

STAR TREK: GLADIATOR

"PILOT"

Written by

Paul Pratt

Based on a story By

Paul Pratt & Andrew McAlister

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Gene Roddenberry

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STAR TREK: GLADIATOR

FADE IN:

BLACK SCREEN

SUPERIMPOSE: Before

EXT. CARDASSIAN SPACE

Starfleet, Klingon, and Romulan ships engage Dominion, Breen, and Cardassian ships in the void of space. Amongst the chaos emerges a Starfleet Akira-Class starship flanked by two Saber-Class ships.

Burn marks and battered hull plating disrupt the smooth lines of the three ships. However, the name U.S.S. Gladiator and her registry NCC-64402 have been cleaned off. A stylized sword has been painted through the name and registry, its point towards the fore of the ship. The closest Saber-Class has a cartoon boot kicking a chibi style Jem'Hadar in the rear. The far Saber has "Frak the Founders" written on it.

The group launch a volley of torpedoes, striking a massive Dominion Battleship violently.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

The bridge is in utter chaos. Consoles are darkened and destroyed, panels and cables hang from the ceiling, walls are blackened near fallen structural elements.

In the center of the bridge sits Captain MALCOLM XIRES, 33, and Commander LORNA RAHNES, 32. The two watch the tactical information pouring across three viewers. A central, large, traditional viewer flanked by two smaller, more vertical viewers.

The Tactical Officer, Lieutenant Commander JACEN SERRA, late 30s, mans the weapons console to the left rear of the bridge. An alien Chief of Operations officer Lieutenant ASHARI KELL, looks late 20s, mans the right rear station, giving updates on the ship's status.

JACEN SERRA

Direct hit to the port side of the battleship. Her hull is buckling along the wing root!

ASHARI KELL

Captain, we've got gaps in the deflector array!

LORNA RAHNES

(frustrated)

That damned deflector! Re-route power from the stern sensor array. I'm not getting cooked by radiation.

MALCOLM XIRES

Helm, run us along the side of the battleship. Point blank, Ensign! Let's end this.

Ensign SABRINA MCQUARIE, 21, taps the course into the console. She has some dirt on her face, her uniform is torn, and her hair, which is in a ponytail, is dishevelled and a lock of hair is in her face.

SABRINA MCQUARIE

Aye, sir.

The ship rocks from a strike.

MALCOLM XIRES

Commander Serra, don't stop firing until we clear the stern of that ship!

Jacen smirks. Without a word, he begins firing.

EXT. CARDASSIAN SPACE

Swooping down the length of the battleship, Gladiator unleashes hell from every phaser array and both barrels of its starboard torpedo launchers. The Saber's follow close, firing at the battleship and any smaller ships that attempt to get close to the Gladiator.

The trio clears the battleship. As they fly out of range, the ship explodes along the wing root, causing the main section to begin listing out of the Dominion formation.

After drifting a moment the severed wing explodes, scattering debris in every direction, pelting the damaged battleship's already smouldering hull.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

The crew cheers at the image on the viewer.

ASHARI KELL
Delta group command ship,
destroyed! The delta elements are
loosing coordination.

LORNA RAHNES
Good work people!

MALCOLM XIRES
Kell, signal the Bismarck and let
Admiral Sykes know that we've
completed our primary objective.

Malcolm taps on the computer console between the command
chairs.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)
Flight ops, find Lieutenant Clerk.
Let's link up with her fighter
group and provide support until we
get some new orders.

FLIGHT OPS OFFICER
Aye, sir. Routing coordinates to
the helm.

SABRINA MCQUARIE
Coming about.

The ship turns in the main viewer, revealing another massive
Dominion Battleship closing in on them from behind the
wreckage.

LORNA RAHNES
Son of a --

JACEN SERRA
That's the battleship from Gamma!
They're locking weapons on us!

LORNA RAHNES
Gamma was Issac's responsibility!

MALCOLM XIRES
The Thunderer must have been
destroyed. Ensign, put as much
distance between us and that ship.
Now!

The Battleship begins firing.

ASHARI KELL
They are targeting the bridge!

JACEN SERRA
Shields at ten percent!

The ship rocks again, causing an explosion in the rear of the bridge.

LORNA RAHNES
Re-route all available power
reserves to the dorsal shields!

ASHARI KELL
I don't have much left, I'm trying
to keep the deflector operational.

Lorna slams her fists on the chair arms.

LORNA RAHNES
That god forsaken deflector! Do
what you have to do to keep us
alive, Lieutenant!

ASHARI KELL
Aye, sir!

MALCOLM XIRES
How long until we're out of
weapon's range?

JACEN SERRA
Twenty seconds.

Sabrina taps furiously on her console, desperately trying to maneuver away from the ships fire.

SABRINA MCQUARIE
That ship has an incredible weapons
range.

Malcolm watches the viewer, he spots a small group of Cardassian ships directly in front of them.

MALCOLM XIRES
McQuarie, put us on the other side
of those Cardassian ships! Get them
in between us and the battleship.

Sabrina concentrates.

SABRINA MCQUARIE
This is going to be close...

She moves her hands speedily across the console with precision.

SABRINA MCQUARIE (CONT'D)

Lya close!

Malcolm grimaces. Lorna's eyes go wide and she takes a firm grip on her chair.

MALCOLM XIRES

(hesitant)

Let's not make it that close,
Ensign.

Sabrina chuckles confidently. Despite the levity, she watches her console intently.

The ship rocks violently.

JACEN SERRA

(yelling over the impact)

Shields down!

LORNA RAHNES

Captain, I don't need to remind you
our ablative armor isn't up to
spec.

Malcolm shoots her a "no kidding" look.

EXT. CARDASSIAN SPACE

The Gladiator flies hurriedly towards the Cardassian ships, going up to dive between them. She is struck again, causing an explosion on the hull.

Another volley hits one of the Saber-Class escorts, causing its tattered hulk to spin wildly out of formation. The second Saber's engine is struck by debris and begins venting a plume of drive plasma, it peels off unable to keep up with the Gladiator.

The Gladiator angles itself downward to dip between the cruisers but a round from the battleship strikes the forward saucer near the bridge, almost simultaneously with the ship's descent.

The round pierces right through the hull, exploding out from the bottom of the saucer section. The Gladiator topples end over end with the force of the impact.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

An explosion erupts from the forward part of the bridge, near the floor and engulfs the forward section.

Sabrina and the others in the crew pit take the brunt of the blast, throwing her out of the pit

The viewer is filled with stars and ships spinning out of control.

The viewer blinks out.

The bridge goes dark.

EXT. CARDASSIAN SPACE

The cacophony of battle slips away to the lonely sound of Gladiator spinning helplessly into space.

Equipment, debris, and personnel spew out of each end of the fiery wound.

The power flickers out in the forward half of the saucer section.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Malcolm comes to, blood covers one side of his head.

MALCOLM XIRES
(coughing)
Status!?

The bridge is filled with dense smoke. Malcolm taps his communicator, only a dead, non-connecting chirp.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)
Computer, status!?

All the consoles are out. Red emergency lighting dimly illuminates the battered bridge.

Malcolm spots Lorna sprawled out near him, bleeding. He tests for a pulse.

He closes his eyes in thanks with confirmation of life, then, suddenly slaps her in the face without remorse.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)
Lorna! Wake up!

Lorna rouses.

LORNA RAHNES
What's? Malcolm? Oh my God, the ship!

Lorna shoots up, realizing they are in the midst of battle.

MALCOLM XIRES
I can't raise anyone on the comms.
Not even the computer is
responding.

A familiar voice sounds from behind the console.

ASHARI KELL
(o.c.)
They probably blew out the forward
power relay.

Ashari stands up behind the ops console. Colored blood covers her stomach. She clenches it as she stands.

MALCOLM XIRES
Auxiliary?

Ashari taps on the consoles.

Nothing.

She slaps them in frustration.

ASHARI KELL
Slabs of plastic. I can't see a
thing. We should try moving to the
combat operations center through
the turbolift shaft.

The ship rocks from an impact.

MALCOLM XIRES
(frustrated)
I NEED eyes on the situation!

ASHARI KELL
Aye, Captain.

Ashari moves to a turbolift shaft at the back of the bridge and begins to pry it open.

LORNA RAHNES
Is Jacen back there?

JACEN SERRA
(o.c.)
I'm here, Commander.

Lorna checks the pulse of the COMBAT OPS OFFICER and finds him dead. She looks to the FLIGHT OPS OFFICER, his body slumped over a debris fragment that impaled him.

LORNA RAHNES
Lewis and Palmer are dead.

Malcolm turns from them and scans the bridge.

MALCOLM XIRES
McQuarie, sound off!

He starts looking around when he doesn't hear anything.

Malcolm spots her in a corner, through the smoke. He nearly flies over the debris to her side.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)
(pulling her arm up over
his shoulder)
Come on, Sabrina. We're getting out
of here.

He stops, noticing she is limp. He brushes the lock of hair back from her face revealing her half open, lifeless eyes.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)
McQuarie?

Lorna staggers over to Malcolm. We can see Sabrina's chest and stomach are shredded and bloodied.

LORNA RAHNES
(taking Malcolm by the
shoulder)
Captain.

Despondent, Malcolm shrugs her off, struggling - desperately - to grab Sabrina up in his arms.

MALCOLM XIRES
(crying)
I can't. No. Please.

Lorna gets in front of him and looks in his eyes. She has tears welling up.

ASHARI KELL
I've got the turboshaft open, sir!

Ashari and Jacen kneel by the shaft, watching Lorna console Malcolm.

LORNA RAHNES
(beginning to cry)
I know, I know. Malcolm. I know.

Malcolm's eyes dart around her face frantically. Lorna puts her hands on his face to focus him. His eyes are just filled with sadness and tears. For a moment Lorna just holds him, losing herself in his sadness.

The ship is hit again, snapping her out of the trance.

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)
 (forcefully)
 Captain! We have to save what's
 left of our crew.

Malcolm nods reasserting himself, choking back his emotions.

MALCOLM XIRES
 (almost child like)
 I can't leave her though, OK?

Lorna nods understandingly. She helps him pick up Sabrina's body.

INT. GLADIATOR - CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

A turbolift door cracks open, Ashari and Jacen's fingers push through the crack, getting a grip on the door to force it open.

They both move onto the deck, it's damaged but fully lit.

CREAKING and WRENCHING metal echoes painfully throughout the corridor over the repetitive wail of the red alert klaxon.

Lorna helps Malcolm through the door. He carries Sabrina's lifeless body in his arms.

ASHARI KELL
 This deck has power!

LORNA RAHNES
 Did anyone notice the ship stopped
 taking fire?

Malcolm hits his commbadge.

MALCOLM XIRES
 Combat ops, this is the captain,
 report!

COMBAT OPS OFFICER
 (V.O.)
 Captain! We feared the worst. The
 power relay --

MALCOLM XIRES

I know that part. What the hell is going on outside?

COMBAT OPS OFFICER

(V.O.)

We took over immediately after the saucer hit, but the ship is dead in the water right now. I was about to order the crew to abandon ship, but then the damn Cardassians started firing on the Breen and Dominion ships!

Everyone gasps.

MALCOLM XIRES

What the hell?

JACEN SERRA

The spoon heads switched sides?

COMBAT OPS OFFICER

(V.O.)

The Dominion is in full retreat. The Cardassians are holding here with us while Admiral Ross confers with the fleet commanders.

MALCOLM XIRES

I'm on my way. Do whatever it takes to get us underway in the mean time. Get people outside and push this damned ship if you have to. I want us IN that fight.

COMBAT OPS OFFICER

(V.O.)

Aye. Sir.

MALCOLM XIRES

Xires out.

Malcolm turns to Lorna.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

Lorna, I'm going to take McQuarie's body to sickbay, you take everyone to --

A DEEP METALLIC GROAN fills the corridor.

A conduit in the ceiling ruptures. Everyone looks around for the source of the noise, but it seems to be coming from every direction.

Ashari looks up, noticing an exposed reinforcement beam above Malcolm beginning to buckle.

The grinding becomes unbearable.

Ashari pushes Malcolm out of way just in time as the beam and all the contents of the deck above come raining down on top of her.

Malcolm and Sabrina's body go sprawling out on the deck.

Malcolm lays on the deck, on the opposite side of the cave in. He props himself up against the wall and stares at the massive pile of rubble.

Amidst it, the massive beam is sprayed in colored blood.

Malcolm's eyes move down the beam, the blood splatter thickens and at its base, amongst the crushed conduits and computer components, is Ashari's quivering hand.

Malcolm looks beside him and sees Sabrina's limp and twisted body, her hand still in his.

Alone with the death, he weeps uncontrollably.

INT. GLADIATOR - MALCOLM'S QUARTERS

In a fright, Malcolm springs up from his bed. He looks around his quarters, breathing heavily.

He sits up and regains his composure.

He sighs, rubbing his eyes.

SUPERIMPOSE: Four Weeks Later

MALCOLM XIRES
Computer, time?

COMPUTER
The time is oh-seven eighteen.

MALCOLM XIRES
Damn. Computer, put on the news.

The room's main monitor, built into a wall across from the bed, turns on and a news program begins to play.

NEWS

(plays through out the
rest of the scene)

-- between the United Federation of Planets, the Klingon Empire, and the Romulan Star Empire proclaimed victory after the surrender of the Dominion. Today marks the first Starfleet task force to return home since the instrument of surrender was signed on starbase Deep Space Nine just twenty days ago.

The Seventh Fleet, under command of Rear Admiral Jonathan Sykes will return home, officially ending the Seventh's deployment in service of the war effort.

In a statement about the Seventh, Starfleet said that after some much needed rest and relaxation, these heroic crews and their ships will be sent out across the Federation to ensure peace and stability during these perilous times.

Malcolm walks over to the bedroom's window. Outside, stars fly by at warp. He shifts his view, revealing several other wounded starships in transit with the Gladiator.

XIRES

Computer, lights.

The lights expose burn marks covering every surface. Debris from the ceiling and broken chunks of modular wall sections lay pushed to the sides of the room to make paths, simply left to collect. The carpet is blackened and stained.

Malcolm walks into the bathroom, the light turns on automatically, but one is damaged and flickering. He stares into his weary eyes in the mirror.

The sound falls away for a moment.

THE SHATTERED MIRROR

distorts Malcolm's image.

The silence is broken with a COMM CHIRP.

LORNA RAHNES

(v.o)

Rahnes to Captain Xires.

He sighs.

MALCOLM XIRES

Go ahead.

LORNA RAHNES

(V.O.)

I'm sorry for waking you, sir, but the fleet is preparing to enter Sol within the hour.

MALCOLM XIRES

I'll be up in a bit. Xires out.

Malcolm runs the water out of the faucet and rubs it on his face. He gives himself another look in the mirror.

INT. GLADIATOR - CORRIDOR

Malcolm, now clean and in uniform exits his room. Repair crews are spread out amongst the piles of destruction.

Crewman acknowledge Malcolm when he walks by. He nods back with forced interest.

Malcolm steps into a turbo lift. He looks down the corridor. Some sections of wall are missing between rooms. Blankets are hung in some of the doorways for privacy.

The ship would be condemned if it were a building.

Malcolm stares blankly.

The turbolift doors shut.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Lorna sits, reviewing data on the main viewer superimposed over the forward exterior view. There are several other ships at warp ahead of the Gladiator, including the flagship of the Seventh fleet, the Galaxy-Class starship U.S.S Bismarck.

Behind Lorna, several other crewman are working on elements of the bridge. Jacen is at his station, helping crewman fix some of the components on the tactical station.

Malcolm exits the turbolift.

Lorna spots him and stands. The crew on the bridge take notice and come to attention.

MALCOLM XIRES

At ease, everyone. Continue working.

LORNA RAHNES

Good morning, Captain. We'll be dropping out of warp momentarily. Here is this morning's briefing (reaching for a PADD on the arm of her chair). Repairs are going well. We might get out of drydock within three months at this rate.

Malcolm takes the PADD and sits down in his chair. Lorna takes her seat next to him.

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)

Here is the list of newly assigned crew to the ship after the refit. The list of names for replacement senior officers are in that briefing as well, along with their records. I've gone through and book marked my recommendations and added some notes.

Malcolm glances over the repair data on the viewer.

MALCOLM XIRES

Thank you, commander.

SABRINA MCQUARIE

(o.c.)

Sir, the fleet is preparing to drop out of warp.

Malcolm quickly looks up to see Sabrina sitting at the helm console, facing him with a smile on her face. Her uniform is brand new, her face clean, and her hair perfect.

Malcolm is staring at her. Lost.

Lorna looks up at him curiously. She leans in.

LORNA RAHNES

(quietly)

Malcolm, are you ok?

Malcolm looks at Lorna, then back up to the helm. A different FEMALE SCIENCES ENSIGN, 22, sits at the console, facing him.

MALCOLM XIRES

(To Lorna)

Yeah. I'm fine.

(to Female Science Ensign)

Thank you, Ensign. Match our drop with the Bismarck.

FEMALE SCIENCES ENSIGN

Aye, Sir.

LORNA RAHNES

(quietly)

Are you ready to see home after two years?

Malcolm lets his guard down. Lorna smiles at him. They share a moment. He cracks a smile too.

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)

(quietly)

That's the first time I've seen you smile since we stood at the gates of Cardassia.

MALCOLM XIRES

(quietly)

There hasn't been much to smile about.

Lorna nods. Taking a moment to build up her courage.

LORNA RAHNES

(quietly)

I've been meaning to talk to you about that.

MALCOLM XIRES

(quietly)

About smiling?

Lorna shakes her head.

LORNA RAHNES

(quietly)

About there not being much TO smile about.

Malcolm gives her a curious glance. He has an idea of where she is headed with this.

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)

(quietly)

I think I'm going to resign my commission.

MALCOLM XIRES

(quietly, shaking his head)

I don't think this is the right place for this discussion.

FEMALE SCIENCES ENSIGN
Dropping out of warp.

Lorna reassuringly grabs Malcolm's hand.

MALCOLM XIRES
(quietly)
We'll talk about this later. But,
I'm not letting this go.

Everyone on the bridge turns to the viewer. Malcolm and Lorna stand.

EXT. SPACE

The camera holds on an empty section of space for but a moment.

A distant flash in the background reveals the massive Bismarck zooming into frame almost instantly, immediately numerous flashes blink in the distance behind her, many dozens of starships, medical, cargo, and support ships pour out of warp, including the Gladiator.

More ships continue to emerge as the camera follows the moving fleet to reveal

EARTH

The cerulean globe hangs against the starred heavens, the milky way at her back.

On some invisible space highway several lanes of civilian traffic are corralled into tight lanes. Patrolling the edges of these lanes are Defiant and Norway-Class ships.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

The crew looks longingly at Earth. Jacen looks at the immense traffic leading to the planet. Tactical information fills the screens with ship types, life signs, and other pertinent information.

JACEN SERRA
They've really cracked down on
incoming traffic to Earth.

Lorna turns to look at Jacen.

LORNA RAHNES
Dominion Infiltrators, the Borg,
and the Breen attack have made them
more nervous about security.

JACEN SERRA
Fortress paradise.

Like a pair of slumbering sentinels, two Sovereign-Class ships are in a defensive posture near the end of the traffic lanes.

Debris in orbit made up of destroyed ships and orbital facilities is being cleaned up by shuttles and older starships.

The fleet approaches the massive orbital space dock, itself damaged.

JACEN SERRA (CONT'D)
Sir, I'm getting instructions for
docking.

MALCOLM XIRES
Understood.

A notice on the sidebar of the main viewer identifies an urgent live news stream.

LORNA RAHNES
Computer, begin news feed.

The viewer displays a picture in picture box off to the side of the viewer. The ships returning home can be seen, live.

NEWS
-- Seventh fleet has just arrived
home from Cardassia!

The scene cuts to a massive crowd on the surface of Earth celebrating. People yell happily, waving Starfleet and Federation pennants.

NEWS (CONT'D)
Massive crowds have gathered in the
city centers to watch the heroic
crews return home. In about an hour
the crews from the ships of the
Seventh fleet will arrive in San
Francisco in a formal welcome home
ceremony.

