

Starship: Excelsior
"Smell the Ashes"
(Season 6, Episode 6)
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 6L-97 (PREROLL)

NARRATOR: *The role of Doctor Melissa Sharp will now be played by Jennifer Anne Scott.*

NARRATOR: *Previously on Starship Excelsior...*

[30808]

DOVAN: This petri dish contains an active culture of the telepathic disease known as The Wasting.

[30303]

LORHROK: Doctor Sharp's been very wrapped up in her research, that's all. She feels responsible for what happened at Valandria. There are still ten people in Wasting comas back at Starbase, after all.

[10408]

YUBARI-MYRIAD: Our work is already complete. The war will be won, and won decisively. You are merely... dessert.

DOVAN: Ah. I hope your death hurts, then. (pause) Thousand darsek question: what is the Wasting?

YUBARI-MYRIAD: I am the Wasting. We reach into your minds and tell them to be sick.

[30807]

NEEVA: Just don't be fooled: he'll seem like he's getting better, but, whatever the Wasting did to Simon's brain to fix it, the infestation did just the opposite.

[5J-25]

UNDERWOOD: Ah, Admiral Parker has approved Melissa's transfer request. She's heading to Starfleet Medical to research the Wasting, hopefully wake up the last few victims still in comas.

NARRATOR: *And now, the continuation...*

SCENE 6L-01**LOCATION: STARFLEET MEDICAL - FOYER**

(We hear the busy sounds of the Starfleet Medical foyer as someone walks swiftly through the organized chaos)

RECEPTIONIST: *Welcome to Starfleet Medical, you appear to be injured. Please state the nature of the medical emergency. Single combat or... [inaudible] ?*

(An intercom ping goes off)

NURSE: *Doctor Clayton Forrester, please report to Department 13 immediately.*

(A door opens)

SHARP: Alecz Lohrok, welcome to Starfleet Medical!

(Lohrok approaches and the door closes behind him)

LORHROK: Doctor Sharp?

SHARP: Alecz, call me Melissa. You know that.

LORHROK: It's just, you... uh, well, it's just, you... (sigh) it's good to see you again, though. It's been, what? Ten years?

SHARP: Fourteen. Imagine my surprise when I found out you've been in Mars orbit half this time and never looked me up.

LORHROK: Things changed after you left Excelsior, Melissa. Changed a lot.

SHARP: So what? So did I!

LORHROK: I wasn't going to mention it.

SHARP: Why not? It's life, Alecz. You get through it by sharing the burdens. (pause) Besides, the accident left me five centimeters taller. Not the little, short woman anymore!

LORHROK: Still always looking for the silver lining, Melissa?

SHARP: Not looking: seeing. The silver lining is always there, and that's a miracle, when you think about it. Now, come on, I have a patient.

LORHROK: A patient? Who? (Pause) Why, actually, did you summon me halfway across your solar system?

SHARP: You remember the Wasting?

LORHROK: The telepathic virus? You're still working on that? The Wasting put eighty percent of the Excelsior crew in a coma, but Melissa... the Valandria Expedition was a long time ago.

SHARP: Well, it wasn't a long time ago for Jack.

LORHROK: Jack?

SHARP: C'mon, Josh is already waiting.

(The door opens as they enter the hospital room)

SCENE 6L-99 (OPENING CREDITS)**LOCATION: THE VOID**

LORHROK: *Starship Excelsior: A Star Trek Fan Production*

Starring Samuel Gillis as Captain Aleczhander Lorhrok: Principal Engineer, Project Oracle.

UNDERWOOD: *Gareth Bowley as Admiral Joshua Underwood: Commanding Officer, The Westlake Archive*

SHARP: *Jennifer Anne Scott as Doctor Melissa Sharp: Starfleet Medical - Research Section.*

HELDER: *Featuring Daniel LaForce as Lieutenant Commander Jack Helder: Chief Flight Control Officer, U.S.S. Excelsior-C.*

AEL: *And Bobbi Owens as Ael.*

NARRATOR: *Starship Excelsior proudly presents "Smell the Ashes" by James Heaney*

SCENE 6L-02**LOCATION: STARFLEET MEDICAL - HOSPITAL ROOM**

(We hear bubbling solutions and the whirring of some medical equipment)

(Flashback “whomp” sound)

FLASHBACK: SCENE 100-07:**LOCATION: USS EXCELSIOR – READY ROOM**

DOVAN: Oh, Commander Helder! [...] Hope you slept well last night.

