

Starship: Excelsior
"The Pursuit"
(Season 3, Episode 2)
by James Heaney

Transcribed by Peter Stine

SCENE 302-01**LOCATION: CONTAINMENT ROOM**

(A single warning beep comes from the computer.)

COMPUTER: *Detention cell access granted. Dropping primary forcefield.*

(A muffled sound from outside: a forcefield drops. Then the room's metal door grinds up from the ground into the ceiling.)

PARKER: Guards, weapons ready. Cover the prisoner.

(Three phasers charge up in rapid succession.)

PARKER: Computer, proceed.

COMPUTER: *Dropping secondary forcefield. You have three seconds to clear the field emitters.*

(A second forcefield drops.)

(Parker enters the room and the security measures reactivate behind him.)

PARKER: Good morning, Mister Brahms.

BRAHMS: Is it already? Your interrogators have done wonderful work ruining my sleep cycles.

(Parker reaches a metal chair, pulls it out, and sits down.)

PARKER: You're not complaining about a little missed sleep, are you, General — sorry, I mean Mister Brahms?

BRAHMS: Of course not, Admiral Parker. I was commending your security team. Where's Dovan? You promised he'd be here.

PARKER: Mister Dovan... isn't coming.

BRAHMS: What? Admiral, we need Dovan. We have to explain the Sword of Damocles to him, and why Ensign Ermez bombed the *Excelsior* -- before Dovan does something... rash.

PARKER: I'm afraid it's too late for that.

BRAHMS: What do you mean?

PARKER: I'm afraid I... I let Dovan manipulate me. He provoked me, and used my reaction to help him steal the *Excelsior*. He's gone.

BRAHMS: Where. Did. He. Go?

PARKER: Our scanners say he was on course for the Hesperus Sector. A dark-matter nebula right on the edge of the old Borg war zone.

BRAHMS: The *Anbar*.

PARKER: We think so. Dovan said he was going to find the Sword of Damocles and destroy it himself.

BRAHMS: Destroy it? Ha! He probably thinks the Sword is some kind of weapon — or a secret lab!_ But the Sword is an idea. It's the answer to a question, nothing more.

PARKER: What question?

BRAHMS: "Why did the Borg only send one cube?"

PARKER: I see.

BRAHMS: I wish he could destroy the Sword.

PARKER: But you can only contain an idea.

BRAHMS: Yes, Admiral. That is the story of the last seven years of my life. And now everything I've done comes down to this: If Dovan reaches the *Anbar*, we're all dead.

PARKER: I hope not.

BRAHMS: Admiral, you know that. There's no "hope" about it. The moment we learned that Ensign Ermez was one of them, "hope" stopped being an option. You know what will happen if they reach the *Anbar*.

PARKER: I can't accept that. Hope must be an option... because Dovan is going to reach the *Anbar*.

BRAHMS: He must not.

PARKER: Nevertheless. We just got word back from our scoutship, the U.S.S. *Earhart*. The *Excelsior's* so far out of range we can't even contact them by subspace. Not even my ship could catch up in time.

BRAHMS: Mine could.

PARKER: Oh, right, the *Renegade*. Quick, deadly, and highly illegal. Much like her commander. Tell me, General, if I lost my mind and let you leave here, and you took your ship, and you somehow caught up with the *Excelsior*, what would you do then?

BRAHMS: I've said it before: I'm a soldier. Not a diplomat. I maintain the balance of power at any cost. It's the trickiest, most difficult, dirtiest game of them all... but the only one that keeps the Federation alive.

PARKER: And that's why I can't send you, Brahms. You'd murder a thousand of our own people and claim to be serving the Federation. That's not even a choice.

BRAHMS: Yes, it is, Admiral. It is a very clear choice. A choice between peace... and utter destruction. It's up to you.

PARKER: (sigh) Maybe you're right, Brahms. Maybe I'm supposed to give the order. Shoot down the *Excelsior*, sacrifice a thousand good people, save the galaxy. I admit, your logic is flawless. But I'm not capable of giving that order. And I don't want to be the sort of person who is.

BRAHMS: I see. (Pause) Then I have one more question for you, Admiral.

PARKER: I'll take one more question.

BRAHMS: Do you believe in God?

PARKER: I grew up a believer. My parents — my mother — she was very devout. But I left all that behind to put on this uniform. Starfleet believes in something... higher... than religion. And I believe in Starfleet.

BRAHMS: If I were you, I'd call your mother.

PARKER: What for?

BRAHMS: Because if you're not willing to do what's necessary, we need somebody praying for a miracle.

PARKER: That's not funny, Mister.

BRAHMS: I'm not laughing. Last chance.

PARKER: Last chance or else what?

BRAHMS: Or else this.

(Suddenly, there is a muffled explosion from somewhere outside then an alarm. The power goes out briefly, then re-engages. There are muffled shouts and phaser fire in the hallway.)

BRAHMS: I had hoped to have your cooperation. It would have made things... simpler.

PARKER: My God. What have you done?

BRAHMS: You should know by now, Admiral: I don't leave anything to prayer. I leave it to my crew.

(Another explosion, this one much closer.)

SCENE 302-02**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR in SPACE**

(The *Excelsior* warps past.)

DOVAN: *Captain's Log, Stardate Six-Zero-Zero-One-Three-Point-Six. It's been several days since I... ahem, "borrowed" the Excelsior from Starbase, but there's still no sign of pursuit. We remain on course for the Anbar, and most of the crew is in high spirits. The holdouts, unfortunately, are Commander Neeva, who wants me to follow the rules, and Commander Underwood, who wants my job. Both are bound to be disappointed. They are a minority, but a high-ranking one.*

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CORRIDOR

(Neeva and Yubari are walking.)

NEEVA: You can't just let someone get away with something like this!

YUBARI: You can if he's the captain.

NEEVA: What I said goes double for captains.

YUBARI: Look, Commander. Captain Dovan did the right thing. If the rules get in the way of that –

NEEVA: Following the rules is doing the right thing. That's why they're the rules. Otherwise you're just... making up right and wrong for yourself.

YUBARI: We've been arguing about this for twenty minutes. Aren't you bored?

NEEVA: I never get bored when I'm right.

YUBARI: You're an intransigent young hothead who doesn't know the difference between rightness and outrage.

NEEVA: That's not--! (cut off before saying "even remotely true")

YUBARI: We should be friends.

NEEVA: Excuse me?

YUBARI: I'll make it easy for you to digest, Commander: friends. Yes?

NEEVA: Um... any particular reason? We don't exactly get along.

(Reaching Yubari's quarters, they stop walking. Yubari presses the door key, opening her doors.)

YUBARI: Exactly. Moreover, you're new here. I don't have many friends, and I still have a chance to make a good impression on you. Report to my quarters tomorrow for lunch. Good night.

(Yubari turns and enters her quarters.)

NEEVA: You know, I outrank — (The door closes in front of her) ...you.

LOCATION: YUBARI'S QUARTERS

COMPUTER: *Welcome home, Asuka Yubari.*

YUBARI: That's Lieutenant Yubari, Computer. Any messages for me?

COMPUTER: *One message. Doctor Melissa Sharp said:*

(A computer boop.)

SHARP: *Lieutenant... um, Yuuuuu...bari? Uh, right. Uh, look. I went back downstairs and pulled out Ermez's slab again. That's three times I've rechecked for you, and, no, there's still no sign that the blue-gill in his neck had any influence over his higher brain functions. The gill's not even there anymore, so whatever it was-- I mean, yeah, I know, you're frosted about the medical logs being deleted, but technical errors just happen some--*

YUBARI: Computer, stop. (Computer complies) (sigh) I thought when we proved that Ensign Ermez planted the bomb on deck five, the investigation was over. Now I've spent days on the case, I don't have a motive or a means, and my only lead's dried up. Computer, give me some music. It's gonna be another long night.

COMPUTER: *Specify music.*

YUBARI: I don't know. Surprise me.

(The computer beeps.)

(Ruth Crawford-Seegal's Modernist "Prayers of Steel" comes on at high volume. Yubari gives it about one second.)

YUBARI: AH! Stop it! Turn that off!

