, you're in just as much –

CORTEZ: Both, Lieutenant, or I'm sending you back to the ship right now.

(Pause.)

YUBARI: Thank you, Captain.

CORTEZ: The answers are here in the Vidiian computer system. Some other database, some other stockpile. Somewhere, there's a cure. Let's find it.

SCENE S2EB – 14

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR READY ROOM

DOVAN: Enter.

(The door opens and Sharp enters.)

DOVAN: Give me some good news, Doctor. Did the database help? Do we have a cure? (suddenly concerned) Melissa. What's the matter?

SHARP: The captain told me that, while she continues her research on the planet, you're now in effective command.

DOVAN: Great. Does that mean I can put my feet on her desk?

SHARP: The medical information the captain sent me. The research gleaned from the experiments they ran down there?

DOVAN: Yes?

SHARP: Those "research subjects" were tortured, weren't they?

DOVAN: Looks that way.

SHARP: I swear this oath by Apollo physician, by Asclepius, by health and by all the gods and goddesses: In whatsoever place that I enter I will enter to help the sick and heal the injured, and I will do no harm. I will give no deadly medicine to any person if asked, and in like manner I will not give to any person a pess--

DOVAN: Alright, now that I'm captain, new rule: no extended quotations in the ready room. So you memorized the Hippocratic Oath. What about it?

SHARP: I can't use medical information gained from torture. It violates every tenet of medical ethics.

DOVAN: That's ridiculous. It doesn't hurt them. They're already dead.

SHARP: This would desecrate their memories. And it would justify the actions of the Vidiians who did this to them.

DOVAN: No, it wouldn't. What the Vidiians did to them, they're now doing to us. If we don't live through this, the Vidiians win. Don't you think their victims would want us to live? Would want their deaths to mean something? I'm completely comfortable with this.

SHARP: You're comfortable with us living because they died? Tell me, Alcar, what's an uncomfortable number for you? Our lives for a hundred deaths? Five hundred? A thousand?

(A long pause.)

DOVAN: Alright, Melissa. I'll give you what you want.

SHARP: You mean... we're not going forward with the database research?

DOVAN: That's not what you want, Doctor. You want to live through this as much as I do.

SHARP: (angrily) Then what do I want, Alcar?

DOVAN: Absolution. (pause.) Doctor Melissa Sharp, by the power vested in my by Captain Cortez and Starfleet Command, you are hereby directly ordered to proceed with medical research derived from unethical, torturous, and fatal scientific experiments carried out on involuntary victims. Your ethical objections are hereby noted in my log, and overridden despite your strong protest. (pause.) This one's on me.

(Pause.)

(Sharp turns and exits briskly.)

(Pause.)

DOVAN: (sadly, ironically) You're welcome.

SCENE S2EB - 15

LOCATION: CAVE

(Yubari and Cortez are scanning through data at the terminal.)

YUBARI: How do you feel, Captain?

CORTEZ: Don't ask. The more I read the Vidiian medical logs, the less I think about the pain, but I'm getting eye strain. What about you?

YUBARI: I feel better, Captain. Maybe a quick break will do you good. I'll keep reading.

(Pause.)

CORTEZ: Alright. Thank you, Lieutenant.

(She straightens up and walks away from the terminal. Gavi follows her.)

CORTEZ: Gavi, I have a question.

GAVI: I am prepared to answer questions.

CORTEZ: Were the Vidiians religious? Did they pray to higher powers?

GAVI: Once, the Vidiians believed in many gods. By the time the Phage had finished its work, however, they believed in only one. It's name was Phage. Their purpose was to bring about the death of that god. When they believed they had triumphed, they celebrated. The god smote them for their arrogance.

(Pause.)

CORTEZ: When I was young, my mother was dying of a rare, exotic virus. Just when it seemed hopeless, she went into remission. Her immune system started working again. And, for a few days, we had hope. Then it came back, and it killed her. When she was on her deathbed, she told me that I shouldn't be sad, because I'd see her in my dreams. But when I thought about it, that made me even

more sad, because if I dreamt about her she wouldn't be there when my eyes opened in the morning. I regret thinking that, because I have, to this day, not had a single dream about my mother.

GAVI: May I share with you an old Vidiian saying?

CORTEZ: I can't think of any reason not to.

GAVI: It is said that the whole world is a dream, and death be the interpreter.

CORTEZ: Fascinating. What does it mean?

GAVI: I hope that you will soon be able to tell me.