HELDER: Not especially; I was a bit distracted. But I'm still fit for duty. What can a freshly assigned Chief Flight Control Officer do around here, Commander?

(Flashback “whomp” sound)

END FLASHBACK

HELDER: (through a breathing unit) What...? r'you the... X.O.?

(Flashback “whomp” sound)

FLASHBACK: SCENE 100-09:**LOCATION: USS EXCELSIOR – BRIEFING ROOM**

HELDER: This mission seems like a bit of a milk run, doesn't it? [...] Although I suppose it could be fun... what do we know about their women?

(Flashback “whomp” sound)

END FLASHBACK

HELDER: (deep breath)

(The liquid drains and the forcefield switches off, so he is in normal air again)

HELDER: Ouch.

SHARP: Jack?

HELDER: Doctor, um... Sharp? Is that you?

LORHROK: Jack, try and open your eyes. Slowly.

HELDER: Lieutenant Lohrok? The engineer? (his eyes open crustily) Ow! Ow ow ow.

SHARP: Okay, that's actually a good sign. Your optic nerves are working. It's just stasis shock.

HELDER: Sounds... exotic.

SHARP: Try again, Jack. Slower. I just need them open a slit to test your pupillary response.

HELDER: Ohhh. Okay, that is a better... wait, Captain Underwood? What are you...? Are you in uniform?

UNDERWOOD: (warmly) Commander Helder. It's good to see you.

HELDER: I thought... did I get hit on the head? Isn't Rach Cortez the captain now?

UNDERWOOD: She took over for me for a time, yes.

HELDER: So I guess you won your appeal, then? Good. If you'll pardon my saying so, Captain, Admiral Parker had it coming. If you hadn't slugged him, I would've.

UNDERWOOD: ...well, ah... All in the past, I'm pleased to say.

HELDER: But this isn't sickbay. Hell, the Golden Gate's out the window, so it's not even Starbase. I'm on Earth. (Melissa presses some buttons in the background) So how long was I out? Must have been at least a few weeks. Months?

SHARP: Hold on. Second injection. This will sting for a second.

(Sharp injects him with a hypospray.)

HELDER: Ooo! What are you puttin' in these shots, Doc? Snake venom?

SHARP: Actually... it's a secretion from a bluegill parasite queen.

HELDER: A what?

SHARP: Moderated with a sample of the RNA that causes Elarin's Syndrome. Except, unlike the original Simon Serum, I've activated the RNA.

HELDER: Elarin's Syndrome? Like that kid has? Westlake?

UNDERWOOD: Melissa, did you just give my old helm officer a degenerative neural disease?

SHARP: Well, it's funny. I kinda did.

UNDERWOOD: By all means, then, explain the humor.

SHARP: Yes, I gave him a little Elarin's Syndrome, but it's being cancelled out by the queen secretions, which simulate bluegill infestation.

LORHROK: Melissa, you'd have to find a way to make them cancel out exactly, while simultaneously canceling the Wasting. The slightest deviation would kill Commander Helder. I don't see how that could be possible. The Wasting, the bluegills, and Elarin's Syndrome are too different.

SHARP: You're half-right! It does need extreme precision, which is why it took me so long to get the formula exactly right. However, they aren't that different. As it turns out, the Wasting was generated by a bluegill queen, and Elarin's Syndrome is a benign form of bluegill infestation.

LORHROK & UNDERWOOD: (simultaneously) What?!

HELDER: Um, how long, exactly? Six months?

LORHROK: Melissa, the Wasting was created by the Myriad.

HELDER: Nine months!?

LORHROK: We didn't meet the buggers until [the *Anbar*, months later!]

UNDERWOOD: Exec, these are good questions, but I think we owe Commander Helder some answers first.

HELDER: You called him "Exec." Mister Lorhrok, no disrespect, but you were a Junior Lieutenant this morning. How much of the senior staff would have to die for you to make first officer?

UNDERWOOD: Jack... I--

HELDER: What about John? Is he okay?

LORHROK: John?

HELDER: John Hastings! Marine captain! We've been best friends since the *Vancouver*.

LORHROK: I, um...