(The computer beeps; the music stops abruptly.)

YUBARI: Alright, Computer. Give me something by... Blaze of Andor.

(The computer complies. A much quieter organ piece launches: "Hymne à l'Hiver" by Michael Blais.)

YUBARI: Much better. Start boiling some tea, computer, and let me know when it's warm. I'll be on my couch, with two padds and five hundred hours of security footage. Also, computer, run a voiceprint analysis on Dr. Sharp.

COMPUTER: *Voiceprint analysis is a restricted function. Privacy protocol—*

YUBARI: Security override, computer. I know it's out of the ordinary, but Dr. Sharp just doesn't seem... Wait. I don't need to justify my decisions to a computer. Override! Now!

(The computer complies with a beep-boop. Yubari crosses to a really cushy couch and keeps right on talking as she sinks into it. A hologram quietly materializes somewhere in the back of the room.)

YUBARI: (sighs pleasantly) Ohhh... I love this couch. (drowsily) Actually, Computer... (yawn) hold my calls. I think I'll wait for that... analysis and... rest my... eyes...

KORG: You should never sleep in the middle of a room, Asuka--

(Yubari leaps out of her seat.)

YUBARI: Who are — get down on the floor and start talking if you value your... ...Korg?

KORG: --because you never know who might sneak up behind you. I could have been a Betazoid assassin.

(Yubari presses two buttons on the wall next to her, which turns off the music. Yes, it's Karl Puder's Korg, from *Star Trek: The Section 31 Files* and *Hidden Frontier*! If you were super into Star Trek audio drama in 2005-07, this is hot stuff. If you weren't... well, then you're a normal person, carry on.)

YUBARI: And if you had been, I'd have killed you where you stood. But I could tell you were no Betazoid.

KORG: And how is that? Did it come to you in a dream while you were sleeping on that cushy human couch?

YUBARI: I didn't need to have my eyes open to smell the Klingon from here.

KORG: And I would not have needed my eyes to behead your gormless body from five paces!

(Yubari cracks. She starts laughing.)

YUBARI: (laughingly) Gormless? Is that even a word? Alright, you got me. Oh, it's good to see you, Korg. How have you been? I heard a rumor you'd been promoted. Something that involves you commanding an awful lot of Klingon troops.

KORG: It is good to see you as well, old friend. I'm afraid the rumors are true. These are desperate times for the Federation, and apparently I am the desperate measure. I can only serve my people as best I can, and hope that it is enough. And how are you, Asuka? I see you have changed divisions

once again. Chief of Security. It suits you.

YUBARI: Thank you, Korg. I wouldn't still be wearing a uniform if it weren't for you. I owe you.

KORG: Serve with honor and your debt will be repaid.

YUBARI: That's what you always say. How exactly did you get in here? Officially, I'm supposed to call an intruder alert right now. Your being here without my knowing is... a little embarrassing.

KORG: Don't worry, Asuka. I am half a galaxy away. Right now, I am connected to an advanced holo-telegraphy device that is projecting my image onto the *Excelsior*.

YUBARI: There are no holo-emitters in my quarters.

KORG: Please, try not to think about that. I work with an organization that... knows its way around such limitations.

YUBARI: Sounds like something General Brahms would know about.

KORG: Unfortunately, Lieutenant, you are exactly correct. I am calling to warn you.

YUBARI: Warn me?

KORG: A secret Starfleet facility on Union Three has been attacked. General Isaac Brahms has escaped incarceration.

YUBARI: No. No. Not after everything we did. Not after everyone who died – not after Rol! He can't!

KORG: Nonetheless, Asuka, he has escaped. And he has repaired his ship: the *Renegade* entered cloak as soon as it cleared the Gateway.

YUBARI: You know about Brahms's cloaking device?

KORG: The *Renegade* is *Kindred*-class. I am... familiar... with that design. For example: the *Renegade*

cannot maintain high warp speeds for as long as the *Excelsior* can. All else being equal, he cannot catch up with you.

YUBARI: So we're safe?

KORG: I would not say that. Captain Dalonna and I once worked with General Brahms on a mission. I observed him closely. He is... crafty. Shrewd. And his crew is as loyal as the Invincible Legion of Kahless. There can be no more dangerous combination. He will find a way to catch you, if you let him.

YUBARI: You say you know the *Renegade*. Are there any weaknesses?

KORG: Only one that you can exploit. When under cloak, the *Renegade* switches all its communications to a sub-etha waveband.

YUBARI: It's impossible to send communications over sub-etha. Everyone knows that.

KORG: That's what Starfleet Intelligence wants you to think. Because if everyone thinks sub-etha communication is impossible —

YUBARI: — then no one will be looking for hidden transmissions on the sub-etha wavebands. Of course. I used to think of things like that.

KORG: An occupational hazard, Asuka. I am pleased that you have left the Intelligence services. Security is a more honorable — (pause) Someone's coming. I can't be seen using this transmitter.

YUBARI: Korg. You're not doing anything *illegal* on my behalf, are you?

KORG: Only a little. But I'm more worried about word of this conversation getting back to Brahms. He has friends everywhere. And if he finds out I've warned you...

YUBARI: We lose our advantage. I understand. Thank you, Korg. It was good to see you.

KORG: And you, Asuka. Die well. Korg out.

(The hologram vanishes. Yubari taps her combadge.)

YUBARI: Yubari to Dovan. Captain, I have some bad news.

DOVAN: *Great! I have bad news for you, too, Lieutenant. And I guarantee you mine's worse.*

YUBARI: I just found out that--

DOVAN: *It really has to wait, Lieutenant. Report to the bridge. We're under attack.*

YUBARI: What?

(The ship trembles under weapons fire.)

DOVAN: (all-ship intercom) *Red alert! All hands to battlestations! Red alert! All hands to battlestations!*

(Red alert klaxons erupt in the background.)

OPENING CREDITS

SCENE 302-03**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR TURBOLIFT**

(The turbolift is moving. Yubari's inside.)

(Suddenly, the turbolift slows to a stop and the doors open.)

YUBARI: Excuse me? This is a priority turbocar. Wait for — Oh, it's you, Lorhrok. Get in.

(Lorhrok and Westlake step onto the car. The doors close.)

YUBARI: Bridge?

LORHROK: Bridge would be perfect. Mister Westlake here is coming along.

WESTLAKE: (With forced seriousness) Lieutenant.

LORHROK: Computer, resume--

(A particularly vicious torpedo strikes amidships, shaking the whole turbocar.)

(Lorhrok, Westlake, & Yubari all grunt.)

(Turbolift resumes.)

LORHROK: That sounded bad.

WESTLAKE: I don't think so. It felt like it hit near the ship's library.

LORHROK: No one's in that section right now. I hope you're right, Simon.

YUBARI: Simon's coming? Isn't he a little... little?

WESTLAKE: I can speak for myself, you know.

YUBARI: He's, what, seventeen?

LORHROK: That's enlistment age.

YUBARI: You know what I mean.

WESTLAKE: I'm right here, sirs!

LORHROK: No, Yubari, I'm pretty sure I don't. Simon's become one of my best damage control operators, and if we get blown up he'll be just as dead whether he's on the bridge or in his quarters.

YUBARI: But can he function on the bridge? While we're under fire?

WESTLAKE: I handled myself pretty well at Valandria!

LORHROK: It's... different... on the bridge, Simon. You... When this turbolift opens and we walk out onto the bridge, we might find anything at all. Could be Craylon. Could be Hirogen. Could be Borg. While we're in this turbolift, anything's possible.

YUBARI: You might die up there. You might see people die up there. Some people might already be dead — or, worse: dying.

LORHROK: And there's nothing you can do about it. You did well at Valandria, but death... death's a sight you've not yet known.

WESTLAKE: The captain won't let that happen.

LORHROK: When you're in engineering, you can believe that. When you're on the bridge, you suddenly realize that the captain... is really just a man, like you or me.

YUBARI: And he does make mistakes. Sometimes fatal ones. While you're in this elevator, you just don't know.

(The lift is hit by another torpedo. The occupants are tossed to the side and they grunt.)

