

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, "THE UNCULTURED"

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. LASANTIAN SURFACE

Night, in the clearing of a forest, around a roaring fire. Aliens of an unknown, humanoid race are gathered--a small crowd of 15 or 20, dressed in a vaguely familiar metal armor of black and grey, surrounded by many more in villager's garb. A ceremony of some kind. All are quiet, but there's excitement on the younger faces. One alien, nearest the fire, in the robes of a distinguished leader approaches the warrior captain. He lays his hand on the leader in blessing, whispering something unheard. He turns, as a small boy runs up carrying something. The leader takes it and presents it to the captain--the captain takes it, with bowed head. It's a weapon, some broad, curved blade. The leader turns around to face his warriors and lifts the weapon above his head boldly. Cries of war erupt from the entire gathered assembly.

EXT. LASATIAN SURFACE

The following day. The warriors are parading up the gang plank of a ship, the crowd still surrounding them with reverence. Friends, children, family are saying their goodbyes to their brave fighters. Battle-hardened veterans march stoically, while their younger comrades proudly bear tokens given to them by family for strength and good luck. Their ship, what can be seen of it, looks old and grim.

INT. STARSHIP BRIDGE

The warriors take their posts, patting each other on the backs, looking forward to the coming glory. Their captain takes his chair--a familiar, angular shape.

CAPTAIN

Status!

SENIOR OFFICER

All systems powered and ready.
Engines at your command.

CAPTAIN

(beat)
Lift off.

EXT. LASATIAN SURFACE

The dust on the surface whips up, as the hulking ship, unseen in it's entirety, takes off. The crowd keep only as much distance as necessary, eager to stay with their warriors for as long as possible.

INT. STARSHIP BRIDGE

The view screen goes from blue sky to black space.

CAPTAIN
Set the course.

Two crewmen turn to each other, grinning in satisfaction for the day they've been dreaming about. Their hands punch in coordinates and a hasty speed.

CUT TO:

INT. STARSHIP BRIDGE

The same hands are frantically punching the controls, as the bridge explodes around them. The ship and these warriors onboard are in heated battle and they are losing badly. Crewmen are running, bleeding, desperate to turn the tide.

CAPTAIN
REPORT!

SENIOR OFFICER
The shields are depleted, weapons are offline! Secondary power is failing!

CREWMEN #1
Commander! The enemy is closing in!

CAPTAIN
Engines!

SENIOR OFFICER
Destroyed, Commander! We cannot evade!

The Captain's face holds its stern gaze at the view screen, not admitting the defeat evident around him. The crew show little such stoicism. On the view screen, the enemy is revealed to be a looming Enterprise.

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE

The Enterprise bridge is the opposite scene. Picard is sitting in the captain's chair, legs crossed, with puzzled look on his face. Riker sits to his right, Deanna to his left, both look worried but unruffled. Worf stands coolly at tactical, an intent ensign is at helm, and Data is at ops. On the view screen, an ancient battle-damaged Klingon cruiser, adrift.

RIKER

Lt. Worf, damage report.

WORF

(Checks his console)

Shields holding, no damage.

PICARD

Data, what is the status of their ship?

DATA

The Klingon vessel has lost all power. Sensors show a small crew with several wounded, but minimal casualties.

(taps more)

Captain--life support is failing.

RIKER

We can't leave them there.

PICARD

Agreed, number one. Have the transporter room beam the crew directly to sickbay, and inform the doctor.

Riker nods and turns his attention to the side-terminal.

PICARD

Lt. Worf, have a security detail ready to meet them.

WORF

Aye, Captain.

(Taps comm badge)

Worf to security team alpha,
report to Sickbay.

Worf starts to the turbolift, but stops at the door as Data speaks up.

DATA

Captain, sensors cannot confirm
that the crew of the vessel is
Klingon. Their life signs do not
match any on record.

RIKER

Not Klingon?

Picard stands, and walks towards the view screen, looking
worried.

WORF

Your orders, Captain?

PICARD

A Klingon ship, not in Klingon
space, and not in Klingon hands.

(beat)

Caution, Lieutenant.

Worf stands in the doorway, silently regarding the
drifting, defeated hulk...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise holds it's place near the adrift Klingon
battlecruiser, no signs of the battle before.

WORF (V.O.)

Security Officer's Log, Stardate
44785.3. The Enterprise is
awaiting orders following an
attack by a Klingon D5
battlecruiser. This attack however
was not perpetrated by Klingons,
but instead by raiders from Lasant
IX.

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIEFING ROOM

The senior officers file into the briefing room, taking
their respective seats.

WORF (V.O. CONT'D)

No contact with their kind has
been made before, and how they
came to possess a vessel of the
Empire is a mystery.

All turn to the view screen at the end of the table, as Admiral Nechayev appears.

PICARD
(Deferentially)
Admiral Nechayev.

ADMIRAL NECHAYEV
Captain Picard. I'm glad to see the Enterprise has sustained this... misunderstanding without casualty.

PICARD
Has Starfleet Command decided the best course of action for crew of their ship?

ADMIRAL NECHAYEV
Yes. We believe the situation may be advantageous to further discussion. You will return your...guests to Lasant IX. In exchange for their return, hopefully an understanding can be reached that prevent any further aggression.

PICARD
(Cautiously)
Surely we are not to make their return conditional on such an understanding?

ADMIRAL NECHAYEV
Of course not. Starfleet Command believes that a show of force the likes of the Enterprise will convey the necessary incentive, combined with friendly gesture of their people's return. Under the circumstances, I think we can forgo the usual first contact formalities.

PICARD
Understood, Admiral.

ADMIRAL NECHAYEV
Best of luck, Enterprise.
Starfleet Command, out.

Chairs turn in and everyone, Picard most of all, tenses a little less.

PICARD

Mr. Data, what do know of Lasant IX?

DATA

Lasant IX is home to what was,
(beat)
until recently, believed to be a pre-warp civilization. Very little is known of the Lasantian people--the Lasant system is far removed from any nearby Federation outposts. The last survey reported was from almost 200 years ago.

RIKER

Is there anything that might explain the Klingon technology?

DATA

Perhaps. One of the few recorded events in the Lasant system was a battle between the Klingon Empire and the Federation in the mid-23rd century, at the height of their conflict. Several ships were lost on both sides before Klingon forces ultimately retreated, scuttling those vessels that could not be saved.

BEVERLY

No one thought to check on local population after the conflict?

