

Starship: Excelsior
"And Miles To Go Before I Sleep"
(Season 5, Episode 1)
by James Heaney

Transcribed by Peter Stine

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

Note: In this episode, Rol's lines are repurposes of old lines or alternate takes, as Michael Liebmann passed away unexpectedly during production of the previous episode. This episode was written in his memory. Godspeed, Michael, you did the good work.

SCENE 4H-01**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR SHUTTLEBAY – CONTROL ROOM**

(A comm channel opens.)

YUBARI: Fighter craft *Patroclus*, please respond!

VESANT: *Summit LSO, this is Chief Vesant for the fighter squadron. We took as much speed off the Patroclus as we could. Any more and it might tear apart.*

YUBARI: You've done all you can. Get out of there!

VESANT: *Ma'am.*

(She reopens the comm)

YUBARI: Fighter craft *Patroclus*, this is Summit LSO, calling final approach. You are too hot repeat too hot deploy emergency brakes. (No response) Fighter craft *Patroclus*, acknowledge! (No response) Lorhrok, if you can hear me in there, you need to dump more velocity before your wheels touch the deck. You're gonna blow up. (No response) LORHROK!

DOVAN: *Shuttlebay, this is bridge. Patroclus has entered the landing groove. What's the call?*

YUBARI: God help them. (She presses a button) Bridge, shuttlebay. (deep breath) Prepare for crash landing.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: *Got it. (Pause) Get out of there. Bridge out.*

(A klaxon goes off.)

DOVAN: *All hands, this is not a drill. Prepare for crash landing in Fighter Bay. Evacuate Deck Twenty-Two and brace for impact.*

(Evacuation klaxons go off.)

NEEVA: *Lieutenant, it's Neeva, right below you. Are you evacuating?*

DOVAN: (in background) *Repeat, crash landing in Fighter Bay. Evacuate and brace for impact. This is not a drill.*

SHARP: (in background) *Trauma Team One, get out of here! Regroup in sickbay!*

YUBARI: (working at her console) *Lorhrok and Rol are on that ship. It's a hundred to one that the automatics catch them. If we leave, they're dead.*

NEEVA: *I think we both know there's nobody at the controls of that ship. They might already be dead.*

YUBARI: *I can go manual. Guide them in with the tractor beam.*

NEEVA: *If you miss, you're space dust along with the rest of the deck.*

YUBARI: *I don't see you going anywhere.*

NEEVA: *Of course not. When you land them, someone's going to have to put out the fire so we can get inside.*

SHARP: *We don't need to get inside; just get them out before they both die of plasma inhalation.*

NEEVA: *I have transporters ready to cycle. Just keep your protective gear on in case it doesn't work.*

SHARP: *If Yubari doesn't get this right, it'll take a lot more than a two-millimeter encounter suit to stop me being shredded into a fine mist.*

YUBARI: Thanks for the vote of confidence. (an alert sounds) Here they come! (Louder alerts go off!) Get behind something!

(She presses some buttons and engages the tractor beam.)

(The ship passes through the shuttlebay forcefield and slams into the deck.)

YUBARI: Ahhh! (as she is thrown to the ground by the impact)

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR SHUTTLEBAY – LANDING DECK

(Boxes fall, lights spark, the red alert klaxon fails as the power goes out, etc. We hear a tremendous cruncing of metal and explodery. Nets spring out to slow the crash; a forcefield pops into place, though Patroclus slides through it easily. When it all settles, we can hear Patroclus on the fighter deck, burning worse than ever, the deck creaking around it with sparks exploding everywhere... but, somehow, the ship is intact. Distant alarms are going off.)

NEEVA: (coughing) Yubari... (coughing) you got them down... (coughing) in one piece!

SHARP: (coughing) Beam them (coughing) directly to sickbay!

(Neeva, standing up, regains control of her console, but her attempts to engage transport cycle are frustrated by alarms and access-denieds.)

NEEVA: Pattern lock. One lifesign. Energizing.

SHARP: Only one?

NEEVA: Same problem we had on the bridge: (coughing) hyperonic radiation leaking from both nacelles. (coughing) I still can't scan the forward compartment.

SHARP: Crack it open; I'll pull the other one out myself.

NEEVA: I'm coming with.

SHARP: No, you're not.

NEEVA: Melissa —

SHARP: Neeva, if that's your boyfriend in there, and he's dead —

NEEVA: And if he isn't dead you'll need all the help you can get!

(Neeva has already walked over to the shuttle.)

NEEVA: I'm blowing the hatch! Clear!

(She presses a button and the *Patroclus* shuttle door to explodes clear off the shuttle.)

LOCATION: FIGHTER PATROCLUS – REAR COMPARTMENT

(The whole interior is pretty much aflame, but Neeva and Sharp make their way inside anyway, coughing. Sharp flips open a tricorder, while Neeva blows a fire extinguisher at the fire.)

SHARP: Phaser cupola clear!

NEEVA: Storage area (cough) clear! He's got to be in the cockpit.

SHARP: The door override's burnt to a crisp! Help me pry it open!

(Neeva runs over and helps pry the door open.)

(Sharp gasps in horror.)

NEEVA: *ghuy'cha'*. Is he...?

(Sharp scans with her tricorder.)

SHARP: Fourth-degree burns over 86% of the body. Lungs saturated with plasma. Liquified.

NEEVA: Who... (cough cough)?

SHARP: He's human. It's Rol. (pause) Correction. (she steps back into the main compartment and speaks into her tricorder, falling back on her training) Tricorder, log the following: patient triaged at 1440 hours. Autonomic functions have ceased, resuscitation impractical and patient has sustained injuries not compatible with life. (pause) At 1441 hours, Ensign Alex Bevoney Rol is pronounced dead on arrival.

SCENE 4H-98**OPENING CREDITS**

J'NAYA: ...Jacqueline Lucca as Chief Engineer Kestra J'Naya...

SCENE 4H-02**LOCATION: CORRIDOR**

(Dovan is walking quickly down the corridor when J'naya pops out of a turbolift and jogs up to him.)

J'NAYA : Captain?

(She hands him a padd.)

DOVAN: Commander. Thank you. (he starts to click through the padd.) What am I reading? Forensic report?

J'NAYA: Preliminary sensor readout, sir. Full forensics of the *Patroclus* will take a few hours; Renegade Squadron is still doing its sweep.

DOVAN: Right, the fighter pilots. Who's their X.O., after Rol? I've only met her once.

J'NAYA : C.W.O. Zatreya Vesant. Why? Is everyone okay?

DOVAN: No. Not this time.

J'NAYA: Sir?

DOVAN: What's in the report?

(pause)

Music in this scene: "Mountains" by Message to Bears.

J'NAYA: Well, there's about thirteen pages of details my team compiled for the official record, sir, but the bottom line is, they were attacked. The primary damage to the *Patroclus* is from weapons fire, not from the crash. The black box is missing, most likely scooped up by attackers.

DOVAN: So we don't have anything except the transmission they sent when they dropped out of warp?

J'NAYA: And all that contained was Ensign Rol's landing clearance code. Forensics hasn't found anything else hidden in the data packet.

DOVAN: (sigh) Where were they coming from?

J'NAYA: Ion path shows them following a direct course to us from the Iconian ruin they were exploring. Based on their ETA/ATA differential, we estimate the attack was two light-years out.

DOVAN: Good work, Commander. Have Helm lay in a reverse course along their route and engage at warp three, with level-one long-range sensor sweeps until we find the targets.

J'NAYA: Targets, sir?

DOVAN: Someone did this. (pause) Dismissed.

