

Starship Excelsior Transcript
"The Valandrian Expedition"
(Season 1, Episode 1)

SCENE 101-01

CORTEZ: Captain's Log, Supplemental. The *Excelsior* is attempting to open diplomatic relations with the Valandrin, a matriarchal warrior race that has rejected two other diplomatic overtures in the last five years. Five minutes into our mission, I can't say it's going well.

LOCATION: *Excelsior* Bridge

DOVAN: Time to intercept, Mr. Helder!

HELDER: Fifty-eight seconds, sir.

CORTEZ: Steady as she goes. Prepare to divert auxiliary power to shields. And put them on screen.

HELDER: Aye, sir.

[The viewscreen activates, with three fighters rapidly cutting across space from a distant planet towards the *Excelsior*.]

ROL: All sections report ready for combat, captain.

HELDER: They're entering the limit of phaser range.

CORTEZ: Understood. Mr. Rol, hold your fire.

[A long, tense silence.]

LOCATION: Space

The three fighters do a close flyby over the saucer section of the *Excelsior*. But no weapons fire.

LOCATION: Excelsior Bridge

HELDER: (a little confused) They just flew right over us, sir. That pass was less than five kilometers distance.

ROL: Their weapons are still charged. Maybe they're afraid to fire?

DOVAN: I wouldn't count on that, Lieutenant.

CORTEZ: (to Dovan) They wouldn't have attempted such a close flyby if they were afraid?

DOVAN: (to Cortez) Exactly. I'll bet they want us to make the first move.

[tactical station alarms go off]

ROL: Captain! Five more vessels emerging from Valandria's second moon...

[Rol checks his console to confirm...]

ROL: ...shields charged, weapons hot.

CORTEZ: (to Dovan) ...or they're just waiting for reinforcements.

(to Helder) Slow to one-half impulse.

ROL: I've analyzed their power signatures. I'm detecting approximately twenty vessels around the system and more signatures around the planet. Yet only these eight are responding to us.

DOVAN: (sarcastic) Lucky us.

CORTEZ: Mr. Helder, I want —

[She is cut off as the ship lurches.]

CORTEZ: Report!

ROL: Shields at eighty-four percent! The approaching vessels fired a full volley.

CORTEZ: Evasive pattern omega-two; lock phasers on the lead ship, wide dispersal.

ROL: Aye, captain; locking weapons. But at wide dispersal we won't do much damage.

CORTEZ: I'm only looking to drain their shields, Lieutenant. Fire.

[The *Excelsior* fires a shot at the small fighter craft with the main phaser array. The shot connects and it swings out of formation.]

ROL: Direct hit; shields reduced eighty percent. The target is breaking formation.

CORTEZ: Target at your discretion, all phaser arrays. Same dispersal.

ROL: On it, ma'am, but these pilots know how to fly.

[The *Excelsior* lights up as phaser beams cut through space in all directions. The Valandrin ships are forced to take evasive action.]

CORTEZ: Commander, what's our shield status?

DOVAN: Holding at fifty-eight percent.

[Another blast rocks the ship.]

DOVAN: (not especially concerned) Fifty-five percent.

CORTEZ: Hm. They don't scare easily. Auxiliary power to shields. Helm, attack pattern beta-four-seven.

HELDER: Aye, sir.

[Cortez turns to look directly at tactical.]

CORTEZ: Tactical, can you isolate the power system on one of those ships?

ROL: (confidently) Yes, ma'am.

CORTEZ: Phasers to maximum. Disable that ship.

ROL: Target locked.

CORTEZ: Fire!

[One of the ships passing over the *Excelsior's* hull, strafing the shields with its disruptors, is struck hard amidships by a narrow phaser beam. The ship's shields collapse after a moment of resistance, and the ship, damaged, spins uncontrollably away into space.]

ROL: Target disabled.

CORTEZ: Lock on another.

HELDER: Captain, they're breaking attack formation.

ROL: Confirmed. They're moving out of weapons range and powering down disruptors.

CORTEZ: Yellow Alert. Shields up, weapons down; you know the drill.

ROL: Captain. On the viewscreen.

HELDER: Two ships are breaking off. Direct intercept course.