LORHROK: What this lift reminds you – what it *always* reminds you – is that You Are *Powerless*. A good thing to remember when you're going where we're going.

WESTLAKE: Alecz, I'm terminally ill! I'm not scared of death!

YUBARI: There are scarier things than dying, Westlake. Are you a competent engineer?

WESTLAKE: I think so.

YUBARI: Westlake, can you repair a fried plasma relay, blindfolded, with one hand tied behind your back and the other half-scalded by an explosion, while your best friend Alecz here bleeds to death on the floor next to you?

WESTLAKE: I... I don't know.

YUBARI: Westlake: are you afraid?

WESTLAKE: I am now.

YUBARI: Good. Then you're ready.

(At this moment, the turbolift begins to decelerate and stops.)

WESTLAKE: What? But now I don't want to be here!

LORHROK: Exactly.

(At precisely that moment, the doors open. They all enter the bridge.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE

(Two quantum torpedoes are fired in the background.)

RANDOM CREWMEMBER #1: Torpedoes missed, sir!

DOVAN: Retarget and fire when ready, Ensign.

YUBARI: Don't bother. You're relieved, Ensign. And you can report to the targeting simulator as soon as we stand down.

YUBARI: What's our status, captain?

DOVAN: Two Vaadwaur fighters. Pulled us out of warp with an interdiction field and opened fire.

LORHROK: Vaadwaur? The Federation hasn't encountered them in two years.

DOVAN: Mister Lorhrok? I assumed our Chief Engineer would be staying in engineering during a battle.

(Lorhrok takes his seat.)

LORHROK: Funny. I figured the ship's Executive Officer ought to be up here with the captain.

DOVAN: Hm. Guess we should have talked about this before the shooting started.

LORHROK: I'll put it on the agenda for our next meeting. Now, what about the Vaadwaur?

DOVAN: Neeva, pull us back to two-one-four mark four. See if we can break up their formation.

NEEVA: Aye, sir.

DOVAN: So far, we've been fighting defensively and so are they.

LORHROK: That's odd. They attacked us first.

NEEVA: It's as if they're... confused.

YUBARI: Like they expected something different when they attacked the most powerful ship in the quadrant?

NEEVA: It sounds strange, but... yes. That's what it looks like.

DOVAN: They keep targeting our engines.

NEEVA: Speaking of which, they're coming around for another pass. Targeting the starboard nacelles.

(Weapons fire – multiple rapid, light impacts.)

LORHROK: Shields holding, but they won't for long, sir. We need to end this, now, or we're going to have to find someplace to stop for repairs.

DOVAN: Yubari, return fire.

YUBARI: On it.

(She does so, and her torpedoes hit – but she still can't break through their shields. She pounds her console once with her fist.)

YUBARI: Ugh!

DOVAN: Lieutenant?

YUBARI: A good hit, sir. My third so far. That ship should be crippled or in pieces right now. But I can't even break through its shields.

LORHROK: Really?

(Lorhrok begins to check some sensor readings on the console next to his chair.)

DOVAN: That's strange.

NEEVA: Could the Vaadwaur have upgraded their fighters in the last two years?

DOVAN: It's a possibility.

LORHROK: No, sir, I don't think that's it.

DOVAN: You have a better explanation?

LORHROK: When I was on the *Steadfast*, we saw a lot of action against pirates. You remember; the Orion Syndicate was a big problem after the War.

DOVAN: I recall.

LORHROK: Pirates aren't trying to win long battles against capital ships. They want to attack with surprise, quickly overwhelm resistance, and take what they can before Starfleet comes to the rescue. Their whole strategy is based on trading long-term endurance for short-term advantage.

NEEVA: They're regrouping for another attack!

DOVAN: What's the upshot, X.O.?

LORHROK: If these pirates are anything like ours, they're using shield focusing techniques to temporarily strengthen their shields wherever we hit them. It gives them the appearance of much stronger shields for a short time, but actually it's spreading their power too thin. They can't keep it up – and if we apply pressure, they should collapse.

YUBARI: Poor way to attack a ship of the line.

LORHROK: They're pirates.

NEEVA: Ten seconds!

DOVAN: How, Alec?

LORHROK: Weak phaser beams, hitting them simultaneously in six or seven different places. Their screens will shatter like glass.

NEEVA: Here they come!

DOVAN: Yubari, do it!

YUBARI: Firing!

(Multiple short-burst phaser bursts and the first enemy fighter goes up in a fireball.)

YUBARI: It worked, sir! First target destroyed.

DOVAN: Target the other one. See if you can disable without destroying.

NEEVA: Too late, sir; they're retreating.

(Yubari impotently fires a few shots after the surviving fighter as it escapes into warp.)

NEEVA: Enemy vessel has gone to warp, captain.

DOVAN: Very good. Stand down red alert.

(Red alert klaxon ends; green alert klaxon chimes once.)

DOVAN: Damage report.

LORHROK: Minor, sirs. Shields are scuffed; damage to the starboard nacelle has lowered our maximum warp factor by three percent.

WESTLAKE: Damage control teams are on the way. Should only take a few hours to fix.

NEEVA: In short... almost no damage, Captain.

LORHROK: This whole thing is bizarre. Why would two pirates attack a *Sovereign*-class starship? We outmatched them ten-to-one.

DOVAN: They retreated as soon as they realized that.

YUBARI: They'll be back, sir.

LORHROK: You sound pretty certain, Lieutenant.

YUBARI: I am certain. Their attacks on our engines are no accident. They're going to slow us down as much as they can.

DOVAN: To what end?

YUBARI: So Brahms can catch up with us.

DOVAN / LORHROK: (*nearly simul.*) What?

YUBARI: Brahms is following us under cloak, but his ship isn't fast enough to catch up before we get to the *Anbar*. So he needs to slow us down. I'm certain he's behind the pirate attack.

DOVAN: What are you basing this on, Lieutenant?

YUBARI: I have a source, sir. Right now, you need Commander Neeva to scan the sub-etha band. She should find a transmission frequency that Brahms is using to issue orders to the pirates.

NEEVA: Sub-etha. That's not possible.

YUBARI: Trust me. My source is... honorable.

NEEVA: ...alright, Yubari, but only if you're paying for lunch.

LORHROK: What's that supposed to mean?

YUBARI: It means I just made a new friend.

DOVAN: Yubari, my office. Let's talk about Brahms.

YUBARI: Aye, captain.

(They exit.)

SCENE 302-04**LOCATION: BRIDGE, U.S.S. RENEGADE**

TACTICAL: I have the mid-day report. All our agents are accounted for.

BRAHMS: Thank you, Tactical. Just what I expect from the crew of the *Starship Renegade*. What news from our... employees?

TACTICAL: The first attack was mildly successful, but failed to meet the Strategy Desk's expectations. The *Excelsior* adapted with unanticipated speed and destroyed one of the vessels before it could escape.

BRAHMS: I expected the *Excelsior* would defy Strategy's projections. Damage to their engines?

TACTICAL: Operations has that information.

OPERATIONS: We estimate warp damage at three percent. At that rate, we will reduce the *Excelsior's* maximum speed to an acceptable threshold with four more attacks.

BRAHMS: Well within the required margins. Good. Signal flights two and three. Then, order them to attack as soon as they're ready. We have the tactical advantage, and Dovan doesn't even know we're behind the attack. The *Excelsior* will not escape.

SCENE 302-05**LOCATION: DOVAN'S QUARTERS**

(Dovan is whistling a version of "The Warrior's Anthem" while working at his desk.)

(A soft knocking at the door. Dovan stops working.)

DOVAN: Is that someone... knocking?

(More knocks.)

DOVAN: Come in?

(The doors open; Neeva enters.)

NEEVA: Sorry, captain. Engineering took a few non-essential systems offline so they can finish the warp repairs a little faster. I guess doorbells are non-essential. It's amazing. You mention the word "Brahms" and suddenly every person on this ship doubles their efficiency.

DOVAN: Not so amazing, once you've met Brahms. Did you find it? The sub-etha frequency Yubari told you to look for?

(She sets a padd down on Dovan's desk.)

NEEVA: I can't believe it, but I did. I can tap into every transmission that goes between Brahms and the pirates.