(Flashback "whomp" sound)

FLASHBACK: Scene 10204

LOCATION: VALANDRIA MOUNTAINSIDE

HASTINGS: Get behind me, captain!

(He gets stabbed)

HASTINGS: Yaagh!

(Flashback "whomp" sound)

END FLASHBACK

LORHROK: He, uh, he was a hero.

(Helder begins to sob, trying to control it)

LOHROK: He gave up his life to defend the captain. I'm... sorry.

HELDER: When's the funeral? Tell me I didn't miss John's funeral. He wanted me to say his eulogy. Man, I had some stories...

SHARP: Jack, it... it took a long time for me to find the cure for the Wasting. To be precise... seventeen years.

(Silence)

UNDERWOOD: It's twenty-three ninety-nine, Jack. I'm Admiral Underwood now. This is Captain Lorhrok.

HELDER: ...and what are you, Doc, the Commander-in-Chief?

SHARP: I just made full Lieutenant. Promotion has never been my strong suit.

HELDER: This is, um...

LORHROK: I know.

(Pause.)

HELDER: Look, I know I don't have any listed next-of-kin, Melissa, but there's a girl, a wonderful girl I knew in Port Eridani. Can you try calling [her? Name's T'Shara.]

SHARP: T'Shara?

HELDER: How'd you know?

SHARP: We tried. We, uh, couldn't locate her.

HELDER: Then how about Dara Tornvald?

SHARP: Went back to her husband. Refused my calls.

HELDER: Jolar?

SHARP: She... doesn't remember you.

HELDER: But I saw her just last...! ...night. Oh. Oh, God.

SHARP: You do have a visitor, but I thought it best to wake up to familiar faces. You served under Admiral Underwood. And, because you were never reassigned from the Excelsior, Captain Lorhrok is, technically, your commanding officer.

HELDER: Lorhrok's in command? Dovan got killed at Valandria, too?

UNDERWOOD: No. He survived, saved the ship, and, three years later, was arrested for unrelated crimes. His prison term is... well, come to think of it, I think it's nearly over.

HELDER: The blue guy? Really?

(Some medical alerts go off)

SHARP: Hmm. I don't like the look of these acetylcholine levels, and I need to keep them under control. We never really got over the theragen shortages after Romulus.

HELDER: Why? What happened to Romulus?

UNDERWOOD: It exploded.

HELDER: What?!

LORHROK: It's a long story.

SHARP: If you three are alright here, I need to review some of your scans.

HELDER: I'll be alright. And thanks, doc. Better late than never, right?

SHARP: Sorry, Jack.

(She exits.)

HELDER: So, when do we get back to the ship? I hope you haven't made all the helm controls 3-D or anything. I'm sure you broke in a new alpha shift pilot, well, decades ago, but, right now, I'd be fully happy with delta. A few quiet shifts at the conn, just me and the stars, is probably just what I need to clear my head. (pause) Sirs, it sounds like flying the greatest starship ever built is all I have left. Please.

UNDERWOOD: Jack, it's not that.

LORHROK: Excelsior was destroyed almost ten years ago. I was in command.

HELDER: Then they must have given you the Excelsior-D?

LORHROK: There was no D. Given the circumstances, Starfleet decided to, um...

UNDERWOOD: To give the name a rest for a few years.

LORHROK: They retired it.

HELDER: What? It's the second-most-famous lineage in Starfleet! Who killed her? The Borg?

UNDERWOOD: A temporal disa[ster known as the SD-1 Impossibility.]

LORHROK: We did. Spast, it wasn't a time anomaly. We killed her. She died by reckless hate.

UNDERWOOD: A little dramatic, Exec? (pause) Maybe that's enough, for now, about what's happened. Let's talk a little bit about what's next. Jack -- Commander -- What have you been missing while you were asleep?

HELDER: Nothing! From my perspective, Cap, I passed out in the corridor, woke up here, and you were all wearing funky new uniforms. I like the combadge, hate the shirt, by the way. But I haven't had time to miss anything.

UNDERWOOD: Then you aren't interested in this six-pack of Ferengi sodas I picked up at the gift shop?

(Underwood lifts up the six-pack. The bottle clink together.)

HELDER: Oh Sir, I'm always glad to see a Slug-O-Cola. Thank you!

(They open their sodas)

HELDER: (takes a swig) Ahhhh. That's the stuff.

