

Starship: Excelsior
"The Infestation"
(Season 3, Episode 4)
by James Heaney

Transcribed by Peter Stine

Note: Lines in square brackets are not typically spoken on screen but are left in for fuller context.

SCENE 304 – 01**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE**

DOVAN: Commander, how much longer?

NEEVA: The ion storm is still interfering with our scans, sir. The data's coming through now.

UNDERWOOD: Storm's not getting dangerous, I hope.

NEEVA: It isn't, and it's not going to be. It's just got scanners playing a few tricks on me. For a moment, I saw lifesigns on the *Anbar*.

LORHROK: Lifesigns?

NEEVA: Sorry, sir. Final analysis was conclusive: there's nothing over there but sensor ghosts.

DOVAN: Damn. So much for search-rescue-triage.

YUBARI: Good. Then may I inform Doctor Sharp she won't be needed for the away mission, sir?

DOVAN: Lieutenant... We've spent a month spying on the doctor, and you haven't found anything to make me think her brain is currently occupied by an oversized insect.

YUBARI: Captain, we've collected a dozen reports—

DOVAN: We've collected a pile of impression and innuendo and... (sigh) Look, what do you want me to do with her, Yubari? Clamp her in chains until you can wring a confession out of her?

YUBARI: That wouldn't be a good idea.

DOVAN: Then what would be? (Pause) There's still a parasite loose on this ship, I am still operating under the assumption I can't trust anyone, and that's still unacceptable. You need to catch this bug. Persecuting my Chief of Medicine isn't helping anyone. Are we clear?

YUBARI: Yes, sir.

DOVAN: Start your new investigation with Underwood. The parasites may have an affinity for their own kind.

UNDERWOOD: Hey!

LORHROK: Lifesigns or no, we still need to investigate the *Anbar*. Commander, did you find a beam-down site?

NEEVA: The first four decks are gone, and a lot of the ship's been depressurized... but I can set you down on E Deck, near the cargo elevators.

DOVAN: X.O., pick your away team.

LORHROK: Neeva, Yubari, and Simon Westlake.

UNDERWOOD: The young one? Is he ready?

LORHROK: He's proven himself more than once. And, frankly, I'd rather have Simon on my team than Adow.

DOVAN: Can't blame you. You can have Simon, but not Yubari.

YUBARI: What? Captain, I belong on this team.

DOVAN: Sorry, Lieutenant. This nebula feels like it could come to life any moment, and I need my best tactical officer at her post.

YUBARI: You're afraid of all those dead Borg cubes, aren't you?

DOVAN: Terrified.

YUBARI: A captain doesn't give in to irrational fear.

DOVAN: No, a captain accepts his irrational fear, calls it a "gut instinct," and makes his crew think it's a virtue. Then he gives into it. (To Lohrok) Take The Major instead. And a marine team, while you're at it.

LORHROK: Yes, sir.

(He stands and starts walking to the turbolift.)

LORHROK: Neeva, with me.

NEEVA: Aye, sir.

(Neeva smoothly stands and joins him.)

LORHROK: Bridge to Marine Country. [Major, I want you and a marine team to meet me in Transporter Room 1.]

(Lorhrok enters the turbolift and the door closes on him.)

DOVAN: Speaking of gut instincts, I'd like to scout this nebula while the Away Team is on the *Anbar*. Can somebody call down to flight deck and get our fighters in the air?

UNDERWOOD: I'd love to, Doe-ven, excepting that we don't have any fighters.

DOVAN: What? That can't be right. I requested a squadron right after Valandria. Starfleet approved. They gave us the five-oh-seventh.

UNDERWOOD: Then you stole the *Excelsior* from spacedock a week before our scheduled launch.

DOVAN: Oh.

UNDERWOOD: The fighters were supposed to arrive on Tuesday.

DOVAN: Well, on the bright side, Underwood, now you have one more thing to charge me with at my court-martial.

UNDERWOOD: I already have more of those than I have pairs of underwear.

SCENE 304 – 02**LOCATION: SICKBAY**

(Pseudo/Sharp is sweeping a meditriscorder over Simon's head, who is sitting on a biobed.)

SIMON: How are my levels, Doctor? Is my disease still in remission?

PSEUDO: Umm... the tricorder says you're positive for Ee-larr-in's Syndrome, a mental disorder which slows –

SIMON: Right. Look, I know everything about Elarin's Syndrome, Doctor. But is it in remission?

PSEUDO: Umm... yes.

SIMON: Look, I have to get down to the transporter room. Can we hurry up?

SHARP: *Oh, Simon, why are you trusting her?*

PSEUDO: He's a blockhead who wouldn't recognize the signs of infestation if they up and started talking to him – Which. They. Are.

SIMON: Excuse me?

PSEUDO: Whoever ordered you to the transporter room without my say-so. An idiot. Wouldn't recognize Eller – Eelar – Wouldn't recognize your disease if it started wearing Hawaiian shirts to work. This was important for your health, Simon. Thank you for coming down.

SIMON: Can we just get on with it?

PSEUDO: Get on with... what else?

SHARP: *Oh, dear. Did you forget Simon's medicine?*

SIMON: You know, my injections? The ones that are keeping my brain from overheating?

PSEUDO: I, uh...

SHARP: *You don't know, do you? Did I forget to put this in his chart?*

PSEUDO: Well. Um... Simon...

SHARP: *Do you know the dosage? Or even the drugs? Can you guess?*

SIMON: Doctor? Is something wrong?

SHARP: *Is that the feeling of my body? Starting to panic?*

(Pause.)

PSEUDO: ...Simon... I've been meaning to tell you: you won't be taking the injections anymore.

SIMON: Really?

SHARP: *What? That's not – Oh, no.*

PSEUDO: We ran out of... of that drug this morning. There's just no more to give you. But don't worry: I have some alternative treatment plans.