CORTEZ: I hope that I won't. What about the Vidiians? Weren't you able to learn anything from their example?

GAVI: The deaths of those who lived here were not... I would prefer to draw my lessons from others.

CORTEZ: ...I understand. These people ended their lives trying to take the galaxy with them. Not the best interpretation of the dream.

GAVI: When the Vidiians here learned that they were the last surviving Vidiians – when the mutation arrived here at the research base – they surrendered. They stopped looking for the cure. Anarchy broke out. It took four days for the two thousand Vidiians who lived and worked here to whittle themselves down to twelve. It was those twelve who agreed to a cease-fire. Those twelve who began the project to spread the Phage to other races.

CORTEZ: And here we are.

GAVI: Indeed, Captain.

YUBARI: Captain, I've found something!

(Cortez walks back over to Yubari.)

CORTEZ: Let's hear it, Commander.

YUBARI: I was looking into the not-completed research – the theories the Vidiians were working on, but hadn't attempted experimentally yet.

CORTEZ: Everything not in the database we sent to the Excelsior, then.

YUBARI: Exactly. This theory looks promising. It involved thwarting the antigens produced by Klingon genetic code.

CORTEZ: How successful were they?

YUBARI: Like I said, they never began the experiments. All they knew was that, despite the mutations they'd made to the Phage, the Klingons remained immune. When the scientists here died, they were still working on getting around that immunity. They had narrowed the cause down to a collection of Klingon antigens, but never had the opportunity to modify the Phage genetic code to counter it.

CORTEZ: So Klingons are still immune. Ensign Enderby is part-Klingon, isn't he? Do you think we could harvest his antigens and replicate them for the rest of the crew?

YUBARI: That's really a question you'd have to ask Doctor Sharp. But let me see if the Vidiians wrote anything. (She scrolls down.) (dark, dead voice) Yes, we can harvest the antigens.

CORTEZ: (happy) Then let's get on –

YUBARI: The harvesting process is fatal.

CORTEZ: What do you mean?

YUBARI: If we harvest Mister Enderby's antigens, we get one healthy crew and one dead half-Klingon.

(Pause.)

CORTEZ: That isn't an option. Keep looking.

YUBARI: Captain, I know it would be unthinkable under normal circumstances, but shouldn't we at least consider--

CORTEZ: If it's unthinkable for a Starfleet officer, it's unthinkable for a Starfleet officer. We're not killing a member of my crew. This conversation is over.

(Pause.)

YUBARI: Yes, Captain. But... I need to take a break. The pain--

CORTEZ: I understand. Take a walk; I'll hold down the fort here.

YUBARI: Thank you, Captain.

(Yubari walks out of earshot; Cortez takes her post at the computer terminal and continues searching.)

SCENE S2EB – 16

LOCATION: BRIDGE

(This ship is still on yellow alert.)

ERMEZ: The important thing is, that we have each other's backs.

RANDOM CREWMEMBER #2: And if the security division tries to make a move —

ADOW: We're not going to let them make a move.

ERMEZ: What about Ro'ta?

ADOW: He doesn't wear Engineering gold. He's not one of us. I like him, too, but, when the chips come down —

(The ready room door opens.)

(Pause.)

DOVAN: Don't stop chatting on my account, subcrew.

(Pause.)

ERMEZ: Sir, are the rumours true?

DOVAN: What rumours?

ERMEZ: They say that Doctor Sharp's developed a cure.

ADOW: But that right now it's only being administered to senior officers.

RANDOM CREWMEMBER #2: Because there isn't enough to go around.

ERMEZ: I just want to make sure that, when you do start distributing it to the crew, it will be by a fair

and equal lottery.

RANDOM CREWMEMBER #2: Lottery? I thought we agreed it should go to families first!

ERMEZ: That's not — !

DOVAN: THERE IS no cure. Come on, people. You're Excelsies. You know better than to listen to rumours. Now stay calm, focused, and do your jobs. Believe it or not, we've gotten through worse than this, and the Dominion War didn't involve anybody drawing straws for life or death. And the Phage is nothing to the Borg. Now, if that speech wasn't inspirational enough for you, go to the holodeck and watch an old movie, but that's all you're going to get from me.

(Dovan takes his seat in the center and activates the shipwide intercom.)