DATA

Starfleet command decided that further breach of the Prime Directive made even a limited survey unwise. No Klingon technology was assumed to have survived.

RIKER

Should we involve the Klingons in any attempts at communication?

PICARD

I don't believe so. This situation is complicated enough as it is, and I don't want to open old wounds with the Empire, unnecessarily.

(MORE)

PICARD (CONT'D)

I know this is not a normal first contact, but we should not forget how limited their outside contact has been. I see no reason to forgo a sense of caution.

Nods, around the table.

PICARD

Doctor, are the Lasantians well enough to be questioned at the moment?

BEVERLY

Some of them still need rest and attention, but their leader is conscious. Good luck getting him to talk however--he hasn't said a word to any of our people since he beamed aboard.

PICARD

Then convincing him that we are not the enemy seems the place to start. Lt. Worf, Counselor, please join me in Sickbay. The rest of you, dismissed.

Everyone gets up to leave.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE SICKBAY

Picard, Worf, Deanna, and Beverly walk in to the Sickbay. The scene is one of tense, quiet order. The Lasantian warriors are dressed in battered, torn armor that appears descended from Klingons of old. They're scattered around the sickbay, each with an attending guard and nurse. All are acquiescing to their care, but every able eye is alert and cautious. The captain stands next to his bed, watching his Federation counterparts walk in, paying no mind to the slightly exasperated nurse trying to mend an injury on his arm. The nurse is relieved by Beverly, as she and the rest approach with equal caution.

PICARD

My name is Captain Jean-Luc Picard, of the Federation Starship Enterprise. We mean you no harm.

The alien captain continues to eye him, without a word.

PICARD

This is the Chief Medical Officer,
Dr. Crusher, my Chief of Security,
Lt. Worf, and our ship's
Counselor, Counselor Troi.

The alien captain regards each in turn, saving Worf for last, who he visible sizes up.

PICARD

Can you tell me why you attacked
us? Have you had other hostile
encounters in the past?

The alien captain continues to stare at Worf, as if waiting for the question to come from him. He pays Picard only a brief glance. Picard, realizing this strategy is going nowhere, turns openly to Worf.

PICARD

Perhaps you'd be more comfortable
speaking my with Security Chief?

Worf straightens up to his most commanding.

WORF

Why did you attack our ship? Did
you mistaken us for an enemy?

ALIEN CAPTAIN

We made no mistake. We sought a
Federation vessel and we found
one.

WORF

So you attacked us without
provocation?

ALIEN CAPTAIN

We have had a century to
contemplate our provocation. You
have defeated us this time, but we
will claim our victory, and our
honor.

(with cautious regard)

As our Klingons brothers taught
us.

PICARD

We're currently on enroute back to
your homeworld--is there someone
that we can speak to, to arrange
for your return?

The alien captain eyes Picard, but does not respond. Picard lets out a small sigh.

PICARD

Well, I think we've pressed you enough for now. You and your crew will remain here and continue to receive care. We should be able to return you home shortly.

Picard walk to the back of the room, with Worf and Deanna in tow.

PICARD

Counselor, did you sense anything? Any deception, or anything behind this aggression?

DEANNA

I sense that he's telling the truth, that he truly believes the Federation is some kind of enemy. But there is something that he is unsure about.

PICARD

It would seem Klingon attitudes of different era have survived and been passed on.

(Turning to Worf)

Lt. Worf, he seems to be only willing to speak to you. You might be our only channel of communication, either to our guests, or to their people.

WORF

I am not a diplomat Captain, and they are not Klingons.

PICARD

Be that as it may Lieutenant, we need you in that capacity.

(sigh)

Keep a security detail posted here at all times. Work with Commander Data to find what you can about them before we reach Lasant IX.

WORF

Yes, captain.

Worf leaves sickbay, and Picard starts to follow. Deanna quickly catches him.

DEANNA

I'd like to stay with them for a while, to see if I can sense anything else useful.

PICARD

Very well, Counselor.

Picard leaves, as Deana starts to make a circuit around the outer beds, paying no mind to the Doctor and the alien captain still in silence. She stops however at the second bed, noticing something on an unconscious young warrior--an old ring that looks out of place with the rest of his armor.

DEANNA

(Under her breath)

What...?

Almost in shock, she walks up to the side of the bed and takes up his hand. Just as she starts to lift it, to have a better look, the alien behind her lunges to pull her away. Starfleet guards draw their weapons and Beverly rushes towards the pair.

BEVERLY

Deanna!

The alien captain barks an order at his helmsman in his native tongue. The young man slowly withdraws back to his own bed, eyeing Deanna with a warning glare. The guards go back to their stoic observation, as Beverly leads Deanna aside.

BEVERLY

What happened, Deanna? Are you alright?

DEANNA

I'm fine. I thought I saw something, right there on his finger.

BEVERLY

What?

DEANNA

(composing herself)

Something that shouldn't be here.

Beverly looks worried and a little confused, but quickly recovers.

BEVERLY

Well, whatever it was, ask him
about it once he awakens. But
until then, please, be careful.
The tension is high enough in here
as it is.

Beverly grasps Deanna arm before walking away. Deanna is
left alone, and visibly disturbed.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise, cruising at warp.

INT. ENTERPRISE DEANNA'S QUARTERS

Deanna is pacing in her quarters, clearly still agitated.

DEANNA

Computer, access the Betazed
archives. What last known location
of all of the Holy Rings of
Betazed?

COMPUTER

Four of the five Holy Rings of
Betazed are presently in the
custody of Lwaxana Troi, daughter
of the Fifth House, holder of the
Sacred Chalice of Rixx, and heir
to the Holy Rings.

Deanna throws her head back in exasperation at the complete
recited answer.

COMPUTER

The fifth ring was lost in the mid
23rd century, during a Klingon
raid.

DEANNA

Is there any clues on its
subsequent location?

COMPUTER

There is no further information on
the fifth ring's location in the
Betazed archives.

Deanna sighs and gives up on this line of inquiry. She walks over to the replicator, orders a steaming, relaxing-looking drink, and takes back to her desk. She turns to use her desktop monitor, but pauses when a photo next to it catches her eye. It's a happy picture of Deanna as a girl with her mother and father, and lush gardens behind them. She picks it up and looks at it for a moment, some of the frustration melting. She puts it down and returns the monitor.

DEANNA

Computer, open a channel to the
Betazed ambassador.