UNDERWOOD: Splendid. So, what would you like to do, once you've finished the physical therapy? I can see to it you have any posting you like.

HELDER: Seventeen years is a long time. I never planned that far ahead. Always figured I'd be a completely different person by then, and I didn't have the right to choose for him. (pause) But that's not true, is it? All this time, and it looks like we've hardly moved.

UNDERWOOD: Beg your pardon?

HELDER: I thought, fifteen, twenty years, the galaxy'd be unrecognizable. Everyone would've uploaded their brains into robots or something, and I would've found my next chapter doing something, well, equally amazing.

LORHROK: I think you'll find a few things have changed a great deal.

HELDER: Oh, good! I was starting to worry you'd just added some pips and picked up some wrinkles. But I see you're a captain in engineering. I assume that means they let you build that colony you always wanted.

LORHROK: Well, uh... not exactly. Not yet. But I'm head of a small starship design team.

HELDER: Really? But you told me it was working with the users that made engineering interesting. That's why you wanted a colony. Starship designers only get to meet their users on launch day.

LORHROK: (sighing) I, well, I-- at the time, I needed a break from colonies.

HELDER: Okay. And how long have you been there?

LORHROK: Since Excelsior. (pause) Eight years.

(Pause)

HELDER: Well, I'm happy for your success. How about you, Cap--I mean, Admiral? What's your biggest win since I saw you last?

UNDERWOOD: Other than getting back in this uniform?

HELDER: Right.

UNDERWOOD: Well, I did manage to find the Scions of the Stars.

HELDER: What, really? Great Bird! I'm sorry I doubted you, sir, I thought they were a myth!

UNDERWOOD: No myth. Their ship lived quite up to the reputation.

HELDER: So you met them? What were they like? After so many years searching, how many years did you spend with them before you came back?

UNDERWOOD: Well. Um... About five minutes, actually.

HELDER: That's all?

UNDERWOOD: They told me I was their doom and gave me a prophecy. They've refused all contact with me--I mean, with Starfleet--ever since.

HELDER: Oh. No ambassador?

UNDERWOOD: The Scions picked an emissary, a gentleman by the name of Isaac Brahms.

HELDER: Doesn't ring a bell.

UNDERWOOD: Suffice to say he isn't the man I'd've chosen.

(Pause.)

HELDER: Sirs?

LORHROK: Yes?

HELDER: Would you like me to... fix all this? Is that why you've woken me up?

UNDERWOOD: Ah, fix what, exactly?

HELDER: This timeline. (pause) It seems to have gone wrong. I mean, the Excelsior? Romulus? John? I'll bet you've got an El-Aurian in the next room who's gonna tell me I've got to go back. Right?

LORHROK: No, Jack, we woke you up because Melissa's worked night and day for decades to bring back you and the other Wasting coma victims. This is a really happy -- a joyful day.

(Pause) You know, you were so deep we thought you were dead, at first? I know it took longer than anyone wanted, but the fact you're talking to us at all... it's a miracle.

HELDER: If Lieutenant Rol were here, at least I'd know it was one of his April Fool's jokes.
(pause) Let me guess: he turned out to be a Cardassian spy and was killed fleeing the scene of a murder.

LORHROK: Bev died a hero.

HELDER: Bev?

UNDERWOOD: And he turned out to be our spy.

LORHROK: But he was ready to be held accountable for the murders. I truly believe that.

HELDER: Murders? Plural? Great Bird, I was joking!

LORHROK: Look, you weren't... there.

HELDER: Nope!

LORHROK: You have to understand, it all sounds a lot worse than it was.

HELDER: Or maybe you've been in the muck for so long you've lost sight of how bad it really is. We're supposed to be space adventurers! Things were a long way from perfect in Twenty-Three Eighty-Two, but it sure seems like the horribly few things that have changed have changed for the worse.

UNDERWOOD: Not... entirely. Exec?

LORHROK: There is, um, one other thing. Melissa thought you should wake up to familiar faces, but there is someone else waiting to see you.

HELDER: Who? The temporal displacement shrink? The Ghost of Christmas Yet-To-Come?

UNDERWOOD: There's... no easy way to say this. I know this has already been a taxing conversation, but you'd better brace yourself. I know you recall a woman named T'Shara?