SHARP: *Oh, God. What are you going to do to Simon? Stop. Please, stop!*

PSEUDO: If only I could find a little more of the drugs I need...

SHARP: *Are you... asking me?*

PSEUDO: ... we wouldn't have to start... experimenting... but...

SHARP: *How could you risk hurting Simon? Wouldn't that blow your cover? Why would I help you? Why would I ever help you?*

PSEUDO: But... I guess I'm out of luck! So what we're going to do instead is hook you up to this li'l

doohickey here...

SHARP: *The sonic modulator? Do you even know what that is? That could kill him!*

PSEUDO: Then we run a small sonic shock into your brain...

SHARP: *Alright, fine! Fine! You win! Okay? Okay? You win! Give him a double dose of desegranine taken with an acetylcholine inhibitor. They're in my office.*

PSEUDO: You know, actually, Simon, I just remembered another place where I stash my drugs. I'm gonna go check if there's any left. I'll be right back!

SIMON: ...Okay... Doctor...

(Pseudo/Sharp walks away, passing through a door, entering her own office.)

LOCATION: SHARP'S OFFICE

SHARP: *Excuse me, but wasn't I supposed to be unconscious when you're awake?*

PSEUDO: I don't think you're being properly grateful, old mole. If you were unconscious, you'd--

SHARP: (Interrupting) *If I were unconscious, I wouldn't be able to help you. And you wouldn't be able to ransom Simon's life for a little information. Why am I here? Is it because you're starting to lose control? I'm stronger than you thought, aren't I?*

PSEUDO: Stronger... or weaker.

SHARP: *What do you mean? 'Weaker'?*

PSEUDO: It's true: once in a long while, the host is too strong, and the guest — that's me — is too weak. The cohabitation fails.

SHARP: *'Cohabitation?'*

PSEUDO: A euphemism for killing you and stealing your body. Lots of us need euphemisms to cope with what we do to humanoids.

SHARP: *So... sometimes, it fails? Is that what's happening to us?*

PSEUDO: Doubtful. It's much more likely these are your death throes.

SHARP: *My what?*

PSEUDO: When a cohabit-- When an infestation has gone on long enough, the host echoes... stop.

SHARP: *I... I die?*

PSEUDO: You've been dead for a month, old mole. Your mind just hasn't caught up yet.

SHARP: *How long does this take?*

PSEUDO: Usually, several months. In the very end, the echoes become strong. You "wake up," and you stay "awake" for the rest of your short life. That's why you're here right now. It's rare for a mind to fade away so quickly – but, then, I've known since I first entered your body that you are a woman of rare weakness.

SHARP: *Do you think you'll be surprised when I turn out to be the strongest host you've ever met?*

PSEUDO: Do you think you'll be surprised when your mind vanish-- Oh, wait. You'll be dead. Can't be surprised when you're dead!

(An alert sounds on Sharp's computer console.)

SHARP: *What's that?*

PSEUDO: Proximity alert. Someone's coming.

(She presses some more buttons.)

SHARP: *Who?*

PSEUDO: Ah. It's your Yubari. Probably wants to check my neck again. I'd better retract my gill.

(She inhales slowly and her gill retracts into her neck. She then exhales quickly.)

SHARP: *Wait. You can do that?!*

PSEUDO: For a short time. Can you hold your breath underwater?

SHARP: *For a... short time?*

PSEUDO: Another lollipop for the good doctor! Don't tell Doan: if he knew that I'd staged all that security footage showing off my lily-white neck...

SHARP: *Is that how you've escaped Yubari all month?*

PSEUDO: Exactly. She thinks I either have a gill sticking out of my neck or I'm innocent. She's too stupid to think it might be neither.

SHARP: *Asuka Yubari is one of the smartest women I've ever known.*

PSEUDO: I believe you. You're a very dull-edged species. Ensign Ermez and I have been playing this game with her surveillance devices since before Valandria. But I think it's time we got rid of Miz Yubari.

SHARP: *You're not going to... hurt her? Are you?*

PSEUDO: I am going to hurt her. Badly. Now shut up, or I'll see to it she suffers even more.

SHARP: *I... ..hate you.*

PSEUDO: Good on you, mate. Never much worried what a dead person thought of me before.

(The door opens and Yubari enters.)

PSEUDO: Lieutenant. Is there something I can do for you.

YUBARI: You missed our breakfast this morning, Melissa. Oh-six-hundred. The Delta Lounge. Remember?

PSUEDO: Oh! Um... yes. I'm sorry. I guess I just got wrapped up in my research and didn't--

YUBARI: You were asleep at oh-six-hundred. Your alarm was set for oh-eight-hundred. When the computer asked you last night if you wanted to set an earlier alarm, so you wouldn't miss our breakfast appointment, you deliberately overrode it so you could sleep in.

PSUEDO: You spied on me?

YUBARI: Why are you avoiding me, Melissa?

PSEUDO: Please don't call me that.

YUBARI: You asked me to. Melissa. Answer the damn question.

(Pause.)

PSEUDO: (sad and resigned) This is why, Asuka.

(Pause.)

YUBARI: Pardon me?

PSEUDO: That's the whole problem. I can't pardon you, Asuka. Every time we get together, I'm hoping for some nice food and good conversation. All you're interested in is venting about whatever it is that got you angry that day. Now, that's who you are, Asuka, and that's okay. But "always angry" just isn't what I'm looking for in a friendship. That's not who I am.

(Pause.)

YUBARI: What... what are you saying?

PSEUDO: I'm not interested in being your friend, Asuka. I'll be a good colleague, and if you're ever injured you won't have a better doctor... but... (pretending this is hard for her to say) but you can forget about all the rest, okay? I just... I don't want a person like you that close to the center of my life. Do you understand, Asuka?

YUBARI: I don't... You... Alright, up against the wall! YAH!

PSEUDO: Ahh!

