

Starship: Excelsior

"Excelsior Biographies: Neeva"

(Season 4, A Boxing Day Special)

by James Heaney

Transcribed by Peter Stine

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

SCENE 403-01**LOCATION: CIVILIAN COURT ROOM, ALTAIR VII**

(There is a crowd talking.)

JUDGE: Order! Order! I will have order!

(A gong. The room quiets.)

JUDGE: Commander Neeva, you may approach the dock.

NEEVA: Thank you, your honor.

(She steps forward.)

JUDGE: Your name, for the record?

NEEVA: Lieutenant Commander Neeva.

JUDGE: Neeva Thoem-va (tem-VAH), isn't it?

NEEVA: No, your honor. I have no legal surname.

JUDGE: I see. (pause) The Inheritance of Altair reminds you that, without truth, there can be no civilization. If you deceive this court in any matter, large or small, your life is forfeit. Do you understand this, Lieutenant Commander Neeva?

NEEVA: I swore an oath to the truth when I joined Starfleet, your honor.

JUDGE: We'll proceed to questioning. Where were you born, Commander?

NEEVA: I'm... I'm sorry. Are you the prosecuting attorney? I thought you were the judge.

JUDGE: This is Altair Seven, Commander, not a Federation courtroom. Normally your failure to immediately answer the question would be construed as contempt, but, since We are very grateful to your government for making you available as a witness in this case, We shall overlook the matter.

NEEVA: I apologize, your honor.

JUDGE: To answer your question, we do not employ separate attorneys on Altair. We are the judge for the prosecution; our silent counterpart at left is the judge for the defense. Since you are Our witness, the prosecution will ask you all questions and pass judgment on the integrity of the Inheritance's case. May We proceed?

NEEVA: Of course, your honor.

JUDGE: Where were you born, Commander?

NEEVA: Koh't, your honor. It's a former Klingon colony on their border with the Tholians.

JUDGE: Former colony?

NEEVA: The colony failed. It was abandoned to the criminal element. A small Klingon military garrison stayed behind to secure the system, but they had no role in governing the planet.

JUDGE: And your upbringing reflects that origin.

NEEVA: Your honor, I object to that suggestion in the strongest possible terms. It is untrue and insulting.

JUDGE: The Inheritance apologizes. Please accept this rephrasing of the question: Who was your mother, Commander Neeva?

NEEVA: Deraé (der-EYE) DuLac.

JUDGE: And her occupation?

NEEVA: She was a so-called "Orion animal woman" with substantial power in the sector until she was expelled by the Syndicate.

JUDGE: But that was years before you were born, wasn't it? How did she make her living afterward?

(Pause)

NEEVA: My mother was a whore, your honor.

JUDGE: And your father?

NEEVA: I consider my father to be Professor Jason Fellowes, a human tenured to the faculty of Quantum Mechanics at the University of New Berlin on Earth.

JUDGE: We would like you to identify your male biological parent, Commander. A close emotional bond is not required; only an X chromosome.

NEEVA: The man you describe is Thoem-va, a notorious pirate who has operated just inside Tholian space for several decades, often on behalf of the Orion Syndicate.

JUDGE: Is this man in the chamber with us today?

NEEVA: Yes, your honor.

JUDGE: Could you point him out to Us?

NEEVA: He is standing three meters away from me, chained up, on the Pillar of the Accused.

JUDGE: Were you ever a member of his crew?

NEEVA: Well. Ha. I was a stowaway, your honor. I was nine, I wanted to spend time with my "dad", and Deraé had always told me he was a yamok merchant.

JUDGE: So you snuck aboard his vessel. Were you discovered?

NEEVA: Of course. I lasted a few days, but eventually I crawled out of waste control to find food. We were safely away from Koh't by then.

JUDGE: Was Thoem-va happy to spend some time with his daughter?

NEEVA: Thoem-va did not acknowledge me as his daughter – a fact for which I have grown grateful over the years. He kept the Tellerite crewmembers from enslaving and killing me, so I guess I'm grateful for that, too, and he put me to work tending the animals.

JUDGE: Animals. Were these animals pets? Were they kept aboard for companionship?

NEEVA: There's no room on a pirate ship for companionship, your honor, not even of the animal kind. These were Lissepian antlions. The crew used them during boarding actions to tear through secure bulkheads and break forcefields.

JUDGE: Were these antlions ever used to murder civilians, Commander?

NEEVA: I... I never witnessed that, your honor.

JUDGE: Yet you have cause to believe it?

NEEVA: The antlions usually came back from missions covered in blood and viscera. Sometimes it was crystal dust, hot to the touch. I was responsible for showering them, especially their fragile eyes.