DOVAN: All hands, this is First Officer Dovan. I know you're all in pain, and I know you're all unsure of what's going to happen to you, and your friends, and your families. We are doing everything we can to safeguard this crew, and — I vow to you — we will succeed. No stone will be left unturned in search of a cure. In the meantime, stay focused on your duties, eschew rumours, and remember: we are one crew. This ship can't run without a crew, and this crew can't run if it allows any division to be sewn within its ranks. Keep working. Dovan out.

(Pause.)

ADOW: No stone left unturned. A vow to find a cure. You shouldn't make promises you can't keep, Commander.

DOVAN: If I can't keep this one, Adow, it won't matter. I'll be as dead as the rest of you.

(The ship intercom buzzes.)

YUBARI: *Yubari to Dovan.*

DOVAN: Dovan here.

YUBARI: Sir, I need to talk to you about something.

DOVAN: Where's Captain Cortez?

YUBARI: She's... incapacitated. Which means you have to make the decisions now.

DOVAN: Which particular decision are you calling to talk to me about?

YUBARI: I think we'd better speak about this in private, sir. We found something.

DOVAN: Understood. Mister Warren, you have the conn.

(Dovan stands and exits to the turbolift.)

SCENE S2EB – 17

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR SICKBAY

(Sickbay is quieter than the last time we saw it. Rol is on his feet, rummaging through cabinets.)

ROL: (muttering to self) Come on, come on, come on. Gotta be somewhere. Gotta be somewhere...

(The sickbay doors open.)

LORHROK: Excuse me; I'm looking for Doctor-- Rol? Rol, what are you doing?

ROL: I was... I was...

(Lorhrok picks up a hypospray that is lying on the ground next to Rol. He taps a key on it.)

LORHROK: What did you put in this hypospray?

(He draws and opens his tricorder and scans the hypospray.)

ROL: It... I was... I took some, just a little... I took —

LORHROK: I'm detecting terakine, bicaridine, and morphenolog. Quite the drug cocktail, Rol. This could have killed you.

ROL: Lieutenant, the amount of pain I'm in is inconceivable. The Vidiian drugs aren't working.

LORHROK: And that gives you the right to steal from sickbay? That violates several medical —

ROL: The whole ship is dying and you think I care about medical protocol?!

LORHROK: Lieutenant, lower your voice.

ROL: Lieutenant, please give me the hypospray.

LORHROK: Get back on that biobed. We can get Doctor Sharp; she can use a delta-wave inducer to

get you to go to sleep.

ROL: You don't think we tried that already? The pain!

LORHROK: You think it's just you? I'm in so much pain right now I can't stand up straight, but we have to stay active. We have to keep our minds focused on staying alive.

ROL: Give it to me!

(Rol lunges. The two struggle. Soon it escalates to a fight, which Rol quickly wins with a few punches. Lorhrok, thrown to the ground, snatches the hypospray and smashes it against the ground.)

ROL: You broke the hypospray!

(Lorhrok taps his commbadge.)

LORHROK: Security to sickbay on the double!

(Rol walks over to another cabinet and unlocks it. He pulls out a phaser and charges it up.)

ROL: I'm... I'm so sorry... for everything. The pain...

LORHROK: I know, Rol. It's okay. Just put the phaser down and we'll forget everything.

ROL: Forgive me... the pain...

LORHROK: Rol, no! Computer, deactivate phaser weapons in Sick--

(Rol fires the phaser at his own chest at point blank range and is thrown back across the room and against the wall.)

LORHROK: ROL!

(The sickbay doors open.)

DOVAN: Doctor —

SHARP: Don't you "doctor" me! I'm going to give you an extended quotation of the entire Starfleet Code of Ethics if you don't-- Oh, my God.

(She races to Rol's side.)

DOVAN: What happened here?

LORHROK: (stunned) He... he needed drugs. I wouldn't let him have them. So he took out a phaser, and...

DOVAN: And he tried to kill himself.

LORHROK: He just needed to make the pain —

DOVAN: Lorhrok. Lorhrok! Look at me! This wasn't your fault.

LORHROK: Rol is... because of me, Rol's dead. I can't —

SHARP: He's not dead! I have a pulse!

(The doors open. A six-man security team walks through the door.)

PERELSON: Doctor Sharp? We were called to Sickbay —

SHARP: Security! You're very welcome. Help me get this man on a biobed!

PERELSON: (simultaneous) Yes, Sir. Right away!

BRECKEN: (simultaneous) Yes, Doctor!

(The security team helps Sharp lift Rol to the surgical table. Sharp begins scanning with a tricorder.)