DOVAN: Excellent. So now we can intercept every order he gives.

NEEVA: Not quite. I tapped into the communications band, but the messages are still encoded. It's going to take a while to decrypt them.

DOVAN: I see. Still, being able to read Brahms's mail would be invaluable. Make it your top priority. Is there anything I can do to help?

NEEVA: What do you know about Brahms? The more I understand him, the faster I can work.

DOVAN: Hm. Not much, I'm afraid. Rol knew Brahms very well, but... I don't know where Rol is right now. Most of what I know – other than what you saw in our mission reports – comes from Brahms's Academy file.

NEEVA: You have access to that?

DOVAN: Stumbled on it, actually, by chance. When I was researching Dexter Remmick, trying to find out more about the *Anbar*, I ran into this old file. Turns out Brahms was a senior at the Academy on the day Remmick and Captain Scott died. October 10, 2364.

NEEVA: I remember that. I was ten years old. Living on my father's rickety old bootlegger at the time. There wasn't a lot of sympathy for any dead Federation captains, and somebody as big as Tryla Scott earned a lot of jeering. But I remember: my father – a rotten scoundrel – made a point of watching the funeral. Called her a “worthy foe.” And the ship's cook came – a grown Tellerite – and wept, silently, for two hours. I never found out why.

DOVAN: I was at that funeral. Reading about Captain Scott was one of the reasons I joined Starfleet – thought I'd make captain, head off a couple of wars, and bring a dozen planets into the Federation by the age of thirty. I was an upperclassman at the Academy when she died – my first inkling that bad things still happened in the twenty-fourth century.

NEEVA: Her death changed the galaxy. And not for the better.

DOVAN: More importantly, her death changed Brahms – and not for the better. According to his file, Brahms was on the science track, of all things. Specialist in astrophysics, minor in twenty-third century history. Six months from graduation. Straight A's, no demerits. An ideal cadet. The day after Captain Scott dies, we see his first demerit – non-attendance at class. Then a few more. And more, culminating in a disciplinary hearing. Three weeks after Scott's death, Brahms's Academy file abruptly ends.

NEEVA: Do you think he knew her?

DOVAN: I can't imagine what someone like Tryla Scott would be doing hanging around a guy like Isaac Brahms, especially with the twenty-year age difference.

NEEVA: That's reasonable. Still, I'll make a note of it. What else can you tell me?

DOVAN: Um... I know that Brahms is a great fan of Captain James Kirk. I think that he styles himself after Kirk.

NEEVA: (snorts) I wonder what Kirk would think of that.

DOVAN: Probably spins in his grave about it. Still, that might help us: Kirk always favored the unexpected and the maverick. Brahms might have the same attitude about encryption.

NEEVA: I'm afraid that there's not a lot that's "mavericky" in cryptography, sir. But I'll do my best.

(She stands to leave.)

DOVAN: Commander. Before you go.

NEEVA: Sir?

DOVAN: You're a very rules-oriented officer, Neeva. You made that clear when you came aboard. And there's no question that I acted... irregularly last week when I, uh, took the *Excelsior* out of Spacedock. There's also no question that I used you as... well, as a tool, in that operation.

NEEVA: Is this an apology, sir?

DOVAN: Not a chance. I did what I had to. I was just expecting a little more of a protest from you. Consider my curiosity piqued.

NEEVA: A formal protest was unnecessary. Given the support you have among the crew, I probably can't get you removed from command the legal way. And, since you're going to be court-martialed as soon as we get back no matter what I do, I think it'd be safest for me to keep my head down and

let the Admiralty deal with you.

DOVAN: A sadly accurate analysis of my position, Commander. Until my court-martial, though – can I count on you?

NEEVA: You're the captain, sir. Just don't confuse my obedience for loyalty.

DOVAN: Wouldn't dream of it. Dismissed.

NEEVA: Sir.

(Neeva exits.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR CORRIDOR

(Neeva takes a few steps and stops in front of a turbolift door. She presses the call button, but the door doesn't open immediately.)

NEEVA: Huh. Even the turbolifts are running slowly.

(Underwood approaches from down the hall.)

UNDERWOOD: Hello. Lieutenant Commander... Neeva, is it? Waiting for the lift?

NEEVA: You must be Lieutenant Commander Underwood. Our disgraceful former captain.

UNDERWOOD: I hope you mean "disgraced." Command believes I can be rehabilitated, you know.

NEEVA: You can't be "rehabilitated" once you've punched a Starfleet admiral. Not in my book.

UNDERWOOD: Well, this is awkward. Let's talk about something else. For instance, what does your "book" have to say about Starfleet captains who steal starships, sabotage equipment, and risk blowing up the crew?

NEEVA: ...Court-martial is too good for them. Make your point, Commander.

UNDERWOOD: Well, I can't help observing, *Commander*, that you and I are the highest-ranking people on the *Excelsior*, after *Dovan*. (Underwood says "DOE-ven".)

NEEVA: It would take *three* of us to relieve Dovan. And I don't see Lorchok, Yubari, or Sharp breaking our way.

UNDERWOOD: I was thinking... the case against Dovan is pretty clear. I *suspect* that the Admiralty Board would get down on their knees and *thank* us for bending the rules to help bring down a rogue captain like Dovan.

NEEVA: You mean... mutiny.

UNDERWOOD: I very much doubt that's how the board of inquiry will rule it.

NEEVA: No. I'm not putting my neck on the line so you can play your game of office politics. I don't like Dovan — but you're hardly an improvement.

UNDERWOOD: That's a bit of a low blow, don't you think?

(The turbolift finally arrives. The doors open.)

NEEVA: My turbolift is here.

(Neeva steps inside. Underwood stays in the corridor.)

UNDERWOOD: He's endangering this crew, Commander. And if you don't act, you're helping him.

NEEVA: How so?

UNDERWOOD: That man — General Brahms — he's trying to kill us. And he's employing a whole fleet of pirate mercenaries to help him. As long as Dovan insists on completing this mission to the *Anbar*, Brahms is going to keep us in danger.

(Pause.)

NEEVA: A few dozen pirate fighters are no threat to the *Excelsior*.

UNDERWOOD: Not yet. Are you certain that won't change?

(Pause.)

NEEVA: If I judge that Dovan is putting this crew in danger, then... .. then I'll consider your proposal.

UNDERWOOD: I understand your reluctance. Thank you. Just don't forget: your first duty is to these people, not to your rulebook.

NEEVA: I don't agree. Deck Seven.

(The computer acknowledges, the turbolift doors close.)

SCENE 302 – 06**LOCATION: SPACE**

(The *Excelsior* is in combat with small fighter craft.)

DOVAN: *Captain's Log, Supplemental. We fended off the second and third pirate attacks without too much trouble. But now we've been pulled out of warp and attacked for the fourth time in just a few hours. A couple more skirmishes like this, and we won't have the engine power to outrun the Renegade. (to tactical officer) Continue firing!*

LOCATION: ENGINEERING

(Lorhok, Simon, and Adow are hard at work.)

LORHROK: Just a few more seconds!

ADOW: I can't! The port stabilizer's gone offline!

LORHROK: Simon! Shunt power through the secondary relay!

SIMON: Right, boss!

ADOW: I can't hold it anymore! It's shutting down!

LORHROK: There! Got it! Good work, you two. Status?

ADOW: Port shields are taking a beating.

LORHROK: See if we can strengthen them.

DOVAN: *Bridge to Engineering. Status report!*

LORHROK: Lorhrok here, sir! We're fine! Just get them to stop shooting at us!

DOVAN: *My plan exactly! Neeva, three-one-seven mark four. Yubari, are those quantum ready?*

(The call ends automatically.)

ADOW: We can't keep this up, boss.

LORHROK: The only way those port shields are falling is if you give up on them, Adow!

ADOW: That's not what I mean! You know that if we're attacked again, we can't get the warp engines repaired fast enough.

(Pause.)

LORHROK: ...yeah. Yeah, I know. Hold the waveguide steady while I reboot the secondary scanners.

ADOW: Right.