HELDER: Yeah, you said you couldn't-- Oh, God. She was on Romulus, wasn't she?

LORHROK: We don't know. It was a... chaotic time. Refugees everywhere, Vulcan left the Federation...

HELDER: What?!

UNDERWOOD: ...but T'Shara is still officially listed as "missing," and there have been cases, even twelve years later, where someone on that list is found.

HELDER: So T'Shara is not in the other room.

LORHROK: No. But you can imagine Starfleet's surprise when T'Shara's daughter showed up at the edge of the Neutral Zone, a teenager in a stolen shuttle, claiming Federation citizenship.

HELDER: I don't... [understand.]

UNDERWOOD: Don't worry. You'll hear it when you're ready to hear it. Suffice to say this young lady claimed birthright citizenship. Thanks to her father. Whom she said was a "Federation subcommander."

HELDER: I... have a daughter?

UNDERWOOD: I know it's a great deal to take in, but, apart from Doctor Sharp, she has been your most frequent visitor this year.

HELDER: And she stole a shuttle?

UNDERWOOD: You don't have to meet her today. You've been through an enormous [transition already.]

HELDER: No, no! I want-- what's her name?

LORHROK: Ael.

HELDER: "Little wing." Where do I--oh, good god!

(Helder just tried to sit up.)

UNDERWOOD: Whoa there, Commander! Stasis field or no, your legs haven't moved for seventeen years. You're going nowhere today.

HELDER: I wanna meet my daughter. Please.

LORHROK: You're sure?

HELDER: You don't get it. This is it. This is my next chapter. Seventeen years, she missed her dad taking her out for ice cream, or cheering on her Parrises Squares team. I'm here now, and I love her with all my heart. Nothing else matters.

ay-EL

LORHROK: I... I understand.

(Underwood taps his combadge.)

UNDERWOOD: Miss Ael, I have someone here who's asking to meet you.

(The doors swish open. A young woman, half-Romulan, just over seventeen years old, enters.)

AEL: Hey, Dad.

HELDER: Little Wing, you look just like your mother.

UNDERWOOD: Exec, I believe that is our cue.

LORHROK: Agreed. Call anytime if you need anything, Jack.

(They start to walk out)

HELDER: Thank you, sir. I want to know ever[anything. Please.]

(Lorhrok and Underwood exit, the doors swishing shut.)

SCENE 6L-03 [CONTINUOUS FROM LAST]**LOCATION: SHARP'S OFFICE**

SHARP: Alecz! Josh. I suppose he's, uh...

LORHROK: Yep.

SHARP: Probably won't be interested in hearing his test results right now, then. Was he...?

UNDERWOOD: He was overjoyed.

SHARP: Was he? Huh! Good for him.

UNDERWOOD: Well, this is certainly homey.

SHARP: A decade in one place will do that, especially when you have a home to go home to at the end of the day.

UNDERWOOD: And who did these decorations? Juvenile patients of yours?

SHARP: No, my kids.

LORHROK: Kids?

SHARP: Yeah. See that man in the holo? Dr. Chris Cutter. Yubari said in her toast I should hyphenate. So, you see, when a man and a woman love each other very much--

UNDERWOOD: I take your point, Melissa.

LORHROK: I'm sorry I missed the wedding. I was traveling a lot after Excelsior and I m[ust have missed some of my mail.]

SHARP: No need to apologize, you weren't invited.

LORHROK: Oh!

SHARP: Don't give me that look, Alecz. You locked yourself in that construction station, so don't blame the world for letting you. I invited family and friends. You and I are so close, you didn't even know I had kids.

UNDERWOOD: ...erm, how many kids?

SHARP: Four. No, Oh! No, wait, five, I keep forgetting I'm pregnant. Now that I've solved the damn Wasting, Chris can go back to work and I can take his place at home for a few years. Speaking of the Wasting, you had a few questions?

UNDERWOOD: Yes. You told Jack that the Wasting had something to do with the bluegill parasites?

LORHROK: You also called Elarin's Syndrome a "benign" form of infestation by a Zero parasite. Start there. Elarin's Syndrome is a rare genetic disorder in human-alien hybrids. It crippled Simon Westlake.