(Yubari grabs Pseudo/Sharp and slams her face-first up against a metal rack of lab equipment, like a cop pinning a perp to the wall!)

YUBARI: (simultaneous) (heavy breathing)

PSEUDO: (simultaneous) Wha-- Let me — let me go! What are you — what are you doing? Get off me!

YUBARI: There's got to be one. There's got to be!

PSEUDO: Oh. You still think I've caught Ermez's bluegill. I don't think they're contagious, Lieutenant. (Pause) There's nothing there! Let me go!

YUBARI: (agitated) What's this? What's this small blue bump doing on the back of your neck?

PSEUDO: It's an ingrown hair, okay?!

YUBARI: Why haven't I seen it before?

PSEUDO: Does it look like a gill, Yubari?!

(Pause.)

(Yubari releases Sharp.)

PSEUDO: (relieved sigh) Are you satisfied, Lieutenant?

YUBARI: I wish there had been something there. Now I know what kind of person you are.

PSEUDO: (coldly) Good-bye, Lieutenant.

(Yubari storms out.)

PSEUDO: (To self) Geeze, lady. Just because you don't get along with somebody doesn't mean they're possessed by aliens! Well, except in my case. Heh. Let's let the gill back out for some air.

(The gill extends.)

PSEUDO: (deep sigh of relief) Ahhh. That's better. How you holding up in there, old mole?

SHARP: *Did you know I've never killed anyone before? I never even used a phaser?*

PSEUDO: Good for you. I love pacifists. They're good targets.

SHARP: *I think I'm going to kill you. And you know... I think I'm going to enjoy it?*

PSEUDO: Mm. Good speech, old mole. Now let's go give Simon his medicine.

SCENE 304 – 03**LOCATION: ANBAR CORRIDOR**

(Eight transporter beams appear, depositing LORHROK, NEEVA, WESTLAKE, THE MAJOR, and THREE MARINES.)

LORHROK: So this is the *Anbar*.

NEEVA: It's seen better days, I take it.

THE MAJOR: Tread lightly. Heroes walked these halls.

LORHROK: Major?

THE MAJOR: Marines, fan out.

LORHROK: Oh, not a chance, Major.

SIMON: Alecz?

NEEVA: I'm with Simon. There's no lifesigns, sir. It's safe.

LORHROK: Whatever we're supposed to find here, just knowing about it got Leo Amara and David Robins killed. There's no rush; we stick together.

(Lorhrok pulls out his tricorder.)

NEEVA: If you insist.

LORHROK: I do. Let's make for this cargo hold. It looks like somebody converted it into some kind of control center. Simon, stay close. Your dad would kill me if anything happened to you, and that's if I didn't kill me first.

SIMON: Sure thing, boss. I wouldn't wish one of me dad's tirades on anyone.

LORHROK: Let's move.

THE MAJOR: Sir, yes, sir. Marines, fall in!

(They fall in right quick and the team starts to walk forward.)

(Neeva comes up alongside Lorhrok.)

NEEVA: You know, sir, playing it safe here just means we have to spend more time in the Borg graveyard.

LORHROK: I'm willing to risk a few extra goosebumps if it keeps the team safe.

NEEVA: I'll bet you a night shift you're being overcautious.

LORHROK: I only gamble with the Captain.

NEEVA: Is that a command staff privilege?

LORHROK: No; he's just really bad at it.

NEEVA: (chuckles)

SIMON: Alecz, what happened here?

LORHROK: From the total ruin they made of this deck, I'd say a battle.

NEEVA: A huge battle. It's amazing any of the ship is still pressurized.

LORHROK: After what this old girl has been through, it's amazing there's still a ship at all. Look at this place! That's the impulse manifold! Maker knows how it got up here!

NEEVA: Do you think it was the battle that wiped them out?

LORHROK: If it wasn't the battle, I can't imagine what. But the corridors —

SIMON: Wait. Wiped them out?

LORHROK: Simon? What's wrong?

SIMON: Respectfully, sirs – If they all died... then where are all the bodies?

NEEVA: What? Aren't they – ? Oh. Good catch, Simon.

LORHROK: The bodies are missing. We really should have noticed that.

(Flashback noise)

SCENE 304 - 04**LOCATION: ANBAR CORRIDOR (FLASHBACK)**

NARRATOR: *October twenty-first, twenty-three eight two. Three months ago.*

COX: Permission denied. On the grounds of it being just about the dumbest idea I've ever heard.

SIRESH: Skipper Cox, I'm sorry, but we've got to see what's in — [there!]

COX: Did you make captain because of your brawn, Siresh, or did you just get so senile that Starfleet gave you a gold watch and a starship as a retirement present? I said "No." That's final.

SIRESH: Now, Skipper... that's uncalled for!

COX: It is absolutely called for, and if you had any idea what you're dealing with you'd know that.

SIRESH: Now, Skipper, my men have spent two days repressurizing this section—

COX: — without my knowledge or consent —

SIRESH: — after four days tending to your crew's needs —

COX: — for which we are very grateful —

SIRESH: — even though our express orders were to deal with the parasites first. We were supposed to let you fend for yourselves. We didn't. With all due respect, Captain Cox, you owe me. We are going to take a look at this bugbomb of yours.

(Tense silence)

SIRESH: Whether you like it or not.

WINTERS: Just who do you think you are, Captain? This isn't your — [ship!]

COX: No, Doc. Not your fight.

(Pause.)

COX: Fine, Siresh. But you're not taking your whole goddamned marine army back there. You, me, three guards. No more.

SIRESH: I defer to your judgement. Clark. Korlak. Take point.

(They fall out of line and march into position in front of the door.)

SIRESH: And... Mister Ermez! Front and center!

ERMEZ: Sir, yes sir!

(Ermez hustles forward.)

SIRESH: Ermez, your sergeant had a word with me this morning. Told me you've been down in P.T. lately. Gaining weight. Not acceptable, Mister.