(Dovan enters Sickbay.)

LOCATION: SICKBAY

(Dovan approaches the surgical biobed in the back of sickbay.)

(Neeva stands as the captain approaches.)

NEEVA: Captain.

DOVAN: Commander. How's my first officer?

NEEVA: His mind is intact, just a concussion, but the rest of his body, the burns... It's going to take some time.

SHARP: Alcar, [my patient needs rest.]

DOVAN: I know, Melissa. And you know I have to ask anyway. Is it safe to wake him? It's your decision. I trust you.

(Pause.)

SHARP: I'll give you enough for five minutes. No more.

(Sharp keys a hypospray and injects it into Lorhrok.)

DOVAN: Thank you.

SHARP: Five minutes.

(Sharp leaves, and Neeva starts to follow.)

DOVAN: Please stay, Neeva.

NEEVA: Thanks.

DOVAN: Don't thank me.

NEEVA: Too late.

DOVAN: I just didn't want to do this alone.

(Lorhrok groans.)

DOVAN: You're okay, Lieutenant. Try not to move.

NEEVA: You're in Sickbay. It's safe.

LORHROK: Captain? Neeva. What happened?

DOVAN: You tell me. All we know is your ship dropped out of warp covered in disruptor scorching. What's the last thing you remember?

LORHROK: I'm... not entirely sure. (pause) We found something, at the dig site. I remember that. An Iconian artifact, in some kind of... underground temple, we thought.

DOVAN: Anything that would help Starfleet Command figure out the Mapstone?

LORHROK: That's just it: we weren't sure. The translator wasn't working, for some reason. So we loaded it and headed home.

DOVAN: But you didn't make it.

LORHROK: No, we were... attacked, I think. I must have hit my head in the second or third volley, blacked out; I only remember a couple of snatches.

DOVAN: Who attacked? Did you see?

LORHROK: No, just their torpedoes. They were...

DOVAN: What?

LORHROK: I didn't see them. I... heard them. I can't place it, but I've heard that sound before. Like... like something out of a nightmare.

DOVAN: Was it the bluegills? Did they somehow find out we have the Mapstone?

LORHROK: I'm sorry, that's all I remember. You'll have to ask Bev for more.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: Um.

LORHROK: What's wrong? Bev's okay, right?

NEEVA: Alec...

DOVAN: You were in bad shape when we found you. Plasma burns, inhalation... you were lucky to get here alive. (swallow) Bev... didn't.

LORHROK: You mean...

DOVAN: He's dead.

LORHROK: But... [we're having lunch tomorrow.]

(Silence)

LORHROK: It's my fault, isn't it?

NEEVA: No!

LORHROK: But I could have [given him first aid if I hadn't hit my head.]

DOVAN: No. Don't do that to yourself. It wasn't your fault.

LORHROK: How can you say that? You don't know anything about what happened.

DOVAN: Alecz... (pause) I fought in the War. I know exactly what happened. I saw it happen at Chin'toka; I did it at Betazed. Don't. Somewhere out there are the people who actually killed Ensign Rol. I want to find them, and I need your help. I need my Number One.

(Pause.)

LORHROK: I want to see him, Neeva.

NEEVA: It's... it's bad, Alecz. His body was in the heart of the fire.

LORHROK: I want to see him, Neeva.

NEEVA: Okay. I'll make arrangements.

(She stands and leaves.)

LORHROK: (swallowing hard) And then... I think I should get some more rest, Captain.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: Melissa agrees. Do you want anything from your quarters?

LORHROK: No, thank you.

DOVAN: Alec, I... (sigh) Never mind.

(He leaves.)

LORHROK: Computer, read back my calendar appointments for tomorrow.

COMPUTER: *Oh-nine-hundred hours, Change Management meeting, main engineering. Ten-ten, security roundtable, armory. Twelve-hundred hours, lunch with Bev, Delta Lounge. Thirt[een-hundred-hours, fake meeting because I got interrupted.]*

LORHROK: Hold. Delete last appointment.

COMPUTER: *"Lunch with Bev" is a recurring appointment. Delete just this occurrence, or the entire series?*

(Pause.)

LORHROK: Computer, cancel request. (sniffle)

SCENE 4H-03**LOCATION: MARINE COUNTRY – FORMATION AREA**

SYLVESTE: I don't know; what do you think, Chief? Should we just cancel flight drills for the day?

VESANT: If we do that, there'll be hell to pay when he gets back.

SYLVESTE: Renegade Squadron is in top form and he knows it, Zat. We can miss a day. Not like anyone else on the ship pays attention to us. I have bridge duty in an hour anyway.

VESANT: You know what he'll say, Jon.

SYLVESTE: Something something "three weeks from complete breakdown."

VESANT: Oh, I was thinking of his other chestnut: "How can we ever do the good work around here if my first sergeant grounds us every time I skin my knee?" He won't want us worrying about him.

SYLVESTE: You're gonna make us fly, aren't you?

VESANT: You bet your brass [buttons.]

(The door opens and The Major and Yubari walk in briskly.)

THE MAJOR: Attention on deck!

VESANT: Quick! The Major!

SYLVESTE: What's he doing here? Renegade Squadron! Fall in on Chief Warrant Officer Vesant!

(All conversation ceases instantly as everyone comes running and stands to attention.)

YUBARI: Thank you, everyone.

SYLVESTE: (quietly) And he brought Yubari?

(Pause.)

VESANT: (quietly) Oh, God, no.

SYLVESTE: (quietly) What? Did you know they were — Bev. No.

YUBARI: I've asked Major Willis to join me, as he will be temporarily assuming command of this unit.

VESANT: (quietly) Jon?

SYLVESTE: (quietly) Yeah?

VESANT: It's up to us now.

YUBARI: (in background) I have some difficult news to share with all of you. The commanding officer of Renegade Squadron, Alex "Bev" Rol, was killed in action this morning.

SCENE 4H-04**LOCATION: BRIEFING ROOM**

DOVAN: A member of this senior staff is in sickbay. Another is in the morgue. What in the Nine Hells happened out there? (pause) I'm waiting!

(Pause.)

NEEVA: Well... let's start with what we know. Two days ago, First Officer Lorhrok departed the *Excelsior* to pick up Ensign Rol from the mining camp on Vergaon, where Rol was investigating rumors of Iconian artifacts.

J'NAYA: Artifacts Starfleet needs because they can't make heads or tails of the Mapstone.

NEEVA: Right. For security, they were under radio silence, so we don't know what they found — or whether it survived the attack.

J'NAYA: Ah. It did. We retrieved something from the wreckage ten minutes ago. It must be what Mister Lorhrok told you about. Ensign Rol hid it in a concealed, shielded storage area even we didn't know about — it's not on the *Patroclus's* blueprints.

DOVAN: So now we can make a pretty good guess at why they were attacked. Somebody wanted that artifact. Who?

SHARP: The Vergaon?

YUBARI: I doubt it. They're very friendly — and they have to be, with their technology. A single Federation fighter could take on their best warship and win.

NEEVA: So, who? The bluegills? The Borg? Somehow, could one of them have found out we have the Mapstone?

SHARP: If they did, we may as well pack it in now, because they won't stop until they've killed us all.

YUBARI: Or worse.

J'NAYA: The weapons signature on the *Patroclus* isn't consistent with any known disruptor. And there's no magnetic resonance footprint, so you can rule the Borg right out.

SHARP: Whoever went after him, Bev got the artifact home to us, and paid the ultimate price. If it does turn out to help us understand the Mapstone...