EXT. SPACE

The fleet of ships break apart into several different groups and go various directions. The lead starships line up behind the Bismarck to enter into the cavernous interior of the massive space dock station, others move towards central bays in the massive structure. Others veer off towards unseen destinations.

INT. SPACE DOCK - CORRIDOR

A crowd of cheering starfleet personnel and civilians stand inside the large, windowed corridor watching the ships enter. Bismarck approaches the window, followed by others including the Gladiator. The crowd cheers and claps, but the celebratory atmosphere fades as the ships get closer to the windows.

The crowd watches in shock.

Massive scars and burns run the length of the ships. The Gladiator's nearly grievous puncture wound is still gaping, revealing melted and mangled metal ribs protruding across the interior decks.

The ships have profane sayings, esoteric mottos, and nose art on the hulls. The Esprit De Corps of war apparent.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Malcolm and Lorna watch their approach to the central spire inside the dock.

JACEN SERRA

Ten seconds until docking complete.

LORNA RAHNES

Ready all moorings.

The navigator taps her panel.

FEMALE SCIENCES ENSIGN

Dock position set, engaging interlocks. Air locks engaged. Pressurized.

JACEN SERRA

Docking complete, captain.

MALCOLM XIRES

Jacen, intercom.

JACEN SERRA

Open, sir.

The ships PA system whistles and Malcolm's voice echoes throughout the ship.

MALCOLM XIRES

Gladiator. This is the captain. I want to be the first to say welcome home. I wanted to take this moment to tell you all. Thank you for your service and dedication. The hardship, sacrifice, and loss each of you has endured is the reason we won this war. Even more so, your unwavering dedication to this ship, especially these last few weeks to bring The Gladiator home with the rest of our fleet has been beyond exemplary.

We'll be proceeding directly to the ceremony on the surface as you were briefed on this week. Your loved ones are already there waiting for you. For all those without family, get with your sponsor crew mate and enjoy the fellowship with each other. You've earned it. I'll see each of you on the surface. Xires out.

The crewmen on the bridge cheer and clap.

INT. SPACE DOCK - CORRIDOR

The crew of the ship is pouring out of the air lock and onto the station. The hallway is long, but cramped for the large crew. The crewmen talk enthusiastically about being home. Their spirits are high, but they are all very tired.

Each crewman carries numerous duffel bags, backpacks, and other assorted items to go home with, making the hallway even more crowded.

The senior staff comes off the ship with the other crew members.

Two starfleet SECURITY CREWMEN begin clearing a way for Lieutenant ADNAN, early 30s, to make it though to the Captain.

LORNA RAHNES

There is an engineering team finishing a sweep of the warp core. They found some sort of instability.

MALCOLM XIRES

Make sure they get to the surface for the ceremony. If the core isn't going critical, it can wait.

ADNAN

(shouting over the crowd)
Captain Xires!

MALCOLM XIRES

Lieutenant.

ADNAN

Lieutenant Adnan, sir. I'm the public affairs officer here on space dock. Rear Admiral Sykes requested you beam down to the surface for the arrival ceremony before your crew.

MALCOLM XIRES

Lead the way.

Malcolm turns to Lorna.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

Beam down with the crew and begin organizing them for the ceremony.

LORNA RAHNES

Understood, sir.

Malcolm turns and follows Adnan swiftly down the side of the corridor, past the Gladiator crewmen. The security crewmen clear the way. Everyone has to shout over the rambunctious crew pouring through the halls.

SECURITY CREWMAN

Make a hole! Coming through!

ADNAN

Your crew will leave their personal effects here on space dock and we will have everything beamed to their destinations separately after a complete security check.

MALCOLM XIRES

What do you mean security check?

ADNAN

All bags will be searched for any dangerous items, contraband, or any signs of terrorist intent. Standard procedure.

Malcolm is instantly and visibly agitated, putting his hand out to stop Adnan.

MALCOLM XIRES

Terrorist intent? We just got back from a warzone and you're going to scrutinize the intentions of my surviving crewmen?

ADNAN

I'm sorry, Captain. The directive isn't personal. We just can't afford to take any risks right now. Despite the surrender, Starfleet is still operating under a wartime disposition until the entirety of the Dominion fleet has gone back to the Gamma Quadrant.

Adnan and Malcolm turn into a massive transporter room filled with crewmen sitting down on the floor, waiting for their turns to be checked in, searched, and allowed to beam down. Security crewmen take their bags, log them, and pile them to the side of the transporter. The crewmen are visibly agitated.

Adnan moves to one of the large transporter pads situated near the center of the room.

ADNAN (CONT'D)

You can leave your bags with the security people, they'll transport them down with the rest.

Malcolm shakes his head and reluctantly hands the bags over to a waiting security crewman and steps up to the transporter.

Adnan nods to the TRANSPORTER CHIEF, beaming them away.

EXT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS - DAY

The two beam down outside a massive parade ground. In the center a circular stage is erected.

The field is flanked on each side by two rows of bleachers that run its entire length.

Malcolm looks to the surrounding city, in ruins, to his dismay. The clean-up from the Breen attack is still on-going. The golden gate bridge and several other structures are under reconstruction.

Cheers of the massive crowd in the bleachers around the parade ground drown out almost all sound. The bleak view is a stark backdrop to the celebratory mood.

The two walk towards the stage while talking.

MALCOLM XIRES

(shocked)

I didn't realize the damage was so extensive.

ADNAN

Hence our diligent security measures. We've been trying to rebuild for months, but there was just so much destruction. The Breen took us completely by surprise.

MALCOLM XIRES

I saw the feeds. How did they get past the early warning systems?

ADNAN

Rumor has it some sort of sensor evading stealth technology. I'm not sure about that type of thing, though.

MALCOLM XIRES

They didn't seem to hit much infrastructure wise.

ADNAN

No, but we took a huge blow in morale here. There is still a lot of fear on Earth. They also hit other areas, including the capitol in Paris, but luckily we managed to destroy most of them.

Numerous starfleet personnel are around the stage and on the field preparing for the event, organizing people as they beam down.

Rear Admiral JONATHON SYKES, 50s, walks towards them.

JONATHON SYKES
Welcome home, my friend.

Adnan and Malcolm come to attention.

ADNAN AND XIRES
Admiral.

JONATHON SYKES
At ease.

MALCOLM XIRES
Thank you, sir.

JONATHON SYKES
I need to talk to you for a second
before we get swept up in the
festivities today.

MALCOLM XIRES
Of course.

JONATHON SYKES
Lieutenant, if you don't mind.

ADNAN
Of course, sir. I'll begin
coordinating the incoming crewmen.

Both nod as Adnan taps his communicator and walks off.
Malcolm and Jonathon walk towards the stage.

JONATHON SYKES
I have a deployment for you.

MALCOLM XIRES
A deployment? I just dropped
anchor.

JONATHON SYKES
I told you before we left Cardassia
that Starfleet would be waiting to
cut the Seventh into pieces. I just
didn't think it would be this
quickly. Literally, as soon as I
stepped off my ship Starfleet
command handed me orders for every.
Damn. Ship. In the Seventh. I've
been giving out orders since I
beamed down an hour ago.

Malcolm shakes his head.

JONATHON SYKES (CONT'D)
(melancholy)
Combat is done. So begins the
peacekeeping.

MALCOLM XIRES
What are my orders?

Jonathon hands Malcolm a PADD.

JONATHON SYKES
Starfleet wants someone to take
command of the situation on
Betazed. I want the Gladiator on
this. I want you there, Malcolm.

Malcolm looks at the PADD.

MALCOLM XIRES
Betazed was under Dominion
occupation.

JONATHON SYKES
It's worse than that. The Dominion
destroyed a lot of infrastructure
in the final moments of their
presence. A lot of the planet
doesn't even have the basic
necessities of life right now.
Power, food, clean water are all at
a premium. The planet is descending
into chaos. Political shifts of
power, people fighting for scraps
of whatever they can get.

MALCOLM XIRES
Is it like Cardassia?

JONATHON SYKES
No. The Dominion left Betazed in a
hurry. The civilian casualties are
much, much lower. But I want to
warn you. The full extent of the
Dominion's toll on the Federation
is being hidden from the public. I
have a feeling the situation on
Betazed will be dealt with in the
same fashion. You'll be behind the
curtain on this one.

MALCOLM XIRES
I don't know if I'm suited for this
type of operation.

JONATHON SYKES

I need eyes I can trust on this
before it goes south.

Across the parade ground people are beaming in.

MALCOLM XIRES

I don't know, sir. The crew --

JONATHON SYKES

This isn't some superfluous patrol.
I need you on this Malcolm. I need
the Sword of the Seventh. We've
fought side by side in this war and
you've become my right hand. I've
watched you mature as a captain. I
wouldn't be sending you if I didn't
have faith in your ability to
complete the mission.

MALCOLM XIRES

What about you? Why aren't you
taking the lead on this?

JONATHON SYKES

(slightly disappointed)
Starfleet has seen fit to promote
me to Vice Admiral. I'm stuck here
for now.

MALCOLM XIRES

(taken aback by all the
change)
Congratulations, sir. Who's getting
the Bismarck?

JONATHON SYKES

(disappointed)
Captain Bendrix.

MALCOLM XIRES

(shaking his head)
I guess he deserves her for
enduring the burden of being your
first officer.

Jonathon stares off to the half rebuilt Starfleet
headquarters building.

JONATHON SYKES

I'm not going to let a bunch of old
people that cowered behind desks
the entire war shape this
situation.

(MORE)

JONATHON SYKES (CONT'D)

Admiral Ross has even expressed concern over the

(beat)

constantly evolving post war developments in this quadrant. I've got work to do here, important work, so I need my trusted people in the field, in key positions. I'll be your contact here, your only contact here, for this assignment.

Jonathon gets in close.

JONATHON SYKES (CONT'D)

Malcolm. Things are extremely delicate right now. The Klingon defense forces are virtually annihilated. The Federation and the Romulan Empire have now just become the only two superpowers in two quadrants. Hostilities are increasing in Cardassian territory between us and the Romulans, things do not look good right now.

Malcolm looks inquisitively.

Jonathon waves him off.

JONATHON SYKES (CONT'D)

We aren't going to war. Not yet. At least I hope not. Malcolm, I'll handle that. If things change I will make sure you're on the ready line. As for the mission at hand, Betazed is a core world. This could be a huge boost for your career, your visibility as a young captain.

MALCOLM XIRES

I've only had combat assignments.

JONATHON SYKES

There are no more combat assignments. So you'll have to find something else you're good at. This is a humanitarian mission. This is a chance to directly have a hand in rebuilding what the Dominion tore apart. We can take back what those sons of bitches took away from us!

(MORE)

JONATHON SYKES (CONT'D)

We can do it without phasers and
make all those lost lives mean
something.

Malcolm shoots Jonathon a glance. He's on board now.

MALCOLM XIRES

Are there other assets?

Jonathon smiles. He knows Malcolm's hooked.

JONATHON SYKES

There is a small task force already
in the sector. I've set up a
priority refit for the Gladiator at
Utopia Planitia for this mission.
I'm going to get you out of there
in three weeks. You'll take the
initial delivery of relief supplies
when you depart. The first of
numerous deliveries until we can
get their industrial capacity back
up. You'll take charge of the task
force. This is YOUR operation,
you'll be the honcho.

Crewmen are still beaming down, tens of thousands now fill
the area.

MALCOLM XIRES

How long is this projected to take?

JONATHON SYKES

I'm not going to lie to you. The
situation is extremely fluid, but I
don't even have all the details.
I'll need you there until Betazed
can get back on its feet.

(Malcolm still distant)

Everything that I know is in the
briefing materials. Can I count on
you, Malcolm?

Malcolm looks to Jonathon with intensity.

MALCOLM XIRES

Always.

Jonathon puts a hand on Malcolm's shoulder and nods
satisfactorily. He walks up on to the stage in the center of
the field. The crowd cheers.

Malcolm looks out to the thousands of crewmen that fill the area from the remaining ships of the Seventh fleet. They line up, by ship, by department, and by rank.

Malcolm looks over them. He spots Lorna and Jacen standing at the front of their crewmen. In the crowd there are people missing, numerous gaps in the lines. These are the dead.

He notices Sabrina at the front of the Navigation department.

The sound falls away. She smiles at him and waves.

An AIR HORN in the crowd shakes him out of the trance. She's gone.

Malcolm shakes it off and walks up to his place amongst the crew of the Gladiator. Flags from each ship fly in the breeze.

He looks over and sees the Starfleet Command brass are lined up on stage with Jonathon.

The crowd is intense. Numerous fighters and shuttles fly overhead. News drones float around trying to capture everything.

Jonathon waves and the crowd calms.

JONATHON SYKES

Thank you for this incredible welcome home! I can not express to you the feeling of standing here before you today. I want to thank Starfleet command for honoring us with such a gathering and I want to thank all of you, all the citizens of the Federation and her allies in this war for a reception like this. For two years the Seventh Fleet struggled against the forces of those that sought domination through oppression. Every life in our Federation was touched by this war even if they did not serve aboard a starship. We sit amidst the ruins now. We look around at the destruction and we mourn the loss of those gone from us. Every ship in the Seventh Fleet strove with everything they had against a seemingly unbreakable enemy across many fields of battle.

(MORE)

JONATHON SYKES (CONT'D)

The strength of the seventh fleet crews is what saw the seventh persevere through every adversity placed in front of them allowing the fleet to participate in almost every major engagement of the war all the way to the walls of Cardassia Prime. The crews of the Seventh stand apart not simply for their courage, courage was displayed by every single member of Starfleet. The seventh stands apart for the terrible cost we paid in lives for that courage. But, today marks a new beginning. We will turn that loss into a victory. Turn adversity into opportunity. The ships of the seventh fleet will soon go out across the Federation and with her noble principles pick up those shattered pieces and bring us into a new age of prosperity and peace.

The Federation anthem begins playing. Several Peregrine fighter squads fly overhead.

The crews from the ships of the seventh are arrayed out across the field. Almost 100,000. The Gladiator's crew is visibly smaller.

JONATHON SYKES (CONT'D)

Citizens of the Federation, it is my distinct pleasure to present the dedicated crews of the seventh fleet!

The crowd roars. Jonathon turns to the crews.

JONATHON SYKES (CONT'D)

Seventh Fleet!

All the crewmen on the parade field take a synchronous step out to full attention, their boots echo throughout the grounds.

JONATHON SYKES (CONT'D)

Welcome home! Dismissed!

The crowd roars again, louder, the crews join in.

The crews disperse to see their families. People flood in every direction.

Lorna looks to the crewman flying the ships colors. She motions for the flag.

He hands it to her.

She motions for him to run off. He does.

Amidst the celebration Malcolm stands fast. Lorna and Jacen stands at his side, Lorna holding the colors up. The trio holds their ground against the excitement and commotion of the crowd.

EXT. EARTH

San Francisco is consumed in darkness as the terminator creeps across into the ocean. The camera pans to space dock, also shrouded in darkness.

INT. SPACE DOCK - CARGO BAY CONTROL ROOM

Malcolm and Lorna stand in front of a large window of a control room overlooking a cargo bay. They watch CREWMEN unload body bags from the Gladiator neatly into rows on the floors. The cargo bay is almost filled. A group of HONOR GUARDS in dress uniforms, standing at attention watch over the dead armed with phaser rifles. The crewmen unload the dead slow and purposefully, with honor, respect, and dignity.

MALCOLM XIRES

Sykes wants us to leave as soon as the Gladiator is refit.

LORNA RAHNES

I thought they were going to scrap her. I don't know who Admiral Sykes talked to but Utopia Planitia says the Gladiator will be out of there in three weeks.

MALCOLM XIRES

That's what he said he would do.

LORNA RAHNES

In addition to our mortal wound, the engineering team found we had several fractured warp coils that miraculously held up for the trip home. Don't ask me how the hell we held a stable warp field. Not to mention that damned deflector dish.

MALCOLM XIRES

All thanks to our wonderful chief engineer, Nemi Dai. We wouldn't have been here today without her.

Lorna says nothing. She continues watching the cargo hold below.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

So, what about your own repairs?

Lorna turns slightly to Malcolm standing behind her. She catches his eyes.

LORNA RAHNES

I don't know if I can go.

MALCOLM XIRES

So you are going to resign your commission?

She turns away from him.

LORNA RAHNES

I think it's time I go live the rest of my life.

MALCOLM XIRES

What about the life you've built in Starfleet?

Lorna is silent.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

You aren't even going to look me in the eyes to say you are leaving?

She extends her hand to the body bags, still turned away from Malcolm.

LORNA RAHNES

There is my life in Starfleet, Malcolm! So many dead we couldn't even spare the torpedo casings to bring them home. Couldn't spare the deuterium to replicate more. There are so many, we would still be down there at attention for hours just unloading them.

(tearing up)

Look at all of them. Why aren't we still down there?

MALCOLM XIRES

(turning away)

I've already seen them, sat with them on the way home.

The two brood for a moment in silence.

LORNA RAHNES

I remember the only casualty from my first tour of duty on the USS Vision. Crewman Logan. He died on an away mission doing some sort of ultimately pointless geological survey. His death was felt on the ship for weeks.

(beat, breaking up)

McQuarie was our fourth helmsman, Malcolm.

Malcolm gets choked up.

MALCOLM XIRES

I know.

LORNA RAHNES

We stopped feeling most of them, we got numb. But, we had something special with McQuarie. The only reason I noticed any of the others is because all the replacements got younger. Then I noticed stations became empty when Starfleet stopped sending us replacements for non-combat operations.

(turns, streaming tears)

You aren't the first captain of the Gladiator. I'm not the first XO. With a few exceptions we're amongst the oldest senior officers in Starfleet now and we aren't even pushing forty. We are some of the youngest commanding officers in Starfleet history. We're younger than Tryla Scott and James Kirk, Malcolm. They actually earned their place. We aren't qualified to command a starship! The entire crew is made up of children. I don't know if I can put anymore children in body bags.

MALCOLM XIRES

I know things haven't been the same since Cardassia for us.

(MORE)

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

Loosing McQuarie was hard. But, this mission is a humanitarian one. I have to believe that we can do something good there. I need to believe it. I want to find out if what I was before, if what I wanted to be when I joined starfleet is dead along with all those children.

Malcolm walks up to the window and points towards the bodies with the last bit of the line.

Lorna turns and stares at the bodies.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

We've been together since Torres Three, Lorna. Somehow, you and I survived this entire war. When I was a new tactical officer and you were just an angry operations officer. Always in my face telling me how bad a job I was doing even though you only had been on the ship four weeks longer than me.

Lorna laughs through her crying.

Malcolm smiles, finding the chink in her armor.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

I need you with me on this, Lorna. I need my shield.

Lorna looks down.

LORNA RAHNES

Damn you, Malcolm.

MALCOLM XIRES

I know you feel the same as me, but leaving isn't going to help you forget what we've endured. What we've done. We need to go to Betazed. We need to rebuild. We need to rebuild ourselves, together.

(Beat)

I need you.

Malcolm puts a hand on her shoulder. She grabs his hand with hers and they watch the crewmen below do their work.

LORNA RAHNES

Ok. I'm in.

EXT. MARS - UTOPIA PLANITIA

SUPERIMPOSE: Three Weeks Later

Above the rust red planet is a massive industrial scaffold and lattice dock amidst construction. The massive structure houses dozens of honeycombs of the familiar dry docks within. Shuttles and work bees fly throughout the structure. Fighters patrol around her perimeter.

Above, a Sovereign-Class starship sits peerless over the planet below.

Almost lost amongst the many filled docks is the U.S.S. Gladiator. Her once tattered body is new and shining once more.

A Runabout approaches from the planet into an open, rear shuttle bay.

INT. GLADIATOR - SHUTTLEBAY

The Runabout enters the cavernous shuttlebay that spans the entire length of the saucer section. In the center is a large structure that allows the pass through of the warp and computer cores. Shuttles and fighters are arrayed around it.