ERMEZ: It's true, sir! I'm sorry, sir!

SIRESH: Your sarge wants me to make sure you get a workout today. I might just be able to give you one. Watch our six.

ERMEZ: Sir, yes sir! Sorry, sir!

(Ermez falls in with the other marines and all three charge their phasers.)

SIRESH: Pop the door, Skipper.

(Cox taps a TOS-style door control and the doors slide open. They walk through)

LOCATION: ANBAR BUGBOMBED SECTION

SIRESH: Alright, Skipper. You're not a woman who scares easy. From what you've told me about the Big Empty, you've got a stiffer spine than half the Starfleet admiralty. So educate me. What is it

about a bugbomb that's got you so scared?

COX: Ever phasered an anthill, Captain?

SIRESH: Can't say they covered it in basic, no.

COX: Imagine you blow open an ant colony, except the ants are poison and if a single one touches you, you're dead. That's a bugbomb. Except if a Zeero bugger gets you, you're not dead. You're worse: they turn you into a weapon to help kill the rest of your friends and family.

SIRESH: What happened to this one?

COX: All we know is it didn't blow up when it hit us. And it hasn't blown up since. Could be a dud. Could be part of the plan. Doesn't matter. It's given us time to fortify the deck -- make sure we can contain the entire infestation if the bomb blows. Your teams just spent two days dismantling our defenses.

SIRESH: What do you mean, it could be "part of the plan"?

COX: Bugbombs don't blow open automatically. They're blown on the inside by the lead parasite. Usually, that happens on impact, but they're patient, the buggers. Could be a day, a week... even a month.

SIRESH: The "lead parasite." You mean the queen?

COX: The.... the queen?

SIRESH: Is that not what you call them?

COX: Queens?

SIRESH: They're the big ones — Captain Picard, from the *Enterprise* — he's fought the bluegills. He had to blow up Dexter Remmick's whole torso just to get at one of the queens. Our intel shows that they're the telepathic center of every parasite hive. You know the ones I'm talking about, right? What do you call them?

COX: Why, queens, of course.

SIRESH: Pardon?

COX: Captain Siresh, queens could not possibly lead a Zeero family. They're not called hives, by the way. The buggers work in families. Command is handed down father to son, King to King.

SIRESH: Why not the queens? They're obviously the central component in – [the biological processes of the bluegill hives.]

COX: The queens aren't intelligent, Captain.

SIRESH: You mean, they're not good at strategy?

COX: No, I mean they don't have brains, Siresh. Queens aren't sentient. They're not people, even to the buggers. They're important, because families can't function without queen biology. They're dangerous, because kings can hide inside their queens, which makes the only sign of infestation a little weight gain. But commanders... without brains... My God, Captain, how much did you actually know about the Zeero before you barged onto this deck and put both our crews at risk? I've lost enough people already, God dammit!

SIRESH: The Sword of Damocles has been a top priority since the bluegill infiltration at Starfleet Headquarters. That was in twenty-three-sixty-four.

COX: So that's given you, what? About two weeks?

SIRESH: Skipper, I know you learned a lot about the buggers out there in the Big Empty, but I'd ask you not to belittle almost two decades of hard and dangerous —

COX

Two decades? I didn't have the benefit of your Federation education, but, by my math, you won't have two "decades" of experience until the middle of the eighties!

(Pause.)

SIRESH: Skipper... what year do you think this is?

COX: It was hard, keeping track of the calendar out in the Big Empty, but we did our best. By our count, it's got to be... March, twenty-three sixty-three. Sounds like we're a little off.

SIRESH: Skipper, it's October twenty-first... in the Year of Our Lord twenty-three eighty-two.

COX: We didn't misplace nineteen years out there.

SIRESH: I'm sure you didn't. Which means... When you drilled a Passage through the Galactic Barrier... is it possible you drilled a hole in time as well as space?

COX: I'm no scientist, but if there was any possibility, my crew would've found out. So, no. Not a chance.

SIRESH: Then what...?

COX: Or who?

(They come to a stop. The bugbomb — a cylinder as tall as a short woman — hums menacingly in the background.)

DOOMED MARINE #1: Sir? We're here.

(Siresh approaches it.)

SIRESH: So I see. Not a very complicated instrument. Just a cylinder with thrusters.

(One of the marines pulls out his tricorder and starts scanning.)

COX: Don't touch it! It doesn't have to be complicated.

SIRESH: I know. Simplest is deadliest. Learned that in the War. I'll be careful.

COX: There are exactly ten thousand neural parasites in there. And they are always hungry.

SIRESH: I said I'll be careful.

(Pause. He touches it.)

He continues to run his hand slowly over the casing as he says:

SIRESH: (Quoting Percy Shelley) "...And on the pedestal these words appear: 'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings.'" (Pause.) We can sterilize this section from the *Excelsior*. Full phaser batteries, precision strike.

COX: You can blow up the whole ship for all I care. My crew buried its last casualty an hour ago. The *Anbar*'s work is done. Time to discharge my last responsibility.

SIRESH: I'll start the evacuation.

COX: I'll give the order.

DOOMED MARINE #1: Excuse me, sirs. Skipper, did you say there are ten thousand parasite drones in a bugbomb?

COX: Sure. Ten thousand drones and a few dozen queen spores.

DOOMED MARINE #1: Exactly ten thousand drones, ma'am?

SIRESH: What are you getting at, Corporal?

DOOMED MARINE #1: My tricorder reads only nine thousand nine hundred ninety-nine.

(Pause.)

COX: We're one short.

SIRESH: Skipper, is it possible — [that there's an irregularity?]

COX: No.

(Siresh smacks his combadge.)

SIRESH: Siresh to *Excelsi--* ! (Cox activates her phaser) Skipper, what the devil?

(The other two marines instantly retaliated by raising and charging their phaser rifles.)