YUBARI: If that's true... then Bev Rol died saving the galaxy.

DOVAN: So it's alright he died?

YUBARI: No, sir.

DOVAN: We need a lot more answers. We'll be arriving at the attack coordinates in a few minutes. I want all hands at battlestations and another level-one sensor sweep ready to go when we drop out of warp. Will Lieutenant Lorhrok be reporting for duty?

SHARP: Not unless you want him hemmoraging all over your cushions.

DOVAN: Then, Commander Neeva, you're first officer until further notice. See to it.

NEEVA: Aye, sir.

DOVAN: Dismissed.

(He rises, most follow him out.)

J'NAYA: Neeva?

NEEVA: Kestra.

J'NAYA: How you doing?

NEEVA: I'm... Well, how does it look like I'm doing?

J'NAYA: Like you're giving a two-ton Rectyne monopod a piggyback ride.

NEEVA: That bad, huh? Heh. Guess I'm not sure how I feel yet.

(Pause.)

J'NAYA: I remember when I was about fourteen, my aunt Aislyn — she taught me how to knit — was in a moon shuttle accident with my uncle Seamus. He didn't make it. We weren't close, but everyone started to think we were because I sobbed for the whole wake.

NEEVA: You'd just missed your chance to be friends with your uncle. It tore you up.

J'NAYA: Ha, no. I wasn't even a tiny bit sad about Uncle Seamus. I was ecstatic.

NEEVA: What?

J'NAYA: Every time I looked at his body in the casket, I thought, "That could have been Aunt Aislyn, and then where'd I be?" The fact that me aunt was fine was such a relief I couldn't make any room for him.

NEEVA: Then why the sobbing?

J'NAYA: I was supposed to be sad, right? I cried because I thought I was a sociopath! Took me years to know better.

(Pause.)

NEEVA: You don't think I – about Bev Rol – that I feel –

J'NAYA: Oh, no, no no no no. Thought hadn't crossed my mind. It's just, when you said you didn't know how you felt, it made me remember about a little girl named Kestra who wished she didn't know how she felt. You want to walk me down to Engineering?

NEEVA: No, I have to get to the bridge.

J'NAYA: I figured.

(J'naya turns to leave, walking a couple steps to the door, which opens for her.)

NEEVA: But, Kestra?

J'NAYA: Yeah, Neeva?

NEEVA: Thank you. Really.

J'NAYA: Maybe next time. I hope Alecz wakes up soon.

(She walks out and the door closes behind her.)

SCENE 4H-05**LOCATION: EXCELSIOR BRIDGE**

DOVAN: Okay... Red alert.

(Klaxons!)

SYLVESTE: Dropping out of warp... now, sir.

YUBARI: Shields up, weapons hot.

(Neeva enters the bridge from the briefing room and immediately crosses toward her chair.)

DOVAN: Very good. Start that sweep.

SYLVESTE: Beginning scan.

NEEVA: I'll take that. (She takes her station at ops.) I'm picking up the *Patroclus's* ion trail, as well as a debris field, sir. There were other ships here, at least two, just about the time of the attack.

DOVAN: Where'd they go?

NEEVA: Their ion trail is... it looks like they tried to mask it. It's all over the place. Can't get a good lock. Helm, set course three one eight mark three-three.

SYLVESTE: Ma'am.

DOVAN: To what end, Commander?

NEEVA: They tried to hide the trail. They just didn't do a very good job of it. Tactical, run a charge of huon energy through the deflector dish. Broad spectrum, no need to be picky here.

YUBARI: Captain?

DOVAN: She's the X.O.. Her orders are my orders.

YUBARI: Aye, sir. Uh, ma'am.

(Yubari fires a beam from the deflector dish and a trail appears.)

NEEVA: There it is.

DOVAN: The attackers' ion trail.

SYLVESTE: Right through the debris field from the battle.

DOVAN: Follow the trail, Mister. Don't bump anything.

NEEVA: Tactical, I'd like an analysis of that debris.

(Yubari runs an analysis.)

YUBARI: I'm picking up Starfleet standard duranium alloy —

DOVAN: — presumably various missing pieces of the *Patroclus*—

YUBARI: Yes, obviously. As for the rest of the debris field... it's not a high total mass. Could be a destroyed fighter, but more likely parts of a small starship, maybe a scout or corvette.

DOVAN: Any idea who it belonged to?

YUBARI: Yes, it... but... but that doesn't make any sense.

DOVAN: Lieutenant?

YUBARI: There are none of the residual footprints, but the debris reads as— (A sensor alert at her console.) All stop!

DOVAN: All stop!

(The *Excelsior* slows to a stop.)

(Something explodes and rocks the ship.)

DOVAN, SYLVESTE, NEEVA, RANDOM CREWMAN #1 AND #2: Oof. Oooh. Ah. (grunt). Ay Carumba!

NEEVA: Are we under attack?

YUBARI: No, sir, that was a mine. Someone left it behind and rigged a proximity trigger.

(A string of small Borg-sounding torpedoes hit the ship.)

YUBARI: Now we're under attack. Shields holding.

NEEVA: Picking up an automated weapons platform at bearing two-two-one!

DOVAN: All port phasers, return fire! Evasive maneuvers!

YUBARI: Returning fire!

LOCATION: SPACE

(Phasers lance out into the dark!)

SCENE 4H-06**LOCATION: SICKBAY**

LORHROK: Doctor! Doctor!

(Sharp comes running.)

SHARP: Alecz! What is it?

LORHROK: The ship's under attack. I need your permission to report for duty.

SHARP: Oh, I thought you were bleeding from your posterior again – or, for that matter, from any of the other brand new holes in your body. You know, if you'd been in that fire a hundred years ago, you'd have spent the rest of your life in a wheelchair that can only beep answers to "yes" or "no" questions?

LORHROK: Doctor, this is all charming, but [I need something to get me on my feet, now.]

SHARP: You're not listening, are you, Alecz? Let me try again: Your survival is a miracle of modern medicine and it is by no means guaranteed if you leave that bed for the next four hours. You're going to stay right here, where the rest of my staff can marvel at my handiwork, for a good. Long. While.

LORHROK: But my ship!

SHARP: Not my problem. Therefore, not your problem. Now, if you'll excuse me, our captain treats combat like a getting-to-know-you card, so I have to prep for incoming casualties.

(Sharp walks away briskly.)

LORHROK: Thank you, Doctor, but (grunts) I think I'm going to get (grunts again as he stands up) a second opinion. (Lorhrok takes a step and hits his combadge) Leftenant Lorhrok to Main Engineering. Where can I help with, uh, uhhhhhhn (faints)

(Lorhrok hits the floor like a sack of flour.)

SHARP: God, dammit Alecz! Mike!

(Nurse Hennessy jogs over to where Lorhrok fell. Sharp stalks her way over more slowly.)

NURSE HENNESSY: I have him, Melissa! He fainted! No bleeding.

SHARP: Get him back to bed! And put him in a restraining field! I'll use my command lockout!

NURSE HENNESSY: Mels, can we do that? He's the X.O.!

(He drops the body on the biobed.)

SHARP: If Alcar has a problem with it, I'll put him in a restraining field and run this damn starship myself! See how many space battles we have when Captain Melissa's the one doing the talking!

(She's already walking away.)

Fun continuity note: this scene is directly referenced by Future Hertzler in Scene 10404. Which aired, uh, nine years ago? Extremely minor payoffs are fun! Oh, and also now you know who's captain of the *Oracle*.

SCENE 4H-07**LOCATION: BRIDGE**

YUBARI: Their shields are buckling!