SHARP: Yes, Elarin's disrupts certain parts of the brain. I discovered that, during infestation, bluegill queens use their telepathic fields to depress exactly the same parts of the brain. That allows the parasite to keep control. The Wasting excites those parts -- exactly the same parts. Three sides of the same coin. Sure enough, when I did genetic comparison on Isaac Brahms's

bluegill friend Janath and her queen, she had all the genes that cause what we call Elarin's Syndrome.

LORHROK: And Simon Westlake had those genes, too? What exactly are you saying, Doctor?
(pause) That Simon had bluegill ancestors?

SHARP: That was my working theory. Really! Don't look at me like that. You're a Trill; half your ancestors are flatworms. But I searched galactic genomes for months. It looks like the bluegills have never interbred with anyone.

UNDERWOOD: Well, I could have told you that. Janath says, the Zero breed through parthenogenesis. The queens are practically clones of themselves, reaching back millennia. Apparently it's becoming a rather serious problem.

SHARP: Exactly! The bluegill queens are starting to suffer replicative fading. That wouldn't happen if their parthenogenesis was the result of natural evolution. The bluegills must have had a different form of reproduction at some point, a more sustainable one, and something went wrong. Unfortunately, whatever it was, it left no record in genetic archaeology.

LORHROK: My point is, Elarin's Syndrome isn't benign.

SHARP: You're right. In humans, these genes are malignant when activated.

UNDERWOOD: But Elarin's Syndrome only affects humans.

SHARP: No. That was my breakthrough. Turns out, the genes for Elarin's Syndrome are everywhere. They're never expressed except in certain rare hybrids, and their manifestations are very different, so no one's ever connected the dots before. But Vulcan hybrids with the

gene tend to be Kolinahr masters. Klingon hybrids with the gene get *brak 'lul HlpHa'*³, which helps them heal faster. Yubari Asuka's son Ichiro is a Betazoid hybrid with supercharged telepathy. Turns out he has the gene, too. These are all just different forms of Elarin's Syndrome. In humans, it causes brain damage, but that's just genetic bad luck.

UNDERWOOD: If these genes are in half the species in the galaxy... where in God's name did they come from?

SHARP: Who else? The Scions of the Stars. They left the galaxy a quarter-million years ago, but we've known for a long time that, before they left, when they called themselves the Iconians, they explored the galaxy. Turns out, they did more than explore.

LORHROK: But how did those genes get into the bluegills? The Zero have been at war with the Scions for thousands of years, ever since they first tried to invade our galaxy.

SHARP: I don't think we've been told the whole story here. Most species have only trace elements of the Scion DNA. When I compared Scion DNA to the bluegills, though, I found a ninety-two percent genetic match.

UNDERWOOD: Th-- that implies they're practically the same species!

SHARP: Not quite. Humans and cats are a ninety-percent genetic match, too, and we're pretty different. But it certainly means the Scions and the Zero came from the same environment. I'd say they evolved together, except there's no evidence a second sapient race ever lived on Iconia.

LORHROK: That doesn't make sense.

³ BRAHK-'LOOL HLP-HAH'

SHARP: Not my job to make it make sense. I'm just —

(the door chimes)

SHARP: Oh!

(Ael enters.)

SHARP: Come!

(Helder is gasping in pain through the open door)

AEL: Melissa? Dad just tried to get out of bed again.

SHARP: What?

AEL: Well, it didn't go great.

SHARP: Well, at least his physical therapist'll give him an A for effort.

AEL: Thanks.

(Sharp stands and talks as she heads for the door.)

SHARP: Gentlemen. Duty calls.

(Ael ducks back out. Door swishes shut behind them.)

UNDERWOOD: Well, that was... enlightening?

(Pause.)

LORHROK: I'm worried about Jack.

UNDERWOOD: It didn't look like a bad fall from here. I'm sure he'll be fine.

LORHROK: Not that.

UNDERWOOD: What, then? He seemed to know precisely what he wanted.

LORHROK: Exactly. I know that feeling. It doesn't last.

UNDERWOOD: I'm not sure. Jack Helder was always a man of... intensity.

LORHROK: Nothing that strong lasts. When it burns out, the hole it leaves is deeper than ever.

(Silence)

LORHROK: I'd better get back to Mars.

UNDERWOOD: Hold up, Exec.

LORHROK: Sir?

UNDERWOOD: Admiral Parker's Committee.

LORHROK: (heavy sigh) You people ask me every year.