ROL: Should I charge weapons, captain?

CORTEZ: Negative, Mr. Rol. Steady as she goes.

(to Dovan) An escort?

DOVAN: That or the boldest attempt at a suicide run I've ever seen.

[He checks his console.]

DOVAN: They're coming alongside our flanks. Looks like they're guiding us in towards the planet.

CORTEZ: Helm, match course and speed.

[Helder complies, entering the relevant commands.]

HELDER: Aye, sir. At one-half impulse, we'll enter standard orbit in twenty-six minutes.

CORTEZ: Commander Helder, maintain yellow alert, and you have the bridge. Mr. Dovan, I'd like to see the rest of the senior staff in the observation lounge in five minutes.

DOVAN: Aye, sir.

[Captain Cortez exits.]

-Opening Titles-

CORTEZ: Space. The final frontier. These are the voyages of the Starship Excelsior. Her ongoing mission: to explore strange new worlds. To seek out new life, and new civilizations. To boldly go where no one has gone before.

SCENE 101-02

LOCATION: *Excelsior* Engineering.

[Engineering is a furious hive of post-battle activity. There is little damage, but always much to be done after any combat.]

NARRATOR: In Engineering, the mostly-green crewmen were more shaken than the ship itself, and, as most engineers do, they were venting their nervous energy by staying busy and walking quickly.

LORHROK: I can't believe this. The first *day*? Spast.

(calling across room) Ms. Adow, I need those damage statistics for the port nacelle two minutes ago!

ADOW: (from distance) Working on it!

[Lorhrok scans through part of a padd as he hands it off to T'Kala.]

LORHROK: Ensign T'Kala, will you see to it that these updated power grid schematics are delivered to —

[He nearly bumps into Asuka Yubari.]

LORHROK: Excuse me; what are you doing realigning internal sensors? [beat] What team are you on?

YUBARI: (stiffly) Mr. Ermez's, sir!

LORHROK: Then what are you doing down here? He's up at junction thirty-six-slash-sigma.

YUBARI: Well, sir, I —

LORHROK: And why are you out of uniform? I happen to know every lieutenant on this ship, and you're not one of them. Miss...

YUBARI: Yubari, sir. (incredibly lamely) I... must have put on the wrong uniform today, sir. I apologize.

LORHROK: (doesn't have time for this nonsense) Very well. Get down with your team, and I'll talk with Mr. Ermez later.

YUBARI: Yes, sir!

[She exits. Lorchrok turns to the console she was at. Presses some buttons, and after a quick diagnostic...]

LORHROK: (curious) This isn't just a realignment of internal sensors; it's more like —

SIMON WESTLAKE: Alecz?

[Simon Westlake was introduced in the pilot. He is 16 years old, ran away from his commodore father, wants to be an engineer and go exploring, but suffers from a degenerative neurological disorder called Elarin's Syndrome that will kill him in a few years - faster if he is placed under high stress.]

LORHROK: *Simon?* What are you--?

WESTLAKE: Alecz, what should I do? I've never been —

LORHROK: Simon, you shouldn't *be* here. We're at yellow alert; it's a potential battle situation!

WESTLAKE: I just want to help!

[Lorchrok considers the boy for a minute.]

LORHROK: Okay. Crewman Harkless is over there resetting our shield frequency. And it looks like he doesn't have an assistant. Go over and ask if he needs any help; if any of those shield monitors turn red, tell him or Ensign Nebison.

WESTLAKE: Aye, aye, sir!

[He turns and jogs over to Harkless.]

LORHROK: (relieved exhale) There. T'Kala. Updated schematics. Can you get them to Ensign Walters?

T'KALA: Yes, sir.

Sir, are you certain it is wise to allow the boy —

DOVAN: Dovan to all senior staff. Report to the observation lounge.

LORHROK: On my way, sir.

Sorry, Ensign; duty calls.

But no. I'm not sure at all.

[Lorhrok exits.]

SCENE 101-03a

LOCATION: Excelsior Briefing Room.

[Dovan enters the briefing room. His footfalls are heavy and he sits down heavily.]