After a moment, the monitor's empty display comes to life with Lwaxana's immediately smiling face.

LWAXANA

Little one! What a lovely
surprise!

Lwaxana turns abruptly suspicious, lowering her voice.

LWAXANA

You're not in trouble, are you? Is
it the Ferengi again? Despicable
little creatures.

Deanna settles into a familiar, measured pattern.

DEANNA

Hello mother. I'm not in trouble.
I just wanted to talk.

(beat)

Did you go to the Betazed Garden
festival this year?

LWAXANA

Yes, though it was a waste of
time. The competition was been
nothing but boring minimalist
displays. I think Mr. Homn liked
them, which is why I don't employ
him for his taste. Why do you ask?

DEANNA

I was just reminded of when we
used to go, when I was growing up.
I remember all the color, running
through the flowers.

LWAXANA

(concerned)

Is everything alright, my dear?

DEANNA

Everything is fine, I was just
feeling sentimental. I should go
mother.

LWAXANA

As should I. Mr. Homn is insisting
I have appointment to dress for.

Lwaxana vanishes in swoosh, as the transmission ends.
Deanna leans back, but is interrupted nearly as soon as she
settles.

PICARD (COMM)

Counselor Troi, report to the
bridge.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise, dropping out of warp and approaching a rich
blue and green world.

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE

The bridge crew attend to their tasks. Picard and Riker
occupy the command chairs, with the third unoccupied. Data
occupies the conn, next to an ensign at helm. Worf
dutifully mans tactical. Deanna walks in from the
turbolift, taking to the lone empty seat.

DATA

Arriving at Lasant IX, captain.

PICARD

Mr. Data, can we raise any form of
communication with the planet?

DATA

I am scanning now for any
electromagnetic frequencies in
use.

RIKER

Have you decided yet how you
intend to open discussions?

PICARD

I am hoping they will see us
returning their people as an
honorable gesture. But I'll regard
any dialogue as a start.

DATA

Captain, I believe that I have
found something.

Picard stands, preparing for the opening move.

DATA

There is a broadcast coming from
the surface, consistent with the
technology in their possession.
They appear to be attempting to
hail the battlecruiser.

PICARD

Mr. Worf, open a channel.

WORF

(entering commands)
Channel open, sir.

PICARD

This is Captain Jean-Luc Picard of
the...the United Federation of
Planets. We were attacked by a
vessel of yours.

(beat)

We are here to return your crew
and to discuss the reason for your
hostilities.

A moment passes before the view screen comes on, showing
the alien leader from before. A look of fierce indignation
is etched on his face.

ALIEN LEADER

I wanted to see the face of our
enemy. I wanted him to know that
we will not die on our knees.

PICARD

We are not your enemy. We come in
peace, in goodwill--

ALIEN LEADER

(cutting him off)
Save your breath...

The leader's voice trail off as his gaze settles behind Picard. His composure goes to shock and then anger as Picard realizes that he is looking at Worf.

ALIEN LEADER

What is the meaning of this? Why is a Klingon with you, dressed in your colors? What dishonor have you visited upon him?

PICARD

Lt. Worf is a officer of my crew.

(beat)

His place as a Federation citizen is a product of the peace that exists between the Federation and the Klingon Empire.

Picard walks forward to the screen, with diplomatic drama.

PICARD

The war that exists between us is over and has been for decades.

The leader regards him wearily.

ALIEN LEADER

Are there other Klingon warriors among your crew?

Picard turns back to face Worf, with a leading look in eye. Worf takes an earnest expression.

WORF

I am the only one. But we are at peace.

ALIEN LEADER

The word of a Klingon warrior I trust. But not yours, Captain. We invite your Lt. Worf to return our warriors to us.

The leader ends the transmission abruptly. Picard stands in contemplation, as Riker joins.

RIKER

Well, at least they're not lining up to shoot at us.

PICARD

I fear that most of us are not much beyond that point. Counselor?

Deanna looks off into space, obviously somewhere else.

PICARD
Counselor Troi? Did you sense
anything?

Deanna's attention snaps back.

DEANNA
No. His caution and mistrust is
genuine. Worf was not above that
distrust either. His invitation is
be something that the Lasantians
felt was an obligation.

PICARD
Was there anything else that you
picked up on?

DEANNA
No, Captain.

PICARD
(sighs)
The Lasantians are obviously not
going to meet us half way, at
least not without a bold move. I
will accompany Worf down to the
planet.

RIKER
(abruptly)
Captain, I don't think that's a
good idea.

Picard, predicting his first officer's response, fixes him
with a overriding look.

PICARD
Your concerns are noted, Number
One. But we won't make progress if
we don't talk, and I see no other
way than to force the matter.

Picard turns up to Worf, who is also looking a little
distracted.

PICARD
Mr. Worf, have the Lasantian crew
ready to beam down to the surface
within the hour.

WORF
Aye, Captain.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. LASANTIAN CITY SQUARE

Afternoon, in the large square of capital city. Lasantians are gathered about the town square. Some normal activity is going on, merchants selling from stalls, people coming and going from various shops and eateries, but most are simply milling about, waiting for something. The leader, with a congregation of other high-ranking officials, is there as well, also simply waiting. A transport begins in the middle of the square, and Picard, Worf, and the captured crew materialize. The crowds erupts in hushed whispers and rapt attention. The leaders rush forward to their returned fighters--arms are clasped, worried questions are pressed, assurances are given. Finally, the leaders turn their attention to Picard and Worf, both of whom have been standing dutifully out of the way.

ALIEN LEADER

I told you Captain that your
Lieutenant Worf was welcome here.
I said nothing of you.

(beat)

Be gone.

Picard steps forward, as if to start into a considered speech, but before he can open his mouth, Worf speaks up.

WORF

He is here at my request. He is a
honorable man, and if you are
people of honor, you will hear
what he has to say.

ALIEN LEADER

The Federation does not know or
practice true Klingon honor.

The leader turns to leave, following immediately by the other officials. Picard ventures for their attention.

PICARD

The Empire would disagree with
you. I served as the Arbiter of
Succession...

The leader pauses and turn back around.

PICARD
...at the request of the
Chancellor himself.

The leader considers Picard for a moment and then turns pointedly to Worf.