WESTLAKE: Forgive the mentally challenged, but fast enough for what? These pirates aren't a real threat, are they?

LORHROK: Not on their own.

ADOW: But if they lower our warp nacelle output by another... (she checks a console) ...another two percent, then Brahm catches up to us. Then we're in trouble.

LORHROK: We'll tell the repair teams what's at stake. They'll pick up the slack.

WESTLAKE: Boss, all respect, but I don't think there's any slack left to pick up. Damage teams are working as hard as they can.

ADOW: I always said the Delta Quadrant would kill us. Just didn't think it'd be Starfleet Intelligence that pulled the trigger.

(A console alarm. Adow leaps to check it, slamming her palm onto a large button.)

ADOW: Dammit! We just blew the S.M.R.C.!

LORHROK: Spast! Backup kicking in?

ADOW: Ummm... Yes.

LORHROK: Good. One less brushfire to worry about. Bridge! If you don't want Brahms to catch us, you've got about thirty seconds to end this fight!

DOVAN: *Just a moment, Lorhrok. We're cleaning up the last fighter now. Yubari, fire! Fire now!*

YUBARI: (in background) *Torpedoes away!*

(Torpedoes are launched.)

YUBARI: *Massive damage. Engines gone, life support failing. Should I finish him off?*

DOVAN: *Leave it. His allies can deal with him. We need to stay ahead of Brahms. Engineering, maximum warp!*

(Lorhrok frantically presses many controls.)

LORHROK: Ready, sir!

DOVAN: *Hit it!*

(The warp core surges in speed and the *Excelsior* jumps to warp.)

(The communications call ends automatically.)

LORHROK: (breathes a sigh of relief)

WESTLAKE: Can I take a quick break, boss?

ADOW: Only if you're back in time for the next attack – in about twenty minutes.

LORHROK: Oh, Maker. We can't go through this again.

ADOW: I don't think they're giving us a choice.

LORHROK: There has to be something we can do.

ADOW: It's like Simon said – your repair teams are already working full tilt.

WESTLAKE: That's true, but maybe there is something else we can do.

ADOW: Such as?

WESTLAKE: Just trying to be optimistic.

LORHROK: Good. Good, Simon, thank you. Let's start from the beginning. The problem: we need to repair our warp nacelles more quickly.

ADOW: That's not the problem. We need to repair our warp nacelles faster than the pirates can damage them.

LORHROK: Fair enough. But how does that help us?

WESTLAKE: Actually, Adow might be onto something.

ADOW: Really? I mean, I usually am, but--

WESTLAKE: Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that I'm right, and we can't repair the nacelles any faster than we are. But if we can slow down the pirates, so they can't damage us as fast...

LORHROK: I see where you're going. But how we do that? The Bridge is already destroying them as fast as it can after the attacks start.

WESTLAKE: I... I don't know.

ADOW: After the attacks start. Think earlier. What do the pirates do before the attacks?

WESTLAKE: They set up a mobile interdicator in our path, we fly into it, the warp field collapses, they open fire.

ADOW: Block any of those steps and we block the attack.

LORHROK: Great... in theory. But how do we do that?

ADOW: The warp field collapse is the only engineering problem in the whole scheme. I say we focus our energy there.

LORHROK: Now we're getting somewhere! Simon, grab the subspace field equations. Adow, a stack of padds and a stylus.

ADOW: What are you doing?

LORHROK: Setting a timer. We have eighteen minutes to find a solution. After that, we're probably all dead.

SCENE 302-07**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR COMPUTER CORE**

(Underwood approaches the center island from the gangway. Neeva is hard at work in that island.)

NEEVA: (muttering, quickly) Uncompression completed... decrypt negative... Hash check failed... but checksum succeeded? Doesn't make any sense. Could be algorithmic...

UNDERWOOD: (from a moderate distance) Commander Neeva!

NEEVA: (muttering) Dammit. (polite friendliness) Commander Underwood. Can I help you with something? Or are you here to use the computer core's resources directly? I can make some space here--

UNDERWOOD: No, no, not at all. Captain Dovan sent me to find out how you were doing with Brahms's codes.

NEEVA: He sent you?

UNDERWOOD: Well, I am the *Excelsior's* chief diplomat. There's not much call for my services at the moment.

NEEVA: Plus, you're most harmless to Dovan out of the way, running courier missions far away from the bridge.

UNDERWOOD: How cynical of you, Commander.

NEEVA: No. Just an observation. Dovan is a good leader — look at the loyalty his crew shows him. Loyalty like that is built on a keen sense of people — where to put them, how to combine them... and when to get rid of them.

UNDERWOOD: It's that "getting rid of" part I'd like to talk to you about. But first, your report. How close are we to reading Brahms's coded messages?

NEEVA: I have no idea.

UNDERWOOD: None?

NEEVA: This is cryptography, Commander. It's not like a shuttle inventory or a warp engine startup where you can post the steps on the wall and count how many you've done. This is an experimental science. You can try a million things and come up with zilch; but then you try the million-and-first thing and suddenly the problem's solved. I've tried a lot, but I haven't tried everything. I'll inform you when I make any progress.

UNDERWOOD: Understood. I'll tell Dovan. Have you given any more thought to my... proposal?

NEEVA: I have. I've started to wonder about it.

UNDERWOOD: What part?

NEEVA: Why do you need me? Having my help doesn't make a mutiny any more legal--

UNDERWOOD: Acting against a rogue captain isn't mutiny.

NEEVA: Maybe, maybe not. Either way, my helping you doesn't change the equation. Yes, I hold a high rank, but I'm still only one more person against a crew that overwhelmingly supports this captain. If you're going to do this, why are you so desperate for me to join you?

(Underwood takes a step forward.)

UNDERWOOD: I've only been here for a couple of days, Commander, but I've already developed a reputation as the fellow who came here to steal Dovan's job. I have to admit, that's not entirely unfair. Dovan is acting illegally, I believe – but I know deep down that I want to believe that. I want him to make the same mistakes I did, so he gets thrown out and I get to be captain of the *Excelsior* again. But, whatever you may think of me, Commander, I am a bit more than an embittered Starfleet reject. I'm also a former starship captain. You don't make it to that chair without caring – about your orders, about your mission, and, yes, about your crew. So if I act against Dovan, I need to be certain that I'm not just giving into my own selfishness. I need you to confirm that I am, in fact, acting in the best interests of the *Excelsior* and the Federation. Which leads me to this: we're a few minutes from another attack. That attack will probably succeed. Which means General Brahms is going to catch up with us. And, if that happens... that's the ball game. So now I need to know: in

your opinion, is Captain Dovan's stubbornness putting the *Excelsior* in danger? Is it time to relieve him of command?

(Pause.)

NEEVA: (takes a deep breath) Lieutenant Commander Underwood... (pause) ...the Operations department is at —

(Intercom beeps.)

LORHROK: *Lorhrok to all Senior Staff. We have a solution.*

(Pause.)

NEEVA: I--

UNDERWOOD: No, it's--

NEEVA: I'd better--

UNDERWOOD: I think —

NEEVA: Right. (She slaps her commbadge) Neeva here. What have you got, Lorhrok?

LORHROK: *Simon and Adow and I have just invented a... Well, I don't know quite what to call it. A graviton pulse-disperser, I guess? Anyway, all we have to do is hook it up to the warp core at a modulating frequency of forty-seven cochranes--*

DOVAN: *Dovan here. Lorhrok, do you know what color my uniform is?*

LORHROK: *...red, sir?*

DOVAN: *Exactly. Do you know what that means?*

LORHROK: *...no?*

DOVAN: *It means I neither know nor care about whatever it is you're babbling.*

YUBARI: *Techno-babbling.*

DOVAN: *Right you are, Yubari. So, congratulations, X.O. Good invention. Now what's the upshot?*

LORHROK: *In redshirts' terms? If you turn this on, the pirates can't pull us out of warp.*

NEEVA: *That would be a big break for us. What's the catch?*

LORHROK: *There isn't one.*

YUBARI: *No catch?*

LORHROK: *Nope. Just turn it on and we're safe.*

DOVAN: *Then — this may be a dumb question — but why haven't we turned it on yet?*

LORHROK: *Oh, I'm sorry. Didn't I say? We turned it on five minutes ago.*

DOVAN: *Oh. Well, then! Congratulations to you and your team, Lieutenant!*

LORHROK: *Thank you, sir. Commander Neeva, I'll need to talk to you about some of the power distributions. I'm afraid the configuration we're using is pretty non-standard.*

NEEVA: *The power — yeah. Yes. Yes, sir. I'll be right down. Neeva out.*

(Pause.)