SHARP: This is really bad. He's going to need full torsal reconstruction, artificial heart, vascular

regen--

DOVAN: Get someone else to do it, Doctor.

SHARP: What?

(Dovan taps his combadge.)

DOVAN: Nurse Rojan to sickbay! (to Sharp) Our conversation about Ensign Enderby isn't over. Those Klingon antigens could save the ship.

SHARP: It is over! We're not killing a member of this crew!

DOVAN: Enderby's already Stage Two! He'll be dead within the hour anyway!

SHARP: I swore an oath — !

PERELSON: Wait... are you saying there's a cure?

BRECKEN: And what's Brel Enderby have to do with it?

PERELSON: ...I think they're talking about killing him.

BRECKEN: (stunned) Great Bird.

DOVAN: (brusque) We'll talk about this in your office, Doctor.

Sharp and Dovan start to leave. Lohrok grabs Dovan's arm.)

LORHROK: Sir, may I have a word?

DOVAN: Sure. Come on.

(They walk around the corner.)

DOVAN: How are you feeling, Lieutenant? Are the pain meds--?

LORHROK: Permission... request permission to be relieved of duty, sir.

DOVAN: What? Why? Didn't you hear my inspiring speech? I need every able-bodied man man at his--

LORHROK: Sir, I'm in so much pain right now, I can't focus on my duties. I'm a liability to you and the captain.

DOVAN: Lorhrok, if this is about Rol —

LORHROK: It isn't.

DOVAN: Alec... You've given up, haven't you?

(Silence.)

DOVAN: (suddenly hard and angry) As long as you wear that uniform, Mister Lorhrok, you will stand your ground. You will comport yourself according to--

LORHROK: I'd like to write a letter to my parents, sir. (pause) I'd like your permission, sir, to be excused to compose a final message to my family.

(Silence.)

DOVAN: Go. Write your letter. That's an order.

LORHROK: Thank you, sir.

DOVAN: But, Lorhrok.

LORHROK: Sir?

DOVAN: I've ordered you to your quarters, Lieutenant, but you are still on duty. And you will

continue to be Chief Engineer Aleczhander Lorhrok of the U.S.S. Excelsior until the moment this ship dies. Do I make myself clear?

LORHROK: (grateful) Yes, you do.

DOVAN: Yes I do, sir. Dismissed.

LORHROK: Yes, sir.

(Lorhrok exits sickbay.)

(Pause. Dovan enters Sharp's office.)

SHARP: No.

DOVAN: I can find a doctor who's willing to.

SHARP: No, you won't.

(She draws a phaser. It charges.)

DOVAN: Drawing a phaser on me, doctor? I'm pretty sure that forfeits your moral high ground.

SHARP: It's set to stun.

DOVAN: You know if you knock me unconscious now, I'll never wake up. Not unless someone goes forward with Mr. Enderby's surgery.

SHARP: You mean his murder.

DOVAN: Do you think we could debate the semantics in a court-martial somewhere? You know, after we've cured the Phage?

SHARP: I won't allow —

(Shouts from Sickbay.)

DOVAN: What's tha--?

(Then, a few muffled punches. A single phaser blast rings out, striking a wall. The main sickbay door opens, and several people run into the corridor.)

DOVAN: Jehosephat.

(Dovan and Sharp run into Sickbay.)

DOVAN: Ensign Perelson! What happened!

PERELSON: (coming to his senses) It was Brecken, sir! He and two of his men decided to bring in Ensign Enderby themselves. They overpowered, us, sir.

DOVAN: I see. Computer, locate Ensign Enderby.

(The sickbay doors open. Cortez walks in, Yubari behind her.)

COMPUTER: *Ensign Brel Enderby is in his quarters.*

CORTEZ: Dovan! We heard phaser fire! What's happening here? And why is anyone on this ship interested in Ensign Enderby?

DOVAN: Captain! Lieutenant Yubari told me you were incapacitated!

CORTEZ: (surprised) She did. (pause) And I would guess that she told you you were in command, and told you something about Klingon antigens we could harvest from Ensign Enderby.

DOVAN: (stunned) She lied? You lied, Lieutenant?

YUBARI: (ashamed) I'm sorry.

CORTEZ: Did she mention to you that harvesting those antigens would be fatal to Mister Enderby?

DOVAN: As a matter of fact, she did.

CORTEZ: Then why is it even being discussed right now?

SHARP: It's gone beyond that, Captain. Dovan was trying to order me to do the procedure when three security officers decided to take matters into their own hands.