DOVAN: (sighs deeply as he sits down; almost a growl) (to Cortez) I've paged the senior staff. They're on their way.

CORTEZ: Is there a problem, Commander?

DOVAN: (surprised) Sorry?

CORTEZ: It's not as if you're showing your feelings or anything. I'm just adept at reading people. Especially when they storm into a briefing room, glowering, tapping their hands on the table, and not looking at anyone. So, if I was wrong...

DOVAN: (after a deep breath; reluctantly) No, sir.

I should have expected this.

CORTEZ: What, exactly, is 'this', Commander?

DOVAN: It's been five years since I was last in combat, Captain. I assume you've read my record?

CORTEZ: I have.

DOVAN: (furious) Then you understand where I find some fault with any species that bases its entire society around fighting and killing!

NARRATOR: Dovan heard a loud thunk [*thunk*], then realized it was his fist pounding the table. He looked down at it in disbelief.

DOVAN: All I see when I think of... of what we did out there... are faces. Klein, Taraschi, Lizet... and the faces of a *hundred* other *good* men and womn who died for nothing but the *bloodlust* of a race of *barbarians!*

(chuckles darkly)

Damn. Seven years since the war, two years out of the service, and the ghosts still haven't gone away.

[pause]

CORTEZ: You're aware that this exercise was never intended as lethal, for either side.

DOVAN: (impassioned) Yes, but what if something had gone *wrong*? What if Mr. Lorhrok hadn't patched up the EPS grid as well as we thought, or what if they scored a lucky shot on us, or someone on that ship we hit was just standing in the wrong place at the wrong time? You don't play around with phasers and photon torpedoes as a greeting ritual. Not in a *civilized* society, at least. (exhales) I'm sorry, Captain. I'll see Doctor Sharp for counselling as soon as possible. This won't happen again.

[Lorhrok enters, nose deep in a padd.]

LORHROK: Hello, everyone.

DOVAN: Lieutenant, are you intending to walk through the window? I hear it's a long way to the Gateway from here.

LORHROK: Oh!

NARRATOR: Lorhrok grimaced with embarrassment and scurried to his seat. Dovan tried to send him encouraging thoughts. At any rate, Lorhrok wasn't nearly as embarrassed as Alcar Dovan.

SCENE 10103b

LOCATION: Excelsior Bridge

HARKLESS: Engineering repair report, sir.

HELDER: Thank you, crewman.

HARKLESS: (longingly) Do you ever wonder what it's like in a senior staff meeting?

HELDER: Not especially. You know, being senior staff and all.

HARKLESS:! That's right! (conspiratorial) So, what do you talk about in there?

HELDER: Oh, you know. This 'n that.

HARKLESS: Well, like... like what?

HELDER: Crewman, I'm not at liberty to discuss that. Tell Ensign Nebison to keep up the good work.

HARKLESS: (embarrassed) Um, yes sir. Thank you, sir. I'll just, um —

[Sensor alert.]

HELDER: Report!

ENSIGN KIBYR: Picking up a large object... correction, series of large objects. Looks like satellites, sir.

HELDER: Satellites. That's a surprise. Put me through to the briefing room, ensign.

CORTEZ: Cortez here.

HELDER: Captain, I think you'd better come see this.

CORTEZ: *On my way. Cortez out.*

HELDER: What else can you pick up, ensign?

[The door opens. The senior staff enters, takes stations.]

AMARA: I'll take that question, Mr. Kibyr. You're relieved.

Looks like a network of satellites, captain. I *think* they're artificial.

DOVAN: The plot thickens.

CORTEZ: Lieutenant, why didn't we detect them before?

AMARA: They're being powered from the surface, which allows them to run with virtually no energy signature.

LORHROK: (intrigued) Powered?

CORTEZ: To what end?

AMARA: They seem to be generating a field of some kind. (exhales) I believe it's a defensive field. Possibly in the... (surprised) in the two-point-four gigahertz range, Captain.

DOVAN: *That* wasn't in the report.

CORTEZ: I guess the *Indomitable* and the *Armstrong* made a larger impression than we thought.

AMARA: That's... not all, sir.

CORTEZ: What else?

AMARA: Look.