ALIEN LEADER
You spoke of a peace before. Tell
me how it came to be. How the
Klingon Empire could be brought to
see eye to eye with people such as
these.
(gestures to Picard)

WORF
We do not always see eye to eye.
But Humans, Vulcans, and many
others under the Federation flag
fought, and gave their lives, for
peace. They showed the courage to
live by their principles, and the
Empire saw the honor in that.

PICARD
(stepping forward)
I would risk my life for the
principles I serve. I risked my
life coming here, knowing that you
may not welcome me. But I do not
come baring you ill-will and I
will not raise a weapon against
you.

The leader takes a moment to come closer to Picard, though his officials remain back. He turns to his warriors' captain.

ALIEN LEADER
How were you treated, Farak? Did
they treat you as an worthy
opponent, or did they condescend
to you?

FARAK
Our wounds were treated and then
we were kept under watch of guard.
But they did not abuse us, nor did
they cower.

ALIEN LEADER

(turning to Picard)

Still, they come to us--friends,
they say--overstepping their
bounds while holding us at bay.
You'll have to do better than
that, Captain Picard.

PICARD

(beat)

I welcome the opportunity.

WORF

These warriors, will you embrace
their return?

ALIEN LEADER

They may have been defeated in
battle, but they were taught to
fight bravely and we know that
they have. There will song and
wine enough for that.

WORF

Allow me to join you in your
feast. I will tell you of their
deeds.

ALIEN LEADER

Very well, you may join us and
speak your peace. For now, earn
your place and help us prepare.

WORF

(turns to Picard)

Captain?

Picard nods and taps his comm badge.

PICARD

Enterprise, one to beam up.

Picard transports away. The leader approaches Worf.

ALIEN LEADER

My name is Kalkhan. I am
Chancellor of our high council,
and we here are students of
Kahless.

(beat)

Come, there is much to do.

The chancellor lead Worf, Farak, and everyone else away
from the square.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise, in orbit.

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE

Picard is sitting in the Captain's Chair, looking over a PADD, with Riker sitting next to him. Data is at the conn, while the remaining posts are manned by various junior officers. Riker looks anxious, while Picard looks intentionally occupied.

RIKER

Data, any updates from the surface?

DATA

Still none yet, sir. Lt. Worf has not left the city. Would you like a more detailed report of his whereabouts?

RIKER

No thank you, Data.

Riker continues to look unsatisfied, turning to Picard.

RIKER

He's been down there for hours.

PICARD

Worf knows best his audience. I think we need to trust his instincts. We're all running a little in the dark this time.

TACTICAL OFFICER

Captain, a transmission for you, from Admiral Nechayev.

PICARD

I'll take it in my ready room.
Number One, you have the bridge.

Picard stands and tugs his shirt.

INT. ENTERPRISE READY ROOM

Picard enters and sits down behind desk, wasting no time. He taps his monitor on, and Admiral Nechayev appears on screen, sitting imposingly straight.

ADMIRAL NECHAYEV

Captain Picard, any update on the negotiations?

PICARD

We have taken the first steps, however I'm afraid there is no progress to report.

ADMIRAL NECHAYEV

I want to be clear Captain, we are interested in forestalling further attacks. Anything else before that is a distraction.

PICARD

Admiral, their culture is heavily influenced by their contact with the Klingons. That much has been evident from our direct contact thus far.

(beat)

I believe that the Enterprise--that Lt. Worf--is in a unique position to meet them in familiar ground. I believe that a greater peace may be attainable with some patience.

ADMIRAL NECHAYEV

Captain, as usual, I applaud your dedication to the Federation's highest principles. But I also trust that you appreciate how important free and safe travel in Federation space is, so close to the Klingon border.

PICARD

I do, Admiral.

ADMIRAL NECHAYEV

We were lucky their first target happened to be Starfleet vessel capable of defending itself. What casualties might there have been if they had instead open fired on a civilian ship?

PICARD
(Sighing)
More than I would care to risk.

The admiral gives him a brief, but understanding smile and nod.

ADMIRAL NECHAYEV
You mentioned Lt. Worf...

PICARD
He's on the planet now. For the moment, he seems to be the only one they will deal with.

ADMIRAL NECHAYEV
Is he up to this task? Is he prepared to fully represent Federation interests?

PICARD
He has my full trust, Admiral.

ADMIRAL NECHAYEV
I'm sure that he does, and that he had earned that trust. But as I said, you are close to the Klingon border... I don't want matters unnecessarily confused, for anyone.

Picard appears defensive for a moment, but says nothing.

ADMIRAL NECHAYEV
I'll leave you to your efforts for now, Captain. Keep me apprised of the situation. Starfleet Command, out.

The communication ends and Picard leans back in his chair, pensive.

CUT TO:

EXT. LASATIAN SURFACE

Evening, in the ceremonial clearing. The fire is once again alight, but this time, countless other torches and banners surround it. Crowds are laying out food, and rolling in barrels of wine. The younger warriors are loudly regaling their friends and family with tales from the battle. Worf and Farak are talking off to the edge, comparing their strategies and bonding as competitors do.

FARAK

Had we better seized the element of surprise, we would have given your Enterprise a fight she would have remembered.

WORF

I do not doubt your bravery, but your ship was simply outmatched. Even with limited shields and weapons, the Enterprise is more than a match for ship as...long served as yours.

FARAK

We waited a long time to take to the stars. We trained for a long time, testing ourselves constantly, as we were taught to do. The warriors under my command are the finest of my people.

(beat)

They may have been beaten by you today, but the fire in hearts, that drum of battle--that is what will lead them to defeat you one day. For all the power of your vessel, you will not match our power of our spirit.

WORF

You will be the ones to underestimate us.

(beat)

If it comes to that.

FARAK

When it comes to that. But for tonight, let us drink together as brothers and not as enemies.

Farak clasps Worf on the shoulder, and cracks a smile. He leads them both to a nearby barrel, freshly opened. They fill their cups, raise them to one another before a first sip, before returning to their spirited debate of tactics. The celebration continues with musicians beginning to take up their instruments. Children play at sword fights and a couple wield crude approximations of Bat'leths. The chancellor is among the crowd, speaking to various warriors and officials, and eventually making his way to Worf and Farak

FARAK

Chancellor, you honor us with this glorious feast.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

You have shown the Federation that we will not be quietly beaten. You have made our ancestors and our teacher proud.

The chancellor claps his shoulder, with a civilian's lighter touch and a leader's pride on his face. He turns to Worf, and his demeanor becomes measurable cooler.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

Well, Lieutenant, what do you think of our society? Does it compare to the other worlds of Federation?