CORTEZ: You did what, Commander?

DOVAN: Captain, if I'd known you had already vetoed the idea--

CORTEZ: You shouldn't have needed to know that. I stayed on the planet too long. I didn't want to face what was happening up here. Wanted to stay in my research. In logic. In control. (short pause) Yubari, you're relieved. Dovan, Perelson, with me. Security! Send all available teams to Ensign Enderby's quarters! Apprehend Ensign Breckin and his accomplices!

PALVI: Lieutenant Palvi here, sir! Fights are breaking out all over the ship! We're reporting phaser fire on decks, three, four, and Engineering. We don't have anyone left to send to your location!

CORTEZ: (under her breath) Dammit. (louder) Acknowledged. Cortez out. Let's move it, people!

DOVAN: (simultaneous) Yes, Captain!

PERELSON: (simult.) Yes, ma'am!

(They exit Sickbay into the hallway.)

YUBARI: Rol, is that you?

(She injects his unconscious form with a hypospray.)

ROL: What? I'm alive?

YUBARI: Rol, what happened to you? Were you shot?

ROL: Yes.

YUBARI: Who the hell shot you?

ROL: An idiot.

YUBARI: You shot yourself?

ROL: It seemed like a good idea at the time.

YUBARI: There are no more biobeds left. Scoot over and I'll sit on yours.

ROL: I've got a better idea. Help me up and walk me to the holodeck. We'll play a one-on-one game of Parrises Squares.

YUBARI: You're joking.

ROL: How funny can a man be who just shot himself with a phaser?

YUBARI: The hole in your chest is barely cauterized. You're vitals aren't stable!

ROL: I'm dying of the Phage. My vitals aren't supposed to be stable. And, actually, it hurts less now that I've burned off half my upper body.

(Rol stands up. Yubari walks side-by-side with him to the door.)

YUBARI: You're not going to cheat again, are you?

(They exit.)

SCENE S2EB – 18

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CORRIDOR

(A small mob is gathered outside Enderby's quarters.)

BRECKIN: All we want is access to the cure!

CORTEZ: (emphatic) There is no cure! The price is too high!

ADOW: That's not for you to decide!

DOVAN: She's the captain!

ERMEZ: We deserve to live!

ADOW: She's unfit for duty!

CORTEZ: This isn't how the crew of the Excelsior should be remembered! Don't you all see? We deserve more!

ADOW: What are you saying? That you've already given up hope! (to the mob) The captain doesn't want us to live!

CORTEZ: It's begun! (surprised; to self and Dovan) We're too late.

BRECKIN: No! We can harvest his antigens! Get the process started!

ERMEZ: The captain's no longer in command. I'll follow Adow. What are your orders, sir?

PERELSON: The captain's still in command!

BRECKIN: Stand back!

(Dovan fires his phaser into a wall panel.)

DOVAN: If people don't settle down right now, the next one I fire won't be a warning shot.

ADOW: The commander's firing on us!

(A second phaser charges!)

CORTEZ: Dovan, look out!

(The second phaser fires! Cortez is struck in the chest!)

CORTEZ: Aaah!

DOVAN: Captain!

(And, the fight breaks out in full. Fighting, yelling, punching, brawling, and phaser blasts litter the background.)

ADOW: (in background) What the hell? What?! Ahh!

BRECKEN: (in background) Come on!

PERELSON: (in background) Come on!

DOVAN: Captain, can you hear me?

CORTEZ: (weakly) Everything's repeating itself. The same thing that happened to the Vidiians... everyone at each other's throats.

DOVAN: Captain, this has become such a nightmare.

CORTEZ: It's like a dream... death is... the interpreter...

(Chaos envelops the background. Slowly the sounds all mesh together into a white noise that fades out, followed by a beep.)

SCENE S2EB – 19

(LOCATION: CAVE)

GAVI: Diagnostic-and-correction program complete. Simulation terminated.

DOVAN: What the--

ALL SENIOR STAFF: (heavy breathing)

CORTEZ: Cortez to *Excelsior*, report!

PERELSON: Perelson here, Captain. Everything is quiet on the ship. Has the simulation ended?

CORTEZ: Simulation?

DOVAN: Wha... What simulation?

GAVI: In a few moments your minds will clear, the memory drugs will wear off, and you will remember how events actually transpired.

DOVAN: Right. I beamed down with the away team. We fired up Gavi's program. She told us about the Phage simulation – a last relic of the Vidiians here.