DOOMED MARINE #1: Ma'am, get your weapon the hell away from Mister Ermez.

COX: Weight gain! I should have seen it earlier!

SIRESH: Whoa! Slow down!

COX: Get away from Ermez, Captain.

DOOMED MARINE #1: Ma'am, I will not ask you again. I will burn you down. Put. Your. Weapon. Down!

SIRESH: Stand down, marine! Skipper, why are you aiming a phaser at my man?

(Ermez slips smoothly behind Siresh and charges his rifle.)

ERMEZ Because I'm not your man... "Captain." Don't move.

DOOMED MARINE #1: Step away from the captain! NOW!

PSEUDO-ERMEZ: I have a better idea. How about everyone backs off? Combades on the floor — everyone against that wall. I think this is what you gents call... a "stickup."

COX: Ermez has been infested, Captain.

PSEUDO-ERMEZ: Yes, thank you, Skipper Obvious. And it's not "infest," it's "cohabitate." We focus-tested that for weeks, so I'm afraid I must insist. Now, how about you lower your phaser before I turn this chap's intestines into confetti?

SIRESH: Hang on. I'm Sharvah Siresh of the *Starship Excelsior*. We come in peace. Who are you?

PSEUDO-ERMEZ: You think this is a first contact mission, Sharv? You can't have my name, and I don't come in peace.

SIRESH: Then you can go straight to hell.

(Siresh pulls and charges his phaser, but it's too late; Pseudo has pulled the trigger on his.)

PSUEDO-ERMEZ: You first!

(But Pseudo's not firing at Siresh; instead, he strikes the bugbomb, the front of which explodes outward. We hear ten thousand tiny insects squeaking and they skitter outwards in a stream. Meanwhile, Ermez turns and runs down the corridor.)

PSUEDO-ERMEZ: Toodles!

SIRESH: He missed?

COX: No, he didn't miss -- he's blown open the bugbomb!

DOOMED MARINE #1: They're everywhere!

(The marines start firing phaser rifle pulses into the crowd of buggers.)

SIRESH: Skipper, get out of here! Get out of here and warn Commander Cortez! We'll hold them off!

COX: Thank you for the rescue, Captain. Thank you for everything. Good-bye.

(Cox begins to run.)

COX: Hey, God! I'll make you a deal: you can kill me, infest me, send me to Hell. I don't care what you do to me. Just stop making the people I love pay for my mistakes! Okay? Okay, God? Do we have a deal? (Pause) Yeah. I thought not.

(Flashback noise.)

SCENE 304 - 05**LOCATION: ANBAR CORRIDOR**

NARRATOR: *January twenty-first, twenty-three eighty-three. The present day.*

SIMON: Alecz. I think this is the bridge.

LORHROK: Looks like, Simon. No power to the door. Go ahead and put a door-force on it, Simon.

SIMON: Right quick, sir.

(He unstraps something from a velcro utility belt and attaches it to the wall. It hums for a moment and the door opens.)

LORHROK: Okay, let's get — [everyone inside and see what's still working.]

NEEVA: Wait.

LORHROK: Marines, hold. Neeva?

NEEVA: Did anyone else hear that?

LORHROK: Hear what, Commander?

NEEVA: I don't know. It was... probably just a leaky pipe in the bulkhead.

(The Major raises and charges his phaser.)

THE MAJOR: Marines, establish a perimeter around this bridge. Cover all three doors. Keep your lights on. Sirs, if you could all please step inside...?

NEEVA: Really, Major, it was nothing.

THE MAJOR: Ma'am, I'd feel more comfortable this way, ma'am.

LORHROK: Your comfort is my comfort, Major. We were just going in anyway. Load 'em up, subcrew.

(They enter the bridge. The marines move quickly to their perimeter positions and recharge their phasers. Neeva cracks out a tricorder, and the engineers sort of wander around looking at things.)

NEEVA: Wow. Not quite my picture of a command center. Are those dabo tables?

SIMON: Yes.... but they've been reconfigured to work as old-style NAVCOMs. That's awfully clever.

THE MAJOR: First thing I noticed was the blast doors. You drop those, and you couldn't get a cockroach in here without setting off an alarm.

LORHROK

Alright, people. Let's solve this mystery and get home. Simon, set up the fusion cells. Neeva, let's figure out these consoles. And Major...

THE MAJOR: Sir, I know my job, sir.

LORHROK: Of course. Neeva?

(They walk over to the consoles.)

THE MAJOR: Martinez, grab some scrap metal and weld it over those vents. I want this room secure. Freemdee, Florez: the doors. I want the blast doors in place as soon as we have power online.

LORHROK: Hello! Look at this, Neeva!

(He walks over to it and runs an engineering tool over it. Neeva joins him, with a tricorder.)

LORHROK: Wouldn't have expected to find one of these on a century-old cargo ship. Even all burned out like this.

NEEVA: My tricorder's identifying it as an "ansible." I'm too embarrassed to admit I don't know what that is.

LORHROK: No surprise. They're purely theoretical. In fact... Truth to tell, the only people who believe in these things are conspiracy theorists and Scion hunters.

NEEVA: What are they supposed to do?

LORHROK: Instantaneous communication, across any distance. Supposedly, the Scions of the Stars needed them to maintain their empire... and they would have needed something like this to talk to anybody out in the Intergalactic Void, because the distance between stars out there is so vast.

NEEVA: How do they work?

LORHROK: Supposedly? Transplexing inversion. Actually? I have no idea; it looks like somebody deliberately phasered this one. It's dead.

NEEVA: Well, we can take it back to the ship with us. Underwood will love it, at the very least.

LORHROK: Let's do that. I wish we knew where this ship has been for eighty years.

(Suddenly, Simon's tricorder goes nuts.)

SIMON: Whoa!

LORHROK: Simon?

(Then, just as suddenly, it stops.)