NARRATOR: At that moment, the *Excelsior* peaked over the horizon of the small, iron-and-green world of Valandria... and met the morning sun.

CORTEZ: Lieutenant, is that what I think it is?

NARRATOR: In the very center of the red-orange starlight, there was a large object, its outline visible even from this distance. It was long, black against the bright sun. And far larger than anything the Valandrin should have been able to construct.

AMARA: Yes, ma'am. According to her transponders, you're looking at the Valandrian space station... [he reads] "*Vigilance*."

DOVAN: Impossible. That thing is as large as a Regula II-class outpost.

CORTEZ: And yet, Commander, we seem to be directly in front of it. As the dedication plaque says... wherever you go, there you are.

DOVAN: (rolling his eyes) I knew that would have a practical application *someday*.

[A console alert.]

AMARA: Captain, I'm receiving a transmission. *Vigilance* is hailing us.

CORTEZ: On screen.

[The viewer switches on. Cortez stands and steps to the middle of the bridge.]

NARRATOR: Although the viewscreen came on, the crew could see nothing but vague figures cloaked in shadow.

CORTEZ: This is Captain Rachel Cortez of the United Starship *Excelsior*.

[There is silence.]

CORTEZ: We seek parley with your people. An exchange of envoys and good faith.

[The silence continues.]

CORTEZ: However, if our presence here is unwanted, we will leave.

[She turns and moves to sit down.]

CORTEZ: Mr. Helder, plot a course out of the system, bearing —

SORID-GEE: You speak for your people?

[Cortez stops and turns back to the screen.]

CORTEZ: I speak for many peoples. I am a representative of the United Federation of Planets, and we come to offer a hand of friendship. Whom am I addressing?

[Premier Beta-Na steps forward from the shadows.]

BETRA-NA: I am Premier Beta-Na.

CORTEZ: Premier, we have come a great distance to meet your people.

BETRA-NA: This much we know. It is your intentions that are not clear.

CORTEZ: Our only intent is the pursuit of friendship and knowledge.

BETRA-NA: For a peaceful people, you come well-armed.

(more confidently) You fought well and that is to be commended. There is no shame in showing your strength. Your craft is an impressive weapon.

CORTEZ: Perhaps we could arrange a tour for you.

BETRA-NA: That would interest me greatly, but you did not come so great a distance to give tours. Your craft may couple with our orbital platform. I will receive a small party.

[The transmission ends.]

CORTEZ: A small party. Captain Hastings, you and three of your marines will accompany me. Female if possible. Ensign Hunter and... Lieutenant Lorhrok, you wanted to get a first-hand look at their technology.

AMARA: Captain —

CORTEZ: Lieutenant Amara, I'd like you and Mr. Rol to keep a handle on ship's security while we're away and try to get a full tactical analysis of Valandrian defenses. Passive sensors only. If you come into contact with any Valandrin during my meeting, Doctor Sharp will do the talking due to their... colorful... view of males. Is that understood? Mr. Helder, take us in.

HELDER: Aye, sir.

SCENE 101-03c –

LOCATION: *Vigilance* Royal Chambers

SORID-GEE: Their craft is powerful, Your Excellency.

BETRA-NA: Yes. But it was expected that they would be powerful, General. What we did not know is that they would also know the *art* of warfare.

SORID-GEE: Does it not concern you?

BETRA-NA: I am no fool, Sorid-Gee. But we would do well to learn why they have returned.

SORID-GEE: We know why they have returned.

BETRA-NA: And we shall hear it from them.

ASTRIN-SA: And if they should deceive us, Your Excellency?

SORID-GEE: Yes, what if they should deceive us?

BETRA-NA: Then they would feel our wrath.

SORID-GEE: You are far too trusting.

BETRA-NA: (casually, but angrily, hisses at her) And *you* should learn your place.

[Sorid-Gee backs down instantly, bending her head and taking a step back across the cold stone floor.]

SORID-GEE: (hisses apologetically) I beg pardon, Your Excellency.

BETRA-NA: You and I both interpret the words in our own way. Neither of us can be sure of their meaning. For now I choose to hear the aliens' matriarch. If this should change, you will be heard. You may go.