UNDERWOOD: *Well, Commander, I guess I ought to be--*

NEEVA: *Underwood. Let's... Let's not talk about it.*

UNDERWOOD: *Okay.*

NEEVA: I... have to go.

(She stands.)

UNDERWOOD: ...right.

(He shuffles out of her way as she walks down the metal gangway to the turbolift.)

SCENE 302 – 08**LOCATION: FLYBY, U.S.S. RENEGADE**

(The *Renegade* warps past us.)

LOCATION: BRIDGE, U.S.S. RENEGADE

(Console alert at Operations.)

OPERATIONS: Receiving a report.

BRAHMS: The fifth attack? Was it successful? How long until we can intercept the *Excelsior*?

OPERATIONS: The attack... failed.

BRAHMS: Failed? What? How?

OPERATIONS: The interdiction field. Their engineers have found some way to thwart it.

BRAHMS: Lieutenant Lohrok, no doubt.

TACTICAL: Then... have they defeated us?

(Pause.)

OPERATIONS: General Brahms?

(Pause.)

BRAHMS: No. No, we can still stop Alcar Dovan and his merry band of renegades. But it will come at a steep price.

OPERATIONS: We are willing to give our lives, General. You know that.

BRAHMS: I know. And, for that, I am proud to call all of you my crew. If only it were as easy as

dying. (pause) Display tactical projection on the main viewscreen. Show the *Excelsior's* course towards the *Anbar*, our position, and the surrounding sector.

(Tactical works his console requested tactical display appears on screen. The *Excelsior's* position updates every few seconds.)

TACTICAL: Ready.

BRAHMS: I see. What's that planet there? Just off the *Excelsior's* main route?

TACTICAL: That's New Victoria, a Federation colony. Settled in twenty-three eighty-one; population ninety-six hundred.

BRAHMS: When will the *Excelsior* pass it?

TACTICAL: In just over three hours.

BRAHMS: I see.

OPERATIONS: General? Is there--?

BRAHMS: Operations, signal the pirate fleet. Order them to stop attacks on the *Excelsior*. Instead, they are to set course for the New Victoria colony. Upon arrival, they are ordered to destroy it.

(Silence.)

TACTICAL: General...

BRAHMS: Those are my orders.

TACTICAL: General, those are Federation civilians! Innocent people!

BRAHMS: I know.

TACTICAL: The pirates aren't just going to kill them, General. First they're going to send down raiding

parties. They're going to pillage, and rape, and enslave--

BRAHMS: I know.

OPERATIONS: We cannot hurt Captain Dovan's ship anymore, Tactical. So, in order to slow him down, we must find another way to hurt him. Something immediate. Something devastating.

TACTICAL: I understand the tactics, Operations. But, General... I draw the line at massacring children in the streets.

BRAHMS: Would that the line were yours to draw, Tactical.

(Brahms taps the intercom key.)

BRAHMS: All hands, this is the General. I have just ordered the extermination of nearly ten thousand innocent Federation citizens on planet New Victoria. I have done this because I believe there are no better choices. If I refused to give this order, my refusal would consign all the trillions of life-forms in the Federation – including the people of New Victoria – to a far more painful enslavement and eventual death. I must give this order. Therefore, I will give this order. Let there be no doubt, however, that what I am asking you all to do is nothing less than a monstrous atrocity. This goes far beyond anything this crew has ever done before – far beyond society's most extreme moral lines. If you stand by me now, your hands will be stained with blood, and civilization will never forgive you. Nor, I think, should it. For that reason, any officer or crewmember on the *Renegade* who wishes to withdraw from this action may, at this time, leave their posts and be confined to quarters for the remainder of this mission. I will think no less of you, and your recusal will not affect your position on this ship – nor the pride I take in having each and every one of you serving with me aboard the *Renegade*. Please make your decisions immediately. This operation will proceed in one minute. Brahms out.

(Pause.)

TACTICAL: General... you know I've never refused an order of yours.

BRAHMS: No, you haven't, Tactical. Nor are you refusing one now. Go. With my blessing.

TACTICAL: Sir.

(Tactical shuts down his console and exits to the turbolift.)

BRAHMS: And you, Operations?

OPERATIONS: General, I don't want my wife and daughters to wake up one day with a Borg fleet hovering in the sky. I don't want them to wake up one morning with roaches screaming enslavement in their heads. I want to keep my family safe from the Sword of Damocles, sir. I think the people of New Victoria would, too.

BRAHMS: The people on New Victoria will never get the choice.

OPERATIONS: Nonetheless, General, I stand by you.

(Pause.)

BRAHMS: Send the order. Begin the attack.

SCENE 302 – 09**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE**

DOVAN: The President? You mean the Academy Commandant.

YUBARI: No. The President of the Federation. Min Zife, at the time.

DOVAN: Zife! A fellow Bolian! I voted for him, you know. How in the world did you end up under his desk in an ushanka and a fur coat?

YUBARI: If you'll be quiet, I'll tell you. You see, it was my brother Bezu's birthday--

(Console alert. Yubari checks the results.)

YUBARI: Hunh.

DOVAN: What?

YUBARI: My voiceprint analysis of Doctor Sharp just came back. No irregularities. It's definitely her.

DOVAN: I wasn't aware there was any doubt.

YUBARI: Really, Captain? You haven't noticed any strange behavior from her the last few --

(Another console alert, this one much more urgent.)

YUBARI: Captain, I'm picking up a distress call.

DOVAN: Source.

YUBARI: New Victoria colony.

DOVAN: On screen. (Yubari presses some buttons) This is Captain Alcar Dovan of the Starship *Excelsior*. What's the nature of your -- ? (The viewscreen acticates) Jehosephat.

WARREN: *Excelsior? Excelsior, are you there?*

DOVAN: We read you, New Victoria.

WARREN: *Oh, thank God. I'm Warren. Mayor Warren. Everyone else in the building is dead. I knew we had to hang on... Had to hang on until we could get a signal through.*

DOVAN: New Victoria, what's your status? Helm, set a course for New Victoria. Maximum warp.

WARREN: *They just dropped out of warp and started firing. Dozens of them. Way more than the typical raiding party. I guess they must have dropped the jamming field; they've been at it for almost an hour and we haven't been able to get a distress call out until now.*

DOVAN: Who? Who attacked you?

WARREN: *Pirates. Norther Pirates. We've seen 'em before in this area, but never like this. Had to be twenty or thirty of them, all at once. We didn't stand a chance.*

DOVAN: How far from here to the colony, Yubari?

YUBARI: Two minutes. Maybe less.

DOVAN: We're on our way, Mister Mayor. Just hold on a few more minutes.

WARREN: *Not me, thanks. They got me, early on. Armory blew up. Big piece of metal in my chest. Just... get the survivors out of here alive, Captain.*

DOVAN: Be one of those survivors, Mister Mayor!

WARREN: *Get the survivors out, Captain. And say a prayer for all the rest of us. New Victoria... signing off.*

(Comm-link closes.)

DOVAN: Mayor! Mayor Warren!

(Pause.)

(Dovan presses the intercom.)

DOVAN: Red Alert! (Klaxon starts) All hands report to battlestations. Commander Underwood to the bridge. Repeat: Condition Red. Battlestations.

LOCATION: SPACE

(The *Excelsior* drops out of warp above New Victoria and enters orbit.)

DOVAN: Standard orbit.

(The helm officer pushes a few buttons.)

UNDERWOOD: Miz Yubari, full scan of the surface.

DOVAN: Belay that. Full scan of surrounding space. I don't see any pirates. Why not?

UNDERWOOD: From the looks of the planet, I'd say they've finished plundering and went home. Look: see that crater? That's where the capital city is supposed to be.