WORF

I see a planet that has much to offer, and much to gain from an alliance. You are surrounded by Federation space--it does not make sense to remain isolated from potential allies.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

The best allies this world has ever known have already come and gone. The Klingons who crashed here brought centuries of technological and cultural advancement.

(leaning into Worf)

To say nothing of teaching us what truly matters.

WORF

You are firm in your dismissal of other points of view. Clarity is wise, but a closed mind serves no one.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

Is that what you're here to do Worf, forcibly open our minds?

WORF

I...we are not here to force anything upon you. We are here to earn your trust.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN
Do all of you Starfleet speak as one? Does the Federation always act as a collective mind?

WORF
It is my duty to represent my service--I will defend it with my life. But from now on, I speak for myself.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN
So then Worf, why are you here?

WORF
Your ways...I was not ready to leave them so quickly.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN
So, there is some Klingon left in you yet. That uniform has not completely robbed you of your better sense. Or your ability to drink Bloodwine.

Worf takes lifts an eyebrow at his drink.

WORF
This is fine beverage, but it is not Bloodwine.

FARAK
(in mock warning)
Careful, Worf. I make some of this drink myself.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN
Come. Perhaps you can enlighten us with your native palette.

The chancellor leads them away.

INT. ENTERPRISE READY ROOM

Picard sits at his desk, sipping a cup of tea and diligently reading something from a pile of PADDs. He puts down the cup and the door chimes.

PICARD
Come in.

Deanna walks in, hands held behind her back, determination on her brow. Picard looks welcome to this distraction, as Deanna sit across from him.

PICARD

Counselor, what can I do for you?

DEANNA

I want to discuss an encounter I had with one of the Lasantians.

PICARD

Is this about what happened in Sickbay? Dr. Crusher informed me that you recognized something on of the injured crew. A piece of jewelry?

DEANNA

That's right, Captain. One of them had a ring.

(sigh)

The last of the holy rings of Betazed. These are very important relics to my people. The four rings that the Betazoid people still possess--their guardianship is still considered a high honor. One presently held by--

PICARD

(cutting her off)

--Your mother, I know.

(Beat)

Is there an action you'd like to propose?

DEANNA

I would like to join Worf on the planet. Perhaps find the Lasantian who had it and talk to him.

PICARD

Under the circumstances, Counselor, I'm not sure that I can allow that. The situation is delicate. I'm afraid this matter may have to wait.

DEANNA

I understand your concerns captain...

Deanna composes herself and bring herself to a studious posture. Picard lifts his cup of tea, preparing for another calming sip.

DEANNA

But, I'm not sure that a matter
this important to leading
Federation member can be made to
wait. I believe my mother,
Ambassador Troi, would agree.

Picard sets the cup back down and takes a moment to consider his fate.

PICARD

I promise you, if the opportunity
presents itself, I will see to it
that you have a chance to address
the Chancellor directly. I have no
desire to see such an important
relic of Betazed culture held
captive. I don't believe
Ambassador Troi would ever forgive
me.

(beat)

But for now, I must insist on your
continued patience.

Deanna stiffens, no more at ease than when she walked in.

DEANNA

Of course, Captain.

PICARD

Dismissed.

Deanna nods, stands, and walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. LASATIAN SURFACE

Night. The crowds have mostly cleared and Worf is lingering near to the central fire, alone. His mind is obviously somewhere else, but something catches his attention and he starts walking over. The boy from before is swinging one of the play Bat'leths with untrained enthusiasm. Worf steps in cautiously and narrowly avoids having his chest slashed when the boy turns around abruptly. The boy startles on seeing Worf and steps back, like a student waiting to be chastised.

WORF

Your power is commendable for a boy your age, but you must learn control. The sword is most lethal when it is an extension of yourself. Let me show you.

Worf moves closer, offering to take the boy's hands in guidance. He considers for a moment, and then nods. Worf comes behind the boy, grasping the Bat'leth by the same hand holds. He guides the boy through a few swings, far more controlled than what he was doing before.

WORF

Do you see how the blade becomes a part of your arm, a part of you? It goes where you will it, stopping your enemy. Or ending him.

He lets go and the boy takes another tentative swing, trying to replicate the more precise motion, with significant success. Worf nods, pleased in the boy's progress.

WORF

Good.

The boy smiles proudly, taking another swing.

WORF

What is your name, boy?

ALIEN BOY

Kelin, son of Parin.

WORF

My father first taught me how to wield the Bat'leth. He taught me the meaning of honor and the meaning of battle.

KELIN

Do you have a son to teach the Bat'leth to?

WORF

I do. He is about your age.

KELIN

Does he live on the Klingon homeworld? I've heard stories of it--of the warriors who gather there, singing and fighting!

Kelin's excitement builds a to a fever pitch and he strikes a combat pose. Worf stands, the smile drifting from his face.

WORF

He lives with my adoptive parents,
on Earth.

Kelin pauses and looks at Worf confused and a little wary.

KELIN

Why did you live there, on Earth?
Why didn't you live with your own
people? Why is your son not with
other Klingons like him?

WORF

It is complicated.

KELIN

He's your son--don't you want him
to be warrior when he grows up?
How will he become one growing up
on... Earth?

WORF

I would very much like him to know
the things I learned as a boy, but
he has not always chosen that
path. I have learned to respect
that.

(beat)

As others have learned to respect
it in me.

Kelin still looks a little confused, but his trust in a real-live Klingon wins out once more and he nods. Kalkhan walks up behind them, into the fire light.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

It's late Kelin, and I'm sure your
father and mother are waiting for
you. Run along.

Kelin nods quickly and runs off. Kalkhan turns his attention to Worf.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

He's an eager lad. You may yet
meet up one day--
(points to the sky)
--up there.

WORF

I hope as allies.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

That remains to be seen.

(beat)

How did you come to live with these humans?

WORF

My home was massacred when I was small boy, by the Romulans. I was found and adopted by a human serving in Starfleet, aiding in the aftermath. He took me back to Earth, and raised me as his own.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

That seems like a great severance. You must have been lost in your youth. These people do not seem like they would know how to handle someone like you.

WORF

It took me a long time to find my place, but I have.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

You may have found a place, but it has cost you something. They have taken something away from you. I saw just as much longing in your eyes as I see in Kelin's.