ASTRIN-SA and SORID-GEE: Yes, Your Excellency.

[They both exit the chamber through a large, very heavy, definitely reinforced metal door. We follow them as they enter a corridor, which, unlike the chambers, is of metal and mesh. The atmosphere is not unlike that in the Great Hall in the First City on Qo'nos. Neither is the architecture.]

ASTRIN-SA: You play a dangerous game, General.

SORID-GEE: Only the dangerous games are worth playing, Matriarch.

ASTRIN-SA: And should she tire of playing, she would execute you.

SORID-GEE: She will not live forever. Should she continue to talk to me as if I am a child, she will not live long at all.

ASTRIN-SA: Nor would you if a rumor of treason began to spread. Your sister challenged her and paid the price. You would not be in the position you are were if not for her death.

SORID-GEE: I am not my sister.

ASTRIN-SA: It is foretold that no one of Gee clan will defeat a Na in combat.

SORID-GEE: Prophecy can be interpreted in many ways, Matriarch. One could argue that the one you speak of refers only to Honor Combats.

ASTRIN-SA: (hisses her disapproval) What are you suggesting?

SORID-GEE: You may disapprove, but you know that the Gee would strengthen our people in a way the Na have never done.

[They stop.]

SORID-GEE: The Sa have never had position like you have brought them. You have vision, Matriarch, and you have a strength the Sa have never shown before. You know Beta-Na is not heeding the words. We have all heard them. We all know what should be, what *must* be done.

[They circle each other.]

ASTRIN-SA: I will not move against Beta-Na.

SORID-GEE: (hisses angrily)

ASTRIN-SA: But neither will I give her my support. You take a chance with your own life, not mine.

[a short pause]

SORID-GEE: It will not be my life that is lost.

[She walks away quickly, leaving Astrin-Sa standing alone.]

SCENE 10104

LOCATION: *Excelsior* Airlock.

AMARA: There we are. What do you think, captain? Phaser-one or phaser-two?

CORTEZ: What's your recommendation, Lieutenant?

AMARA: Those things are lizards. If they're anything like the Gorn... phaser-two is the only one with a high enough stun setting.

CORTEZ: Phaser-two it is, then. I need seven.

AMARA: Captain, if I may, I have another recommendation.

CORTEZ: Yes?

AMARA: Captain, as you know, I'm half-Betazoid. The Valandrian physiology is confusing my empathic sense, but... sir, I don't have a good feeling about this mission. Take me with you.

CORTEZ: (empathetically) Denied. The marines will have to be enough protection for us.

AMARA: Then, from a personal standpoint, I'd like to get a look at their technology as much as Lieutenant Lorhrok. Their shield grid has some efficiencies I'd like to research.

CORTEZ: Really?

AMARA: Really, captain.

CORTEZ: You're not a good liar, Leo Amara. Commander Dovan will need someone on the bridge he can rely on.

AMARA: Yes, Captain. And good luck.

[He closes the weapons locker.]

CORTEZ: Thank you, Lieutenant. Heavy stun, you said?

AMARA: Yes, ma'am.

[She turns and walks down the hallway towards the others]

CORTEZ: Okay, people! Take your phasers. Heavy stun is the order of the day. What's the atmosphere like on the other side of this airlock?

HASTINGS: Slightly higher oxygen and gravity than ship's normal. Nothing serious.

HUNTER: Captain, phaser-two? Might I point out that they're a little... conspicuous?

CORTEZ: Ensign Hunter, diplomacy is your department, but my first duty is to my crew. Corporal Ayarga, release the airlock.

The airlock slides open, and the party cautiously steps through onto a stone floor.

LOCATION: *Vigilance* Formal Reception Hall

[This room is very large, with stone floors, of course Betra-Na and Sorid-Gee are roughly in the middle of the stairwell, coming down to meet the Starfleeters.]

CORTEZ: I'm Captain Rachel Cortez.

BETRA-NA: Captain. While I am gratified that you accept my invitation, I assure you you are in no danger. You may leave your males here.

CORTEZ: These are my officers. They wished to see your impressive space station.

BETRA-NA: And you granted their request? [hisses thoughtfully] But I suppose one must show patience with males. Come. We have much to discuss.