UNDERWOOD: I'm only telling you the job offer is still open.

LORHROK: Why? (pause) There are a thousand engineers as good as me, and a hundred captains who haven't lost their starships.

UNDERWOOD: Your command is not defined by its last day. Not in the eyes of anyone who counts.

LORHROK: Except me.

UNDERWOOD: Well, that's your own affair.

LORHROK: I'm sorry. I know you're right. Still we both know I'm not indispensable. Why me?

UNDERWOOD: Prophecy, Exec. Classified.

LORHROK: (snort) Nice try, Admiral.

(He brushes out into the main room, where Jack is settling back into the biobed.)

SCENE 6L-04 [CONTINUOUS]**LOCATION: HOSPITAL ROOM**

(Lorhrok crossing from Sharp's office door directly to the corridor exit.)

LORHROK: Good seeing you, Jack. Welco--

(He pauses walking)

LOHROK: Wait. Jack, you okay?

HELDER: Oh, I'm just fine now, sir.

(Underwood enters.)

HELDER: Just... hungry.

AEL: Oh! I can get you something to eat from the replimat!

HELDER: I could really go for a plate of poutine.

SHARP: No! No no no no no. Go easy on your first meal in seventeen years. Try a baguette. If you're feeling bold, butter it.

HELDER: ...y'know, that sounds delicious, too.

AEL: I'll be right back, Dad.

HELDER: Thanks, Little Wing.

(Ael exits and Helder leans back on his bed.)

SHARP: Now. How does the pillow feel?

HELDER: Thank you, Melissa, that's just, it's uh... i-it's fine.

(Helder gasps a quiet sob)

UNDERWOOD: She seems like a wonderful young woman, Jack.

HELDER: (holding back sobs) I-i-isn't she... p-perfect?

(Helder breaks down in sobs)

SHARP: (near simultaneous) Jack!

UNDERWOOD: (near simultaneous) Jack!

LORHROK: (near simultaneous) What's wrong?

(Helder tries to control his sobbing.)

HELDER: It's-it's not -- I -- I love, I love her so much already. It's just there's... there's so many... (his breath catches) Everyone and everything I loved when I went to sleep is dead. In a way... I'm... I'm dead, too. I'm gonna love being her dad, I know it, but... (short breath) I won't be me. It'll be great, I'll be amazing, but that Jack is already gone and I miss him so much. (pause) Oh, god, you must think I'm hysterical. You gonna sedate me?

SHARP: You're making perfect sense, Jack.

(Helder continues sniffing and shuddered breathing)

SHARP: Not gonna sedate you for that. Josh, Alecz, thank you again for coming.

UNDERWOOD: Anything for an old shipmate. Time to go, though?

SHARP: Yes, it's time. I'll send you the rest in my report.

LORHROK: Welcome back, Jack Helder.

(Helder continues to sob as they exit.)

SCENE 6L-05 [CONTINUOUS]**LOCATION: STARFLEET MEDICAL - CORRIDOR**

(They speak while walking)

UNDERWOOD: You see what I meant about Jack's intensity.

LORHROK: And what I said about his emotions. Remember what he said earlier, before he knew about his daughter?

UNDERWOOD: What, specifically?

LORHROK: He offered to reset the timeline for us.

UNDERWOOD: And you think he might actually be the sort of man to do it? I'll remind you that you didn't know him very well.

LORHROK: That's true.

UNDERWOOD: ...But you're right. If his perspective were to change, if he did "burn out," as you put it... he is the type.

LORHROK: I'll contact Temporal Investigations to keep an eye on him.

UNDERWOOD: No, no need. We can keep an eye on him just fine.

LORHROK: Sir, the Oracle Project requires my full attention he[re in the final stage.]

(Underwood stops walking, faces Lorchrok, who is also forced to stop)

UNDERWOOD: Exec...

LORHROK: What? It wasn't a small thing for me to get over here to Earth for the afternoon.

UNDERWOOD: Let me try to put this more delicately than Doctor Sharp did...

LORHROK: You want to see the schedule?

UNDERWOOD: And you think it was easy for me to get here all the way from the Valandrian Drydock? To interrupt the negotiations? Jack Helder needs us right now. And, delicately: since you remain determined to push away all your old friends, perhaps it's time to try making a new one?