SIMON: I don't know. My tricorder picked up a life sign for a moment. At least, I thought it did.

NEEVA: What was it?

SIMON: It was moving very, very fast.

LORHROK: Major --

THE MAJOR: Florez, get our sensor sentry set up now. And do not take your eyes off that

passageway. Martinez, aren't you done that welding yet? Then take Freemdee and start mining the approaches to this room. Three meter trigger, photonic detonation. Go!

(The marines go.)

LORHROK: Simon?

SIMON: Yeah, boss?

LORHROK: Come here. Stay close. (He taps his combadge.) Lorhrok to *Excelsior*.

DOVAN: *Excelsior here. Report, Mister Lorhrok.*

LORHROK: Could be some trouble over here, sir. We're getting some weird readings. We'll learn everything we can, but be ready to beam us out.

DOVAN: *Absolutely. Mister Underwood, confirm our transporter lock. What kind of trouble?*

(Westlake's tricorder starts beeping again, less urgently.)

WESTLAKE: Alec? I'm reading a power fluctuation.

LORHROK: On the *Excelsior*?

WESTLAKE: No, right here, sir.

LORHROK: Neeva?

NEEVA: Wasn't me.

LORHROK: Major?

THE MAJOR: Sir, no sir.

DOVAN: *Lorhrok, we're getting a strange power reading from over there. Did you just turn on the log*

recorder?

LORHROK: Haven't even hooked up the power packs yet, sir.

WESTLAKE: It's not us. It's... the communications array?

YUBARI: *Yubari here. I agree. The Anbar is trying to send out a message, but it doesn't have enough power to break through the ion storm.*

DOVAN: *That's one too many anomalies for me. You want to get out of there, Lieutenant?*

LORHROK: Heartily, sir.

DOVAN: (STATICKY) *Prepare for beaming.*

LORHROK: Captain?

DOVAN: (STATICKIER!) *Underwood, where's my transporter lock! GET THEM BA — [CK!]*

(The commlink closes suddenly, with an audible "communicator failed.")

LORHROK: Captain? Captain Dovan!

NEEVA: Sir, the hold!

(The bridge has suddenly, with a quick power ramp-up, started coming back to life!)

SIMON: It's powering up!

LORHROK: Neeva, was that us?!

NEEVA: No, sir!

LORHROK: Then what —

(Simon's tricorder goes off.)

SIMON: Alecz! Lifesigns again! Moving fast in our direction!

LORHROK: How many?

SIMON: Thousands.

(Lorhrok slaps his combadge again.)

LORHROK: *Excelsior*, emergency beam out! Code green!

THE MAJOR: Marines, fall back to the blast doors! Fall —

(He is interrupted by a photonic mine detonating from down the corridor on the left — followed by a very human scream!)

(And then the skittering and squeaking sound from scene three: thousands of small insect-like creatures crawling on every surface in the corridor outside, coming closer, fast! The sound begins to grow...)

THE MAJOR: Mister Freemdee! Caligosus Freemdee!

(The sound of the bluegills coming closer is still growing.)

THE MAJOR: Marines, open fire!

(The major and his two surviving troops all recharge their phaser rifles one more time and let 'em rip into the swarm. It doesn't slow them.)

THE MAJOR: Sirs! The blast door, sirs!

(Lorhrok runs to the console next to the door.)

LORHROK: I've got it! Neeva, Simon, the other two!

(Lorhrok slams down on a control button, and the thick metal blast door slams down like a guillotine, severely muffling the now-terrifyingly-close sounds of the swarm. Neeva and Simon are running to the other two doors and do the same on those. The marines stop firing as soon as the first blast door is in place.)

NEEVA: There. That'll buy us some time.

THE MAJOR: Time, sirs, but not safety.

NEEVA: What are those things? What'd they do to Caligosus?

THE MAJOR: Respectfully, ma'am... the same thing they did to Ensign Ermez, ma'am.

LORHROK: Then the bluegills are now armed with a marine-issue phaser rifle. The blast doors won't hold for long.

(Sensor alerts sound on the *Anbar* control consoles.)

SIMON: Alecz, the *Excelsior*!

LORHROK: What is it?

SIMON: It's their deflector dish!

NEEVA: It's powering up.

LORHROK: What's going on over there?

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR DEFLECTOR CONTROL ROOM

(The secondary red alert klaxon sounds off in the background – quietly. Psuedo-Sharp is rapidly keying in commands on the computer panels.)

PSEUDO: Computer, lock the deflector control room.

COMPUTER: *That command is not available.*

PSEUDO: Figured. Ah, well.

(She stops keying in commands for a moment to take a phaser off her belt and charge it. She then returns to keying commands.)

PSEUDO: Let the record show that I tried to avoid pointless bloodshed.

SHARP: *So you do care about bloodshed?*

PSEUDO: Oh, you again. Now's not the best time, old mole.

SHARP: *For you or for me?*

PSEUDO: There is no you. Very soon, you won't even be an echo.

SHARP: *Didn't we discuss the possibility that I'm stronger than you think?*

(A small alert on Pseudo's console.)

PSEUDO: You think you're strong enough to outwill me. Well here's your chance.

(Turning off the alert, Pseudo stops keying in commands, picks up the phaser off the counter and faces the door.)

PSEUDO: A security officer's about to walk through that door. I'm going to shoot him. Try and stop me.

(Pause.)

SHARP: *What happens if I win?*

PSEUDO: You won't.

(The door opens.)

RANDOM CREWMEMBER #1: Doctor Sharp? We had a security alert.

PSEUDO: Ensign! Thank God you're here!

(The ensign starts walking toward Pseudo.)

PSEUDO: The deflector dish just started --

(She fires.)

(He yells and crumples to the ground, dead.)

SHARP: *No! I'm sorry, Ensign.*

PSEUDO: One down, one to go.

(She resumes keying in commands.)