[Cortez and her group walk up the stairs to meet the premier and Sorid-Gee. As they begin to walk, the other functionaries fall in line behind them. Cortez and Betra-Na lead the way, with Sorid-Gee and Hunter flanking them. They walk a short distance in silence before Betra-Na speaks again.]

BETRA-NA: I will be direct, Captain Cortez. Why have you returned?

CORTEZ: Premier Betra-Na--

SORID-GEE: (interrupting) You will address the clan matron as 'Your Excellency!'

BETRA-NA: (angrily) Sorid-Gee, you will be silent.

CORTEZ: ...Your Excellency, I thought I had made the Federation's intentions clear. We seek friendship.

BETRA-NA: Is this all?

CORTEZ: (hesitantly) Yes.

SORID-GEE: (triumphantly) You see, Excellency? She lies!

CORTEZ: (annoyed) And on what evidence do you claim *that*, Sorid-Gee?

SORID-GEE: You will address me as *General*. . . *Rachel*. The Oracle is most clear on this point: you do not bring *friendship* to our people.

CORTEZ: Oracle?

BETRA-NA: (embarrassed) There is a . . . prophecy. It can be interpreted in many ways.

SORID-GEE: The prophecy says that your people herald our destruction.

BETRA-NA: Sorid-Gee, I do not know what has brought on this foul and unworthy disposition, but you are dismissed.

SORID-GEE: Show them the Oracle.

BETRA-NA: What?

SORID-GEE: Show them the Oracle or they will not understand.

BETRA-NA: I did not expect such an idea from you.

SORID-GEE: (vaguely sarcastic) Your praise honors me, Excellency.

CORTEZ: Excuse me. I'd like to see anything that would shed some light on what's going on here.

[Betra-Na regards Cortez for a moment. Then she changes course and turns down a new hallway, the group following.]

BETRA-NA: Come.

[Sorid-Gee begins to follow.]

BETRA-NA: Not you, General Sorid-Gee. Though your idea redeems you, you remain dismissed from my presence. Do send my personal guard to the Oracle chamber. They will join us before we commune.

[pause]

SORID-GEE: Very well, Your Excellency.

[The others walk away. Once they seem safely out of earshot, Sorid-Gee activates a communications device on her wrist.]

SORID-GEE: (sotto) Brigadier. This is the General.

[There is a short crackle before contact is established.]

BRIGADIER: I hail the General.

SORID-GEE: Order all units to go to Case Orange. Wait five cycles and execute.

BRIGADIER: Acknowledged... (smugly) Your Excellency.

SORID-GEE: We shall see, Brigadier. We shall see. Out.

SCENE 101-05

LOCATION: *Excelsior* Bridge.

AMARA: Commander.

DOVAN: Yes, Mr. Amara?

AMARA: I'm picking up some sort of... odd power signature. Coming from the station.

DOVAN: Can you be any more specific, Lieutenant?

AMARA: I think so, but it'll take a minute, sir.

DOVAN: Go ahead.

LOCATION: *Vigilance* Transport Chamber

CORTEZ: Is this your Oracle?

NARRATOR: It was a small, dome-shaped room. Simply to fit everyone in the chamber along with the Premier's personal guard required the lead females to circle around to the rear, so that they were standing with their backs to the intricately carved walls. In the middle stood a life-size statue of a Valandrian female, standing proudly, holding in her raised hands a glowing pyramid.

BETRA-NA: It is not. Room, take us to the Oracle.

NARRATOR: The pyramid glowed brightly, and everything turned to white.

[They are transported out.]

NARRATOR: They were gone.

LOCATION: Excelsior Bridge

AMARA: (urgently) Sir, I just lost the Away Team.

DOVAN: What?

AMARA: There was a surge in that strange power signature, and then...

HELDER: Captain! Three contacts from behind the planet, coming fast!

DOVAN: Ships?

HELDER: I think they're satellites, sir. But they're running with far more power than the others.

[The ship shudders — not enough to throw people from seats, but enough to make them hold onto their stations — and there is a scream of metal twisting against metal.]

DOVAN: Report!