(beat)

We learned a great many things from the Klingons who crashed here. Not just technology and not just ritual, but a meaning as well. Your's is a rich culture, Worf, and I question anyone who tries to restrain or diminish it.

WORF

If you think I have lost something than you do not know me.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

Perhaps I am mistaken, and perhaps not. I'm sure we shall see in the days to come. For now, it's late, and I'm sure your Captain is expecting you.

WORF
Until then.
(taps comm badge)
Enterprise, one to beam up.

Worf transports away, leaving the Kalkhan alone next to the fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise, in orbit.

INT. ENTERPRISE WORF'S QUARTERS

Worf enters and studiously goes to sit at his desk, activating his desk monitor.

WORF
Computer, begin Tactical Officer's report.

The computer beeps accordingly and he starts to say something and then abruptly looks at a loss of for words.

WORF
Computer, pause report.

The computer beeps once again. After moment's hesitation he gets up and walks to the replicator.

WORF
Computer, Bloodwine. Young, sweet.

A metal tankard materializes. Worf takes it and takes a hearty gulp. The result is merely disappointment, written on his face, and audible in a fleeting growl. He puts tankard back on the replicator pad and walks away, as the tankard vanishes. He walks over to the Bat'leth hanging on his wall. He runs his fingers on the handle, before taking it up and off its mounting. He takes a step back, but before he has a chance to even take a fighting stance, a picture of his Human parents catches his eye. He picks it up and looks at the familiar picture, no longer paying any attention to the sword in his other hand.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise, in orbit.

INT. ENTERPRISE TEN FORWARD

Geordi and Data walk into ten forward, having a friendly discussion. Geordi gets beverage from server, but before continuing, notices Worf sitting alone and leads Data over.

DATA

What are you having this morning,
Lieutenant?

WORF

Raktajino. Klingon Coffee.

Geordi makes a face.

GEORDI

Never could stomach that stuff. A
little too strong for anyone but
Klingons.

WORF

Plenty of other races have a taste
for it.

DATA

That is correct. Raktajino is a
exported in greater quantities
than human varieties of coffee.

Geordi looks a little incredulously at Data, but lets the
point drop. He turns back to Worf.

GEORDI

So I heard you spent some time
down on the planet--how did that
go?

WORF

(stiffening)

Good. I was able to forge a
connection with the Lasantians
that I think will prove useful.

GEORDI

Quoting your report?

WORF

I spent time with the crew of
their vessel. They were celebrated
for for their bravery with a
feast, and I was honored to join
them.

GEORDI

Honored? Worf, they attacked us.
You were there, firing back.

WORF

They took on an enemy many times
more powerful than they. They did
so without hesitation, because
that is what they believed they
must do.

GEORDI

So they're aggressive and
suicidal.

WORF

You are missing the point.

GEORDI

I get it, Worf. They speak the
same language as you--I understand
the sense of duty. But I also know
that the reason I'm enjoying a cup
of coffee this morning and not
still putting this ship back
together isn't because they knew
when to stop.

Geordi sighs. Data looks between Worf and Geordi, trying to
assess the present state of affairs between his friends.

GEORDI

This must be really hard, seeing
them emulating the Klingon way of
life.

WORF

They are more than emulating it.
They are living it, truly.

GEORDI

Seems like they would be happier
on the other side of the Klingon
border.

WORF

Perhaps, but then perhaps the
Federation could learn something
from the Lasantians.

DATA

The sharing of cultures is one of
the central tenets of the
Federation.

GEORDI

Like you said Worf, they're living the Klingon way. Federation and Klingon cultures haven't mixed that great so far. I don't know if I trust it will work out much better this time.

Geordi stands, followed by Data.

GEORDI

We've got to get to Engineering. But listen, whatever happens down there, we're here for you, Worf.

Worf nods, somewhat reluctantly. Geordi turns to walk away.

DATA

Good day, Lieutenant.

Data joins Geordi, walking away. Worf is left alone again, finishing his Raktajino.

PICARD, OVER COMM

Picard to Lt. Worf, please report to my ready room.

WORF

(taps comm badge)

On my way, Captain.

Worf immediately stands, leaving his drink behind.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE

Worf walks in from the turbolift, making his way to the ready room. Riker and Deanna look up from the command chairs as he comes down the ramp.

RIKER

(teasingly)

Worf--how's it being a Federation ambassador? Do I need to start looking for a new tactical officer?

WORF

I assure you, Commander, I will be at my post for my assigned duty shift--

RIKER

--It was a joke, Worf. You're doing a good job down there. Keep it up.

WORF

Thank you, Commander.

Worf looks visibly relieved and walks on. Deanna furls her brow, but says nothing.

INT. ENTERPRISE READY ROOM

Worf walks in, with Picard sitting at his desk, reading something on his monitor. He closes it out as Worf steps in.

PICARD

Please, Lieutenant, sit.

Worf sits in one of the open chairs.

PICARD

I read your report, Lieutenant, of the your time on the planet. It sounds as if you've been successful in forging some connection?

WORF

I believe I as beginning to earn their trust.

PICARD

That's good. We'll need to leverage that I think, if we are to bring negotiations to a start, much less to a successful conclusion.

WORF

Sir, if I may ask, what are we attempting to accomplish?

PICARD

Starfleet Command would have us walk away with a simple cease-fire. I don't believe they have much expectation of earning the Lasantians' respect.

WORF

That would not be an easy task--it wasn't, earning the trust of the Empire.

PICARD

Would you prefer we not try?

WORF

That is not what I meant, Captain.

PICARD

Good. I want to you to return to the planet. Continue your efforts of good will--try to convince them that we will present them with a fair and honorable accord.

WORF

(beat)

Captain, I am no longer sure that I am correct person for this task.

PICARD

Worf, you have been hesitant with this assignment since the beginning. I need you to see this through.

WORF

I believe that my presence is only confusing their loyalties.

PICARD

I don't want to make them question the foundation of their society, Worf. But I do need them to listen to what we have to say.

(beat)

You wear a Starfleet uniform, and you will represent Federation interests.

WORF

Yes, Captain.

PICARD

Dismissed, Lieutenant.

Worf stands, more confident once again, and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE CORRIDOR

Worf is walking down the hall. Deanna runs up to catch him.

DEANNA

Worf! Wait a moment.

WORF

Counselor? Is there something I
can do for you?

DEANNA

You're travelling down to the
planet again?

WORF

Yes, on the Captain's orders.