NEEVA: One more hit oughta do it.

DOVAN: Nothing fancy, helm. Stay out of their firing arc and line up aft quantum torpedo tube.

SYLVESTE: Aye, sir. Lining up for the shot. (the helm console beeps) Fire when ready, Tactical.

YUBARI: Firing!

(Quantum torpedo launches, flies through space, hits weapons platform. Shields collapse; it explodes.)

NEEVA: Target destroyed.

DOVAN: All stop. Maintain red alert; there could be more surprises.

SYLVESTE: Aye, sir.

DOVAN: Helm, your arcs were wide and you didn't stop fast enough to avoid that mine. This's the bridge, not a simulator.

SYLVESTE: Understood, sir.

DOVAN: Commander, who was that? Who attacked us?

NEEVA: Tactical, I got some very strange readings from that alloy. Can you confirm my console was working correctly?

YUBARI: I also had some odd readings, Commander.

DOVAN: Oh, come on, out with it. I already know it's the Borg.

(Pause.)

NEEVA: That is what my readings indicate.

YUBARI: But there's no magnetic footprint. It can't be the Borg.

DOVAN: I knew as soon as the turret opened fire. (pause) We had no idea what we were up against when the Borg attacked Wolf Three-Five-Nine. No preparation, no drills, no warning. The only thing more worthless than our weapons was our shields. That torpedo was the only soundtrack for two-thirds of my classmates as I watched them die. You don't forget that sound. Now we know what Mister Lorhrok was scared of, at least.

YUBARI: So what happened to Rol? He was attacked by the Borg?

NEEVA: The Borg must have been after the Iconian artifact. Prophet knows how they found out about it.

YUBARI: And he escaped? The Borg? In a two-man fighter? That's impossible. Even with his genetic enhancements.

DOVAN: With Bev, the impossible never surprised me. But, right now, this is just a theory. There's only one way to turn it into fact.

YUBARI: No, sir.

DOVAN: Excuse me?

YUBARI: Starfleet Standard Tactical Doctrine, Borg, Propositions One Through Five: "One: You cannot outgun the Borg. Two: You cannot escape the Borg. Three: You cannot challenge the Borg. Four: You can only survive the Borg. Five: Never engage the Borg." As tactical officer, it is my responsibility to inform you that the only option deemed survivable in these circumstances is non-pursuit. We have to break off.

DOVAN: I'm surprised at you, Lieutenant. Where's that fighting Yubari spirit?

YUBARI: There are no fights with the Borg, sir. Only massacres. And that's if you're lucky.

DOVAN: Hm. I wish you were wrong. But two decades of fighting the Borg and losing... well. I'm not authorized to order suicide.

YUBARI: Aye, sir.

SYLVESTE: Sir, Rene[gade Squadron volunteers.]

DOVAN: But if the Borg somehow found out about the Mapstone, it is vital that Starfleet knows.

NEEVA: Galaxy in the balance and all that?

DOVAN: And all that. Miss Yubari, apprise Starfleet of our situation and request orders.

YUBARI: Aye, sir.

(She gets to it, pressing buttons.)

NEEVA: Sir, at this distance, it'll take nearly eight hours for our transmission to reach the Union relay, and another eight hours to receive Admiral Parker's response.

SYLVESTE: Sir!

DOVAN: Yes, Mister...

SYLVESTE: Ensign Jonathan Sylveste, sir. On detached service with Renegade Fighter Group as squadron first sergeant.

DOVAN: I asked your name, not your bio, Ensign First Sergeant Jonathan Sylveste.

SYLVESTE: Yes, sir. Request permission for Renegade Squadron to pursue immediately.

DOVAN: Denied. This isn't a volunteer mission. It's at least... eh... forty percent suicide.

NEEVA: I'd be interested in seeing the math behind that, sir.

SYLVESTE: Sir, the trail could go cold in eight hours. We can pursue for weeks without refueling. We accept the risks!

DOVAN: Look, if anyone's going off half-cocked on a screwball revenge quest around here, it's me. Besides, didn't I just get done saying you could use some more bridge seasoning? Now's your chance, kid. Yubari? What's taking so long?

YUBARI: It's just the encryption [key, sir. I should have it in a minute.]

SYLVESTE: SIR! With respect, sir!

DOVAN: Wha — ?

SYLVESTE: I don't need more bridge seasoning, sir. Those firing arcs were as near to perfect as anything you'll ever see in your life, sir, and Bev Rol would have taken at least another point-six seconds to reach all-stop after that order.

(Dovan steps right in front of Sylveste.)

DOVAN: Are you telling me you're better than Alex Bevoney Rol, Mister First Ensign Sergeant?

SYLVESTE: Sir! Mister Rol was the greatest squadron leader I ever met! I will never be his equal in wisdom, or generosity, or friendship. But, sir, I could fly circles around him while sick with Stage-II Rigellian Flu, and that is a true story, sir! Every member of his squadron has earned the right to wreak God's terrible vengeance on those who took his life! Sir!

(Pause.)

DOVAN: Hmp. Spunky. (pause) Commander Neeva, with me. Miss Yubari, you have the bridge. (Dovan turns and starts to walk away. Neeva follows.) Something you'll learn fast, Ensign Sylveste: (he enters the turbolift) I'm not big on God talk. Sickbay.

(Doors swish shut.)

LOCATION: TURBOLIFT

(Pause)

DOVAN: Was that kid right, Commander? Did he brake fast enough?

NEEVA: Faster than Bev? I don't know, sir. Faster than I could have, though.

DOVAN: Hm. (pause) After we visit Alecz, can you prep the flyer *Tirch Mir* for launch? Schedule it for, oh, nine hours from now.

NEEVA: Yes, sir. (exhale) I hate to say it, sir, but he had a point.

DOVAN: What, Sylveste?

NEEVA: Why are you waiting for orders, sir? It's smart, it's regulation, and it's exactly the kind of thing you never do.

DOVAN: Ah, well, I know what Admiral Parker and his committee are going to say. They won't be willing to endanger the *Excelsior*, but they will agree that we must take a risk in order to find out what the Borg know. They'll order a shuttle mission. Since I am the local expert on fighting the Borg, they'll send me.

NEEVA: You're the captain.

DOVAN: I'm a fluke — an expendable one, at that. Not that I'd let anyone else go in my place anyway.

NEEVA: Still: a shuttle against the Borg?

DOVAN: No different from a starship against the Borg, really. They'll squash you like a bug either way. A small ship with a little stealth might actually stand a better chance.

NEEVA: So if you know that's what the committee wants, why wait? Why not just go?

DOVAN: Gives my X.O. a little more time to rest before I roll him onto the *Tirch Mir* with me in a wheelchair. As the sole survivor of the attack, he might have some critical insights.

NEEVA: And he needs to see Bev's last chapter through to the end.

DOVAN: Yeah, that too. Don't tell Melissa. (pause) How long were you in command during the Tilara Investigation?

NEEVA: About four days.

DOVAN: Then this'll be cake. I suggest finding a nice nebula to hide in while you wait for our signal. In case of Borg.

NEEVA: But why nine hours? We'll have Admiral Parker's response in eight.

DOVAN: Eight to get the Admiral's orders across unthinkable distances of space and time. But nine to convince Doctor Sharp to release my executive officer from sickbay. (The turbolift slows to a stop and opens) ...starting now.

SCENE 4H-8**LOCATION: FIGHTER DECK**

(Valentine and Sylveste are on top of a fighter, trying to fix something. It's noisy in here.)