HELDER: (not sure how to interpret these readings at first) Sir, their... the *Vigilance* docking port just punctured our hull.

DOVAN: Hail the station!

[A klaxon goes off.]

COMPUTER: Intruder Alert! Intruder Alert!

AMARA: Sir, we have several reptilian biosigns moving in through the umbilical. That impact damaged intruder controls... I don't think I can lock down the section.

DOVAN: Dispatch security teams. I take it the Valandrin aren't responding?

AMARA: No, sir!

HELDER: Captain, the satellites!

LOCATION: Space

One of the satellites zooms into view in a lower orbit than *Vigilance* or the *Excelsior*. It activates a beam weapon that then hits the *Excelsior* amidships.

LOCATION: *Excelsior* Bridge

[The ship shudders.]

DOVAN: What the *hell* was that?

AMARA: Those satellites... sir... they're weapons platforms!

DOVAN: (to self) Jehosaphat! [to Amara; a hat-tip to Sulu in *Undiscovered Country*] Shields. Shields!

AMARA: I can't while we're docked, sir!

[The beam scores a direct hit on the starboard nacelle, causing serious]

LOCATION: Valandria – Mountain Region

[We're in a wide-open, mountainous region of Valandria as the team completes the end of rematerialization. There is moderate to heavy vegetation and a chill atmosphere, so

we can safely conclude that this is a fairly high latitude and a fairly low altitude. Our team has materialized on a small, gravelly trail.]

CORTEZ: (rubbing her eyes as she adjusts to the brightness) Everyone alright?

HASTINGS: Present and accounted for, Captain.

[Cortez taps her combadge]

CORTEZ: Cortez to *Excelsior*.

[*krrink* – the communicator can't get through.]

CORTEZ: Premier —

BETRA-NA: (holding up a hand) You wished to see the Oracle, Captain. Now you shall.

[Lorhrok already has his tricoder out.]

LORHROK: Captain, I can't get a reading on anything. My tricoder is going wild.

BETRA-NA: Your devices do not function here; nor do ours. The Oracle prevents them.

LORHROK: (sotto, to Cortez) Well, more likely a mineral vein in these mountains, but it comes to the same thing. It goes on for miles in all directions.

BETRA-NA: Come. It is not far.

LOCATION: *Excelsior* Bridge

[Another impact shakes the Bridge. A console explodes. The bridge is also beginning to rumble with the dueling forces of the *Excelsior's* engines and the *Vigilance's* umbilical cord embedded in the hull.]

DOVAN: (over the noise) Mr. Helder, get us free!

[The rumbling gets louder.]

HELDER: Trying, sir!

AMARA: Should I return fire?

DOVAN: Absolutely!

[Amara presses the "fire torpedoes" button.]

LOCATION: Space

[The *Excelsior*, still stationary, locked to the *Vigilance* umbilical cord despite the work of her engines. Suddenly four photon torpedoes launch, one after another, and hurtle towards the satellite. However, as they are getting close to the satellite, the network of defensive satellites surges with power. The photon torpedoes are neutralized against the planetary forcefield.]

LOCATION: *Excelsior* Bridge

Amara checks the results.

AMARA: (frustrated) Their network of defensive satellites created a shield that blocked impact. (scornfully) No damage.

Detecting another power build-up! All three satellites this time!

DOVAN: We need to maneuver! Target that docking port!

AMARA: Sir... at this range? It's inside our *hull*.

DOVAN: Those are my orders, Lieutenant!

AMARA: Aye, sir. Firing torpedo.

LOCATION: Space

A single torpedo launches from the forward turret. It arcs away, and then speeds back like a heat-seeking missile.

LOCATION: *Excelsior* Bridge

Dovan gets on the shipwide.

DOVAN: All hands, brace for impact!

[The torpedo strikes *Vigilance* at the root of the umbilical cord/docking port. The port tears free from *Vigilance*, and the *Excelsior* is free.]

[...causing some havoc on the bridge. Not catastrophe, but we have our share of conduit explosions. Maybe a little hissing steam, too. Dovan has to shout to be heard over the klaxons and the explosions and, mainly, the deafening shriek of metal against metal.]

DOVAN: Report!