JUDGE: Crystal dust. Was that the remains of Tholian carapace?

NEEVA: I am not an expert, your honor.

JUDGE: This is Altair Seven, Commander. You are free to speculate. In fact, you are obliged.

NEEVA: I would speculate that the crystal dust was Tholian flesh, yes, your honor.

JUDGE: We feel compelled to tell you that this testimony would lead to your execution under Altair law. You are protected by your Federation citizenship, of course, yet We feel compelled to ask: how did you feel about your tour of duty as a pirate, Commander?

NEEVA: I wish I'd listened to Karnas, your honor.

JUDGE: Karnas?

NEEVA: The son of the Klingon garrison commander. My only friend in the ruins of Koh't. He is my brother – in far more ways than that man is my father. He... didn't want me to leave. Gave me his grandfather's d'k tahg knife for protection. That blade saved my life more times than I can tell you.

JUDGE: Very well. How did you come to join Starfleet, Commander?

NEEVA: Well, when I was fourteen, Thoem-va's ship struck a spatial anomaly. We lost power and propulsion. The damage was superficial, but we were adrift in disputed space with a very big price on our heads. We were out there, running silent, hoping for a miracle, for more than a month. By the third week we were beginning to starve to death. We started eating the antlions. Another week and I think the Tellerites would have eaten me. (pause) Then a merchant vessel, flying under Federation colors, happened to pass by. It was armed, or we might have attacked it, but instead Thoem-va burned out the last of the battery reserves to call for help. Most of us thought he was crazy, especially the Brentari – they'd never heard of the Federation, and "extending a helping hand" was a good way to end up dead in our corner of the galaxy. (pause) But we underestimated the compassion of citizens of the Federation.

JUDGE: Or perhaps you overestimated their intelligence.

NEEVA: Your honor, I recognize the delicacy of my legal station here, but if you dare make a suggestion like that again, I will cease cooperating with this trial and bring down your case around your ears. We underestimated the Federation's compassion.

(Pause.)

JUDGE: Go on.

NEEVA: Professor Fellowes, a passenger on the merchant ship, was sent over as their representative. They said it was because he had the engineering expertise to assess our damage and the language skills to communicate... but I think it's just because he was braver than the rest. During his tour, he noticed me, a little Orion girl about to hit puberty on a ship full of evil men. He agreed to hand over the necessary supplies to effect repairs, and he told them the price for that assistance: me.

JUDGE: Professor Fellowes tried to purchase you? From your father?

NEEVA: He didn't try; he succeeded. My "father" thought Professor Jason was a chump for fixing his ship at such a low, low price. He only lost his daughter, not something really important, like the alcohol stockpile. The traders made the exchange, and I was taken back to Professor Jason's ship.

JUDGE: As a slave?

NEEVA: Well... technically, I suppose. But the moment I stepped onto the merchant vessel, the law emancipated me and made me a Federation citizen.

JUDGE: Less than five years later you joined Starfleet. Why?

NEEVA: I was already halfway into Starfleet when Professor Fellowes rescued me. Karnas had taught me about my honor; after four years on a pirate ship, my honor was about the only thing I had left. Starfleet rewards honor. When I met Uncle Allonz, a pilot assigned to the D.M.Z., the idea of following him into service seemed natural.

JUDGE: And you've had a successful career in Starfleet?

NEEVA: My record speaks for itself. The *Saigon*, the *Mon Calla*, the *Jericho* Project, Newburgh, the *Totallic*, the *Appalachia*, and soon the *Excelsior*. I've been everywhere.

JUDGE: You are an Orion, like your parents.

NEEVA: Are you implying I'm racially inferior?

JUDGE: Only that it can't have been easy.

NEEVA: There have been tensions, yes. Some of my male commanding officers... (pause) I'm now on a strict regimen of cutting-edge pheromone suppressants. The gender thing shouldn't be a problem anymore. (pause) Is this relevant to your case in any way?

JUDGE: All truth is relevant, Commander Neeva. Did you ever feel as though Professor Fellowes' decision to "liberate" you was a sign of the Federation's fatal arrogance — his paternalism running roughshod over your family and traditions?

(Pause.)

NEEVA: Of course Professor Jason acted paternalistically. He's my father — that's his job. And on that note, your honor, that question was strike two. I don't know what political game you're playing with Thoem-va's trial, but I want nothing to do with it. Good bye.

JUDGE: By the Inheritance, We demand that you stay. Guards!

NEEVA: You lay one hand on me, your honor, and it's an act of war with the United Federation of Planets. Is Altair Seven ready for that?

(Pause.)

NEEVA: No, I didn't think so.

(She walks away.)