PSEUDO: Computer, begin powerup cycle of the enhanced sensor array, authorization Dovan-Quattvor-Septem.

(Computer makes a denial boop.)

COMPUTER: *Authorization denied. Voiceprint not recognized.*

PSEUDO: Computer, run program Ermez-double-oh-seven and reauthorize.

(The computer acknowledges then makes a series of denial noises. Finally the computer makes an "okay all clear" sound)

COMPUTER: *Access granted. Powerup sequence initiated.*

SHARP: *How are you doing this?*

PSEUDO: I spent two months in an engineer's body. Ensign Ermez and I put holes in half the *Excelsior's* computer systems. And right now... Captain Dovan will be on his way.

SHARP: *What are you going to do?*

PSEUDO: Kill him, of course. And it looks like you can't stop me.

SCENE 303 – 06**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE**

(Sensor alert at Yubari's console.)

YUBARI: Ensign Enderby hasn't checked in yet.

DOVAN: Have we restored communications or sensors down there?

YUBARI: No, sir. Engineering still doesn't have an explanation for what's happening in deflector control.

DOVAN: Mister Enderby's overdue. Let's send another — [team down there.]

(A sensor alert sounds)

YUBARI: (Interrupting) Sir, someone just activated my sensor enhancements on the deflector.

DOVAN: That's a secured function. Who gave the authorization?

(She taps through some readouts.)

YUBARI: According to the computer... you did, Captain.

DOVAN: Of course. Only the captain can activate those sensors.

(Dovan stands.)

DOVAN: I'm going down there.

YUBARI: You mean we're going down there.

DOVAN: Not a chance, Lieutenant. Something's happening on the *Anbar*, and we've lost contact with our away team. Stay at tactical. Have a security team meet me at deflector control.

UNDERWOOD: Belay that. Have security meet me there, Lieutenant. You're staying on the bridge where you belong, Doe-ven.

DOVAN: Double belay that! Only I could turn those sensors on, Underwood. Only I can turn them off. You both stay here.

YUBARI: Acknowledged under protest, sir.

DOVAN: Protest noted. Mister Underwood... (quiet sigh) I just lost a bet.

UNDERWOOD: How so?

DOVAN: Promised I'd never say this, but... Mister Underwood, you have the bridge. Get our people out of there. Alive.

(Underwood rises.)

UNDERWOOD: Of course.

DOVAN: Right.

(He moves for the turbolifts.)

UNDERWOOD: Dovan -- (pronounced correctly: "DOE-ven")

DOVAN: Yes?

UNDERWOOD: Good luck.

DOVAN: Thanks.

(The turbolift doors close on him.)

SCENE 303 – 07**LOCATION: ANBAR – THE HOLD**

(We can hear the swarm surrounding the Hold. Neeva is scanning around with her tricorder. Meanwhile, muffled behind one of the doors off to the side is the sound of a marine phaser rifle, firing steadily.)

NEEVA: There are lifesigns all around us, now. They have all three exits covered. We're surrounded.

THE MAJOR: Whatever's taken over Mister Freemdee is firing on the blast door. We don't have long.

LORHROK: Then our only hope of getting out of this is the *Excelsior*.

SIMON: I still can't get a signal through.

LORHROK: Do we know why yet? A dampening field?

THE MAJOR: Sir.

LORHROK: Major?

THE MAJOR: I think it's the buggers themselves, sir.

NEEVA: How so?

LORHROK: That could be. Apparently, they're invisible to sensor beams, except when they're moving fast or at very close range.

SIMON: I still can't get a clear lock on any individuals.

LORHROK: So now that we're surrounded, their combined dampening effect is blocking all signals. Not bad, you two. So all we have to do to get out of here is make them go away for a few seconds. And all we have to do to make them go away is... Did anyone bring a sonic screwdriver with them?

WESTLAKE: No.

NEEVA: No.

LORHROK: No. Okay. That's okay. Simon, see if you can jury-rig your tricorder to emit a sonic pulse. Neeva, try do — [ing something clever with the Anbar's intercom].

(The repeated phaser blasting from outside finally explodes a big hole in the blast door. The swarm horde descends on them, squeaking and skittering all the way. The marines instantly open fire.)

NEEVA: It's no good! They're through the blast door!

THE MAJOR: Marines, encircle the officers! You will keep them alive at! Any! Cost!

LORHROK: Simon, keep trying!

NEEVA: What about me, sir?

LORHROK: Fire at will!

(With that, he and Neeva unholster their hand phasers and open fire in short bursts.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CORRIDOR

(Still at red alert. Dovan striding quickly but confidently down the hallway.)

DOVAN: Computer, status of deflector dish.

COMPUTER: *Deflector dish online. Enhanced sensor array initializing.*

DOVAN: How many people in deflector control?

COMPUTER: *One.*

DOVAN: Identify.

COMPUTER: *Commander Alcar Dovan.*

(He stops and taps a few buttons quickly.)

DOVAN: Computer, open weapons locker seventeen-kay, authorization Dovan-Quattuor-Septem.

(The computer beep-boops acknowledgement and the weapons locker opens up. Dovan grabs a standard hand phaser from the rack, charges it, and resumes walking.)

DOVAN: Close weapons locker.

(The weapons locker does so.)

DOVAN: Dovan to Bridge.

UNDERWOOD: *Bridge here.*

DOVAN: I'm almost to Deflector Control. I'll probably lose contact with you as soon as I go in there.

UNDERWOOD: *Acknowledged.*

YUBARI: *Yubari here, captain. Security team is only a minute behind you.*

(Dovan reaches the doors, stops.)

DOVAN: Good. I'll wait.

PSEUDO-SHARP: (muffled through door) Help! *Someone out there!* Help me!

DOVAN: Doctor Sharp? Correction, bridge: I'm going in!

(He presses the door control, and the doors slide open.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE

UNDERWOOD: Deflector control? Are you there? Gone.