DEANNA

Is the Lasantian crew that we
returned still there in the city?

WORF

They were there at the feast--I
could ask after their whereabouts.
Why would you like to know?

DEANNA

I would like to come down with
you, Worf. I want to speak to one
of them.

WORF

I'm not sure that's a good idea
Counselor. They've not been open to
other Starfleet--

DEANNA

Worf, this is important. I need to
speak to one of them, a young man.
He has something that I need to
know more about.

WORF

I don't understand.

DEANNA

Please, Worf, this is important.

Worf considers for a moment.

WORF

I'm on my way down now.

DEANNA

I'm ready.

Worf nods and they both continue on down the hallway.

CUT TO:

EXT. LASATIAN CITY SQUARE

Day. The city square is bustling once more, with a more everyday feel. Worf and Deanna materialize in the middle of the crowd. The city folk step back, still not comfortable with the Enterprise crew coming and going, even with a more familiar face among them. Farak steps forward to greet his adversary, chuckling slightly to himself.

FARAK

Worf, I might almost starting
thinking you were a brother
warrior, granting us your company
again and again.

Farak pauses a moment to eye Deanna, with more curiosity and far less contempt than before. The crowd slowly starts returning their goings on, giving Worf, Deanna, and Farak a wide berth.

FARAK

You are Ship Counselor's Deanna
Troi, are you not?

DEANNA

That's correct.

FARAK

I could not forgot a title such as
ship's counselor. What function do
you serve for your commrades?

DEANNA

I see to the crew's mental and
emotional wellbeing.

Farak lets out a small chuckle, obviously finding Deanna's description a comical weakness.

FARAK

Emotional wellbeing... how
considerate of your superiors to
see to such comforts.

(beat)

Tell me, what particular gifts
enable you to excel at this task?

Worf scowls a little at the continued interrogation. He begins to say something to put an end to the discussion, but Deanna puts a hand on his arm.

DEANNA

I have empathic abilities--I'm half-Betazoid.

Deanna lets the statements stand, as if her full meaning is entirely clear. Farak's smile fades, but only slightly.

FARAK

Betazed. There is a name I've not heard in some time. I believe I know what you're after, Counselor. My crewman, with the old ring?

DEANNA

Can you take me to him?

WORF

Counselor, I do not believe you should go on alone.

FARAK

You still don't trust us, Worf? She will be safe, while she sees what she came here to see.

Worf looks back at Deanna, who breaks her steely lock with Farak.

DEANNA

It's alright, Worf.
(turning to Farak)
I sense that he's being truthful.

FARAK

Something I would have hoped you would have already trusted.

Farak calls back into the crowd.

FARAK

Parin!

The senior officer from the battlecruiser steps out from the crowd, joining Farak at his side.

FARAK

Escort Counselor Troi of Betazed to see Garus. The Lieutenant will stay with me.

PARIN
Yes, commander.
(beat)
Come.

Parin turns swiftly and starts walking towards one of the roads. Deanna follows without saying a word, leaving Worf scowling.

CUT TO:

INT. LASATIAN BARRACKS HALL

The barracks hall is a vaulted chamber, impressively darkened with slate stone walls and nothing but red-filtered or flame-torch light. There a scattering of warriors talking over long tables and half-finished plates. All are armored and armed. Parin leads Deanna to a younger man eating alone in the back. Garus is still showing a bruise or two, and is eating conspicuously with only one of his arms.

PARIN
Garus, this Counselor Troi, from
the Federation vessel. Commander
Farak wishes you to speak to her.

Garus pauses his labored meal, but barely looks up from his plate.

GARUS
What could I possibly have to say
to her?

DEANNA
I wanted to talk to you about
something I saw you wearing.
There, on your finger.

GARUS
What is it to you?

DEANNA
Do you know where that comes from?

GARUS
A Klingon warrior gave it my
grandfather. It has been passed
down, to remind us of their
teachings.

DEANNA
It's not Klingon. It taken by
them, long ago.

Garus turns to face Deanna, a boastful smile breaking out onto his face.

GARUS

It was a brilliant raid, they told my grandfather. Women and children crying out, men helpless to defend them. Fear was put into their enemies' hearts.

Garus winces as he raises his injured arm and holds up a fist capped with the holy ring.

GARUS

This was a souvenir of their glory.

He pauses for a moment to admire it, before looking back at Deanna questioningly.

GARUS

Why do you care?

DEANNA

I care because that belongs to my people.

Garus breaks out into a smile once more.

GARUS

You're Betazed? Perfect. Even in victory, you'll come down here groveling for your trophies.

DEANNA

We will not steal from you. I'm asking you, please, return what was robbed from my people. Be better than those who took this.

Garus abruptly turns, incensed.

GARUS

You HAVE stolen from us! You stole our honor! I should have died out there in battle, and instead I'm here, eating my food and nursing my wounds.

(beat)

I won't lay down my sword and I certainly won't GIVE you what you want. Now leave me.

Parin looks to Deanna, clearly waiting for her to conclude that nothing more will come of this conversation. She turns and allows Parin to lead her from the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. LASATIAN COURTYARD

Worf is being escorted through the courtyard of an official building by Farak. The ground is stone, as are the surrounding walls. The only plant life comes in a few geometrically placed beds, bursting with thick green ferns. Farak leads them to where Kalkhan is sitting with another elder statesmen.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

Well, Worf, do you come here as warrior, or representative?

WORF

I come as a friend. I hope that I may convince you once and for all that we mean you no harm.

Whatever elderly warmth was present leaves Kalkhan's face.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

I see you found yourself, at last.
(beat)
Pity. We are done.

Kalkhan gets up and starts to walk away.

WORF

Federation allegiance could bring glory to your people. Glory you would not know isolated and alone. Surely you must see that.

Kalkhan turns around, dismissiveness now written on his face.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

You're a snake, Worf. Wearing those decorations of a warrior over a uniform that fits you that much better. You could drink a sea of Bloodwine, but your blood would still be as thin as theirs.

WORF

I am Worf, son of Mogh. I was born a Klingon and I will not be disrespected in this way!

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

Claim all the heritage you like-- nothing but the hollow arrogance of the fearful is left in your heart.

Worf takes a step forward towards Kalkhan. Farak starts to mirror, but Kalkhan waves him off.

WORF

If you really were a Klingon, I would strike you down where you stand.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

I am closer to one than you. The fact that you refuse to raise your fist to me is proof enough of that.