COMPUTER: (in background) *Squadron commander to marine flight deck. Squadron commander to marine flight deck.*

VALENTINE: Nope, still no thrust.

SYLVESTE: Don't worry, we'll get this bird flying again before next drill. Now what if I try this inductor?

VALENTINE: Nope. Y'know, sir, I think the problem's in the fuel line?

SYLVESTE: Eh, you might be right about that, Valentine.

(The Major approaches.)

MAJOR : First Sergeant Sylveste! Front and center!

SYLVESTE: Sir, Major, sir! I'll be right down, sir!

MAJOR: See that you--

(Sylveste jumps from the top of the fighter and lands right in front of the Major, grunting as he does so.)

MAJOR: --are. We have a sick bird here, First Sergeant?

SYLVESTE: Aye, sir. Valentine's one of the best mechanics I know, though. She'll pull through, sir.

MAJOR: See that she does. Squadron launches at oh-four-hundred.

SYLVESTE: Sir? Shouldn't mission details be given first to Chief Vesant, sir?

MAJOR: We'll be escorting Captain Dovan and First Officer Lorhrok aboard the *Tirch Mir*. The captain instructed me to notify you personally.

SYLVESTE: He did. ...I mean, sir, yes, sir!

MAJOR: Carry on, Mister Sylveste.

(The Major walks away.)

SCENE 4H-09**LOCATION: SPACE**

(The runabout cruises past as several small fighters surrounding it swoop by.)

DOVAN: Captain's log. Following Admiral Parker's orders, the Tirch Mir and its escort are proceeding at low warp to avoid disrupting the enemy ion trail.

LOCATION: FLYER TIRCH MIR – REAR COMPARTMENT

(Dovan, sighing, walks up to the door that leads to the cockpit.)

(Dovan presses the button, the door slides open and he steps through.)

LOCATION: FLYER TIRCH MIR – COCKPIT

DOVAN: What? Computer, lights up one-quarter.

LORHROK: Captain?

DOVAN: Alecz. I'm sorry. I just had to file my logs. Thought you were asleep. Well, sedated, actually.

LORHROK: No. Watching the stars.

(Dovan makes his way to the front of the cockpit and, when he eventually gets there, he sets down the PADD he's holding.)

The music Rol is listening to is "Sleep" by Eric Whitacre.

DOVAN: What's the song? Sounds... human?

LORHROK: Yes. Whitacre. Rol got me listening to him.

DOVAN: Ah.

LORHROK: No. I'm lying. I'm lying and I don't even know why I'm lying. Rol wanted me to listen to Whitacre. He said I'd like it.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: And did you?

LORHROK: I don't know. I never plugged in the album until a second before you walked in. I figured he'd badger me another month, maybe two, and then... I'd have time.

(Silence.)

DOVAN: These lyrics... "His house is in the village, though"? Where have I heard that?

LORHROK: Oh. Oh, that explains it.

DOVAN: Huh?

LORHROK: Bev's favorite poet. He probably quoted this poem on the bridge sometimes. I guess Whitacre set it to music.

(Silence.)

DOVAN: He gave his life in service to others. A graceful end. It isn't enough, but...

LORHROK: No, it's not enough. Saving the galaxy isn't a good death for someone who shouldn't have had to die at all. He was the best of us, Captain. The one who had nothing to atone for.

DOVAN: Well... there was that time he murdered Leo Amara and David Robins.

LORHROK: He was under genetic control! Isaac Brahms committed those murders; Bev didn't get a say.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: (exhales) There... were no genetic controls.

LORHROK: What?

DOVAN: I'm sorry.

LORHROK: Captain, I saw the nanites.

DOVAN: Brahms put Rol under genetic control to absolve him. Take away the responsibility and you take away the crime. Rol wasn't willing to be absolved. He disabled the controls. He followed orders of his own free will. I don't think even Brahms knew.

(short pause.)

LORHROK: No. No! If Bev was killing people on his own, he wouldn't have told me about it! He would have just killed me and moved on!

DOVAN: That was my first hint, actually.

LORHROK: Sorry? For the record, he didn't kill me.

DOVAN: Right. If he were really under genetic control, any half-decent programmer would have put in some safeguards — you know, a failsafe, in case someone got too close. But he didn't shoot you. He shot a computer chip, giving you the chance to disable him. That didn't smell like programming to me. That had the odor of a choice. And choice it was.

LORHROK: How could you possibly know that?

DOVAN: I asked him.

LORHROK: And... and he told you?

DOVAN: He made a formal confession to Admiral Parker after Gevinon. Rol wanted a public trial, confession, punishment... but it was too damn "sensitive", what with all that DEFCON Zero business. Parker swept him under the rug. Bev wanted to tell you.

LORHROK: If that were true, he would have.

DOVAN: I know he was worried about you, ever since Gevinon. Or, maybe he was just waiting another month, maybe two... thought he had more time.

LORHROK: I was putting off listening to a music album! It's not really the same as murder!

DOVAN: I can't speak for him. I won't. Maybe he had a good reason, maybe he was just ashamed. Here's what I do know, Alecz: Bev loved you. You saved him.

LORHROK: Apparently, I saved him from a bunch of genetic controls that didn't actually exist.

DOVAN: No no no! Don't you see? That's a nice little story, but it doesn't amount to much. Any man in the Fleet would free a fellow officer from slavery. Nothing special. But you, Alecz, you saved Bev. He adored you for it.

LORHROK: What are you even talking about?

DOVAN: Just after Rol willfully murdered two officers — not for the first time — you confronted him. He decided on the spot to stop murdering, to help arrest his accomplices, and to turn himself in. You didn't fix some nanite engineering problem. You convinced Alex Rol to repent. You might be too young to know how impossibly rare that is.

LORHROK: No, you know what's impossibly rare? The naïve, moralizing childishness that let me ignore what was right in front of me — for years. Bev saw me for what I was: a useful mark. And, hey, full points to him: he got off the hook, didn't he? Wheels within wheels within wheels, right?

DOVAN: Alecz...

LORHROK: No! He doesn't get to betray me and die on the same day! (pause) Please leave, captain.

(Short pause.)

DOVAN: Al'ght.

(Dovan leaves.)

LORHROK: The stars are lovely, dark, and deep.
Bev... you had promises to keep.
And miles to go before you sleep.
And miles to go... before...

SCENE 4H-10**LOCATION: FIGHTER COCKPIT**

VESANT: *Dak, you're too close to keep the ion wake clear. Loosen up!*

RANDOM SQUADRON MEMBER #1: *Loosening up, roger.*

(Sensor alert.)

SYLVESTE: CAG, I'm getting some strange readings at bearing three-one-one. Permission to break formation and investigate.

VESANT: *Permission granted. Take a buddy with you. Valentine, fall in with Mister Sylveste!*

JUBAL VALENTINE: *Yes'm!*

(Valentine's fighter accelerates out of formation and falls in with Sylveste's as he angles up toward the anomaly, which he scans.)

SYLVESTE: Definitely getting some more debris. Same Borg alloy.

VESANT: *Enough mass to account for the mothership? Maybe at least a sphere?*

SYLVESTE: Not even close, ma'am. Another scout, at best. (another sensor alert) Ma'am, I'm detecting a body in the wreckage.

VESANT: *Borg?*

SYLVESTE: Too much radiation. We'll have to bring it aboard.

(Pause.)

VESANT: *I'll call the captain.*

SYLVESTE: Hold on a minute...

VALENTINE: *Sarge? What is it?*

SYLVESTE: More ion trails. A lot more. Zat, you might want to ask the captain to get over here.