(Console alert for Yubari.)

YUBARI: Automatic life detectors just tripped, sirs. There's still people down there!

DOVAN: How many?

YUBARI: One hundred twelve so far. There could be more hidden in the radiation shadow. Our sensors can't break through.

UNDERWOOD: Take us into low orbit and drop shields. Prepare to recover survivors—

DOVAN: Belay that! Keep those shields up, Lieutenant.

UNDERWOOD: Dovan, there's no time to waste. Those people need our help.

DOVAN: We're useless to them dead. Those pirates--

UNDERWOOD: Are gone. They couldn't beat us, so they raped and pillaged an innocent colony world instead. I hope the *Anbar* was worth it.

DOVAN: You don't know Brahms, Underwood. This is a trap. Ten thousand people just died, all just to slow us down.

UNDERWOOD: How are you so--?

(Weapons fire strikes the *Excelsior*.)

DOVAN: Bingo. Yubari, report.

YUBARI: They were hiding behind the moon.

UNDERWOOD: Oldest trick in the book.

DOVAN: How many?

YUBARI: Twenty-seven... twenty-eight, sir. All on attack vectors.

DOVAN: Can you handle that many?

YUBARI: I'm... not sure, sir. But it'd be a lot easier with Commander Neeva at Ops.

(They're hit again by weapons fire.)

DOVAN: Evasive maneuvers! Where is Neeva, anyway? (Pause.) Computer, that was directed at you!

(Computer beeps)

COMPUTER: *Lieutenant Commander Neeva is in the computer core.*

UNDERWOOD: Dovan, she shouldn't be in there. When I was captain of this ship, the computer core almost always flooded with veridium-nine during combat. Not a grave problem, since no one is supposed to be in there during combat, but--

DOVAN: But we never fixed the veridium problem, either. Dovan to Neeva! Get out of there, now!

NEEVA: *Neeva here. I can't do that, Captain!*

DOVAN: It's an order, Commander!

YUBARI: Sir, ventral shields are failing.

UNDERWOOD: Already?

YUBARI: Twenty-seven is a lot of enemy fighters.

(One of the fighters explodes.)

YUBARI: Correction: twenty-six.

DOVAN: Continue evasive. Get our dorsals facing. We can't leave those survivors behind. Neeva! Am I still talkin' to you?

NEEVA: *Captain, I've found the algorithm Brahms is using to encode his messages. I just need another minute to finish decrypting!*

(Underwood taps his badge.)

UNDERWOOD: Commander, this is Underwood. You have the code?

NEEVA: *It took so long because I assumed Brahms would use genius-level encryption. I was using all the latest and most modern decryption techniques.*

(A console on the bridge explodes in a shower of sparks.)

YUBARI: Sir, I can't keep them off the ventrals! We're taking hull damage!

DOVAN: Cut to the chase, Neeva. Are you saying Brahms isn't a genius?

NEEVA: *He's a maverick, Captain. Brahms used Code Two.*

UNDERWOOD: Never heard of it.

NEEVA: *Of course not, sir! It was broken more than a hundred years ago — by the Romulans! Nobody in his right mind would use it today!*

DOVAN: ...which makes it the best candidate to use against a fellow Starfleet vessel. Dammit, Brahms.

(A heavy impact rocks the ship. Something explodes on Neeva's end, then there is a fast hissing gas leak.)

YUBARI: Direct hit! We've got casualties on Deck Six! And — Sir, computer core just sprung a leak. It's flooding with veridium-nine!

DOVAN: Neeva, get out of there!

NEEVA: I — I can't, sir. The doors just sealed in front of me.

DOVAN: Yubari! Beam her out, now!

YUBARI: I can't get a lock!

NEEVA: Veridium fields block transporters. (deep breath) I'm trapped, Captain.

DOVAN: We'll get you out of there, Commander.

NEEVA: (laughing) You and what hazmat team, sir? During a losing battle with two dozen pirates? No, sir. (cough) I just — I wish — I knew the risks, sir. This isn't your fault. I knew what I was doing. (cough, cough) And I still intend to finish doing it. Continuing... (cough) Continuing decryption.

DOVAN: Commander, leave the decryption and focus on escaping that room! That is a direct order!

NEEVA: Sir, if you were any other captain, I'd respect that order. Computer, mute Dovan.

DOVAN: Neeva! Neev--

(Another heavy hit. Another bridge station explodes.)

RANDOM CREWMEMBER #1: Aggh!

YUBARI: Captain, I'm having trouble holding the rest of the shields up. Fires are starting to break out below decks.

UNDERWOOD: Recommendations?

YUBARI: I strongly urge retreat. Another forty seconds and we might not be able to plot a warp jump through the fighter screen.

UNDERWOOD: What about surrender?

(Silence.)

YUBARI: What?

UNDERWOOD: We can negotiate for the safety of the colonists.

DOVAN: ...These don't look like the negotiating kind of pirates, Underwood.

UNDERWOOD: We don't surrender to them. We surrender to Brahms.

DOVAN: You think Brahms is going to be more open to negotiation?

YUBARI: Running out of time here, sirs.

(The *Excelsior* is hit again.)

DOVAN: Back us off, Yubari. Buy us a little time.

(The intercom beeps.)

NEEVA: *Bridge, I have it! The code is cracked! We have full access to Brahms's communication network! (cough cough cough)*

UNDERWOOD: Commander, this is Underwood! Now's your chance! Save this ship! Save that colony! Signal our surrender!

DOVAN: What the devil, Underwood?! Belay that order, Neeva!

UNDERWOOD: You don't have to follow the orders of a rogue captain, Commander. I repeat: signal our surrender!

DOVAN: That's mutiny!

UNDERWOOD: Now you know how Admiral Parker feels, Dovan. Neeva! Do it now!

(Pause.)

NEEVA: (coughing very badly) *Captain, these lives... they're – they're more... important... than...* (dissolves in coughing, gives up on explaining) *Computer, open a channel to the U.S.S.... Renega--* (coughing)

DOVAN: No!

NEEVA: *Open a channel.. to the... (overwhelmed by coughing) I can't...* (She presses a button) *Uhhnn...*

(Neeva slumps to the gound.)

UNDERWOOD: Commander!

YUBARI: Sir! I have the codes! Neeva just sent them to the bridge!

DOVAN: What about her?

YUBARI: Unconscious. Life signs fluctuating.

(More weapons hits.)

DOVAN: Encode the following message, bounce it off the nearest moon to disguise its source, and transmit to all pirate vessels on the sub-etha band: "Break off attack immediately. Intercept and destroy the cloaked starship at course one-eight-one mark one. This channel has been compromised; switch to code three and accept no further orders over code two."

YUBARI: Transmitting message... Done, sir.

(The weapons fire stops mid-strafe.)

YUBARI: Captain, the pirates have ceased firing. They're going to warp.

DOVAN: Very good. Now let's see how Brahms likes it.

UNDERWOOD: Dovan, I just want--

DOVAN: Shut up, Underwood. Stand down red alert. Yubari, any casualties?

(Green alert sounds.)

YUBARI: No deaths, sir. Not... not yet.

DOVAN: Zero dead?

YUBARI: Sir, Commander Neeva...

DOVAN: In twenty years commanding starships, I've never made it through a battle without losing anyone. I'd like to end that streak today. Yubari, begin rescue operations for the colonists. Underwood, with me.

(Dovan heads to the turbolift.)

UNDERWOOD: Where to?

DOVAN: Bridge to Security! Have a team meet me outside the computer core!

(Dovan and Underwood enter the turbolift.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR TURBOLIFT

DOVAN: Computer core! Priority transit!

(The turbolift starts moving quickly.)

DOVAN: Well, I suppose I should just arrest you for mutiny right now.

UNDERWOOD: I assure you, Dovan, I appreciate the irony.

(The turbolift halts.)

COMPUTER: *Warning: computer core contaminated with Veridium-Nine. Entry prohibited.*

UNDERWOOD: What's your plan, Dovan?

DOVAN: Simple enough. Walk in, carry Neeva out.

UNDERWOOD: You can't be serious. That's Veridium-Nine in there. You'll be dead before you reach her.