What isn't taken up by support craft is filled in with equipment and crates full of relief supplies. Pilots and crewmen inspect all the craft and secure them for transport. Other crewmen secure and organize the cargo on the decks.

The Runabout wedges itself into the crowded landing deck as best it can, directed by a flight deck crewmen.

The side door slides open and starfleet personnel come spilling out. Amongst the many crewmen are Lieutenant DREVIN LOPE, Mid 30s, and Ensign BLAINE GREY, 22, amidst conversation.

BLAINE GREY

This is my first assignment.

DREVIN LOPE

Really? Fresh out of the academy? I remember those days. The sense of impending discovery around every solar system.

The two turn from each other after stepping off the Runabout and stare at the flight deck, filled to the brim with equipment, personnel, and auxiliary craft.

The two drink in every detail. Hanging from several places on the walls around the edge of the flight deck are large battle banners commemorating every major engagement the ship participated in during the Dominion War.

BLAINE GREY

Wow. Look at all this. This ship is legendary! I can't wait to meet everyone that fought in the war.

DREVIN LOPE

They did what they had to do.

BLAINE GREY

They're heroes in my book. This ship is huge!

DREVIN LOPE

Have you been on a starship? Do they still train cadets on starships today?

BLAINE GREY

(chuckling)

Yes, sir. My cadet voyage was on a New Orleans-class ship.

Blaine spins around, taking it all in.

BLAINE GREY (CONT'D)

This is definitely a luxury liner compared to that old thing.

DREVIN LOPE

They stuck us on an old Oberth for mine. Now that's an old starship.

The other crewmen from the Runabout are being herded to a central place near a cluster of turbolifts by a DECK OFFICER carrying a PADD.

DECK OFFICER

(yelling over noise)

All new personnel please follow me if you are in-processing.

Blaine and Drevin head towards the deck officer.

DREVIN LOPE

By the way, I don't believe I introduced myself. Lieutenant Drevin Lope, I'm the Chief of Operations.

Drevin extends a hand while they walk. Blaine eagerly takes it up.

BLAINE GREY
Ensign Blaine Grey, sir. Chief Navigator.

DREVIN LOPE
A fellow bridge officer? You must be an impressive pilot to be chief navigator of a starship as an ensign.

BLAINE GREY
I like to think so.

Blaine points to the nearest fighter in the hangar and starts walking towards it. Drevin curiously follows along.

BLAINE GREY (CONT'D)
With the war being over, we may not see much action, but I can show you what I can do in one of these sometime.

Blaine walks up to the fighter and puts a hand on it, running his fingers across its surfaces.

DREVIN LOPE
You know how to fly a fighter too?

BLAINE GREY
That was my original SFOS. Fighter pilot. After the war ended I shifted to starship navigation. Not much to gain in a fighter now that the war is over.

DREVIN LOPE
What are you looking to gain?

Down the hangar deck a fighter is being pushed into an alcove by crewmen and pilots. Atop the fighter stands Lieutenant Commander AMANDA CLERK, mid 20s, barking at the top of her lungs for everyone to push the fighter as hard as they can. She notices Blaine moving around the fighter.

BLAINE GREY
The real test of a pilot has to be the thrill of the chase, right? A dogfight?

AMANDA CLERK
 (to herself)
 What the hell?

Blaine starts looking under the wings of the fighter, walking underneath it, inspecting it.

AMANDA CLERK (CONT'D)
 (yelling)
 Don't touch the fighters!

Amanda jumps down off the fighter. The crew members part like the Red Sea to make way for her. She walks swiftly over to Blaine and Drevin.

DREVIN LOPE
 (reluctant)
 Perhaps?

AMANDA CLERK
 Hey, you two! Get your hands off
 the fighter!

Drevin holds his hands up, surprised by Amanda's forwardness. Blaine moves behind the fighter quickly.

AMANDA CLERK (CONT'D)
 You aren't authorized to be over
 here. Fighter Wing personnel only.

Amanda ducks below the wing to root him out, but Blaine squirrels away from her.

BLAINE GREY
 (o.c.)
 I'm sorry.

Blaine hides behind one of the landing gear. Amanda is opposite him at the other gear. They spot each other through the hydraulics, their eyes meet for a moment.

She moves her head from behind the gear.

AMANDA CLERK
 I said don't touch!

Blaine moves his head out from behind the opposite gear. They hold on each other for a moment.

BLAINE GREY
 I'm not touching it. See.

Blaine puts out both arms and waves them around.

Amanda gives him a curious glance, breaking her steely demeanor for just a moment.

Drevin chuckles.

Amanda snaps back into reality.

AMANDA CLERK

(angry)

Get the hell out here, Ensign!

Blaine runs out, and Amanda steps in front of him before He can reach the comfort of Drevin's proximity. Blaine looks down at her rank of Lieutenant Commander and Fighter Wing Badge, eyes wide.

BLAINE GREY

I'm so sorry, Commander.

AMANDA CLERK

I'm sure you are. You aren't authorized to be over here, Ensign.

BLAINE GREY

Understood, Ma'am. I'm a pilot, I was just --

AMANDA CLERK

Not in my wing you aren't.

Blaine motions to the ceiling.

BLAINE GREY

I fly the ship.

AMANDA CLERK

Not even close to the same thing.

BLAINE GREY

I was just telling the new operations chief here that I can fly one of these.

AMANDA CLERK

Oh really? Do you think you've got what it takes?

BLAINE GREY

I miss flying my fighter in flight school. Such freedom.

Amanda eyes Blaine up and down. Blaine is intimidated by her, but doesn't shy away.

AMANDA CLERK

You went to flight school?

BLAINE GREY

I saw you pushing the plane in. Why aren't you using the tractor emitters to set the plane?

AMANDA CLERK

I like a personal touch. Shouldn't you be in processing?

Drevin steps up to break the tension and looks down at her rank, expecting to defuse the situation with his own rank. He's immediately taken aback by her rank of Lieutenant Commander.

DREVIN LOPE

Lieu...

(Then)

...Commander? Forgive me, but aren't you a little young?

She doesn't look at Drevin.

AMANDA CLERK

(louder, to drevin while looking at Blaine)

Life expectancy was low for pilots, Lieutenant. I'm in charge because thirteen people above me ate it in combat. (Then to Blaine) I really don't think you have much to show me, Ensign.

DREVIN LOPE

I meant no disrespect.

AMANDA CLERK

Where did you serve before this assignment, Chief of Operations?

DREVIN LOPE

The Axiom.

AMANDA CLERK

Which FLEET were you with?

DREVIN LOPE

(slightly confused)

None. Well, I guess technically the thirty-fifth. Our ship was recalled but we were so far out we couldn't make it back in time to fight.

(MORE)

DREVIN LOPE (CONT'D)

The fleet was assigned but we never left port.

Amanda finally turns.

AMANDA CLERK

(laughs)

You couldn't fight because you were driving back home? For two years? You disrespect me by being on my flight deck. Leave. Both of you.

Amanda walks away.

DREVIN LOPE

Excuse me? I'll have to inform the Captain about your disrespectful behavior.

Amanda waves him off.

AMANDA CLERK

You do that, Lieutenant.

Drevin grabs Blaine's arm and pulls him to walk away. Blaine turns to look at Amanda before he walks off with Drevin. He watches her laugh with the other pilots as they mock them.

Amanda climbs back up on her fighter and starts yelling at the others to keep pushing. She shakes her head watching them walk off.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

The bridge is renewed and rebuilt after its refit time, filled with new officers and crewmen. There is a shift in the atmosphere and mood, a reluctant optimism in the air.

Malcolm is standing, looking at a PADD. He turns to Lorna who is standing at the operations console, tapping away. He watches her for a moment.

She looks up and notices him looking at her. She smiles at him.

LORNA RAHNES

What?

MALCOLM XIRES

Do you still remember how to do that?

LORNA RAHNES
Just like riding a bike, sir.

Malcolm walks to her side.

MALCOLM XIRES
What's our status?

LORNA RAHNES
The deck chief is reporting the last of our cargo has been secured. All departments report ready to make way. We are ready to set sail on your order.

Malcolm looks around the bridge.

MALCOLM XIRES
Reminds me of the first day we met. Standing back here with you. A new ship, a new crew.

LORNA RAHNES
It's been awhile since we've seen the ship this full of people.

JACEN SERRA
(o.c.)
And clean carpets.

Lorna and Malcolm both look over at Jacen manning the tactical console. He looks at them deadpan.

LORNA RAHNES
I'm thankful the ship doesn't smell like fire anymore.

MALCOLM XIRES
Speaking of the crew, where are my navigator and operations officer? I can't get underway without either of them.

Malcolm walks to the captain's chair and sits down.

LORNA RAHNES
The runabout with the last of the personnel just landed on the flight deck about thirty minutes ago, they are probably getting in processed.

As soon as he sits down a turbo lift door opens. Blaine and Drevin step out, both carrying their duffle bags. Both walk up to the Captain coming to attention and each salutes.

DREVIN LOPE
Lieutenant Drevin Lope, Chief of
Operations reporting for duty, sir.

BLAINE GREY
Ensign Blaine Grey, Chief Navigator
reporting for duty, sir.

Malcolm stands and salutes.

MALCOLM XIRES
At ease. Welcome to the Gladiator,
gentlemen. I'm Captain Malcolm
Xires, and this (motioning back to
Lorna at the operations console) is
Commander Lorna Rahnes.

BLAINE GREY
It's a pleasure to meet both of
you!

MALCOLM XIRES
Thank you, ensign. I'm sorry for
the abruptness, but my warp core
has been spooled up for several
days and we're ready to depart, so
if you don't mind, please take your
stations.

DREVIN/ BLAINE
Aye, sir.

Blaine turns and walks down to the central helm station at the front of the bridge in the crew pit. He stows his bag underneath his console. He enthusiastically greets the FLIGHT OPERATIONS OFFICER and COMBAT OPERATIONS OFFICER. The Flight Officer bears a Fighter Wing badge like Amanda Clerk wore. The Combat Operations Officer wears a Marine uniform and badge. Blaine greets them enthusiastically.

Drevin walks to the rear of the bridge towards Lorna.

LORNA RAHNES
You can stow your bag underneath
your console for right now. We'll
work on getting you situated in
your quarters after we get
underway.

DREVIN LOPE
Yes, ma'am.

LORNA RAHNES
Sir is fine.

BEAT

DREVIN LOPE

Yes, sir.

Lorna walks up to her chair to the right of Malcolm.

LORNA RAHNES

Utopia Planitia Control Tower, this
is USS Gladiator, requesting
permission to depart.

UTOPIA PLANITIA

(V.O.)

USS Gladiator, this is Utopia
Planitia, permission granted.
Clearing all moorings.

The ship lurches a moment. The viewer shows them drift
slightly.

UTOPIA PLANITIA (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

You are clear to depart. Good
hunting, Gladiator.

LORNA RAHNES

Thank you control. Gladiator out.
Engineering, begin warp plasma
injection to the nacelles and
charge the bussard collectors.

An ENGINEERING OFFICER sits at the engineering console center
on the left of the bridge.

ENGINEERING OFFICER

Engineering is reporting warp core
reaction is stable, beginning
plasma feed to nacelles. Bussard
collectors charging.

EXT. GLADIATOR

The side grills and front bulb of the nacelles begin to glow
with the familiar blue and red illumination.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Lorna takes a seat and presses a button on a console between
her and the Captain. The comms whistle sounds. Her voice
echoes throughout the ship.

LORNA RAHNES

Attention, all hands, attention.
This is the Commander. All
stations, make ready. All stations,
make ready. We are now departing
Utopia Planitia.

(Several beeps emanate
from the console)

Captain, all stations report ready
to depart.

MALCOLM XIRES

Thank you Commander. Ensign
McQuar...

(Malcolm catches himself)
...Helm. Thrusters, full ahead.

Lorna looks over to him curiously.

BLAINE GREY

Aye, Captain. Thrusters, full
ahead.

MALCOLM XIRES

Take us out.

EXT. DRYDOCK

The Gladiator, in all her glory, begins moving forward out
from the drydock slip. Her hull gleams as she moves into the
rays of distant sunshine.

As she pulls away from the massive latticework of the Utopia
Planitia and her busy yards, three ships, a Saber-Class, an
Excelsior-Class, and an Intrepid-Class move into frame and
form up around the Gladiator.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Drevin looks up from his console in slight confusion.

DREVIN LOPE

Captain, three ships, The Xiphos,
The Dauntless, and The Stoic have
moved along side us and are
escorting us to the Mars orbital
perimeter.

Jacen gives a breathe of a laugh and smiles. Drevin looks
over, still unsure of what is happening.

MALCOLM XIRES

On screen.

The three monitors, one toward each of the sides of the ship and one toward the rear display the three vessels surrounding them.

Malcolm just watches the monitor for a moment.

He looks over to see Lorna's hand grasping his. His eyes go to hers, she smiles at him.

BLAINE GREY

(turning around)

Forgive me sir, I don't understand.

MALCOLM XIRES

They're escorting us out as an honor guard.

LORNA RAHNES

They're ships that served with us in the Seventh fleet.

EXT. SPACE

The ships are a bit further away from Mars now, all flying together in perfect formation. The sun light comes from behind the red planet, shining down on their hulls.

The Saber has been refit but the Intrepid and the Excelsior still have battle damage that needs repaired.

A moment later the three ships break apart and loose the Gladiator to continue flying forward on its own.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

As before.

DREVIN LOPE

Sir, they've all sent the same message. Good hunting.

(then)

Sword of the Seventh?

Malcolm looks to Lorna.

MALCOLM XIRES

(whispering)

My shield.

Lorna wipes away a tear.

There is a moment between the two. The bridge is in silence.

LORNA RAHNES
The final flight of the Seventh
fleet.

BEAT

BLAINE GREY
Captain, we have cleared the Mars
orbital perimeter.

Lorna recomposes herself. Malcolm straightens up in his
chair.

MALCOLM XIRES
Helm, set course for Betazed. Warp
eight.

Blaine taps his control panel.

BLAINE GREY
Setting course for Betazed, warp
eight. Aye, Captain. Course laid
in, sir.

MALCOLM XIRES
Engage.

EXT. SPACE

The Gladiator rapidly accelerates past the camera and speeds
off into the distant stars at warp, gone in a flash.

INT. GLADIATOR - CORRIDOR

Lorna and Drevin turn a corner and arrive at a nondescript
doorway.

LORNA RAHNES
Here are your quarters, Lieutenant
Lope.

Lorna pushes the panel next to the door, and enters the room,
Drevin follows.

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)
The quarters are single
accommodation per your SFOS.
(MORE)

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)

I hope you'll find them suitable for a bridge officer.

DREVIN LOPE

No, sir. These are excellent. I was double bunked on the Axiom before this. Much more room here.

LORNA RAHNES

Excellent. I'm the former operations officer so I can help you get acquainted with anything aboard the ship.

DREVIN LOPE

Ah, yeah. I appreciate that. Just as an aside, I ran into the wing commander of the fighter group on the flight deck after I arrived this morning.

LORNA RAHNES

Yes, Lieutenant Commander Amanda Clerk.

DREVIN LOPE

Yes, that's her. She confronted Ensign Grey and I very brazenly and was borderline in her professional courtesy.

LORNA RAHNES

You can speak plainly, Mr. Lope.

DREVIN LOPE

She was extremely disrespectful to two fellow officers.

LORNA RAHNES

The Commander is a firebrand, for sure.

DREVIN LOPE

I understand she's the commander of the fighter wing, but --

LORNA RAHNES

I wouldn't let it get to you. She's an accomplished pilot and endured a lot during the war.

DREVIN LOPE

Understood, sir. I just like to see an adherence to the basics of good order and discipline.

LORNA RAHNES

I know this is a bit different than the Axiom, but you'll get used to it. Give it some time.

Lorna turns to walk out.

Drevin shifts uncomfortably.

DREVIN LOPE

As operations chief, perhaps we should reiterate basic discipline and...

Lorna sighs. She steps up to Drevin, almost threateningly.

LORNA RAHNES

Mr. Lope. I made the personnel selections after the war ended. You are good at what you do, which is why you are here, but I'm advising you to sit back and observe your surroundings before you put your claws into everything or things could go very badly for you here. This ship has a different tempo than an Intrepid-class starship. You are not the second officer on this ship. The Tactical officer is. We have thousands of crewmen, hundreds of officers in addition to hundreds in the fighter wing and hundreds in the marine unit, all of which demand attention and are all looking to get oneupsmanship over each other. It's a friendly rivalry. If you can't handle a simple pissing contest from other departments on the ship I recommend you find a transfer assignment immediately. Do I make myself clear, Lieutenant?

Drevin steps back.

DREVIN LOPE

Of course, sir. I apologize.

Lorna points to the left.

LORNA RAHNES

(points to the left)

Bunk and head.

(points to the right)

Replicator and comms. Finish your
in processing before the end of the
duty day.

DREVIN LOPE

Yes, sir.

Lorna turns and walks out, leaving Drevin standing in the center of the room feeling uneasy.

INT. GLADIATOR - MAIN ENGINEERING

Malcolm walks through one set of doors into main engineering, another set of doors on the opposite side mirrors the room. Main engineering is traditional, with a large warp core surrounded by a couple balconies overlooking the core. In the center of Engineering is a pool table sized console. The walls of the room are layered with consoles as well. The look and feel is similar to Voyager, but the room and the core are larger.

Crewmen have consoles and hatches open, tinkering with hidden components beneath the slick and tidy veneer of the starship.

Malcolm walks through the extremely busy bay and moves towards the warp core. People acknowledge him as he walks through. He looks up the core, it stretches to the top of the ship. He looks down, it stretches to the bottom of the ship. Crewman are on balconies all along the core doing work.

He turns and looks around. Crewman are everywhere. He stops one.

MALCOLM XIRES

Petty Officer, where is the Chief
Engineer?

PETTY OFFICER

She's in her office, Sir.

MALCOLM XIRES

Thank you.

Malcolm walks out of engineering and down a parallel hallway. He stops at a door, which is open. The entry is surrounded with windows indicating a duty office. In the office sits a young female Betazed tinkering with a piece of equipment. She runs her hands along it, feeling for something. This is
LIEUTENANT NEMI DAI, 20s.

INT. GLADIATOR - CHIEF ENGINEERS OFFICE

Malcolm knocks on the frame of the door. Nemi jumps a bit, looks up at him, and stands quickly, cradling the equipment in her hands like a baby.

NEMI DAI

Captain. I'm sorry! I didn't see you there.

MALCOLM XIRES

As you were, Lieutenant. I'm not interrupting anything?

NEMI DAI

No, not at all, sir. What can I do for you?

She sits down and motions for Malcolm to have a seat.

Malcolm turns to the door and hits the control panel. A glass door slides shut.

He turns and sits.

MALCOLM XIRES

Lieutenant, you know we are headed to Betazed.

Nemi listens, but she seems distracted, continuing to mess with the device on her desk. She is unusually distant for a Betazoid.

NEMI DAI

You want me to help, don't you?

Malcolm shifts a bit.

MALCOLM XIRES

Did you know I was going to ask?

NEMI DAI

I'm the only Betazoid on the ship. You don't have to be a mind reader to deduce you were going to ask me to assist you.

MALCOLM XIRES

Fair enough. I don't know much about your people. I've read a lot of reports while the ship was in drydock, but I've spent a lot of time with you over the last year of the war.

Nemi looks down.

NEMI DAI

Obviously, I'm not like the rest.

MALCOLM XIRES

That's why I promoted you to chief engineer, but you are still a Betazoid.

NEMI DAI

That is why my helping you is going to be difficult. The things you've read in your reports is probably just after action reports about the Dominion occupation, perhaps some basic information, some loose history.

Nemi continues to run her hand over the device. She cocks her head a bit.

MALCOLM XIRES

Exactly, actually. For as much as the Federation Diplomatic Core uses Betazoids we don't keep a lot of information about them.

NEMI DAI

Betazed is backwards by Federation standards. They don't like to shine light on that fact.

She unlatches a piece on the device and removes a small chip, hitting it with an emitter device.