YUBARI: Underwood, did you hear what he said before we lost him?

UNDERWOOD: Yeah, I think he said something about Doctor Sharp.

YUBARI: Doctor... Sharp?

(She hits the shipwide intercom.)

YUBARI: All security units, converge on deflector control! Apprehend Doctor Sharp!

(Underwood is hard at work at his computer console.)

UNDERWOOD: Yubari, we have another problem.

YUBARI: What?

UNDERWOOD: The deflector's finished powering up. It's intercepting the low-power transmission from the *Anbar* and... ..and amplifying it!

YUBARI: What does the message say?

UNDERWOOD: One word. Just one word. (Pause.) "Now."

(Yubari's panel sounds many alerts.)

YUBARI: Sir, three unknown vessels just dropped out of warp! They're charging weapons!

UNDERWOOD: Raise shields!

(Yubari is just in time, as the first barrage strikes the ship hard, immediately blowing out a nearby console.)

UNDERWOOD: Helm, put us between them and the *Anbar*! Return fire!

(Yubari does so with gusto.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR DEFLECTOR CONTROL ROOM

DOVAN: Doctor Sharp?

PSEUDO: Captain! Thank God you're here. I need your help!

(Dovan charges his phaser.)

DOVAN: I should've listened to Yubari. Back away from the console, Doctor, and prepare to be taken into custody.

(Dovan approaches.)

PSEUDO: No! Dovan! It's... not like that! I was on my way to sickbay for the red alert. I heard a phaser go off, and came running. When I got here, the door was ajar. I saw someone running away down the corridor, and Ensign Enderby here with a gunshot wound. He'll die without medical attention. I need you to compress the bleeding while I get him ready for transport. (Pause) Captain! Put down that phaser and help me!

DOVAN: I'm not sure I can do that, Doctor.

PSEUDO: Look, either you start trusting me, or Brel Enderby will die! Make your choice, Captain!

(Pause.)

(He discharges and holsters his phaser, crouching down.)

DOVAN: Alright. What do I do?

PSEUDO: Put your hands here, and here. And press hard.

DOVAN: Is this good?

(Pseudo-Sharp grabs Dovan's phaser off the ground, recharging it in the air as she levels it at him in a single fluid motion.)

PSEUDO: Oh, it's perfect... "captain."

DOVAN: Son of a... So... I guess you're not Doctor Sharp, then?

PSEUDO: I'm better. Stronger. Faster. "Sharper," you might say. I know you like puns, Captain.

DOVAN: Ha ha. Sorry. Hard to laugh with the business end of a phaser a foot from your abdomen.

PSEUDO: I'm sorry if this is uncomfortable for you. I'll make it quick. Solar plexus shot.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: I'm in no rush.

PSEUDO: Only because backup will be here in a few seconds.

DOVAN: That, and I just like stalling death. It's one of my highest ambitions.

(Pause.)

PSUEDO: What...?

DOVAN: Looks like you're a little reluctant yourself, Doctor Blunt.

PSEUDO: (growling) Very funny. It... why won't it...?

DOVAN: You can't pull the trigger, can you?

PSUEDO: Why not?

SHARP: *Are you still there... "old mole"?*

PSUEDO: YOU!

DOVAN: Ah. I see my Chief of Medicine is still with you. Hello, Melissa, I hope you're holding up alright in there.

SHARP: *Captain!*

DOVAN: Now I'm going to reach out, Melissa, and we're going to put down that phaser. Then security's going to take you into custody, and we're going to figure this all out, okay? So just hang on.

PSEUDO: (growl again) No.

DOVAN: I'm reaching for the gun...

PSEUDO: Nooo.

DOVAN: Okay, Melissa? I need you to let go now. I know it's hard. Just let go of the phaser, Melissa.

PSEUDO: NO!

(Pseudo fires! Dovan is struck in the gut and goes down!)

DOVAN: Agggh!

SHARP: *NOOOOOOO!*

(Pause. We hear... sizzling.)

DOVAN: (struggles to breathe for a second or two, fails) Finally. A vacation. Jehosephat.

(He falls unconscious.)

(The doors open. Practically a whole platoon of security storms in.)

RANDOM CREWMEMBER #2: Put your hands in the air where we can see them!

PSEUDO: I think it's time I made a swift exit. Goodbye, old mole.

SHARP: *No...*

(She stands up.)

RANDOM CREWMEMBER #2: Put your hands in the air or we will fire!

PSEUDO: Then take your best shot.

(She raises her weapon (recharging again), but before it's up three Starfleet phaser beams have dropped her to the ground.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE

(The ship is struck by another volley, and lurches hard. Communications alert on Yubari's console.)

YUBARI: Sir, security teams have secured the deflector room!

UNDERWOOD: Good! Any casualties?

YUBARI: Three officers down: Ensign Enderby, Doctor Sharp, and... And Captain Dovan.

UNDERWOOD: What?

(Another volley shakes the ship.)

YUBARI: Underwood, you're acting captain now!

(Stunned Silence. The *Excelsior* absorbs another enemy volley.)

UNDERWOOD: Then we have a fighting chance, Lieutenant.

(Another volley hits the ship.)

UNDERWOOD: Oh, what I wouldn't give to have that fighter squadron right now, Doe-ven. Helm, reposition on course zero-three-one and — [prepare to fire a full spread!]

(A proximity alert goes off. The ship is hit by one more volley.)

YUBARI: (Interrupting) Sir, there's another ship dropping out of warp!

UNDERWOOD: Identify! Is it the same kind of ship?

YUBARI: No, sir! It's a Starfleet transponder! Identifying as... Oh, no.

UNDERWOOD: Yubari! Identify!

YUBARI: Vessel identified... as the U.S.S. *Renegade*. His ship.

UNDERWOOD: General Brahms!

NARRATOR: *To be continued...*