AMARA: It worked, sir! We're free!

DOVAN: Mr. Helder, evasive pattern gamma-two-five! Get us the hell out of here!

HELDER: On it, sir!

[The *Excelsior* swoops away from the *Vigilance* as it accelerates in a wide turn. And then, having completed a 180 turn, it speeds away at top speed.]

[Things are a little quieter on the bridge; Dovan no longer has to shout his orders.]

DOVAN: Mr. Amara, what's the status on those satellites?

[The weapons strike, shaking the ship again.]

AMARA: Shields down to forty percent. Sir, I don't think we can take another hit. At least not from all three.

DOVAN: Then let's not get hit by all three. Continue evasive pattern, load quantum torpedoes, and fire at will.

[The ship turns again to give a firing angle. Four quantum launch. Three hit the shield. One gets through, hits the satellite, and causes its destruction.]

HELDER: Yes!

AMARA: Direct hit! That bird is *gone*, sir.

DOVAN: Reload and continue firing.

LOCATION: Valandria – Mountain Region

[The group reaches the mouth of a cave, of sorts. More of a crack in the mountain. Their feet are now stepping on smooth stone floors.]

BETRA-NA: In here.

[Betra-Na goes in, but Lohrok holds back Cortez. He is squatting on the ground near the back of the group, holding something in his hand.]

LORHROK: Captain!

[Cortez walks back and joins him.]

CORTEZ: What is it, Mr. Lohrok?

LORHROK: (puzzled) This metal, smashed into the gravel. It *looks* like tritanium.

CORTEZ: I thought there weren't any tritanium deposits on Valandria.

LORHROK: There aren't.

BETRA-NA: Captain Cortez! Do you wish to see the Oracle or not?

[Cortez stands up, takes the few steps back to the mouth of the cave.]

CORTEZ: What is this place?

BETRA-NA: This is the Oracle. The source of our knowledge.

CORTEZ: *All* your knowledge?

BETRA-NA: Silithium mining, the anti-matter power core, the very satellites that defend our world.

In the dark times, when my people had descended to combat with clubs and spears, we found this place. And then our people found their way.

CORTEZ: This place has been here that long?

ORACLE: Six hundred forty years, Captain.

[A man steps out of the shadows.]

ORACLE: Ah. It's about time the Federation got here.

[pause]

CORTEZ: (not fully understanding what she sees) Who... are you?

ORACLE: I am the Oracle.

NARRATOR: The simple answer did not explain why the Oracle was wearing a blue Starfleet uniform.

LOCATION: *Excelsior* Bridge

[The ship shakes again as one of the satellites strikes a glancing blow.]

AMARA: Port shields are gone, sir. Sir, we should withdraw until we can repair the damage.

DOVAN: Commander Helder, can you get a lock on the Away Team?

[Helder checks over his console one more time.]

HELDER: (firmly) Negative, sir.

DOVAN: Then I don't see any reason for us to stick around in a field of fire. Helm, get us out of here, best speed. And, Lieutenant, if you'd care to fire a few more quantumts out the aft tubes, I don't think anyone I care about offending will be offended.

[The *Excelsior* flies out of the system.]

LOCATION: Valandria – Oracle Cave

BETRA-NA: Oracle, prophecy about the aliens.

ORACLE: On April Fourteenth, twenty-four-oh-two, the Federation colony of Valandria was destroyed, along with its extensive shipyard facilities. Starfleet losses: eighty-seven vessels. The Battle of Valandria is widely considered to have been the turning point in the war. Unable to access further information; database corruption is extensive.

LORHROK: Captain, look.

NARRATOR: Lorhrok pointed at a part of the wall, which Cortez realized was actually a metal bulkhead, melded with the rock. In the darkened section of twisted duranium, she was able to make out a few words.

CORTEZ: (quietly reading them off)

N...C...V, eight-three-one-two-four.

U.S.S. ... *Oracle*.

[There is an moment of sound: the Oracle hologram is damaged and, as EMH's often do when damaged, it flickers.]

ORACLE: Warning: holomatrix damage. Temporal transponder inactive. Repair required. Repair required... Repair required... Repair required... Repair required... Repair required... (fade out)