MALCOLM XIRES

I've talked to a handful of people that were stationed there, including Commander William Riker, the first officer of the Enterprise, he was there for a brief period I guess. He said it was wonderful.

NEMI DAI

I've heard of him. Commander Riker fashions himself a ladies man from what I understand. But his involvement with the House of Troi is known to many.

She slips the small chip in and latches the device.

MALCOLM XIRES

You mean Commander Deanna Troi?

NEMI DAI

Their family is one of the noble houses.

MALCOLM XIRES

I don't understand.

NEMI DAI

Betazed is a matriarchal hierarchy based on a hereditary transmission of political and social status.

She turns and pulls two pieces of the device apart, opening it in the center. Two struts link the pieces.

MALCOLM XIRES

Wait, what? That isn't allowed to exist in the Federation.

NEMI DAI

We are the reason there is a rule. Before Betazed, the Federation more or less overlooked a races' cultural traditions, but with the induction of Betazed the structure was so repressive to them they had to create a rule that forbid class and caste systems.

MALCOLM XIRES

So, Betazed was grandfathered in?

She turns the device on, creating an energy bridge between the two sections.

NEMI DAI

Yes.

Malcolm sits back in the chair and ponders for a moment.

Nemi closes the device back up, creating a closed cylinder again.

MALCOLM XIRES

I'm going to have you on the ground coordinating the set-up of all the relief efforts.

NEMI DAI

I'm not sure that's a great idea.

MALCOLM XIRES

This isn't a request. I think you can genuinely provide some insights. I'll send the relief deployment schedule to you in an hour or so.

NEMI DAI

(saddened)

I understand, sir.

Malcolm stands.

MALCOLM XIRES

Nemi, I saw something in you that no other person on this ship saw. You wanted to fade into the background with your machines, but I saw someone who was good at not just organizing machines, but someone who is good at organizing people.

Malcolm pushes the panel to open the door again.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

You are a fine leader and an exemplary starfleet officer. Don't ever sell your self short.

Nemi nods.

NEMI DAI

Thank you, sir.

Malcolm exits leaving Nemi alone in her office. She smiles a bit before we:

INT. GLADIATOR - MEDICAL BAY

A MEDICAL TECH walks into a lobby with a PADD.

MEDICAL TECH

Lieutenant Lope? The Doctor is ready for you.

Drevin stands and follows the Medical Tech into the back.

Captain SANDRA MURPHY, 40s, stands at a table in an exam room looking over information on a PADD. The Medical Tech brings Drevin to the room and motions for him to enter.

MEDICAL TECH (CONT'D)
Captain, this is the Chief of
Operations, Lieutenant Drevin Lope.

Sandra turns and smiles at him and shakes his hand.

SANDRA MURPHY
Good to meet you. Have a seat,
Lieutenant.

The Medical tech leaves and the glass door slides shut behind her.

Drevin sits down on the exam table.

SANDRA MURPHY (CONT'D)
How are you doing Lieutenant? Have
you had a chance to settle in?

DREVIN LOPE
Yes, Ma'am. I have. I got my
quarters assigned today as well.

SANDRA MURPHY
Excellent. Since you are a bridge
officer they should be some of the
better quarters on the ship. I
reviewed the record sent from your
previous assignment on the Axiom.
Your physician reported you were in
excellent shape. Most of these
tests were performed in the last
few months, but I'm going to do
just a few simple scans to verify
nothing has happened since then and
we'll get your in-processing
finished up and officially get you
certified for duty.

DREVIN LOPE
I didn't expect a Captain to be
checking me out.

SANDRA MURPHY
I like to clear all the department
heads myself.

DREVIN LOPE
So you're the Chief Medical
Officer?

SANDRA MURPHY
That's me.

The doctor pulls out the handheld scanner from her medical tricorder and begins running it down his head and spine.

DREVIN LOPE

Can I ask you about the tempo of this ship?

SANDRA MURPHY

I've only been her for a week myself. So I'm not an expert by any means.

DREVIN LOPE

Oh.

SANDRA MURPHY

Why?

DREVIN LOPE

I haven't been here a day and I've already started to butt heads with two senior officers, one of them being the first officer.

SANDRA MURPHY

That's probably not someone you want to anger. Can I ask what happened?

Sandra moves the scanner around, checking other parts of his body.

DREVIN LOPE

When I landed on the ship, the Wing Commander and I got into a heated discussion about whether or not I fought in the war.

SANDRA MURPHY

Yeah, that's a hot button issue right now.

She puts her scanner back in the tricorder and sits down.

SANDRA MURPHY (CONT'D)

In the week I've been here I've noticed that the original members of the crew are slightly more hostile towards the new crewmen.

Sandra inputs some information in her PADD.

DREVIN LOPE

Really? Why do you think that is?

SANDRA MURPHY

Animosity towards those that didn't fight in the war. They don't look at us as equals.

DREVIN LOPE

Us? You're a Captain, you must have had some involvement in the war?

SANDRA MURPHY

I served, but it was on a medical ship. I never lifted a phaser rifle, never saw direct combat. We would just get the gruesome aftermath.

DREVIN LOPE

I spent the entire war, at warp, trying to get home in time to fight.

SANDRA MURPHY

You were on a deep space assignment!?

DREVIN LOPE

Yeah, near the galactic core.

SANDRA MURPHY

Oh my. I bet that was wonderful.

DREVIN LOPE

It was. A lot of emptiness, but a lot of marvelous things too.

DREVIN LOPE (CONT'D)

I feel like I've come back to a different Starfleet.

SANDRA MURPHY

I know what you mean. I would suggest keeping your head down for a bit and give yourself a moment to feel everyone out. You haven't even had your first senior officer meeting. I saw some heightened activity in your adrenal glands, so I know the encounter must have spooked you.

DREVIN LOPE

That was Commander Rahnes. I tried to explain all this to her, but she made me feel like it was my fault.

SANDRA MURPHY

The Captain and Commander are tough nuts to crack. They keep things close to the chest, but give it time, OK. Virtually the entire medical staff is new as well, including the counselor,, so don't hesitate to utilize the medical services, alright? If you need any professional advice, you can count on me as a resource, OK, Lieutenant?

DREVIN LOPE

Thank you, Ma'am I appreciate it.

EXT. SPACE

The Gladiator is cruising along at warp speed.

INT. GLADIATOR - MALCOLM QUARTERS

SUPERIMPOSE: 16 Days Later

Malcolm sits at his desk examining a report in some civilian clothes. Lorna sits on his sofa in her uniform with her head back. The uniform jacket is unzipped. Music plays in the background.

LORNA RAHNES

Lieutenant Lope is finally getting into the swing of things.

MALCOLM XIRES

He's not a fool by any means.

LORNA RAHNES

No, he's weird and uptight, but he's capable. He's been going to the medical bay talking to the counselor after his shifts. It's tapered off though.

MALCOLM XIRES

He probably needed time to adjust. I'm glad he's working out.

LORNA RAHNES

I worry about him and the chief medical officer.

MALCOLM XIRES
Captain Murphy?

LORNA RAHNES
Yeah. I worry about them putting
their idealistic heads together and
causing disharmony.

MALCOLM XIRES
The doctor knows her place.

LORNA RAHNES
I know, just all the new people are
different, so many little conflicts
around the ship. Crewmen butting
heads.

MALCOLM XIRES
Everyone is just stir crazy.

LORNA RAHNES
A lot of them are kids. Like Lope
they never carried a phaser. They
don't get the way the ship
operates.

MALCOLM XIRES
When we get to Betazed everyone
will have something to do and stay
occupied for awhile.

The music is interrupted by a comm chirp.

JACEN SERRA
(V.O.)
Captain, we're receiving multiple
distress signals from Betazed.

MALCOLM XIRES
Distress signals?

Lorna cocks her head.

JACEN SERRA
(V.O.)
Dozens. But they are local
subspace, very low power. Probably
handheld, portable units.

Malcolm stands up and begins getting ready.

MALCOLM XIRES
We're due in tomorrow, how far out
are we?

JACEN SERRA

(V.O.)

We're still about three light years out.

Lorna stands and motions she's going up to the bridge. Malcolm nods and Lorna exits.

MALCOLM XIRES

Go to yellow alert and accelerate to maximum warp. I'll be up in a few moments.

JACEN SERRA

(V.O.)

Aye, Captain. Bridge out.

Malcolm moves towards the bedroom, some of the lights in the cabin brighten in coordination with the yellow alert symbol displayed on the wall screens and computers. A computer voice chimes, echoing throughout the ship.

COMPUTER

(V.O.)

Attention, all hands. Yellow Alert, Yellow Alert. All mission critical personnel please report to your stations immediately.
(repeats as needed)

EXT. SPACE

The causal warp speed light streaks begin to accelerate, but space begins to fade away and every thing surrounding the Gladiator turns to an all consuming blue and white light. Space is barely visible through the tunnel.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Malcolm walks onto the bridge from the turbolift, he is wearing his red shirt and gray vest, his uniform blouse in hand.

Lorna is standing in front of the captain's chair. Jacen moves to return to his station from Lorna's side. Malcolm zips the collar up on his shirt as he takes the captain's chair.

MALCOLM XIRES

Status report?

BLAINE GREY
We're swiftly approaching the
Betazed system, we'll be in range
in three minutes.

From another turbolift two crewman arrive and take stations.

DREVIN LOPE
Long Range sensors are only picking
up three Starfleet ships in orbit
around the planet.

MALCOLM XIRES
Did you hail them?

JACEN SERRA
I tried, but no response. Someone
could be jamming communications or
their subspace arrays could be
destroyed.

LORNA RAHNES
Are you getting any weapon
discharge readings?

JACEN SERRA
Negative, sir.

Malcolm looks to Lorna. She looks confused.

BLAINE GREY
Arrival in system in one minute.

MALCOLM XIRES
Helm, drop us out of warp as close
to the planet as possible.

BLAINE GREY
The gravity well detection will
kick us out before we can get close
or we could hit the atmosphere and -
-

MALCOLM XIRES
Haven't you ever performed this
maneuver?

BLAINE GREY
Sorry, sir. I didn't get a chance
to fight in the war.

MALCOLM XIRES
We'll get you up to speed on that
later.

(MORE)

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

Just override the gravity well
detection and exit right into low
orbit.

BLAINE GREY

That's going to be tight.

LORNA RAHNES

I guess we're going to see what
type of pilot you are, Ensign.

BLAINE GREY

(excited)
Aye, sir!

MALCOLM XIRES

Go to red alert, sound general
quarters and prepare for combat.

The bridge lights dim out and shift to the red hue of the
alert lights. The alert klaxon echoes.

EXT. SPACE

The Gladiator burrows through the blue hued warp tunnel at
incredible speed.

CRACK

The massive vessels shield emitters activate.

A white bubble flickers around the ship for a moment, which
fades to an invisible layer just as quickly. The port,
starboard, and multiple dorsal pod torpedo tubes all
illuminate an ominous red-orange.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

The bridge crew watches the viewer. Malcolm is in the crew
pit next to Blaine watching him issue commands on the helm,
checking his work.

MALCOLM XIRES

(pointing towards a
setting)
Here, this too. The rest is up to
you.

BLAINE GREY

Ok. Here we go!

In an instant the blue tunnel disappears and real space returns, the planet Betazed seems to propel itself swiftly into view, swallowing the entirety of the view screen as the ship comes out of warp.

BLAINE GREY (CONT'D)
Whoa, damn!

Malcolm puts a hand on Blaine's shoulder.

BLAINE GREY (CONT'D)
Sorry, sir.

MALCOLM XIRES
(chuckling)
No. Excellent work, Ensign.

Malcolm and Lorna survey the tactical screens to the sides of the main viewer. They identify three Starfleet ships in orbit around the planet. The tactical data fills the screen with information about life signs, damage reports, and weapon status. The fleet consists of an Excelsior, a Saber, and a Steamrunner-Class ship.

LORNA RAHNES
Have you identified any hostile targets?

JACEN SERRA
Nothing, sir.

LORNA RAHNES
Turn us towards the ships.

BLAINE GREY
Aye, sir.

MALCOLM XIRES
There are only three ships here. Admiral Sykes said there was an entire taskforce.

DREVIN LOPE
I'm receiving hundreds of distress calls now. Commander Serra was right, its mainly handheld and portable units, some are radio transmissions. Ah, I'm getting hailed by the Excelsior-class ship, identifying itself as the U.S.S. Greenwald.

MALCOLM XIRES
On screen.

The central screen turns on, filling with the face of Commander CHARLENE VAHLERS, 30s.

CHARLENE VAHLERS
Captain Xires! Thank goodness you
and your fleet have arrived! We've
been expecting you for weeks now.

The side tactical screens fill with her service profile and confirms her identity.

MALCOLM XIRES
Our fleet?

CHARLENE VAHLERS
Last we heard you were bringing a
relief fleet.

MALCOLM XIRES
We were told there was a task force
here already. We were coming to
take command.

CHARLENE VAHLERS
You can call our humble assemblage
of broken vessels Task Force:
Betazed.

LORNA RAHNES
Evidently, there has been some
miscommunication.

MALCOLM XIRES
I've been trying to contact anyone
out here for days.

CHARLENE VAHLERS
Yeah, sorry about that. We don't
have comms on any of our ships.

MALCOLM XIRES
Your ships look like they got into
a fight.

CHARLENE VAHLERS
We've been here for
(beat)
three months now, I guess? Whenever
the second and tenth pursued the
Dominion forces back to Cardassia.
We got left behind.

MALCOLM XIRES

You've been here since the end of the war? What about the distress calls?

CHARLENE VAHLERS

(disappointed)

Welcome to Betazed.

Malcolm and Lorna give each other a curious look.

CHARLENE VAHLERS (CONT'D)

Why don't you and your first officer beam over. The other ship commanders and I were just going to sit down to dinner. We can give you an informal debrief. You can stand down red alert by the way.

MALCOLM XIRES

OK..? We'll be over momentarily.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

See you soon. Vahlers, out.

The screen reverts back to a view of the planet and the three ships.

MALCOLM XIRES

Stand down red alert, but keep us at yellow. Helm, get us into formation with the other ships, bring us up on their backs.

BLAINE GREY

Aye, sir.

MALCOLM XIRES

Commander Serra, coordinate with the other ships and get them on yellow alert as well. Relay orders to have them form into a defensive screen.

JACEN SERRA

Aye, sir.

MALCOLM XIRES

Flight operations, I want a CAP established and flying within the hour. I want two patrols, one planet side and one orbital, coordinated with a runabout controller. One flight for now.

FLIGHT OPS OFFICER

Aye, sir.

The flight ops officer begins relaying information via her headset.

Lorna stands and turns to Drevin.

LORNA RAHNES

Ops, I want that entire planet scanned within one orbit. Get as much detail as you can, I want deep core scans as well. I don't want anything omitted.

DREVIN LOPE

Aye, sir.

Malcolm and Lorna walk towards the turbolift.

MALCOLM XIRES

Commander Serra, you have the bridge.

JACEN SERRA

Aye, sir.

The two enter the turbolift.

INT. GLADIATOR - HANGAR DECK

Several enlisted crewmen in protective gear and multi-colored shirts load a command module into the back of a Runabout chassis near an elevator to the flight deck. Once the module is loaded into place, large clamps, in the front of the warp engines clamp down on the module, securing it. In the background a Peregrine fighter is brought up to the flight deck on another large elevator.

EXT. SPACE

U.S.S. GREENWALD

In orbit above Betazed are the four ships. The Greenwald's hull is severely damaged in many areas.

Two fighters from the Gladiator fly by.

INT. GREENWALD - CAPTAIN'S MESS

Around the table in a formal dining area sits Malcolm Xires, Lorna Rahnes, Charlene Vahlers, Commander SEAN WILLIAMS, early 30s, and Lieutenant Commander LILY ARMSTRONG, mid 20s. These are the commanders of the three vessels around Betazed.

The room is damaged and broken, much like the Gladiator at the beginning of the episode.

They eat their meals as they talk.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

The second time the tenth had fought its way back to Betazed, we didn't see any ships in orbit. Long range sensors reported nothing. There were Jem'Hadar forces on the ground of course, the transporters were inhibited, as the Dominion do, so we thought the remainder of the fleet had gone out to escort another logistics convoy from the Argolis Cluster. We started launching the marine drop ships to establishing a landing zone. Escort fighters, shuttles, everything we had was going down to the planet. From out of no where, dozens of Breen attack ships swept in and started firing on the shuttles, completely ignoring the starships. In almost one pass they wiped out our entire invasion force. Whoever made it to the planet was eventually killed without support. We had to retreat, there was nothing we could do.

LORNA RAHNES

Damn.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

After that Starfleet couldn't spare us any more ground personnel. We were ordered to simply contain them in the Betazed system, prevent them from spilling over to another core world.

MALCOLM XIRES

So, once Starfleet began the offensive into Cardassian space, the second and tenth just followed the Dominion fleet back when they were recalled?

Charlene nods slowly.

SEAN WILLIAMS

They told our three ships to stay behind and do the best we could to help the people until relief arrived.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

That's all we've been doing. A Klingon patrol group came here about four weeks ago, they allowed us to contact Starfleet command. Starfleet said a fleet had been assigned to bring supplies and relieve us. But we hadn't heard anything from anyone outside this sector since then.

LILY ARMSTRONG

All of our ships comms have been destroyed. My ship has one of the few experienced engineers left and we just don't have the parts we need to get the subspace antennas working again.

LORNA RAHNES

Can't you replicate base components?

CHARLENE VAHLERS

We're low on deuterium. The Ushann-Tor can't even leave orbit to use its bussard collectors and it has some sort of shield feedback too, so it can't generate a shield construct.

SEAN WILLIAMS

The Vindicator has some components for the subspace arrays, but our fabrication facilities are all destroyed.

MALCOLM XIRES

I'll get my chief engineer and her teams working with all of you. We brought several slush vats with us. We can transfer some of that to your ships so you can get your people doing something again.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

That's great and all, but if there is no more relief coming, we're going to have problems providing aid to an entire planet.

LORNA RAHNES

Obviously, with all those distress signals we received.

SEAN WILLIAMS

Those are people in the rural regions. People scattered to the wind that don't have access to anything except for some scavenged equipment. With no slush for our ships, we can't really replicate anything for them.

LILY ARMSTRONG

We recycled a lot of stuff ourselves just to keep the lights going the last week or so.

Malcolm rubs his eyes.

MALCOLM XIRES

So how are these people broadcasting?

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Starfleet intelligence would occasionally get agents down to the surface to support the resistance on the planet. They brought handheld comms, small replicators, power generators, whatever. Some of the people down there are even using the comm badges of KIA marines and security forces.

MALCOLM XIRES

That's unacceptable. Commander Rahnes and I developed a relief plan while we were being refit, but we didn't know how many other ships would be here or what the disposition was. So, we'll have to review the plan.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Where will you be setting up?

MALCOLM XIRES

I thought the capital would be the most prudent place.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Normally I would say OK, but the political situation here is shifting.

MALCOLM XIRES

That is the only solid piece of information about this place I have.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Betazed, for all its propagated glory as being a paradise world and its diplomats espousing their lofty beliefs in the ideals of the Federation, is a backwards world.

Malcolm chuckles.

MALCOLM XIRES

I've heard that too. Why does that prohibit the capital as a staging ground?

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Captain, since the Dominion left no one really holds control anymore. The commoners are using the opportunity to seek equal representation.

LORNA RAHNES

That should be a good thing.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Normally, that would be fantastic, but the nobility here isn't going to let go easily.

(MORE)

CHARLENE VAHLERS (CONT'D)

They haven't made any moves yet,
but they are obviously
uncomfortable with the situation.
If you go into the capital with the
supplies and set up shop, you'll be
seen as propping up the nobility.

MALCOLM XIRES

What do you advise?

CHARLENE VAHLERS

When you go down tomorrow to meet
with the nobility, you'll also meet
Aetor Elani. He's a commoner, a
male no less, and leader of the
resistance group called the Betazed
Rangers. The Magna Duchissa has
been keeping him around to keep her
eyes on him. He'll be your line to
the common folk.