LORHROK: I have friends, sir, on Mars. I just decided not to spend the last ten years romancing my own ghosts!

UNDERWOOD: And that worked, did it? Gave us up as a bad job and moved on?

LORHROK: As a matter of fact, it did!

SHARP: Hey, wait up!

(Sharp is coming down the corridor at a jog.)

UNDERWOOD: Melissa?

SHARP: (short gasp for breath) Just one more thing.

UNDERWOOD: Oh, I assumed we'd have to wait for the report! You certainly piqued my interest! You said The Wasting came from a bluegill?

LORHROK: Except that's impossible. The Wasting came from the Myriad, a creature of pure energy that was haunting the Valandrin catacombs.

SHARP: Years ago, when I was infested by the bluegill named Pseudo, he took over my Wasting research and made huge strides, even though he didn't know any medicine. After we captured him, he asked me a question I didn't understand:

FLASHBACK 307-08

PSEUDO: You never noticed? (pause) Why does the telepathic profile of the Wasting exactly match the telepathic profile of one of our queens?

END FLASHBACK

SHARP: It took a while for me to accept the answer, but there's no way around it: the Wasting was generated by a bluegill queen.

LORHROK: I saw the Myriad, with my own eyes. Pure energy.

SHARP: I know. But, somehow, the Myriad was a bluegill. Transformed, yes -- inverted, technically -- but there can be absolutely no doubt.

LORHROK: How is that possible?

SHARP: No idea. All I know is, the proof is sitting in that room talking to his daughter. If I'd been wrong, my cure could've killed him. (pause) But you're right. All that's in the report. It's not why I chased you down.

UNDERWOOD: Why then?

SHARP: I owe you an apology. I tend to owe a lot of them in the first trimester. I'm sorry, I just... I'm sorry I snapped at you, Alecz. You're a good man. I just...

LORHROK: What, Doctor? I just what?

SHARP: No, I'm sorry. I just wanted to apologize. If you ever do want to drop by the house, Chris'd love to hear your 'Celsie stories. I don't think he believes half of mine.

LORHROK: Thank you... Melissa.

SHARP: I've got to get back to my patient. Thanks again, (pause) both of you.

(She walks away.)

(Silence.)

LORHROK: Okay.

UNDERWOOD: Okay?

LORHROK: Okay. I'll visit Jack. I promise.

(He resumes walking)

UNDERWOOD: (quietly) Thank you.

(Underwood quickly catches up and maintains pace with him.)

UNDERWOOD: One more thing, Exec. Remind me: the Myriad were in the catacombs for thousands of years, but they didn't come from there, did they?

LORHROK: You've read my classified report.

UNDERWOOD: Admiral's clearance.

LORHROK: You're right. The Myriad crashed into Valandria's past after a time travel accident. They came from the far future.

UNDERWOOD: How far?

LORHROK: About twenty years. April, Twenty-four-oh-two.

UNDERWOOD: Yes, I was afraid I remembered something like that.

LORHROK: Why?

UNDERWOOD: Exec, that's only three years from now.

(They stop walking)

LORHROK: How time flies.

(They resume walking)

LORHROK: Maybe we should let Jack reset the timeline.

(They walk through the main doors of Starfleet Medical)

LOCATION: STARFLEET MEDICAL PLAZA

UNDERWOOD: Well, I admit, it isn't the wrong idea. Jack Helder is just not the right person to do it.

LORHROK: How do you mean?

UNDERWOOD: This is confidential, you understand.

LORHROK: You can trust me.

UNDERWOOD: If you want more information, well, you know what to do.

LORHROK: You can't recruit me.

UNDERWOOD: I know, it's just... I've been told through our contacts that the Scions of the Stars are planning to reset the timeline.

LORHROK: Reset it? From what point?

UNDERWOOD: Our contacts have been less than forthcoming on that matter. We surmise... something like ten to fifteen years.

LORHROK: And what's Starfleet's attitude toward changing history like that?

UNDERWOOD: Admiral Parker trusts Triassa's decisions, especially when it comes to the Sword of Damocles.

LORHROK: So we're going to let the Scions undo history, despite our ethics, despite the laws against it?

UNDERWOOD: In a word... yes. (pause) Is that going to be a problem?

(They stop.)

LORHROK: No. It's the best news I've heard all day.

(They resume walking)

THE END