SCENE 4H-11**LOCATION: TIRCH MIR – LIVING AREA**

DOVAN: Understood, Miss Vesant. *Tirch Mir* out. (he closes a comm channel and stands up)
Melissa, I need you to prep the kitchen area for autopsy and possible restraint.

SHARP: Why would I need to restrain him if he's already dead?

DOVAN: Dead Borg have a nasty habit of regenerating back to life. 'specially when you unfreeze them.

SHARP: Are they really dead at all, then?

DOVAN: They died the moment they were assimilated. Anything after that's just a sick joke. (he checks inside a storage locker) Climbing ropes. Will these do?

SHARP: They'll do. (her arm swipes across a kitchen table, knocking pots and pans and plates to the ground) Sterilize this table and tell me what's going on.

DOVAN: This appears to have been some kind of staging ground. There are dozens of ion trails, some weeks old. They may have even hollowed out a rogue asteroid as a headquarters; the Renegades are investigating.

SHARP: Okay, we're ready.

(Dovan hits his combadge.)

DOVAN: Dovan to Vesant. Energize.

(The corpse Sylveste discovered last scene beams onto the table.)

SHARP: Hunh. (pause) Didn't you say...?

DOVAN: That he'd be a Borg? I'm as surprised as you are.

SHARP: This man is not a Borg.

DOVAN: Is that your expert opinion, Doctor?

SHARP: You were right about him being dead, though. One for two's not bad. Note the pronounced ridges at the corners of his eyes. He's Benkaran. It's hard to tell if he was killed by the weapons fire or the exposure to space.

DOVAN: Weapons fire? What weapons fire?

SHARP: See these scorch marks along his left cheek? Disruptor burns, probably from a console in his cockpit that overloaded when his shields failed.

DOVAN: We found him in the wreckage of a Borg ship. That's... not how they work.

SHARP: Believe your own lyin' eyes, then. I have an autopsy to do.

(She starts scanning.)

DOVAN: But what do the Benkarans have to do with the Borg? Or the Mapstone? This doesn't make any sense.

SYLVESTE: *Sylveste to Tirch Mir.*

(Dovan hits his combadge and steps away to the other side of the cabin.)

DOVAN: Go ahead.

SYLVESTE: *Sir, someone was using this asteroid as a base, but I don't think it was the Borg.*

DOVAN: Yeah, I'm getting a lot of that right now.

SYLVESTE: *Temperature is all wrong, no regeneration alcoves, I see common areas with refrigerators and food on the table... if they're Borg, they can't be part of the Collective.*

DOVAN: I'd love to ask them. Where are they now?

SYLVESTE: *One of the clusters of ion trails has a different warp signature from the others. It looks like this second group was responsible for the destruction of the ship we found... and, after they left, there are no more ion trails in this area.*

DOVAN: So we follow them.

SYLVESTE: *That would be my recommendation, sir. Course will take us into space claimed by the Perenalthorias Union.*

DOVAN: They're supposed to be peaceful, but now I'm not so sure. Hit it. Dovan out. (pause)
Well, it looks like this might not be a suicide mission after all.

SHARP: Try not to sound so disappointed.

SCENE 4H-12**LOCATION: TIRCH MIR COCKPIT**

MAJOR: *...Of course, it couldn't last. Ten minutes later, Commander J'naya walked in and asked, "Wait, how far did you say to Rigel Two?"*

LORHROK: Ha! Good one!

MAJOR: *It's not up to Lieutenant Yubari's standards, but—*

LORHROK: Say no more, Major. Lieutenant Yubari's stories are in a class by themselves. That was still a good prank.

MAJOR: *Thank you, sir. Then I have your official approval to do it again?*

LORHROK: Nice try. You just want to give Kestra somebody else to shoot at.

MAJOR: *I plead the Seventh Guarantee, sir.*

LORHROK: Y'know, Major, I appreciate the check-in, but you don't have to keep me company all night. I'm not an invalid.

MAJOR: *Sir, with respect, you currently can't stand up. Sir.*

LORHROK: You don't need legs to pilot a shuttle, Major. Besides, you have a whole squadron to worry about.

MAJOR: *Ha. The truth is, sir, Renegade Squadron has no use for me. Chief Vesant has her pilots well in hand. I could use the company more than you, sir.*

LORHROK: She's a natural leader, then?

MAJOR: *Sir, I'm not certain how much of this is the chief's doing and how much was Mister Rol's.*

(Pause.)

LORHROK: Major, you served with Bev, didn't you? Before he came to the *Excelsior*.

MAJOR: *Our paths crossed, sir.*

LORHROK: You respected him.

MAJOR: *Sir... I'm not really at liberty to discuss it, sir.*

LORHROK: You're forgetting, Major: my sigma clearance is higher than yours, now. (pause) Unless you don't want to discuss it.

(Pause.)

MAJOR: *I tried to have him relieved of duty.*

LORHROK: You what?

MAJOR: *I went over his head. Petitioned Director Mak directly. Denied. Brahms and Rol were too close. (pause) Look, I don't care what you think of the mission. I've refused missions that crossed the line; sometimes more. But you have to decide.*

LORHROK: He didn't?

MAJOR: Mister Rol was a time bomb. Hated the mission and everyone he worked with – himself most of all. That put us all at risk.

LORHROK: Do you know why he kept doing them?

MAJOR: Hmph. There were some pretty outlandish rumors, but Captain Siresh made it simple.

LORHROK: Sharvah Siresh agreed with you about Bev?

MAJOR: Apparently, Mister Rol fell in love during the Dominion War. Then, she betrayed the Federation.

LORHROK: You mean, she turned her back on Starfleet's ideals?

MAJOR: No, I mean she was helping the Dominion win. (pause) I don't think Mister Rol ever recovered.

LORHROK: You never raised your concerns with me or Captain Dovan. (pause) Wait, did you?

MAJOR: I never needed to. By the time I got back from Gevinon, Ensign Rol was a model officer. He always seemed sad, even when he was laughing... but sad isn't dangerous. I suppose he finally decided.

LORHROK: He chose to leave that world behind.

MAJOR: Suppose that's one way of looking at it.

LORHROK: What's another?

MAJOR: *He died fighting to keep the Borg from learning Starfleet secrets--and, somehow he succeeded. He couldn't have done that eight years ago. Doesn't sound to me like a man who doubted the mission a[nymore.]*

(The Tirch Mir drops from warp into normal space.)

LORHROK: Hold, Major. We just lost warp power.

(The fighter squadron, eight ships strong, also starts dropping out of warp.)

MAJOR: *So did the whole squadron. We're being interdicted. Major to Renegades!*

VESANT: *Renegades! Defense pattern Omicron! Protect the Tirch Mir at all costs! Sylveste, where the hell did that come from?*

LORHROK: Captain to the cockpit.

MAJOR: *Tirch Mir, plot an escape course.*

LORHROK: Major, [we're not leaving you behind.]

MAJOR: *Tirch Mir, you are lightly shielded and carrying the captain. If the Borg move in, we'll have only seconds.*

(Lorhrok lays in a course while the fighters maneuver into defensive positions around him.)

VALENTINE: *Sensor contact!*

SYLVESTE: *I have them, too! Two ships moving to intercept at high warp!*

VESANT: *Does that mean we have engines, too?*

(Lorhrok's running more commands on the console.)

LORHROK: No! Maker! They must have some kind of bypass!

VALENTINE: *Here they come!*

SYLVESTE: *Set phasers to modulating frequencies!*

VESANT: *Don't fire until Borg ID confirmed!*

(Two ships drop out of warp. They are both markedly *not* Borg.)