MALCOLM XIRES

Can we trust him?

CHARLENE VAHLERS

I don't know. We've only been able
to get basic utilities up and
running in the planet's capital. I
know for sure he doesn't like me.

Malcolm nods his head and stands.

MALCOLM XIRES

Alright, all of you will beam over
to the Gladiator tomorrow morning
at oh six thirty. We'll all go down
together and get this started at oh
seven hundred. We should turn in,
we have a lot of work ahead of us.

Everyone stands up.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Another thing too, Captain Xires.
The nobility of Betazed like to
eat. Everything they do centers
around meals. So, never go down on
a full stomach.

Malcolm nods.

SEAN WILLIAMS

Captain, Commander, I want to say
its an honor having you with us
here. We've all heard stories of
the Sword of the Seventh during the
war.

Malcolm gives a coy look.

MALCOLM XIRES

I appreciate that.

LILY ARMSTRONG

We aren't trying to simply flatter
you, sir. I think I speak for
everyone, but I feel better knowing
someone of your experience is here
to help out.

SEAN WILLIAMS

Exactly.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

(less starry eyed)
Indeed.

MALCOLM XIRES

I appreciate that very much.
Sincerely. I hope we all can feel
better about helping Betazed
recover over the coming weeks.

SEAN WILLIAMS

Here, here!

Lily claps excitedly, showing her youthful age, genuinely
enthusiastic and hopeful. Malcolm and Lorna walk toward the
exit to the Captain's mess. Charlene walks towards Malcolm
and puts a hand on his arm.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Let us see you off, Captain.

MALCOLM XIRES

No, no. Everyone needs to get some
rest. You've been gracious enough
to host us. We'll get ourselves
back. I'll see you all on the
Gladiator tomorrow.

Charlene smiles at him and nods.

CHARLENE VAHLERS
Thank you for coming to our rescue,
Captain. Even if it was just a
false alarm.

Malcolm sheepishly smiles and nods. Lorna gives him a curious look.

MALCOLM XIRES
I'll see you all tomorrow.

Malcolm and Lorna exit the room.

INT. GREENWALD - CORRIDOR

Lorna and Malcolm wait for the turbolift in the corridor. The ship's lights have dimmed for the evening shift and the halls are empty save for the two of them.

LORNA RAHNES
(whispering)
Did you see how young the
Lieutenant Commander was?

MALCOLM XIRES
(whispering)
Yeah.

LORNA RAHNES
(whispering)
She told me on the way up that she
was just a line level operations
officer.

The turbolift opens. The two enter. The door shuts.

MALCOLM XIRES
Transporter room.

The turbolift begins moving.

LORNA RAHNES
A line level operations officer!

MALCOLM XIRES
And she's the senior officer on the
ship?

LORNA RAHNES

The Captain! She told me she wasn't comfortable taking the rank of captain as a battlefield commission. She was a Lieutenant Junior Grade less than a year ago.

Malcolm shakes his head.

MALCOLM XIRES

This is a mess. I don't know what Sykes walked us into.

LORNA RAHNES

Did you contact him yet?

MALCOLM XIRES

I sent him word we were here. It's really early morning so he wasn't in the office yet. I'll give him a full report after tomorrow's meeting, I suppose. Make sure the ships get a ration of slush. Oh, and get Nemi briefed on the situation and have her put some teams together to start repairs. We'll need to get the workbees out since we don't have a drydock.

LORNA RAHNES

I don't like this, Malcolm. Something doesn't feel right.

Malcolm nods slowly.

MALCOLM XIRES

We aren't even on the surface yet.

EXT. SPACE

The small fleet of ships is covered in darkness. Betazed below has limited lights on the surface, concentrated in a handful of huddled areas.

INT. GLADIATOR - FLIGHT DECK

Two Argo shuttles and several Peregrine fighters sit in one of the forward launch areas of the Gladiator's flight deck, ready to go. Crewmen run around prepping everything for launch.

Two squads of Marines are formed up behind the shuttles, ready to board. A young woman, Colonel EMICA SATO (30s) stands in front of them barking orders that are inaudible to us. All the marines wear the ground troop uniforms as seen in "The Siege of AR-558", flak jackets, phaser holsters, backpacks filled with various equipment for each marines specialty, and they all carry post Star Trek: First Contact phaser rifles.

Lieutenant Nemi Dai and some engineering crews are loading into another shuttle across the flight deck. A small group of workbees prepares to launch and another pair of fighters are set behind them.

Malcolm, Lorna, Sean, Lily, and Charlene are standing outside the marine shuttles wearing flak jackets, phaser holsters, and tricorders. The whine of the engines and the fervor of activity drowns out their voices slightly.

MALCOLM XIRES

Because we're still escorting Dominion out of the quadrant, we'll be operating in a state of alert for the foreseeable future. Wartime planet side procedures will be in effect until I say so. Marines, shuttle fighter escorts, and no transporters to the surface. Betazed is considered a hostile zone until I'm satisfied it is no longer a threatening environment. Yellow alert will be maintained in orbit and a red alert footing will be observed while on the ground. Understood?

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Understood.

SEAN WILLIAMS & LILY ARMSTRONG

Aye, Captain.

MALCOLM XIRES

Commander Rahnes, go make sure the marines are ready to go.

LORNA RAHNES

(Hesitant)

Aye, Captain.

Malcolm gives her a reassuring nod.

Lorna walks over while Malcolm continues to talk to the other commanders.

The shuttle with Nemi Dai and the engineers launches and heads out towards the other vessels. The fighter in the nearest bay is launched out alongside another fighter in the central launch bay. The two link up and escort the shuttle. The workbees move out to follow.

A scout ship (From Star Trek: Insurrection) is being moved into position for launch.

Lorna walks over to the marines, who are now loading up into the Argo shuttles.

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)

Major. Are you and your people set?

Emica turns to Lorna.

EMICA SATO

(sternly)

Aye. Commander.

LORNA RAHNES

(quietly)

Look, Major, you and I need to put our differences aside.

EMICA SATO

My differences are aside.

LORNA RAHNES

(quietly)

I don't want our past to impair what we are here to do.

Malcolm and the other commanders split up to enter the marine shuttles in the background.

EMICA SATO

If you are asking if I can follow orders, you don't have to worry about that, Commander.

LORNA RAHNES

What do I need to worry about then, Sato?

EMICA SATO

Your conscience.

Emica turns and walks aboard the shuttle. Leaving Lorna standing there until Malcolm walks up behind her.

MALCOLM XIRES

You ready, Commander?

LORNA RAHNES
Ah, Yes, Captain.

EXT. SPACE

The exterior of the Gladiator's bays are in view, from the starboard side a fighter launches out of the shuttle bay. Behind it, one shuttle emerges, from the center another, from the port side another fighter is launched. All four form up and head down towards the planet.

EXT. BETAZED

Through the clouds the four ships continue down, exiting out the other side, exposing the surface of the planet. A massive capital sits on the coast of a large mass of land. The city is festooned with massive spires that pierce into the sky, mostly cylindrical in nature decorated with columns at every level. Massive suspension bridges connect buildings and glass domes dot the city scape. The architecture is almost hedonistic, embellished in a mixture of Victorian and Gothic styles, making every building look like a church dedicated to some forgotten gods. The city has visible damage to the buildings as the shuttle group closes in on the surface.

Surrounding the city are massive amounts of natural reserves. Large, elevated geodesic dome structures protrude from these areas as seen in Star Trek: The Next Generation, most are damaged or destroyed.

The shuttles fly through the city, allowing us a closer view of the architecture, heading towards the largest, central building.

The fighters continue on as the shuttles set down on a landing pad extending out from a sky bridge filled with people.

The shuttles drop their rear hatches, spilling marines out the back. In columns the marines move towards the outer side of their respective shuttles, around them to the front - using the shuttle as coverage as they dismount. They move forward, sweeping over the platform.

One squad of marines takes up guard positions around the shuttles as the others move on towards the crowd. Emica Sato and her unit approaches the Magna Duchissa VEMMIRI UKOI, early 30s, and her personal, all female HONOR GUARD.

VEMMIRI UKOI
My dear, the pain, it radiates off
of you. I can see its colors.

EMICA SATO

(taken aback)

The colors? My team is going to finish a sweep of the platform.

Vemmiri and Emica lock eyes for a moment. Vemmiri's alien, cold, completely black iris seems to pierce right into Emica's soul. Her sharp features are juxtaposed against her graceful and regal gown, the cloak floats like gossamer in the breeze.

VEMMIRI UKOI

Do as you require.

Vemmeri looks away, almost releasing Emica from her thrall. Emica shakes it off and moves past.

Emica looks at the female honor guard, clad in formal and imposing uniforms, armor covers their arms, neck, and faces. Ornate Swords and pistols are in holsters at their waists, each holds a large stave. Single clasp, half cloaks ripple in the breeze.

At the end of the platform are the Magna Duchissa's ATTENDANTS, AIDES, and NOBLE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD. A man and a woman, AETOR ELANI, late 20s, and his lieutenant USLID BRAE, 20s, stand off to the side, secluded from all the other females. They are dressed significantly more humble, but militaristic.

Emica approaches them all and signals her team to sweep around the other side.

Emica pulls out a tricorder from her waist and does quick scan around for any foreign energy signatures. Another Marine with a tricorder signals Emica an "All Clear."

She taps her communicator.

EMICA SATO

Captain, this is Colonel Sato, we're clear.

MALCOLM XIRES

(V.O.)

Understood.

Malcolm, Lorna, and the other captains exit the shuttle and walk around to meet the Betazoid entourage.

As the captains approach some in the Betazoid delegation whimper and cry out awkwardly, in their inability to suppress the overwhelming emotional empathy.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)
Peace be upon you.

VEMMIRI UKOI
Peace be upon you.

MALCOLM XIRES
I am Captain Malcolm Xires,
Commanding Officer of the USS
Gladiator. I am assuming command of
the Betazed recovery.

VEMMIRI UKOI
Greetings, Captain Xires. I am
Electis Nobilis, Magna Duchissa
Vemmiri Ukoi, Daughter of the First
House of Betazed, Protector of
Betazed, Bearer of the Sword of the
Empress and Crown of the Royal
House. I welcome you to Betazed.

MALCOLM XIRES
I'm honored, Electis Nobilis.

Some of the women behind Vemmiri are weak, and unable to stand.

VEMMIRI UKOI
(slightly fatigued)
I apologize for our countenance.
The empathic echo from all of you
is very strong. Your pain is
(then)
The war weighs on each of you.

MALCOLM XIRES
Are you reading our minds?

VEMMIRI UKOI
Never. That is a taboo in our
culture. We do not read the minds
of those that are unwilling to
share their thoughts with us. That
is considered an intimate act.
However, every living being has an
emotional emanation. Many of us
unwillingly pick up on this.

MALCOLM XIRES
But you are capable of reading our
minds. I've seen Betazoids do it.

VEMMIRI UKOI

Of course, but those are off-world Betazoids. They see it as a liberation to not restrain themselves as they do here. They flaunt themselves. Here, on the birth world, it is an offense.

MALCOLM XIRES

My primary reason for visiting is to introduce myself, but I also want to begin laying down the ground work for recovery by sharing my vision for rebuilding this beautiful planet and gaining any insights you may have.

VEMMIRI UKOI

Excellent, we can discuss it over the morning meal. Please, come. All of you.

The Betazoid procession turns and heads inside with Vemmiri leading the starfleet personnel behind her. The female guards turn and escort everyone in.

INT. BETAZED CAPITOL PALACE - GREAT HALL

Malcolm stands at the head of a group of tables arrayed in a U shape around him. Taking up the wall behind Malcolm is a massive display currently showing an image of the entirety of the planet's surface.

MALCOLM XIRES

Using the capitals of each fiefdom as staging points we'll begin replicating the machinery necessary to bring food production and industrial capacity back up to pre-war levels. This will help in getting trade operational.

VEMMIRI UKOI

I want to say, Captain I fully endorse your plan of assisting the capital cities and using them as relief areas, but I'm wondering why the Federation response isn't more substantial?

MALCOLM XIRES

We just got out of the largest war ever fought in the Alpha Quadrant.
(MORE)

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

I assume this is the best we can do with the limited resources available.

VEMMIRI UKOI

You don't have to lecture us on the effects of war, Captain. But, Betazed is a core world. I think we're due a larger response, considering Starfleet abandoned us in our hour of need.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

I wouldn't say we abandoned you. The Tenth Fleet lost tens of thousands of people trying to liberate your world.

VEMMIRI UKOI

Perhaps the tenth fleet shouldn't have been out of place when THEY were needed most.

Charlene steps up to defend her efforts, but Malcolm signals for her to stop.

MALCOLM XIRES

I understand your position and how it looks like we abandoned you. We're here now and I want to focus on making things right, not living in the past. However, there are many worlds that are in the same state as you. The entire western and northern frontiers of the Federation are devastated. I'm afraid its simply a problem of too many worlds and not enough people. For that I offer my most sincere apology. However, I will do everything in my power to restore Betazed to its rightful place within the Federation.

BEAT

VEMMIRI UKOI

Is that it, then?

MALCOLM XIRES

(hesitant)

These were just the broad strokes. We will have a full evaluation within forty-eight hours.

VEMMIRI UKOI

Good. We can examine the details later as the work unfolds. You and your people just arrived, so please, make yourselves at home and enjoy what little we have to offer you.

Malcolm nods and turns off the image. Everyone starts moving around the room. MALE ATTENDANTS like those of the same race as Mr. Homn from Star Trek: The Next Generations fill the room and begin cleaning the tables from the meal. More Attendants place down snacks. Delicate chimes play in the background at regular intervals.

Lorna and Charlene come up on Malcolm's side.

LORNA RAHNES

(quietly)

That was very diplomatic of you.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

I'm impressed.

MALCOLM XIRES

The broad strokes part?

LORNA RAHNES

No, the part before that. You almost sounded like a real starship captain.

MALCOLM XIRES

We'll see. I'm out of my element here.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

It's going better than I thought it would.

Aetor Elani and Uslid Brae approach everyone.

AETOR ELANI

Peace be upon you.

MALCOLM XIRES

Peace be upon you.

AETOR ELANI

I am Aetor Elani, Commander of the Betazed Rangers. This is Uslid Brae, my first lieutenant.

MALCOLM XIRES

I'm Captain Malcolm Xires. This is my Commander, Lorna Rahnes, and you already know Captain Vahlers.

Aetor nods.

AETOR ELANI

I am QUITE familiar with Captain Vahlers.

Charlene tries to restrain a laugh behind a breaking smile.

AETOR ELANI (CONT'D)

I was wondering if I might have a few moments of your time, Captain Xires.

MALCOLM XIRES

Absolutely. I've been hoping to speak with you.

Malcolm turns to Lorna and nods. She nods back and turns, as does Charlene and they walk off. Uslid nods to Aetor and she walks off.

AETOR ELANI

If I may, I wanted to speak about your plan for Betazed.

MALCOLM XIRES

Sure, let's walk.

Malcolm and Aetor head for a balcony off the massive dining room.

EXT. BETAZED CAPITOL PALACE - BALCONY

The two walk through the archway surrounded in lush curtains that flutter out into the breeze.

MALCOLM XIRES

I've been told you started the resistance here on Betazed.

AETOR ELANI

Yes. I led the original group we called the Rangers, the militia grew to encompass a planet wide network of thousands near the end of the war.

MALCOLM XIRES

That's impressive. I assume that's why you are here?

AETOR ELANI

I've been granted a minor place at the table so the Electis Nobilis can keep me on a short leash.

MALCOLM XIRES

Leash?

AETOR ELANI

The Electis thinks I don't know she is keeping a close eye on me.

Malcolm goes silent for a bit.

AETOR ELANI (CONT'D)

But you know all about that don't you.

MALCOLM XIRES

Are you reading my mind?

AETOR ELANI

I can feel it coming off of you. I'm not as adept as the nobles, but I felt your emotions surge. You were a warrior too.

MALCOLM XIRES

I am. Was, I guess. There are still Dominion being escorted out of the quadrant. I don't know anymore. I was on a starship for most of the war though.

AETOR ELANI

But you've endured the hardships also.

Malcolm spots Sabrina over Aetor's shoulder, she leans on the balcony taking in the incredible view while bathed in sunlight.

MALCOLM XIRES

Yes.

AETOR ELANI

War isn't the way of the Betazoids anymore. I only picked up a weapon because I saw my people suffering.
(MORE)

AETOR ELANI (CONT'D)

The Dominion couldn't be negotiated with and I felt their wasn't any other choice. I had to do something.

MALCOLM XIRES

On the first mission of the Dominion War our ship was taken off patrol duty. With no information we were told to rendezvous with a massive fleet and headed to Torres III in Cardassian space. We found out Deep Space Nine was under attack and that we were going to war. No plan, really. We were all taken by surprise, but we did what we had to do.

AETOR ELANI

You understand then, which is why I've come to talk to you. Your plan is probably the best you can do with so little, but I want to show you another way. A way that can save lives right now, today even.

MALCOLM XIRES

I'm listening.

AETOR ELANI

Start with the ghettos. You can deliver immediate relief right to the people who need it most.

MALCOLM XIRES

I couldn't supply that many people that quickly. I only have a handful of industrial replicators and we need those to rebuild industry within the cities.

AETOR ELANI

I understand, completely. I'm talking about a paradigm shift in thinking here. We need industry in the ghettos too. To get people fed, working, and being productive. The people here in the capital cities already have everything they need. Commoners have poured into the cities for generations, we need more out there. Those people need real change.

(MORE)

AETOR ELANI (CONT'D)

They don't have roofs over their heads. People are starving.

MALCOLM XIRES

I don't know if I have the resources for that. I understand what you want. You want to empower your people. But, I can't get involved in any political struggles between you and the Electis. That's not my place.

AETOR ELANI

I know you can't feel their pain, like we do.

MALCOLM XIRES

I'm not down playing their suffering.

Aetor shakes his head no.

AETOR ELANI

No, we feel it. Every Betazoid. We can feel the pain all around us. We wake to it, we live with it, we go to sleep to it. Their sorrow fills the air, its palpable to every Betazoid man, woman, and child. We can hear it whispering to us. Since the war started, every Betazoid has felt, either directly or indirectly the suffering of all the others on the entire planet. Even the Electis, she feels it but I'm not sure she cares.

Aetor looks out over the balcony. Malcolm is unable to put any meaningful words together.

MALCOLM XIRES

I'm so sorry.

AETOR ELANI

Betazed hasn't been in this state since The Crusade millennia ago. We're a peaceful people. We haven't endured hardship like this. I want that feeling to go away for every Betazoid. I need us to return to some sort of normalcy.

Malcolm thinks back.

MALCOLM XIRES

Near the beginning of the war the seventh fleet was sent to the Tyra system. We were supposed to stop the Dominion from pressing further into Federation space. Before we attacked Tyra we regrouped for resupply to the galactic north of Tzenkethi territory. The Klingons were using a world there as a field hospital for casualties from the ground assault on Tyra. We relied heavily on the Klingons for that, the ground combat. They relished the thought of individual combat. I had never heard Klingons cry out in pain or agony. It shook me, all of us, to our cores. Such a fierce and fearless race. After the battle of Tyra the Fourth and Seventh fleets were annihilated and my captain was dead. My Commander said we carried the fear of those wounded Klingons back with us. If the Klingons couldn't break the Dominion what were we going to do about it?

Malcolm stares off into the distance, the memories swirling.

AETOR ELANI

I can't imagine the spirits of a Klingon being broken amidst what would seem like their most natural state.

MALCOLM XIRES

I know I don't feel things the way you do, but I have felt something like what you are talking about. But, I don't think I can do anything to change it on this scale.

(walks back, but stops short)

But, tomorrow at oh seven hundred. We'll go take a look.

AETOR ELANI

Really?

MALCOLM XIRES

I want to give every option a chance.

AETOR ELANI

Thank you. I'll send the
coordinates to you.

Malcolm walks back inside.