LORHROK: Something left here so that we might remember and understand what happened to them in their final days.

CORTEZ: I beamed down with the rest of senior staff and we all plugged ourselves in... but it felt so horrifically real. Far more real than a holodeck program.

GAVI: As stated previously, particle synthesis produces far more authentic sensations than holographics.

ROL: But I could feel the effects of the Phage! I felt like I was dying! I put a phaser to my chest because I couldn't take the pain!

(Rol snatches up a tricorder and runs a bioscan of himself.)

YUBARI: Rol, what are you doing?

ROL: Scanning us to make sure we don't have the Phage.

LORHROK: It was a simulation.

ROL: I need to know, Lieutenant! No Phage detected!

CORTEZ: I know I speak for everyone when I say that we did not expect this simulation to be so... intense.

SHARP: So the Vidiians didn't modify the Phage to infect other races?

GAVI: They tried, but were not successful.

ROL: Thank goodness.

GAVI: On behalf of the Vidiian people, I thank you for experiencing this simulation. It was created by the Vidiians as a means of understanding their situation. Before you leave here today, think about how you responded and how the people around you responded. Please think about your actions the next time you make judgments about the Vidiian people. In the end, the Vidiians were good people forced to make desperate choices. If you would like to experience this simulation again--

LORHROK: No!

CORTEZ: Gavi, thank you for sharing this with us. Cortez to Excelsior. Six to beam up.

(They are beamed up.)

SCENE S2EB – 20

LOCATION: SPACE

CORTEZ: *Captain's Log, supplemental: The simulation provided us with valuable insight, not only into the Vidiian people, but into ourselves as well. The question is... where do we go from here?*

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIEFING ROOM

CORTEZ: I called this meeting to address what happened during the Vidiian simulation. I want everyone to know that, in my log, I have stated only that the simulation was intense and that we learned a great lesson about the Vidiians' experience of the death of their race. I did not go into any detail about the actions any of us took. As Gavi said, the Vidiians were good people who were forced to make desperate choices. Perhaps, subconsciously knowing that this was a simulation, we did things we would not normally have done. Perhaps we found ourselves acting differently due to Vidiian influence – or because of the brutal, mob-minded caricature the simulation made of what I know to be our noble and humane crew. Or, perhaps... this was us at our worst.

ROL: Sir, I would never steal painkillers, no matter how much pain I was in. That wasn't the person I am.

LORHROK: And I would never just give up like that. I'd fight with my last ounce of strength. That wasn't the person I am, either.

SHARP: And, Alcar – I'll certainly disagree with you from time to time, but I would never draw a phaser on you. It was so violent... That wasn't the person I am.

CORTEZ: Enough, everyone. View what happened as a gift. It's what life doesn't normally give us – a second chance. Now that we know what we'll be tempted to do when things get desperate, we'll be prepared for it when the time actually comes. Do not look poorly on yourselves or your crewmates. Think of what happened as... a dream. Now, you've all been through a lot today. As of this moment, you're all off-duty. Get some rest. Dismissed.

(Everyone exits to the bridge. Cortez and Dovan cut immediately across to the nearest turbolift.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR TURBOLIFT

CORTEZ: Deck twelve.

(The computer beeps in acknowledgement. Silence.)

DOVAN: Captain...

CORTEZ: Yes, Dovan?

DOVAN: Rol and Yubari have scheduled the Parrises Squares rematch for the day after tomorrow. Would you like to join us?

CORTEZ: Like I said, Commander: space is dangerous enough as it is.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: Well, I don't know about the rest of them... but I know this: That was exactly the person I am.

(Pause.)

CORTEZ: Yes. Me, too.

DOVAN: We almost killed each other.

CORTEZ: I know.

DOVAN: How do we get past this? Past what we could have done?

CORTEZ: For shame, Commander. You're asking how we get past ourselves. The answer to that's easy: wherever you go, there you are.

(The turbolift stops and the doors open.)

DOVAN: So we live each day like it could be our last?

CORTEZ: Sound advice.

(Cortez gets out of the turbocar, then stops and turns around.)

CORTEZ: When is that Parrises Squares match, again?

DOVAN: Day after tomorrow. Nineteen hundred.

CORTEZ: I'll be there.

DOVAN: I'll replicate an ion mallet for you.

CORTEZ: I'll bring my own.

DOVAN: So you do play.

CORTEZ: (with a smile) See you on the court, Commander.

FIN.