VALENTINE: *Contact!*

SYLVESTE: *They're not Borg! ID is... (checks his computer) ID is unknown, but they're not Borg.*

LORHROK: We're being hailed on all frequencies.

(Hailing frequencies open.)

WARDEN #1: *This is Nygean patrol frigate calling unidentified vessels. You have entered restricted airspace. State your intent.*

SYLVESTE: *They've locked weapons.*

VESANT: *Those are nice ships, but we can beat them.*

LORHROK: No! No provocations! (he opens the intercom) This is First Officer Aleczahnder Lorhrok of the United Star Ship *Excelsior*. We are on a peaceful mission of exploration.

(Silence. Radio crackles.)

VALENTINE: *What are they waiting for?*

SYLVESTE: *They're talking it over.*

WARDEN #1: *Respectfully, Excelsior, my superiors are skeptical that eight long-range fighters and one shuttlecraft, however impressive, are adequate to sustain a "mission of exploration."*

(The cockpit door swishes open and Dovan walks in.)

LORHROK: We were attacked by the Borg. Our wing was launched to pursue them.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: Sorry, I was held up.

LORHROK: Captain. Will you be taking the microphone?

DOVAN: No, looks like you got this.

WARDEN: *Respectfully, Excelsior wing, you don't look like much of a match for the Borg, either.*

DOVAN: Good eye.

WARDEN: *Say again, Excelsior?*

LORHROK: Uh, disregard previous message, Nygean patrol. I was, uh, clearing my throat. We wouldn't risk our starship, but, in the Federation, we don't let an attack like that go unanswered.

WARDEN: *...hm, I suppose that's compatible with our intelligence on the Federation. Alright. Nivosh!*

SYLVESTE: *They're powering down weapons.*

VESANT: *Stand by, Renegades.*

LORHROK: Nygean patrol, we've been pursuing the Borg on this course for over a day. Have they passed through your airspace?

WARDEN #1: *Ha. Now that you mention it, I think I know just the Borg you're talking about.*

DOVAN: So you have seen them.

WARDEN #1: *Seen them, Excelsior! (chuckle) They're on that planet at this very moment – in one of my jail cells!*

LORHROK: I beg your pardon?

SCENE 4H-13**LOCATION: PLANET SURFACE**

DOVAN: *Captain's Log, supplemental. Obviously, we have to see for ourselves what the Warden meant.*

(They are walking along a path through the woods. Lorhrok is hovering in his space wheelchair.)

WARDEN: And if you look out just here... yes... see? This is the only spot on the planet where you can see the Sunset Falls and the Sunrise Falls at the same time.

LORHROK: It's beautiful. But aren't you worried about escapes?

WARDEN: There are transport inhibitors across the planet, patrols in orbit and atmosphere, and a shield grid over the entire facility. The only danger in an escape attempt is the danger the inmates pose to themselves.

DOVAN: Still, forgive me for saying so, Warden, but the Nygeans have a reputation for being rather... severe... with their prisoners. It's a bit odd seeing such an... open... environment at a high-security prison complex.

WARDEN: Oh, our reputation for law and order is well-earned, Captain. I'm afraid you labor under a misapprehension. This prison is only Security Level 2. No one who poses that kind of a threat is incarcerated here.

DOVAN: Wait. Let me hear that again. You keep captured Borg in a low-security prison?

WARDEN: Well, that's a strong term, but I'll let you see for yourself.

(They arrive at a metal door. The Warden pulls out an ID card, which she flashes at the automated sensors.)

WARDEN: Access Warden, Voice Scan Sample, Code One-Twelve-Four-Negative, Destination Cell Eleven Five.

(The computer beeps and beams them all away in an alien transporter.)

SCENE 4H-14**LOCATION: CELL BLOCK**

(The Warden immediately starts walking down an echoey concrete hallway.)

WARDEN: Of course, even a low-security Nygean prison uses transporter access to control prisoner flow, which generally makes escape a moot point. We're now eight meters underground. (she stops walking) Ah, here we are, captain. Your Borg.

(She presses a button and a shutter on the wall rises.)

BREZIK: Warden? Not feeding time. Who's the blue guy?

WARDEN: Some of your victims, Brezik! Why don't you get acquainted?

DOVAN: He doesn't seem very, um...

LORHROK: Borg? He's not Borg.

BREZIK: (chuckling) Yeah, fooled you, tho, dint I?

WARDEN: Brezik is the leader of a little band of confidence tricksters and pirates. Typical Benkaran riff-raff, but this was a bit more involved than his usual schemes.

BREZIK: Yeah, right, all I do is, uh, liberate a few little surplus scout ships from the army depot, rig 'em up to look all, like, Borg. Find a trade route, drop by, everybody says "Oh no, Borg" and skives off like a buncha mewling kittens.

LORHROK: You were pretending to be Borg.

WARDEN: Most governments in the Perenalthorias Union adopt a policy of absolute avoidance toward the Borg. After all, chasing the Borg is suicide!

BREZIK: We get whatever cargo they chute in the getaway, even split between the boys, no harm done, right? And if my worthless brother Tochick han't got in that bar fight [and rolled over on us, we'd still be raking it in now.]

WARDEN: Then we would have caught you some other way, Brezik. You people don't have the brains for real crime.

DOVAN: But... how did you know?

BREZIK: Know what, Blueskin?

DOVAN: The artifact! How did you know it was on the *Patroclus*?

BREZIK: I have none idea what you're talking about.

DOVAN: The Iconian artifact! That you tried to steal from us!

BREZIK: Blueskin, didn't your nursemaid ever tell you? The Iconians are a myth!

LORHROK: You really didn't know?

BREZIK: I dint, an I still don't. You want I should pay you back for it? I'm in here for next eight years, could take quite a little while.

DOVAN: I need a place to sit down.

WARDEN: Right over there, Captain.

DOVAN: Thanks.

(Dovan walks away.)

LORHROK: Mister Brezik, you didn't get the artifact from us. We managed to hold on to it.

BREZIK: Well then what'd you come all the way out here for? It's like I said, no harm done, right?

WARDEN: Did you lose anything of value, Lieutenant?

LORHROK: Yeah. A friend.

BREZIK: Oh raznock.

WARDEN: Um, pardon. Can you explain that a little, please? For the record.

BREZIK: Why did you fight back, you stupid raznock?

LORHROK: Because our cargo could have threatened the galaxy if it'd fallen into Borg hands!

BREZIK: They're the only ones who fought, Yedara! I didn't know it was them! The only ones, I swear!

WARDEN: You were given the chance to admit other crimes at trial, Brezik. You swore to the court you never fired a live shot until Nygean Enforcement raided your base.

LORHROK: (scoffs)

WARDEN: So, what exactly happened, Lieutenant?

LORHROK: I'm not sure. I lost consciousness. My shipmates pulled me out of the burning wreckage of our ship after we crash-landed —

BREZIK: That wasn't my fault! I didn't know he got hurt!

LORHROK: — and I've been in this wheelchair ever since. My co-pilot, who got the artifact and me home in one piece... burned to death in the cockpit.

(Pause.)

BREZIK: He... died?

WARDEN: That's murder.

BREZIK: It is not, Yedara! You know me! I'm not a murderer!

WARDEN: You didn't used to be. Can you document this?

LORHROK: The flight recorder was lost, but we have extensive forensics. And, I was a witness.

BREZIK: Yadera, no! He's... it's not like that!

WARDEN: This interview is finished, Brezik.

(She presses a button and the shutter descends again.)

BREZIK: Stop. Warden! WARDEN!