Aetor turns back to the balcony and looks out. Uslid walks onto the balcony, carefully watching as Malcolm leaves and meets Aetor at the edge.

Aetor smiles looking out over the vast wilderness. Elevated, geodesic domes rise out of the trees, birds and other creatures fly around.

USLID BRAE

(quietly)

Do not get too enamored with the young captain. We still have a mission to fulfill. Everything you said would happen has happened so far.

AETOR ELANI

(quietly)

Captain Xires seems different. I feel he genuinely wants to help.

USLID BRAE

This isn't the first time you've felt this way. Humans always want to help until they don't. They abandoned us to the Dominion.

AETOR ELANI

I know, but I don't feel any deception from him. He fought in the war too.

USLID BRAE

I can feel the sadness radiating from him, from all of them, but that could be masking their deceit.

AETOR ELANI

I want to take him to one of the ghettos and show him our situation. We might have a chance to do this with peace rather than force and I want to take advantage of that.

Uslid takes a breathe.

USLID BRAE

You are so hopeful. So trusting.
But that is always what gets you
into trouble. These humans see that
vulnerability and they prey on it.
They're opportunists.

AETOR ELANI

Yes. But we need to trust someone
to try and get something done.

USLID BRAE

We have to stay cautious and trust
ourselves. We need to support one
another and keep our thoughts on
our goals. Don't let go of what we
are doing for our people and how we
need to achieve that. We have a
larger, more noble goal. No
privileged Starfleet Captain can
understand that.

EXT. BETAZED

Twilight enshrouds all of Betazed facing us. The sun rises up
over the horizon.

EXT. SPACE

Two marine shuttles and two fighters swoop down towards
Betazed from the four ship fleet.

INT. MARINE SHUTTLE

Malcolm, Lorna, Nemi, and Emica are amongst numerous marines
and engineers sitting in jump seats in the cargo area of the
marine shuttle. A row lines each wall of the bay with a
modular set of seats installed in the center of the bay
facing the walls.

Emica Sato sits next to Malcolm.

EMICA SATO

I don't like this, sir. From the
orbital imagery I can already tell
the area isn't secure.

MALCOLM XIRES

(Sarcastically)

That's why I'm bringing you along,
Colonel Sato.

Emica shakes her head.

EMICA SATO

I understand that, Captain. I'm not sure if I can guarantee any safety in any of these ghettos as you put it.

MALCOLM XIRES

Not my word, his.

EMICA SATO

Fine, but you are considering dropping nigh irreplaceable assets in these regions. I can't secure these replicators.

MALCOLM XIRES

I only have three going to the surface at some point.

EMICA SATO

The city is defensible. Open area isn't.

Lorna leans forward to look around Malcolm.

LORNA RAHNES

That's what we are going down to evaluate, Colonel. To find out if there is any place we could defend, to find out if its even feasible.

MALCOLM XIRES

Once we get on the ground, if we truly can't do it, say so. If you can get creative, let me know. I want honest assessments.

EMICA SATO

Understood, sir.

Malcolm turns his attention to Nemi sitting next to Lorna.

NEMI DAI

We would also have an industrial replicator at our disposal once we decide to set up. We can replicate fortifications, walls, and the like.

LORNA RAHNES

Good thinking. Work with the Colonel.

(MORE)

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)

All solutions are on the table, but we will need to be conscious of resources.

NEMI DAI

Aye, sir.

EXT. BETAZED GHETTO - DAY

The shuttle touches down and the back hatch drops. Fully equipped Marines disgorge from the two shuttles, fanning out to secure the landing zone.

The locals are simply surprised by what they are seeing. Watching from their broken huts and rubble shelters all eyes are on the landing party.

Malcolm, Lorna, Nemi, and Emica walk off the shuttle and start looking around.

MALCOLM XIRES

(shocked)

This is insane. Colonel, Lieutenant Dai, get to work.

EMICA SATO

Aye, sir.

(To other marines)

Bravo, watch the captain.

BRAVO MARINE

Aye, Colonel.

LORNA RAHNES

So now what?

MALCOLM XIRES

He said to meet him here. So, I guess we wait.

Lorna notices CHILDREN starting to become curious about everything. They are particularly interested in the shuttles and the Marines.

A few MEDICAL TECHNICIANS off load from the second shuttle. Lorna grabs up a large duffle and signals for the Medical Personnel and a few of the Marines to follow her.

LORNA RAHNES

The goal is to endear ourselves here, so don't frighten anyone, nothing sudden.

(MORE)

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)

Let's get some of these people checked out and I'll distribute the rations.

BRAVO MARINE

Understood, sir.

The Medical Technicians kneel down and signal for the Children to run over, but they are reluctant to approach the strangers.

Lorna opens the duffle and pulls out a small packet of rations and offers it to the Children. They come around the corner, fixated on the packet. She kneels down.

LORNA RAHNES

Hello. My name is Lorna. We're from Starfleet. Do you know Starfleet?

Some of the Children nod yes.

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)

Hey, here's some food. You can each have a pack. I want you to go tell your families that we're here with medicine and food, OK?

She hands the Children the rations. They run off giggling. Lorna smiles.

One of the Children, a LITTLE GIRL, slightly older than the rest, stays behind and puts a hand on Lorna's.

LITTLE GIRL

(quietly)

Don't hurt yourself, OK.

Lorna is taken aback. She stands up quickly and tears up.

The Little Girl smiles a goofy grin and runs off with the other Children.

Lorna wipes a tear from her eye.

MEDICAL TECHNICIAN

She's right, we'll probably hurt ourselves in this mess.

LORNA RAHNES

(recovering)

Yeah.

(then)

Set up here and start processing people.

(MORE)

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)

Give them what treatments you can, catalog everything and then give each person a pack of rations. You can replicate what you need off the shuttles for right now, but don't go crazy.

MEDICAL TECHNICIAN

Yes, sir.

The Medical Technicians begin laying down some bags and pulling together some folding tables to form a makeshift clinic. One of them props up a temporary sunshade off the back of the shuttle.

NEMI AND EMICA

Walk together with a few other marines are walking the perimeter of the ghetto. People watch from hidden areas along the makeshift street, observing the Starfleet people from a distance. Nemi looks around coyly.

An OLD BETAZOID WOMAN hisses strangely at Nemi as they pass, sensing something off about her. They continue walking.

EMICA SATO

What was that about?

NEMI DAI

They can tell I'm not normal.

EMICA SATO

Not normal, what does that mean?

Nemi is getting uncomfortable.

NEMI DAI

Uh, what about over there.

Nemi points to a level, elevated area a bit away from the ghetto.

EMICA SATO

That could work. Let's check out our lines of site.

MALCOLM AND CHARLENE

The two walk along a path through the debris headed towards Aetor and some of his militia. The two are carrying duffels of rations. Four marines follow at a distance behind the Captains.

MALCOLM XIRES

Did you do something to upset
Aetor?

CHARLENE VAHLERS

(laughing)

I think I emasculated him in front
of some of the nobility a couple
weeks back. I can't even remember
what it was about anymore. He was
wrong about something we did and I
called him out on it.

MALCOLM XIRES

Kind of like you did with the
Electis yesterday?

CHARLENE VAHLERS

If someone is wrong I'm going to
say something!

MALCOLM XIRES

That's going to get you into
trouble one day.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

You just have to be right, or its
not going to work.

Malcolm laughs.

CHARLENE VAHLERS (CONT'D)

I feel as long as you are doing
your job well, no one can tear you
down.

MALCOLM XIRES

I can appreciate that.

The two come upon Aetor and his militia surrounded by people.
They are all wanting to be around him, they swarm around all
of those from the Militia, celebrities of the apocalypse.

Aetor sees them walk up and raises a hand to greet them.

AETOR ELANI

Captain Xires. Thank you for
coming!

Malcolm takes the duffels from Charlene and hands them to
Aetor.

MALCOLM XIRES
Here, we brought these for your
people to hand out to everyone.

AETOR ELANI
Captain, this is a bounty!

MALCOLM XIRES
It's just the start.

Aetor hands the bags out to his men.

AETOR ELANI
You are too kind. Those will be
helpful and greatly appreciated.

MALCOLM XIRES
They are medical rations, so they
won't hurt people who may not be
able to entirely eat solid foods.
You can distribute them to
everyone.

AETOR ELANI
(to his men)
Distribute them to as many as you
can.

His men nod and start handing out the rations.

Aetor and Malcolm start walking around the village of debris.
Charlene and the Marines follow behind.

MALCOLM XIRES
You are quite the star

AETOR ELANI
I don't know the way you use the
word star.

MALCOLM XIRES
Ah, someone who has a high
notability, a high profile and
popularity.

AETOR ELANI
(chuckles)
Oh. I see. The war did that for us.

MALCOLM XIRES
War can have that effect.

AETOR ELANI

You have experience with being a star too?

MALCOLM XIRES

Not exactly like that, but among my former fleet they called me the Sword of the Seventh.

AETOR ELANI

Such a title!

MALCOLM XIRES

I was known as someone who could get things done.

AETOR ELANI

Sounds like with aggression too.

MALCOLM XIRES

From time to time.

Aetor and Malcolm both laugh a bit.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

That's why I'm here. To get this done.

AETOR ELANI

Hopefully not with aggression.

MALCOLM XIRES

No, I want to put that behind me, but I want to do this job well. I don't want us to be enemies. I want to do what's right for your world and bring it back to it's former glory.

AETOR ELANI

I heard that when you were talking to the Electis Nobilis. Many others have said that to me as well.

MALCOLM XIRES

Aetor, I want to get past agendas. My only goal here is to help your people. To get you all out of that sadness you feel everyday. Can you sense that in me?

Aetor looks to Malcolm.

AETOR ELANI

I sense you are being honest.

MALCOLM XIRES

Of course I am! I have only one interest here. I want to form a relationship here and do what's best for these people first.

Malcolm motions to the people in the village.

AETOR ELANI

I am happy for that.

MALCOLM XIRES

Let's do this, together.

Aetor nods, looking down. Before it can go on Nemi and Emica walk up to the group almost interrupting the implied pact between the two.

NEMI DAI

Captain. We found a slightly elevated spot. We can clear it and place the replicator up there.

EMICA SATO

The lines of site are best from there. We can see everything for a few hundred meters.

MALCOLM XIRES

Are there any other locations.

EMICA SATO

Nothing worth looking at here. This is as good as it gets.

MALCOLM XIRES

What's the biggest concern?

EMICA SATO

The forest on the edge of the town here. I'll need to place all sorts of sensors in there and coordinate with the ship to monitor all that.

AETOR ELANI

Is it really less safe than an urban area? At least here the problem isn't many layers. People running around the sewers or on top of buildings.

MALCOLM XIRES

Is there a real threat of attack here? How much do we have to worry about?

AETOR ELANI

There are a lot of people that don't trust Starfleet anymore. Hunger combined with a grudge might make them do something dangerous. It's not likely, but the Colonel is right, we need to be cautious.

MALCOLM XIRES

Is there enough room for everything we need to drop?

NEMI DAI

We'll have to build some support facilities down here for medical and supplies, but the hill will hold the replicator and its components.

EMICA SATO

It's probably better for the medical stuff to be down here to separate the replicator from everyone else.

MALCOLM XIRES

So you're saying this is possible?

EMICA SATO

It is possible.

Malcolm looks out to Lorna across the way laughing with the children.

MALCOLM XIRES

Aetor. We're going to do this.

INT. BETAZED - CAVE

Aetor and Uslid sit at a makeshift table in a militia hideout. People are eating and are in cheerful spirits.

AETOR ELANI

I can't believe he is going to actually do this.

USLID BRAE

We'll need to make a plan to take the replicator once its in place. We won't need any of the support facilities. Just the core and the deuterium.

AETOR ELANI

Be ready, but don't do anything beyond that. I want to give this a chance to work. We'll have other opportunities.

Uslid grabs Aetor's arm.

USLID BRAE

Not if they fortify everything. We have a really narrow window of opportunity actually. We have to move before they entrench.

AETOR ELANI

Can't we just appreciate we're bringing help to people?

Uslid moves next to Aetor and caresses him.

USLID BRAE

I do appreciate that, but like I said if we don't move fast, we'll possibly lose the opportunity for all of our people to be free. Imaarral and his people are ready to move as soon as you give the order. Your people are hungry for their freedom too, Aetor!

AETOR ELANI

I know. I know. I want to try this way first. Please give him a chance to get the replicator up and see how fast he starts working. Please, just trust in my hope this last time.

USLID BRAE

I will, Aetor. I will.

She embraces him and kisses his forehead.

INT. BETAZED CAPITOL PALACE - HEARING ROOM

Within the stone walls of a large room Malcolm stands in the middle of the massive u-shaped table. At its center sits Vemmiri Ukoi in a larger more ornate chair than the everyone else. The other nobles sit in ornate chairs too, these are the noble houses leaders.

Malcolm displays the village location on a massive display on the wall behind him facing the table.

VEMMIRI UKOI

Your plan focuses on the outer fiefdoms and not the capitals!?

MALCOLM XIRES

We want to bring relief right into the heart of those affected. For now.

The room is in an uproar.

VEMMIRI UKOI

What do you mean for now?

MALCOLM XIRES

We need to bring immediate aid outside the cities to alleviate the most acute suffering. The people in the cities have basic comforts already, like roofs over their heads. The people in these ghettos are using broken debris for shelters. They don't have clothing or food, let alone climate control.

Vemmiri sighs.

VEMMIRI UKOI

You are only four ships. You don't have enough people to cover all those outlying territories, let alone the colonies.

MALCOLM XIRES

We are only focused on immediate response right now. Distribution of simple supplies for the time to get people's most fundamental needs met. We'll focus on widespread recovery after that.

VEMMIRI UKOI

Continue.

MALCOLM XIRES

We will create safe zones on each continent in the hardest hit areas where we'll supervise distribution. Each ship in the fleet will oversee a zone. This plan could deliver relief faster to those who need it the most, heal the sick, and feed the hungry much quicker than if we based in the capital cities. This might bring stability faster.

VEMMIRI UKOI

But it could also stretch resources thin and make rapid change difficult.

MALCOLM XIRES

Very true. I have four industrial replicators on my ship right now. Three for deployment, one as a reserve for my ships, but I'm willing to commit all four to this effort, to your people.

VEMMIRI UKOI

(to the nobles)

Perhaps this could be a benefaction to the commoners? We may endear them to us.

The nobles talk.

VEMMIRI UKOI (CONT'D)

If the process is executed without impediment could the resources be brought into the cities to rebuild manufacturing and get our facilities operational?

MALCOLM XIRES

Yes, absolutely. In our scans of the planet we found that most of Betazed is green space, refugees seem to be gathering into small areas like the region Aetor took us too. There are a handful of outliers but they could be easily brought back into these rural areas and given assistance. The effort should only take a few weeks.

(MORE)

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

We could then redeploy half the replicators to the capital cities and start rebuilding the major infrastructure to connect to the outlying regions.

VEMMIRI UKOI

Will the urban centers see any immediate relief?

MALCOLM XIRES

My chief medical officer is working on a plan to set-up medical facilities in the cities. We will have small field hospitals in the rural areas, but we will need major hubs for surgery. We also feel that this is the most critical resource for everyone and with the higher populations in the urban centers we think it best to place those in the capital cities.

VEMMIRI UKOI

It sounds like you have something that resembles a plan.

EXT. BETAZED GHETTO - DAY

Engineering crews are working on assembling the parts of the Industrial replicator on the elevated hill, now cleared out.

A Runabout with no central module attached uses its tractor beams to lower a piece of the replicator into place.

All of the ships Captains stand out of the work zone, but close enough to observe what's going on.

NEMI DAI

This is the only replicator we are going to run for a couple of weeks to make sure everything goes smoothly before selecting and ramping up other sites across the planet. Once the replicator is in place we'll start producing buildings and facilities rapidly to expand our capabilities. The speed of this replicator is roughly ten times faster than a normal fabrication replicator like the ones on our ships.

(MORE)

NEMI DAI (CONT'D)

You can also replicate slightly more advanced parts and sub-assemblies. You'll have to watch out for now until we can source more slush, so you'll have to recycle anything you can.

LILY ARMSTRONG

I guess we could just bring all the debris to the replicator and start recycling it?

NEMI DAI

Yes, exactly! You won't get back what you put out though, so be careful. The replicator uses a miniature warp core to produce energy, so you are consuming slush for power and base matter.

A couple Marine COMBAT ENGINEERS are also with them.

COMBAT ENGINEER

We'll be replicating defensive infrastructure first, building a wall, almost a small fort around the replicator itself, then moving outward to create zones of defense.

Everyone nods.

NEMI DAI

OK. Let's get back to work.

The crowd breaks up. Sean stays behind and walks up to Nemi.

SEAN WILLIAMS

You've done an excellent job here, Lieutenant. This got done quickly, faster than I initially had hoped. You are an excellent engineer for someone so young.

NEMI DAI

(bashful)

Thank you commander. I appreciate it, but my team deserves the credit.

SEAN WILLIAMS

But it takes a someone to move that team too, they have to believe in their leader, that reflects well on you.

NEMI DAI

Thank you, sir.

SEAN WILLIAMS

Good Luck, Lieutenant.

Sean smiles at her and heads off.

Lorna heads over to a handful of Children that are running around on some debris. They spot her and run over to greet her.

LORNA RAHNES

Hello! How are you all doing today?

The Children respond excitedly with various replies.

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)

I brought you a few things. I don't have a lot, but I thought you would like a few things that children from my planet enjoy.

Lorna opens up her duffle bag and pulls out some stuffed animals, one for each of the children. She kneels down and lays out an array of brightly colored animals.

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)

You can each pick one.

The kids closely examine them and carefully consider which one they want. They each settle on one.

Lorna goes back into her bag and pulls out

A LEATHER SACK

She shakes the bag and it makes a slight jingle. The Children are mesmerized, each hugging and holding their new stuffed animals. They watch the bag in anticipation.

She sets down the duffle and opens the sack. She spills out

A JACKS SET

The kids all ooh and aah, but stop after a moment.

CHILD #1

What is it?

Lorna laughs.

LORNA RAHNES

It's a game from my planet called
jacks.

CHILD #2

What do you do with them?

CHILD #1

We can't eat jacks.

LORNA RAHNES

(laughing)

I'll show you how to play, but I
also brought some food for everyone
too!

Lorna pulls out more rations packs from her bag and hands one
to each of the Children.

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)

OK, so now sit down and I'll show
you how to play.

The Children all sit down in a circle around Lorna. She is
smiling and looks over seeing Malcolm and Charlene talking.

Charlene makes intense eye contact with Malcolm. She laughs.

CHILD #3

He likes that lady.

LORNA RAHNES

What?

CHILD #1

He likes her.

CHILD #4

Yeah, but she likes him a lot.

Lorna grimaces.

LORNA RAHNES

I'm beginning to see that.

CHILD #2

Are we going to play the game?

Lorna turns back to the Children.

LORNA RAHNES

Yes! Who wants to go first.

CHILDREN
 (in unison)
 Me!

AETOR

He and a few militia members walk through the ghetto.

They are wearing Betazoid utility clothing underneath scavenge Starfleet and Dominion armor. They carry a mix of phaser rifles and Dominion disruptor rifles slung on their backs. Some pack knives and other edged weapons.

They walk through the camp distributing food and greeting some of the refugees. When people see that Aetor is with them they run up to see him and start swarming around offering thanks and praise.

MALCOLM AND CHARLENE

They walk past Aetor and the people.

CHARLENE VAHLERS
 This seems to be working out for
 the best.

MALCOLM XIRES
 I've got a good feeling about all
 of this.

CHARLENE VAHLERS
 We should celebrate.

MALCOLM XIRES
 You don't think that's a little
 premature?

CHARLENE VAHLERS
 I'm not saying we break out the
 champagne quite yet, but take a
 moment to appreciate the progress.
 You've been here for a few days and
 have already created more inroads
 than we ever could.

MALCOLM XIRES
 I hate to say it, but I think its
 because I'm a man. Aetor feels more
 comfortable. The Electis is a
 different story however.