DOVAN: Bolian physiology is practically built on toxic wastes. We're sturdier than you humans.

UNDERWOOD: Not that sturdy. It's up to ten thousand parts per million in there.

DOVAN: Want to go in my place?

UNDERWOOD: What?

DOVAN: That's why I brought you here. To give you a chance to be the hero. The captain. It seems to be what you want. So: do you want to go in there?

UNDERWOOD: Captains... Captains don't commit suicide, Dovan. That's not leadership; that's selfish emotional indulgence. I think Neeva would back me up on that. It probably violates a few of her regulations.

DOVAN: Well, I think captains are all about the selfish indulgence. And the suicide. If I'm wrong, congratulations. I'm sure you'll make a fine captain the second time around. I just want "Melor Famagal" played at my funeral.

UNDERWOOD: The drinking song? Dovan, what--?

DOVAN: Computer: override lock, authorization Dovan quattuor-septem.

UNDERWOOD: (Underwood pronounces "Dovan" correctly) Dovan--!

(The doors open, Dovan dives through, they close immediately after him.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR COMPUTER CORE

(There are multiple fires and several more gas leaks than last we heard.)

DOVAN: Whoa! I had no idea a few spilled isolinear chips on the ground could start bonfires like that! The flames must be up to my chest! Can't barely see a meter in front of me, what with all this smoke. I'll have to work around — (coughing) Oh, great. There's the gas. I'm coming, Neeva! (coughing)

(Dovan makes his way out to the center island down the metal gangway.)

DOVAN: Neeva. Neeva! (cough) Are you here? The smoke is so thick...

NEEVA: Uhhnn... Dovan?... Dovan? (weak coughing.)

DOVAN: Commander!

(He steps over to her and kneels down on the metal platform.)

DOVAN: Commander, are you still with us?

NEEVA: You... shouldn't be here. You'll die.

DOVAN: You're my crew.

NEEVA: Ship... needs a captain.

DOVAN: Got that covered. (chuckle turns into a cough)

NEEVA: I'm a mutineer.

DOVAN: You're an officer who sees that lives are more important than rules. I wish it hadn't taken all this to make the point, but—

NEEVA: (coughing) ... not that simple. Can't confuse... obedience--

DOVAN: It's never simple. Let's get you out of here.

(Dovan grunts as he grabs Neeva's body off the metal floor and lifts.)

DOVAN / NEEVA: (serious coughage)

(Dovan takes a step forward, but collapses to the ground, spilling Neeva's body.)

DOVAN: Can't — hold — Gas! Ooof!

NEEVA: Ah!

(They cough.)

DOVAN: Uh-oh. I don't think I have the strength to make it back out of here. That gas... that's nasty stuff.

NEEVA: Uhhnnn...

DOVAN: Neeva! Stay with me! Neeva! Breathe!

(He slaps her across the face.)

NEEVA: (coughing)

DOVAN: Better.

(Dovan slaps his combadge.)

DOVAN: Dovan to Underwood.

(No response.)

DOVAN: Underwood!

(No response.)

DOVAN: Communicator isn't working. I'm on my own. (coughing) No, I'm not dying. I am not going to let Underwood take my ship. Just need a way out of here. (coughing)

NEEVA: (cough) Air...

DOVAN: What, Neeva?

NEEVA: ...Air...

DOVAN: What was that?

NEEVA: ...air... (coughs herself back into unconsciousness)

DOVAN: Air... (coughs) I'd love some of that right (cough) now. Or maybe... that's not what you meant, is it? You have an idea. (cough) What is it? Neeva? Neeva!

(He slaps her again. No reaction this time.)

DOVAN: She's not breathing. I'm losing her! Air... air, air, air... air... quote? Airtight? Air... guitar? Air... Air pocket! That makes sense. If we just had a little bit of (coughs) clean air between us and the door... but how? Neeva! What was your idea?! (coughs) Well, I'm no scientist. But I wonder... if I blew up one of those burning isolinear heaps, what would the concussion wave do to the Veridium-Nine? Or to us? (chokes on own coughing) Hunh. Not half as good as Lorhrok's hunch about the pirates... but it beats suffocating.

(He draws his phaser and fires. He hits a heap of isolinear chips which explodes, creating a concussion wave.)

DOVAN: Head down, Neeva!

(It passes over them. Dovan rushes to his feet.)

DOVAN: Let's try this again. (He grunts)

(He quickly picks up Neeva and runs, as quickly as a heavily burdened man can, down the gangway, coughing all along. For her part, Neeva is no longer breathing, and so no longer coughing.)

DOVAN: (Coughing) Compu--! (cough) Compute—! (cough) COMPUTER! Open door, authorization--! (coughs) Authorization *Dovan-quattuor-septem!* (dissolves in coughing)

(The door opens, Dovan dives through. The doors close behind them.)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR TURBOLIFT

(Dovan hits the floor of the turbocar, hard, spilling Neeva to the ground.)

DOVAN: (more coughing!)

UNDERWOOD: (still pronouncing the name "Dovan" correctly) Oh my God. Dovan, you're alive!

DOVAN: (through coughing) Medic. Now.

(Underwood slaps his combadge!)

UNDERWOOD: Sickbay! I need an emergency medical beamout on Deck Five! A Bolian and an Orion in the turbolift near the computer core!

SHARP: *Please wait a few moments, Commander. Your transporter systems will be available presently. End call!*

UNDERWOOD: They're on their way, Dovan.

DOVAN: You started (cough)... started pronouncing my name the right way.

UNDERWOOD: Did I? I assure you, Dovan (pronounced DOE-ven once again), that was an accident.

DOVAN: Baby steps, Commander Underwood.

YUBARI: *Bridge to the Captain. We've finished rescue operations. Two hundred ten survivors are aboard. What are our orders?*

UNDERWOOD: This is Underwood. Your orders are to turn the *Excelsior* to course... to course...

YUBARI: *Underwood? Where's the Captain?*

UNDERWOOD: Well said, Lieutenant. Bridge, I think you had better resume course for the *Anbar*.

YUBARI: *Aye, sir.*

(Pause.)

SHARP: *Sir, the transporter is ready for you. Give the order.*

(Pause.)

UNDERWOOD: What say you, Dovan?

YUBARI: *Course set, sir.*

DOVAN: I say... (with a grin) Hit it.

(A transporter beam grabs Neeva and Dovan.)

LOCATION: SPACE

(The *Excelsior* powers up and jumps to warp.)

(END CREDITS)

SCENE 302 – A**LOCATION: SPACE FIGHTER COCKPIT**

ROL: Vesant, report! Time to intercept!

FEMALE PILOT: *Ummm... which one, Captain Rol?*

ROL: Last time I checked, Vesant, we were going to reach both targets at the same time. Has that estimate changed?

FEMALE PILOT: *Yes, sir. My board shows that the Renegade is no longer in pursuit of the Excelsior. She seems to be in some distress.*

MALE PILOT: *Sylveste here, sir. Does that mean we should change course? Help finish off the Renegade?*

ROL: Hm. Good question.

FEMALE PILOT: *The squadron is spoiling for a fight, sir. I'd love to give it to them.*

ROL: I'll just bet they are. I forgot how much I liked flying fighters during the War. Could be fun.

FEMALE PILOT: *Then, change course?*

ROL: (sigh) No. Our mission is to reinforce the *Excelsior* as quickly as possible. God knows she's going to need help where she's going.

LOCATION: SPACE

(A fighter squadron swoops past – some ten to twelve flybys in close formation. Then they all jump to warp.)

SCENE 302 – B
LOCATION: SICKBAY

DOVAN: So, Neeva.

NEEVA: Sir?

DOVAN: What was your big idea back in the computer core?

NEEVA: Sir?

DOVAN: When you gasped out, "air." I did my best with it, but I'm curious: what were you trying to say?

NEEVA: I was really just saying, "Boy, I could really use some air right now before I die," sir.

DOVAN: Really? No hidden message? No brilliant plan?

NEEVA: Yeah. Really. Sir. Just, "Hey, I'm dying over here."

DOVAN: Hunh.