(The shutter clicks closed on his last word.)

(Pause.)

DOVAN: Then he died for nothing. An empty death. The artifact...

LORHROK: ...probably doesn't mean anything.

WARDEN: My government will formally request all data be copied to the Justice Ministry and Brezik's lawyer by nightfall. Justice will be served, Captain, I promise you.

DOVAN: Some low-life with a generic name and a bumpy forehead. After surviving the Anbar, after Brahms, the bluegills, the Mapstone, the Uhura Incident... it's some punk we'll never see again?

WARDEN: I'm sorry, but I have to ask you both: assuming he is found guilty, how should Brezik be punished?

LORHROK: Well, wouldn't that be up to the jury?

WARDEN: "*Vekto valek k'vadim.*" Under Nygean law, once a criminal is convicted, his victims determine the punishment.

DOVAN: What's the typical punishment for murder?

WARDEN: Death. Humane, of course. Completely painless.

LORHROK: Oh, no.

DOVAN: Hm. Well, the Federation's Prime Directive prevents us from interfering. If capital punishment is the norm here, we may be obliged to accept that.

LORHROK: Captain!

DOVAN: You'd like a word in private, Number One?

WARDEN: I'll be... just down the corridor if you need me.

(The Warden scurries away.)

LORHROK: And since when did you start caring about the Prime Directive?

DOVAN: I'm a Starfleet captain; I swore an oath.

LORHROK: No, this is you looking for an excuse to get revenge.

DOVAN: The man in there killed Ensign Rol. In a premeditated ambush. For nothing!

LORHROK: Not everyone gets to have a death that "means" something, Captain! Sometimes people just die, because life is stupid, and cruel, and much too short. Good people die for nothing every day.

(Pause.)

DOVAN: That's... that isn't enough, Alec.

LORHROK: I'm sorry. It's all I have. We all choose our own illusions, to help cope with death. Yours aren't mine.

DOVAN: No. I don't know which of us is right, but we can't both be wrong. Either it is meaningless or it isn't. We owe Bev better than... than this.

LORHROK: And you think you'll fix it by killing that man? Maker, Alcar, you knew all these things about Bev, but you didn't understand a thing about him, did you?

DOVAN: Oh, and you did?

LORHROK: Maybe not. He was... more complicated than I think any of us knew. But I know enough to do this. Warden!

(The warden comes jogging back.)

WARDEN: Then you've decided?

LORHROK: Warden, what's the minimum prison sentence for murder?

WARDEN: Well... strange question; strictly speaking, there is no lower limit for murder. However, the arbiters' council strongly recommends not less than thirty-eight years' confinement.

LORHROK: Then we want thirty-nine years of confinement.

WARDEN: Oh, um... I'll make a note.

(She presses some buttons.)

DOVAN: Lieutenant?

LORHROK: This "Brezik" knows how to survive in prison. He'll pass the first thirty-eight years in peace. But year thirty-nine... the year he knows he could have gotten out, but didn't, because I added one extra year. He'll never know why, but it will haunt him. (pause) He'll think more about his crime during that last year than he will in all the other years combined.

WARDEN: An... interesting perspective, Lieutenant.

LORHROK: As an old friend of mine used to say, "Wheels within wheels."

DOVAN: "...within wheels," as I recall.

LORHROK: Nah. I'm not that good yet.

SCENE 4H-15**LOCATION: SPACE**

(Excelsior flies by on impulse.)

NEEVA: Operations log, supplemental. Shuttlecraft Tirch Mir and escort returned to shuttlebay without incident and are undergoing standard maintenance. Expedited requisition log for this stardate: one-quarter ton additional foodstuffs, mixed; a variety of flowers native to Setlik III, five dozen bouquets; and one photon torpedo tube, one point nine meters long, warhead removed. End log.

LOCATION: EXCELSIOR – CORRIDOR

(Neeva and Lorhrok are walking side by side.)

LORHROK: Do you think it went well?

NEEVA: I don't know. I thought it was good. But I've never been to a human one before.

LORHROK: But nobody talked about who he really was. Brahms, the murders. Are we trying to remember Alex Rol, or just the slices of him we liked?

NEEVA: I hope, at my funeral pyre, they pray for the person I became--not the one I started out as.

(They walk a little further in silence.)

LORHROK: I miss him so much.

NEEVA: I know.

(Pause.)

LORHROK: When I was the Bringer, it didn't matter that so much death was pointless. I was above it all. I was Death.

NEEVA: I wouldn't be so sure that Bev Rol did anything pointlessly. Even die.

LORHROK: What do you mean?

(A door swishes open.)

NEEVA: Well, this is my stop. Have a good night, Alecz. Call me if you need to talk.

LORHROK: Actually, Neeva... I've lost a lot of people this year. The last thing I want tonight is to be alone.

NEEVA: I understand. I could stay up for a drink in the Delta Lounge. C'mon.

LORHROK: No, I mean... I care about you, and it's time I admitted to myself how much. If all this's taught me one thing, it's that I am a fool for leaving you here at your door every night.

NEEVA: You don't want to leave?

(Short pause.)

LORHROK: If it helps, I make a really good breakfast.

NEEVA: Oh, Alec. I made up my mind weeks ago. Come on in. I'll get you that drink.

SCENE 4H-16**LOCATION: FIGHTER PATROCLUS (FLASHBACK)**

(Alarms are going off, the cockpit is on fire. Rol is in the cockpit, under fire from the "Borg" ships... and firing back.)

COMPUTER: *Warning: plasma fire in main cockpit. Evacuate the cockpit.*

(Rol's hands fly over the keys as he executes another maneuver.)

ROL: Alecz?

COMPUTER: *Lieutenant Alecz Lorhrok is unconscious in rear compartment. Vital signs are stable. No immediate danger. (a klaxon beeps) Main cockpit will be automatically sealed in thirty seconds. Repeat: evacuate the cockpit.*

ROL: You can't just order me around like that. (pause) We can still stop this.

(He grunts as the ship is hit with a heavy blast and a console erupts in sparks.)

COMPUTER: *Error: command functions cannot be rerouted from main cockpit due to unknown damage. Pilot must remain in cockpit. Warning: plasma fire in main cockpit. Evacuate the cockpit.*

ROL: (sigh) (pause) Nothing gold can stay.

(The fighter's cockpit door slowly closes.)

(Rol fumbles with something. He inserts something into a slot.)

COMPUTER: *A new device has been inserted in chip slot one-A. One audio file found. Name: "Daily Reminder."*

ROL: Computer, begin playback on my monitor.

COMPUTER: (beeps affirmatively) *Affirmative.*

ROL: *Rol, Entry Five-Thirteen. As a result of a recent conversation, I have adopted a new mission objective. I don't know whether two complete conversions can be held in the span of a single lifetime. I don't know whether history will judge me a saint or a devil for what I am about to do. All I know is that, if the Federation stands for anything, then I must act, and let history worry about the consequences.*

(There is an explosion. Rol grunts in pain then gasps and slumps onto the console, dead.)

ROL: *For the first time in many years, I do think the Federation stands for something. In fact, I think it stands for everything. May the Great Bird of the Galaxy be my witness and my guide.*

CLOSING CREDITS

POST-CREDITS

NARRATOR: *To Michael. We miss you.*

MUSIC: "Nothing Gold Can Stay" - Sung by Michael Liebmann

ROL: Nature's first green is gold.
Her hardest hue to hold
Her early leaf's a flower
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf
So Eden sank to grief

So dawn goes down to day
So dawn goes down to day
Nothing.... Nothing... Gold can stay.