CHARLENE VAHLERS
 Perhaps you can handle Aetor and
 I'll handle the Electis.

SEAN WILLIAMS

Sean walks through the camp past Malcolm and Charlene, taking in everything.

SEAN WILLIAMS

Captains.

Malcolm nods.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Commander.

Charlene goes back to talking with Malcolm.

Sean notices a subtle blinking red light amongst a pile of rubble. He moves over to investigate and pulls away some of the debris.

Laying amongst the refuse is a

DOMINION HOUDINI MINE

The mine churns to life and a distinctive hum starts up at the recognition of movement.

Malcolm hears this out of the corner of his ear.

MALCOLM XIRES

(yelling)

Houdini! Everybody down!

Malcolm grabs Charlene in a moment and throws her to the ground, laying over the top of her.

Sean gets up to run, but the bomb:

EXPLODES

killing Sean instantly, shredding his corpse.

Killing several Betazoids in the immediate area.

Malcolm and Charlene are pummeled hard with fragments.

LORNA

She grabs the Children and covers them the best she can as the bomb goes off. They are covered in dirt and pelted with debris.

The kids all scream out.

The bomb kicks AETOR AND HIS PEOPLE back, shooting debris at them. Some of them instinctively duck down and ready their weapons.

Marines swarm the area, immediately going for the senior officers.

Malcolm looks up, his face has dirt and blood on it. The uniform at his back is torn and bloodied.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

Are you ok?

Charlene has dirt all over her and the arm and leg closest to the explosion is bloodied.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Yes. I'm ok.

Malcolm stands and helps Charlene up. She winces.

MALCOLM XIRES

Lorna!?

Malcolm runs off.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

(yelling)

Lorna!

He jogs over to her location and finds her helping the Children up, all of which are crying.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

Lorna! Are you OK? Are the kids OK?

Lorna has small bit of blood on her face from a cut.

LORNA RAHNES

Yeah, yeah, we are fine. What the hell was that?

MALCOLM XIRES

It sounded like a subspace mine.

Lorna has a frightened look on her face and stands.

LORNA RAHNES

What!?

Marines are moving up through the paths towards Malcolm and Lorna, weapons ready.

MARINE

I found the captain and the
commander!

The Marines grab them both and forcibly take them away. The
kids cry out.

The Marines, being extremely cautious move all the Starfleet
personnel aboard the Marine shuttles. The shuttles are packed
people are forced in like cattle, shoulder to shoulder.

MARINE (CONT'D)

We can't get everyone on board.

EMICA SATO

Get the senior officers aboard
first and get them back up to the
Gladiator. I'll stay behind with
Fire team Echo and watch the
Engineers. Charlie and Bravo will
watch the replicator.

MARINE

Affirmative.

MALCOLM XIRES

Colonel, we don't need to --

EMICA SATO

This is my show now. Procedure says
you go back up.

Malcolm nods, ceding the argument.

The shuttle door shuts and both take off, headed for orbit.

As the shuttles leave we can see the Marines rounding up the
last of the Starfleet personnel and fanning out to hold the
area.

Aetor sits and watches the shuttles go up. His face is
bloodied and clothes are torn up.

AETOR ELANI

No.

INT. CAVE

Aetor, bloodied walks through one of the militias hideouts
with determination. People watch him as he walks through. In
the back is Uslid talking with several others.

AETOR ELANI
 (yelling)
 Uslid! Did you plant the mine!?

The others just watch as Aetor makes for Uslid.

AETOR ELANI (CONT'D)
 (to others)
 Leave us, now!

They file out quickly.

Aetor walks up to her, pressuring her into the wall.

USLID BRAE
 Calm down Aetor, everyone can feel
 your emotions.

AETOR ELANI
 (V.O. mentally screaming)
 NO!

Uslid's eyes go wide.

AETOR ELANI (CONT'D)
 There were children there, Uslid!
 Innocent people, Betazoids that
 were greeting the Starfleet people.

Uslid is silent.

AETOR ELANI (CONT'D)
 Did you plant the mine?

Aetor stares here down.

AETOR ELANI (CONT'D)
 I already know you did. I can feel
 it coming off of you. I want to
 hear you say it, though.

USLID BRAE
 I did. But it wasn't supposed to go
 off until we moved on the
 Replicator! I did it for you.
 (Aetor cries out, it
 echoes)
 I can't trust you to do the job
 anymore! You've lost site of what
 our goals are. You need to be moved
 forward.

AETOR ELANI

You can't trust me? I told you I wanted to try my way first.

USLID BRAE

You know we need that replicator!

AETOR ELANI

You broke my trust and didn't listen to my wishes. You tied my hands and didn't allow peace a chance. They will know it was us.

USLID BRAE

I'm doing what I have to do. Starfleet is a bump in the road to that end.

(Aetor paces)

I had to sit back and watch you trust every member of starfleet that showed up promising help. Remember Starfleet Intelligence? Every time you would be hurt when they wouldn't fulfill their promises to you. You're weak and you don't have the will to fight anymore.

He turns and gets in her face, putting her up against the wall again.

AETOR ELANI

You are a privileged noble girl who knows nothing about living down here with the commoners. You fancy yourself some sort of revolutionary, rebelling against your mother and father. You are manipulating me for your own purposes and believe you can get away with it because you think I'm a stupid man. This stupid man is the reason you are here, why you are alive. Never forget, I pulled you from that broken building!

Aetor storms off.

Uslid stands against the wall, she begins to cry.

INT. GLADIATOR - MEDICAL BAY

The commanders are surrounding the covered remains of Sean Williams corpse. The body is clearly not whole.

They are stunned and not sure what to do.

Lily cries.

LILY ARMSTRONG

Commander Williams didn't put on Captain because I didn't feel comfortable doing it. He said we would put it on together and we would learn together. He was a good mentor and a good friend.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

He was a kind man, good to everyone down to the lowest crewman and he was an outstanding officer.

CHARLENE VAHLERS (CONT'D)

The war is over but we can't seem to escape the death.

Lorna starts crying.

LORNA RHANES

I can't do this.

Malcolm watches her walk off, away from the group. He turns to Lily and Charlene.

MALCOLM XIRES

Can you give us the room for a minute.

Lily and Charlene nod and exit the exam room. Charlene comforts Lily.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

Talk to me, Lorna.

Lorna is starting to panic a bit, the tears intensifying.

LORNA RAHNES

I shouldn't have come out here.

MALCOLM XIRES

That wouldn't have solved anything.

LORNA RAHNES

I can't escape the death. Vahlers is right, the war is over, but people are still dying. Now it's innocent Betazoids too.

Malcolm tries calm her down.

MALCOLM XIRES

Everything will be ok.

LORNA RAHNES

(yelling)

This is the reason why I didn't want to come! I shouldn't have come!

Lorna just walks around, trying to work out the panic in her.

MALCOLM XIRES

(A bit more assertive)

We need to make his death mean something by completing the mission. We have to finish this.

LORNA RAHNES

Why do you always double down? You always double down!

Malcolm ponders this for a second.

MALCOLM XIRES

I guess the fastest way to the end is straight through?

Lorna shakes her head.

LORNA RAHNES

Maybe his death didn't mean anything like Crewman Logan? Just senseless.

Lorna slides herself down a wall.

MALCOLM XIRES

Think about all the Betazoids we could help. All of them, those kids you were playing with today. We will help them. Keep them alive. We will get back on track. It will all mean something, I promise.

She nods and lowers her head.

LORNA RAHNES
 (flat)
 Fine.

The two are there with Sean's corpse. We hold on Malcolm for a moment looking down on the weeping Lorna, unable to truly help her.

EXT. BETAZED GHETTO - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: Days Later

Malcolm is looking at the replicator, which is nearly complete. Fortified walls are going up.

Children are running around and playing. ADULT BETAZOIDS have come out and are clearing out debris. Marines are everywhere, scouting out debris before its removed.

For a moment Malcolm closes his eyes and just listens to the wind.

The peace is interrupted by a comm chirp.

DREVIN LOPE
 (V.O.)
 Captain, I've got a transmission
 from Admiral Sykes for you.

MALCOLM XIRES
 Send it down here to the
 engineering hub.

DREVIN LOPE
 (V.O.)
 Aye, sir.

Malcolm walks over to a small shelter and enters.

INT. ENGINEERING HUB

There are two ENGINEERING CREWMAN inside. One is working on a small device and the other is sitting with his feet propped up.

ENGINEERING CREWMAN #1
 Like that Caitian you were chasing
 after?

They both jump up when Malcolm enters.

ENGINEERING CREWMAN #2
Captain, sir!

MALCOLM XIRES
Give me the room.

ENGINEERING CREWMAN #1
Aye, sir.

The two Engineers leave the shelter and close the door behind them.

A console starts beeping. Malcolm adjusts his shirt and stands at parade rest.

Malcolm toggles the display, showing an image of now Vice Admiral Jonathan Sykes in his office on Earth.

MALCOLM XIRES
Admiral.

JONATHON SYKES
Captain Xires. I'm contacting you to let you know I got your report on Commander William's death and the Betazed situation. There is a low level inquiry going on but it won't go far, mostly just paperwork.

MALCOLM XIRES
It happened just like the report said.

JONATHON SYKES
What's going on with these militants than?

MALCOLM XIRES
I made the mistake of trying to trust them. I reached out to Aetor Elani, the leader, and tried to broker a deal with him for support. I don't think he carried out the bombing though.

JONATHON SYKES
Your report says it was his group.

MALCOLM XIRES
I think it may have been his people, but not him, specifically.

JONATHON SYKES

Like his people are out of pocket?

MALCOLM XIRES

Perhaps. I'm not clear. He alluded to it.

JONATHON SYKES

What makes you think he didn't have anything to do with it?

MALCOLM XIRES

Just the conversations I've had with him. He seemed genuinely interested in the relief efforts and peace.

JONATHON SYKES

Figure it out. For right now you need to operate as if the Betazed Rangers are hostile.

MALCOLM XIRES

Yes, sir.

JONATHON SYKES

Lastly, I have to recall the other ships with you.

Malcolm visibly loses his cool.

MALCOLM XIRES

Wait, what?

JONATHON SYKES

It's a simple redeployment order. The Tenth Fleet is coming home next. They were part of the Tenth, so they are headed home. Every ship is getting orders at some point. They are to report back immediately for refit and redeployment.

MALCOLM XIRES

Admiral, if I lose them I can't complete the mission. I don't have the personnel to maintain our current operation.

JONATHON SYKES

Plan a new one then. Those crews deserve to come home just like you did.

MALCOLM XIRES

Plan a new.

(then)

Forgive me, sir, but you sent me out here on the premise that there was an entire fleet here already.

JONATHON SYKES

I told you there was a task force there.

MALCOLM XIRES

The Captains here thought there was a fleet coming to relieve them.

JONATHON SYKES

I didn't tell them that.

MALCOLM XIRES

That's not the point, sir. This has been a wreck from the start. I'm undermanned and under supplied.

JONATHON SYKES

Then you need to adapt just like we did in the war. The entire Alpha Quadrant is a mess.

MALCOLM XIRES

I can't be concerned with the Alpha
--

JONATHON SYKES

Did you know Captain Sisko is missing?

MALCOLM XIRES

What?

JONATHON SYKES

He was last seen running off to Bajor several weeks ago and no one has seen him. No body, nothing. He left his wife and his son on Deep Space Nine. Gone as if he simply blinked out of existence.

MALCOLM XIRES

Admiral, if you --

JONATHON SYKES

Benzar is now under full Romulan occupation.

MALCOLM XIRES

Sir, I --

JONATHON SYKES

I've got two quadrants falling apart Malcolm and all I need you to do is hold up this one little world. So, I need you to give the other ships my orders and take control of the situation on that planet by whatever means necessary. Do you understand?

MALCOLM XIRES

Understood.

JONATHON SYKES

Good. Get it done. Sykes out.

Malcolm yells and punches the wall.

INT. GLADIATOR - FLIGHT DECK

Shuttles of every type sit on the flight deck unloading supplies and containers. A shuttle makes it way into the flight deck from the rear bay and lands to unload more stuff. Crewmen are everywhere, using equipment and devices to move the cargo around.

Malcolm and Charlene stand at the side watching everything happen. Deck crews are transferring what they can to various cargo bays.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

This is everything off my ship that wasn't bolted down. I wish there was more, but the Ushan-Tor and the Vindicator were already in bad shape.

MALCOLM XIRES

Every little bit helps. Do the ships have enough slush to get back home?

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Yeah, the bit you gave us is good for a one way trip to Utopia Planitia.

They watch another shuttle come in.

CHARLENE VAHLERS (CONT'D)

This is going to be a tough job
with just one ship.

Malcolm lets out a sigh.

MALCOLM XIRES

I know. I'm going to start
disassembling the replicator after
you leave.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

I'm sorry, Malcolm. It was a
hopeful idea, helping those in need
directly, but I think retreating to
the safety of the capital cities is
for the best. The job will be slow,
but it will work.

Malcolm looks down.

MALCOLM XIRES

I wanted to trust Elani.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

I thought he would be the first to
support us.

MALCOLM XIRES

I'm not entirely sure it was him.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Who would have done it?

MALCOLM XIRES

He said there were people in his
group that distrusted Starfleet.

A crewman in a colored shirt walks up to the captains.

FLIGHT DECK CREWMAN

Captain Vahlers, the last shuttle
for the Greenwald is ready to go.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

Alright. Tell them to stand by.
I'll be there in a moment.

Charlene turns to Malcolm.

CHARLENE VAHLERS (CONT'D)

Thank you for saving my life,
Malcolm.

MALCOLM XIRES

I didn't do much, but you're welcome.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

I mean it. I might have been seriously hurt, but you put yourself in harms way for me.

Malcolm smiles.

CHARLENE VAHLERS (CONT'D)

I don't know how, but I'm going to come back and I'm going to bring help. I promise.

MALCOLM XIRES

That may be a tougher job than staying here.

Charlene and Malcolm embrace for a moment. She kisses his cheek.

Lorna looks over at them, staring.

CHARLENE VAHLERS

(whispering in his ear)
Don't lose heart.

She pulls back and looks into Malcolm's eyes a moment and smiles.

Malcolm smiles back.

Charlene salutes.

CHARLENE VAHLERS (CONT'D)

Good hunting, Captain Xires.

Malcolm salutes back.

MALCOLM XIRES

Safe journey, Captain Vahlers.

Charlene smiles at him and turns to walk towards her shuttle.

INT. GLADIATOR - READY ROOM

Malcolm sits at his desk looking out the window. He watches the three ships come about and angle out of orbit, heading out of view.

He looks down at the planet below, watching it turn.

Malcolm turns in his chair and hits his comm badge.

MALCOLM XIRES
Colonel Sato, report to my ready
room.

EXT. GLADIATOR

Four marine shuttles, twelve fighters, two Type XI shuttles, and two Runabouts with armored vehicles in their module slot swoop by, headed for the surface of the planet.

The fighters have a stylized Salt Vampire on their tails.

The planet has the terminator coming towards their destination.

INT. FIGHTER

Amanda Clerk sits in her cockpit watching all the shuttles around her. She accelerates with her wing-man to the front of the convoy.

AMANDA CLERK
Vampires, we'll be providing cover
for the entire marine unit, so stay
alert for hostiles. We'll be on
station for awhile.

EXT. BETAZED GHETTO - DAY (DUSK)

The four marine shuttles touch down, unloading their human cargo who go fanning out in every direction. The fighters scream overhead.

The two Runabouts hover slightly above the ground and drop down two hover tanks that some of the marines link up with. The Runabouts turn about and head back up into orbit. Four fighters go off to escort them.

The Type XI shuttles touch down and drop off more engineers and marines. They dust off again after they are dropped off, chasing the Runabouts and fighters. The Marine shuttles go up after, again chased by four more fighters.

Nemi and some of the marines walk down to the landing site. Nemi walks over to Emica Sato who is giving orders to her other squad sergeants.

NEMI DAI
Colonel Sato, what's going on?

EMICA SATO

Didn't the captain tell you? We're going to disassemble the replicator and take it back to the ship. We're going to set it back up in the capital city.

NEMI DAI

We just put it together.

EMICA SATO

Sorry, Lieutenant. I told you this was too dangerous.

Emica walks off with her squad commanders.

Nemi sighs and turns to the engineers which are standing around.

NEMI DAI

(despondent)

We're tearing it down. Get it ready for pick-up.

The engineers collectively groan and look frustrated.

The Marines saddle up on the armor and the two vehicles spread out in opposite directions. Some of the marines mount up in the back and some walk on the outside.

Emica and a squad meet up with the engineers and head up to the Replicator.

BETAZOIDs on the edge of all the activity watch in horror as the heavily militarized Starfleet presence moves out. The children watch from behind debris, scared to approach the Marines now.

EXT. BETAZED - REPLICATOR SITE

Nemi and Emica talk as they walk up to the replicator.

NEMI DAI

Does the Captain know I'm ready to go online this evening?

EMICA SATO

I'm not sure he cares anymore.

NEMI DAI

What? Why?

EMICA SATO
 After the death of Commander
 Williams He doesn't trust the
 militia anymore.

NEMI DAI
 We could just leave it here --

EMICA SATO
 Look, Lieutenant I don't care. I
 have orders and those are to get
 you and this machine back to the
 capital city ASAP.

Nemi grumbles.

NEMI DAI
 Alright, teams one and two you
 start disconnecting the slush vat.
 We'll need to separate --

An EXPLOSION echoes in the distance.

NEMI DAI (CONT'D)
 (frightened)
 What was that?

MARINE
 Colonel, IFV one is under attack!

NEMI DAI
 What? What are we supposed to do?

EMICA SATO
 (to Nemi)
 Keep working.

(To Marine)
 Take positions to protect the site.

MARINE
 Aye.

The Marines move out across the site to take defensive
 positions.

Nemi and Emica fall behind as they talk.

EMICA SATO
 How long will it take to break down
 the site?

Nemi is watching all the engineers move into the defensive
 area of the Replicator.

EMICA SATO (CONT'D)

Nemi!

NEMI DAI

(snapping to attention)
A few days at least!

EMICA SATO

Dammit!

A phaser blast strikes near them and Nemi screams and ducks down, including Emica. She taps her communicator.

EMICA SATO (CONT'D)

All squads get to cover. We've got incoming hostiles from the tree line.

Emica grabs Nemi, who is shaking uncontrollably. She pulls her behind a large pile of debris. As they get behind the entire site becomes bombarded by phaser fire.

Another EXPLOSION in the background.

MARINE

(V.O.)

IFV two under fire. All squads are suppressed.

EMICA SATO

Looks like we've been ambushed.
Dai, have you ever fired that a phaser of yours before?

Emica points to the handheld phaser in Nemi's holster. Nemi is huddled behind the debris, crying.

Another PHASER BLAST impacts the debris. Emica ducks, causing Nemi to cry out.

EMICA SATO (CONT'D)

Son of a bitch.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Malcolm and Lorna sit in their chairs. Sandra stands near them talking.

SANDRA MURPHY

I've got several teams setting up on site medical facilities in two of the five capital cities.

(MORE)

SANDRA MURPHY (CONT'D)

We don't have proper surgical facilities quite yet so we'll have to beam urgent cases up to the ship.

MALCOLM XIRES

You know transporter procedure. I can't be beaming anyone up while we are still on a war footing.

SANDRA MURPHY

The Dominion is retreating back to the Gamma Quadrant, we can make medical exceptions.

LORNA RAHNES

Can you not take over a hospital in each region?

SANDRA MURPHY

That's the plan, eventually. But, we need engineers to do that job. There simply aren't enough to spare across all the capitals at the moment.

LORNA RAHNES

Add your request to the engineering suspense list.

MALCOLM XIRES

Once the replicator is back up that will free up --

COMBAT OPS OFFICER

(urgent)

Captain, we've got phaser fire being exchanged on the surface! All fire teams are under attack.

MALCOLM XIRES

Put the tactical data on the screen.

LORNA RHANES

Get us a feed on the main viewer.

COMBAT OPS OFFICER

Aye.

The viewer switches from an orbital view to data filling the side screens. The main viewer shows a large overview of the engagement area.

MALCOLM XIRES
Where's the replicator.

COMBAT OPS OFFICER
Here, sir.

A red bounding box highlights the replicator site and additional bars show marines fighting in each area.

COMBAT OPS OFFICER (CONT'D)
Colonel Sato, online for you, sir.

MALCOLM XIRES
What's the situation, Colonel?

EMICA SATO
(V.O.)
Captain, both armored groups were ambushed. The enemy seems to have Starfleet launchers. They disabled both the IFVs and the Marines are engaged. I'm at the Replicator site and we are under heavy attack. I think they intend to claim the replicator.

MALCOLM XIRES
Colonel, combat ops is sending tactical data. We'll coordinate air strikes and try and take some of the heat off of you.

EMICA SATO
(V.O.)
Understood, sir. But, if they are, in fact, going for the replicator, you have to destroy it. If they get a hold of that...

MALCOLM XIRES
I know, Colonel. Hold your ground, we've got fighters inbound.

The flight ops officer gives a thumbs up.

LORNA RAHNES
Colonel, do you want us to drop more marines?

EMICA SATO

(V.O.)

Get them on the ready line, if we don't put down this militia, I think we're going to have a full fledged insurgency.

MALCOLM XIRES

Hold out for a few minutes. Flight Ops, get Commander Clerk on line.

FLIGHT OPS OFFICER

Commander Clerk online, sir.

MALCOLM XIRES

Commander, the Marines are under attack. They need air support.

AMANDA CLERK

(V.O.)

I can see some of the fire fight now. Just funnel me coordinates through flight ops and we'll do our jobs. Clerk out.

MALCOLM XIRES

Flight ops, coordinate with the Marines to begin air strikes.

DREVIN LOPE

Sir, if I may, would it be prudent to contact the Electis Nobilis or even Elani to find out where the hostiles are coming from?

SANDRA MURPHY

I agree with that, sir.

LORNA RAHNES

We need to get our people out of danger first.

SANDRA MURPHY

Contacting someone might be able to relay that desire to them.

MALCOLM XIRES

I appreciate the idea, but our people are being shot at. The Electis doesn't have control of the militias and Aetor does. To me, that rules out contacting either of them.

DREVIN LOPE
Beam them out?

SANDRA MURPHY
Yes! Beam them out!

MALCOLM XIRES
Did you not hear the part about the replicator? If I let that fall into their hands I lose twenty five percent of my resources and I have an unchecked power that outnumbers us potentially by millions. No. We end this now.

EXT. BETAZED - DAY (DUSK)

Fighters fly over the battle area and immediately start taking phaser fire. They scatter.

INT. FIGHTER

Amanda looks down on the battle, phaser fire is going everywhere. She sees groups moving through the forest.

AMANDA CLERK
Alright, we've got several dozen hostiles in the forest to the east of the replicator site.

PILOT
(V.O.)
Commander, the replicator site is going to get overrun if they keep coming.

AMANDA CLERK
Form up on me and we'll come about and do a strafing run along the edge of that forest.

PILOT
Aye, commander.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Same as before

BLAINE GREY
I don't understand why they would want the replicator?

MALCOLM XIRES

I would wager the militia wants to get weapons so they can usurp the government. Get me Sato.

COMBAT OPS OFFICER

Aye, sir.

SANDRA MURPHY

Maybe they are just hungry?

LORNA RAHNES

We were there to feed them. Why would they attack us?

COMBAT OPS OFFICER

Colonel Sato is online, sir.

MALCOLM XIRES

Sato, air support is on the way.

EMICA SATO

(V.O.)

We saw them pass over, they look to be setting up for an attack run.

MALCOLM XIRES

Colonel, I need you to hold that position. We can not, under any circumstances, lose that replicator.

EMICA SATO

(V.O.)

Understood, sir. These are the militia's sir. They have some combat experience and training. These aren't random civilians, they're organized.

EXT. BETAZED FOREST EDGE - DAY (DUSK)

Aetor and some of his men move through the trees. They are coming up behind another group which is firing at the marines around the replicator.

Aetor moves up behind Uslid.

AETOR ELANI

What are you doing?

USLID BRAE

You said it yourself, They won't trust us anymore. There's no turning back now, Aetor. We have to move forward.

Aetor grits his teeth.

AETOR ELANI

I wanted to stop. I was hoping they could take the reins and end all this work. I'm just so incredibly tired of fighting.

USLID BRAE

We aren't fighting for freedom from the Dominion anymore.

AETOR ELANI

I know! That's the hard part. This politicing has exhausted me mind, body, and spirit. I'm not sure I have the strength to do that. I'm not the right one to bring about all this social change!

(Aetor tears up)

I just want our people to stop suffering.

Uslid doesn't know what to say. She moves over to him and grabs his hand.

USLID BRAE

We can do it together.

EXT. BETAZED GHETTO - DAY (DUSK)

Emica is huddled down with Nemi crying and freaking out. She stands up and fires off a few shots, taking down one of the aggressors.

EXT. BETAZED

A group of fighters moves lower to the deck and split into several groups, some veering off to assist the armored groups that are pinned down.

Amanda and her wing man move down and line up along the forest's edge. They start firing the pulse phasers on their wings, lighting up the entire edge of the trees.

EXT. BETAZED FOREST EDGE - DAY (DUSK)

Aetor and Uslid watch as the front line of their group annihilated in phaser fire. Their screams echo throughout the forest.

Aetor's eyes go wide.

EXT. BETAZED GHETTO - DAY (DUSK)

Emica forcibly picks up the whimpering Nemi and moves her to new cover as the fighters suppress the militia.

Nemi and Emica come under fire as the militia recovers from the strafing. They drop down and see a few marines and engineers dead on the ground.

NEMI DAI
(through crying)
Rand and De La Cruz! Four deities!

Emica hits her comm badge.

EMICA SATO
Gladiator, we've got casualties on
the ground. Marines and Engineering
personnel.

Nemi looks around, afraid for her life. She watches a marine go down by the replicator. The phaser fire is becoming more intense.

She taps her communicator.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Everyone watches the fighters strafe targets where the armored units are at.

MALCOLM XIRES
We need to get one of those armored
units free and get them to flank
the enemy along the edge of the
forest.

DREVIN LOPE
Captain, I've got the Chief
Engineer on line.

Malcolm and Lorna give each other an odd look.

MALCOLM XIRES
Patch her through.

Immediately we can hear the phaser fire and Nemi crying on the comm.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)
Lieutenant?

NEMI DAI
(V.O., sobbing)
Captain...

LORNA RAHNES
Nemi, what's happened?

NEMI DAI
(V.O.)
There are a lot of dead crewman here. People that work for me. I don't know what to do.

MALCOLM XIRES
You have to calm down, Nemi. If you aren't clear headed you might get hurt, OK.

NEMI DAI
(V.O.)
Captain, please, you have to help us.

PHASER DISCHARGE

Nemi screams.

EMICA SATO
(V.O., in background)
Son of a bitch! Reloading!

MALCOLM XIRES
I'm trying Nemi. I need to do my job.

LORNA RAHNES
Nemi, where's Colonel Sato?

NEMI DAI
(V.O.)
Please, I can't do this!

Malcolm swallows hard.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. GLADIATOR - MESS HALL

Sabrina stands in the mess hall with the entire crew, everyone is in rough shape. Malcolm stands on top of a table giving a speech.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Same as before.

NEMI DAI

(V.O.)

Captain! They're getting closer.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Sabrina turns from the helm, raising her hands in the air, celebrating after a daring maneuver.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Same as before.

MALCOLM XIRES

I've got more marines coming down now, just hold out a little longer.

NEMI DAI

(V.O.)

Please, Captain! Please help me! I don't want to die like this.

MALCOLM'S P.O.V. - Sabrina

Sabrina stands at the front of the bridge, staring at Malcolm. She mimics the last sentence in her own voice.

SABRINA MCQUARIE

I don't want to die like this.

BACK TO SCENE

Malcolm turns, eyes wide, and sees Sabrina's corpse laying where he found it on the bridge. The noise of the battle on the ground fills the comms on the bridge.

Malcolm takes a step back.

The sound of phaser fire hitting close to their position snaps him out.

NEMI DAI
(V.O., screaming)
Captain!

MALCOLM XIRES
Nemi, I will help you. Everything
will be, ok. I promise.

Malcolm moves into the crew pit.

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)
Helm, moves us into low orbit right
over the action site. Commander
Serra prepare for orbital
bombardment.

Blaine turns in his chair.

BLAINE GREY
(surprised)
Sir!?

DREVIN LOPE
Captain? No!

SANDRA MURPHY
Whoa, Captain! You can't do that,
there are civilians down there!

Blaine looks up into the Captains eyes, which seem to burn like fire.

MALCOLM XIRES
Did I stutter, Ensign?

Blaine looks down and turns back to his console.

BLAINE GREY
Low orbit, aye, Captain.

LORNA RAHNES
Captain, this is going to be
extremely dangerous. Everyone's
bunched up tight.

MALCOLM XIRES
I'm tired of loosing people,
loosing these children.
(Lorna nods in agreement)
(MORE)

MALCOLM XIRES (CONT'D)

Combat Ops, relay to Colonel Sato
we're beginning an orbital
bombardment and to paint her
targets.

COMBAT OPS OFFICER

Aye, sir.

Drevin moves out of his station and comes around to the
command area.

DREVIN LOPE

Are we really going to kill
civilians?

Lorna turns, bearing her teeth.

LORNA RAHNES

Resume your duties or I will
relieve you of your post and have
you thrown in the brig!

Drevin extends his arms out to calm her down.

DREVIN LOPE

Those people down there are
civilians, even the militia. They
aren't military combatants.

MALCOLM XIRES

They became an opposing force when
they took up arms against us.

BLAINE GREY

I have a bad feeling about this.

MALCOLM XIRES

(to Blaine)

We're going to save our people's
lives.

EXT. BETAZED FOREST EDGE - NIGHT

The sun gone down below the horizon, only a slight bit of
evening light remains for the rest of the scene, painting the
clouds beautiful colors.

Aetor is moving up along with Uslid and her people. They are
pushing through smouldering trees from the fighters strafing
runs.

Aetor sees dead and charred bodies.

AETOR ELANI

I can't take this. I'm going to take my squad and try and outflank them. We need to end this swiftly. I'm tired of losing people.

Uslid watches him direct his men with confidence and purpose.

USLID BRAE

Aetor, wait! I'm sorry.

The other militia members on the front keep fighting. Others are moving up behind them as well.

AETOR ELANI

Sorry for what?

USLID BRAE

Treating you so poorly. You're right, it's because you're a man. I'm a noble, it's hard to see past my culture sometimes. I've been entirely unfair to you.

AETOR ELANI

I. I didn't.

USLID BRAE

I'm still growing and learning. I will do better.

Aetor smiles and nods.

AETOR ELANI

Thank you.

Uslid kisses Aetor lovingly, but quickly.

AETOR ELANI (CONT'D)

Let's end this and start a revolution.

USLID BRAE

Be safe, my love.

AETOR ELANI

You too.

Militia people are growing and growing, moving beyond the forest, slowly moving to overtake the replicator site.

Fighters scream overhead, firing another strafing run on the forests edge.

INT. FIGHTER

Amanda and her wingman do another pass scorching more, but her wingman is hit with a round from a purple space bazooka and his fighter crashes into the forest.

AMANDA CLERK

Dammit! Gladiator, my wing man is down. We've got hostiles all over the place, that replicator site is going to get overrun at any moment.

FLIGHT OPS OFFICER

(V.O.)

Break Break! All wings break. Orbital bombardment inbound.

AMANDA CLERK

Oh hell.

Amanda maneuvers away from the site.

EXT. SPACE

The Gladiator is distant, showing the massive difference between the planet and the ship. The diminutive Gladiator sits alone amongst the silent and starry sky, her belly parallel with planet's darkening surface.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

The beauty and silence of the last shot are broken by the chaotic arguing on the ship.

DREVIN LOPE

This is completely unacceptable!
Captain! Listen to me!

Sandra is trying to be more diplomatic about everything, and is holding Drevin back a bit.

LORNA RAHNES

(angry, hitting her
communicator)

Security to the bridge!

Malcolm shakes his head over the noise.

MALCOLM XIRES

(yelling)

Are we in position yet?

SANDRA MURPHY
Commander Rahnes, just please stop
and think about this a moment.

LORNA RAHNES
We already have dead people down
there, Doctor!

JACEN SERRA
(yelling)
In position, sir!

DREVIN LOPE
(frustrated)
Doctor Murphy, you are a Captain,
can't you stop this?

SANDRA MURPHY
I'm not a line officer, Lieutenant.

LORNA RAHNES
Captain Murphy is a staff officer,
Lieutenant Lope, something you
should be intimately familiar with
as Chief of Operations. She has no
authority on this bridge!

MALCOLM XIRES
(yelling)
Mr. Serra, make those shots tight.
I don't want any blue-on-blue.

The security team arrives through a turbo lift.

JACEN SERRA
(yelling)
I'm ahead of you, sir.

LORNA RAHNES
Security, arrest Lieutenant Lope
and put him in the brig.

SANDRA MURPHY
Commander...

LORNA RAHNES
Do you want to go with him, Doctor?

Sandra puts out her arms to calm her down.

JACEN SERRA

Commander, everyone is under duress, perhaps we should confine him to quarters to let cooler heads prevail?

Lorna looks to Jacen.

SANDRA MURPHY

I'll take responsibility for him.

Then back to Sandra.

LORNA RAHNES

Fine. Security, take him to his quarters. Get off my bridge!

The security team rounds up Drevin and he starts resisting.

DREVIN LOPE

Stop! You can't allow him to do this!

The team pulls him into the turbo lift and Sandra follows. The door shuts and all is silence again.

Lorna turns back to the screen with focus.

The tactical information on the screen reflects her targets. Others targets light up around the IFVs.

COMBAT OPS OFFICER

All teams are reporting targets acquired. We have one hundred and twenty-three targets painted.

MALCOLM XIRES

Commander Serra, lock onto new targets as they are painted by the marines and fire at will. Keep firing until Colonel Sato gives the order to stop.

JACEN SERRA

Understood, sir.

Malcolm looks intently. Sabrina looks just as intently back at him from the viewer.

MALCOLM XIRES

Fire.

EXT. SPACE

The Gladiator unleashes hell from its saucer section ventral phaser array. Dozens of quick firing arcs drop like anvils towards the surface below, concentrated in a very tight cluster.

The scene is quick, virtually silent, almost beautiful as the ship dances across the atmosphere.

EXT. BETAZED GHETTO - NIGHT

Emica holds up her phaser rifle, pointing a small targeting array attached to the barrel at the phaser at the militia. The noise of everything is close, Nemi crying is just as loud, we are surrounded by the battle.

In an instant, a massive beam strikes the surface in the forest, vaporizing a small section of it, the edges spark with fire. The beam is gone as fast as it came, a blink might have missed it.

All that is left is black ash.

The scream of the shot comes a moment later, drowning out the noise of the fire fight. Nemi's crying screams aren't heard.

Emica shoots a close by militiaman as she sets another target.

The rain of phaser fire begins to fall all around.

EXT. SPACE

The Gladiator phaser array continues firing, faster and faster, multiple beams firing one right after another towards the same cluster.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Malcolm and Lorna stands on the bridge watching with cold calculation at the tactical display. With every shot another small circle of the operations area is blackened.

Blaine drops his head.

EXT. BETAZED FOREST EDGE - NIGHT

Aetor watches as the phaser fire annihilates the forest and his militia. Fires rage on the outskirts.

AETOR ELANI
(to himself)
The sword.

He sees Uslid in the far distance looking behind her and above and the chaos around her. Phaser fire fills the sky.

Suddenly, Uslid's entire area is vaporized in a flash.

In a split second Aetor's eyes go wide, but before he can react the concussive wave throws Aetor and his people back.

The blare of the phaser fire echoes.

INT. FIGHTER

Amanda watches the bombardment area from afar, three other fighters fly in formation with her.

From her perspective the phaser shots in the distance can be seen more clearly falling from space.

She watches in horrific awe at the awesome display of firepower.

Several areas around are still fighting, the armored tanks are unleashing massive salvos from their phaser cannon turrets. The phasers continue to bombard everything.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

The tactical screen shows virtually the entire forests edge is a charred ruin save for the few clusters of huddled marines.

COMBAT OPS OFFICER
Armored groups are reporting clear,
no signs of hostile activity.

EXT. BETAZED GHETTO - NIGHT

Emica stands. What isn't vaporized and cratered ash is aflame, trees burn on all the outskirts.

Emica hits her comm badge.

EMICA SATO
Gladiator, it looks all clear. No
more hostile activity.

Nemi, tears covering her face looks around the edge of their cover to peer out at the empty ruin left behind.

Her mouth drops.

INT. GLADIATOR - BRIDGE

Same as before.

MALCOLM XIRES
Colonel, are you and Nemi ok?

EMICA SATO
(V.O.)
We're both ok.

NEMI DAI
(V.O.)
I'm safe captain. Thank you.

LORNA RAHNES
Hang tight, we're sending more troops down. We'll get you off the planet once they arrive.

Malcolm and Lorna both return to their chairs as if everything is fine.

MALCOLM XIRES
Ensign, return us to standard orbit.

BLAINE GREY
(shaken)
Aye. Sir.

EXT. BETAZED FOREST EDGE

On the outskirts of the forest's edge the charred remains of people are all around, those not vaporized, but caught on the edges of the heat wave.

Aetor and his people a bit further back are all knocked out. He comes to and looks around seeing nothing but flame. He looks to the place Uslid stood and sees only a smouldering crater and ash.

Laying in the same position as Malcolm at the beginning of the episode, Aetor, alone with the death, weeps uncontrollably.

INT. GLADIATOR - FLIGHT DECK

Amanda sits on the deck in her flight gear beside her fighter. Her face is covered in sweat. She just looks out contemplating what she just saw. Her helmet is on the ground.

INT. GLADIATOR - LORNA'S QUARTERS

Lorna sits on her bed in her gray uniform vest. Her department shirt is unzipped revealing a gnarled chest wound that didn't heal properly starting at the base of her neck and going well below her unzipped shirt.

Her boots are on the floor and her blouse is thrown on the bed.

She cries and sobs uncontrollably. Emotions are pouring out of her.

She pulls herself together for a moment and walks to the replicator.

LORNA RAHNES
Computer, disable alcohol
replication safety.

COMPUTER
(V.O.)
This task requires command level
authorization.

LORNA RAHNES
Override replicator safety, Rahnes
zero, zero, eight, nine, echo,
tango two.

COMPUTER
(V.O.)
Authorization accepted. Replicator
safeties disengaged.

LORNA RAHNES
Whisky, double, neat.

The replicator buzzes softly, materializing a glass of whisky.

Lorna takes the glass and drinks it slowly.

She pauses as if to think about her actions, then finishes the last of the drink in one gulp.

LORNA RAHNES (CONT'D)
Computer, another.

Lorna's tear soaked face is illuminated by the replicator producing another drink.

INT. GLADIATOR - CORRIDOR

The turbolift doors open.

Malcolm stares blankly.

He surveys the halls of the ship, now pristine.

Malcolm steps out of the turbolift and walks down the corridor. The missing sections and blanketed corridors are now all back to normal as if nothing had every happened.

A crewman acknowledges Malcolm as he walks by. Malcolm nods back with forced interest.

Malcolm enters his room.

The door shut behind him.

INT. BETAZED CAPITOL PALACE

Vemmiri stands in an ornate, regal office. She is talking to Jonathon on a view screen on her wall.

JONATHON SYKES
Is there anything you want to add
to the report?

Vemmiri sits down in a luxurious chair and smiles.

VEMMIRI UKOI
I want to add that I believe the
Captain acted in the best interests
of his personnel. But, I also feel
he protected the citizens of
Betazed from agitators and
protected relief efforts, which are
paramount right now. I feel he
acted correctly in the face of
unforeseen circumstances.

FADE OUT.