(cracking a smile)

You make a good show of it though, I'll give you that. Just don't expect it to count. Goodbye, Worf.

Kalkhan turns away once again and leaves, without stopping this time. Worf is left fuming where he stands, with Farak watching over him. Parin walks up to them, with Deanna following. Worf turns to Deanna, composing himself slightly.

WORF

Did you get what you came for, Counselor?

DEANNA

No. Lets go back.

WORF

(taps comm badge)

Enterprise, two to beam up.

Worf and Deanna transport away, as Farak and Parin glance at each other.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

Enterprise, in orbit.

INT. ENTERPRISE READY ROOM

Picard is standing, looking out the window, visibly agitated. The door chimes.

PICARD

Enter.

Worf and Deanna enter and remain standing. Picard turns and tugs his shirt, as he looks over his crew.

PICARD

I've just received a communication, from the planet surface, informing me that neither of you is welcome to return.

(beat)

While I am disappointed in this outcome, I am disturbed in that one of you had no business being on the planet in the first place.

Picard settles his frustrated gaze on Deanna.

PICARD

Counselor, I specifically instructed you not to pursue the matter of the Betazoid artifact. Was I in any way unclear?

DEANNA

No, of course not, Captain.

PICARD

Then do you have another explanation for why you disobeyed my orders?

Deanna remains silent for a moment, and when she speaks, it's with an uncertain tone that Deanna seems herself not to completely believe.

DEANNA

This is a matter deeply important to me Captain, to my people. I'm sorry, but I could not ignore that.

PICARD

You both have had difficulty keeping your personal affairs from interfering with this mission. I cannot have that any longer.

(MORE)

PICARD (CONT'D)

(beat)

Counselor, you confined to the Enterprise for the duration, and you will avoid all further contact with the Lasantians. That is an order I expect you to follow.

DEANNA

Yes, captain.

PICARD

(turning to Worf)

As for you Lt. Worf--

Worf snaps to attention.

WORF

--Sir.

PICARD

You will accompany me to the negotiations with the Lasantians. They have agreed to hold them here on the Enterprise. Whatever damage has been done, I am hoping that your presence still has a meaningful benefit.

Worf starts to say something, another protest, but he bites his tongue.

WORF

Yes, sir.

PICARD

The both of you have your orders. I don't want any more distractions until this matter is concluded. You're dismissed.

They nod and walk out, by rank.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE DEANNA'S QUARTERS

Deanna storms into her quarters. She paces furiously for a moment, arms folded. She pauses for a moment with a look of determination and then goes to her desktop monitor, tapping it on.

DEANNA
Computer, open a channel to the
Betazed ambassador.

A picture of Mr. Homn appears on the screen, breaking into a friendly smile at the sight of Deanna. Her visible tension defuses some.

DEANNA
Good afternoon, Mr. Homn. Is my
mother available?

Homn shakes his head, with a slightly forlorn expression.

DEANNA
It's important--do you know when
she'll be back?

Homn shrugs his shoulders, with a slightly guilty expression. Deanna sighs.

DEANNA
I need her help, in an official
capacity. Please have her contact
me at her earliest opportunity.

Homn bows his head, his gracious smile returning. The communication ends. Deanna is left sitting at her desk.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise, in orbit.

PICARD (V.O.)
Captain's Log. The Lasantian
delegation is set to arrive, and I
concerned that any peaceful
outcome to this situation may no
longer be in reach.

INT. ENTERPRISE TRANSPORTER ROOM

Picard, Riker, Data, and Worf are standing in the transporter room, while O'Brien mans the console.

O'BRIEN
(taping at the console)
Sir, the delegation says they're
ready for transport.

PICARD
Energize, Mr. O'Brien.

O'Brien activates the transporter, and a full contingent of Lasantians arrive, armed and with a Klingon-esque hostile swagger. Kalkhan leads the delegation, with Farak, Parin, and Garus among the others; Garus's bruises have healed to a milder color and he moves without any show of pain. The delegation steps off the pad, coming face to face with the Enterprise crew.

PICARD
Chancellor, I appreciate you
joining us onboard the Enterprise.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN
I felt compelled to see it for
myself, as I doubt I will have the
opportunity again.

PICARD
I hope that as the end of this,
you will feel welcome to return.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN
(Looking at Worf)
Do you share you Captain's hopes,
Worf?

WORF
Of course, Chancellor. Starfleet
welcomes all potential allies.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN
Of course.
(turning to Picard)
Captain, if you would lead us?

PICARD
This way.

Kalkhan gives a perfunctory smile, as Picard leads the combined group out.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIEFING ROOM

Picard leads the two parties into the briefing room. The Enterprise crew, Riker and Worf, take a seat on one side, while the Lasantians all sit opposing them. Picard takes his usual chair at the head of the table. Two security officers remain posted at the doors.

PICARD

Let me begin by saying that the United Federation of Planets regards the establishment of relations with any new culture as the highest achievement. I know that we did not meet under ideal circumstance, but I hope you join me in putting that behind us and starting over anew.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

I used to believe the Federation was something to be feared. Surely those who best a ship of Klingon Empire's finest warriors must be fearsome indeed. It did not make sense to me why then the Klingons were said to have spoken of them with such disdain.

Kalkhan leans in a little, over the table, and his tone takes on slight revelatory air.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

I understand now. You are impressively armed, impressively capable, but there is nothing behind it.

(beat)

You know nothing of what matters, Captain. We have no use of peace with you.

WORF

Chancellor--

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

(cutting off Worf)

And if your Lieutenant was anything like those Klingon warriors, as he claims to be, he could have told you that himself.

Kalkhan leans back in his chair, his icy demeanor returning.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

His deception offends me. I want him gone.

Picard looks taken aback by the abruptly hostile turn of events. He maintains his cool however.

PICARD

Chancellor, Lt. Worf is fine officer whom I trust emphatically. I consider his presence and his counsel immeasurably valuable.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

Captain, if you want any agreement at all to come of this, you will send him from this room.

Picard stares at Kalkhan for a moment, attempting to size up his adversary. He speaks without breaking his stare.

PICARD

Lt. Worf, would you kindly take your post on the bridge?

Worf stands up, and with his head held high, walks out the door. Kalkhan watches him leave, while the other Lasantians avoid looking at him. Farak, at the last moment, looks his way as the door opens.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise, in orbit.

INT. ENTERPRISE DEANNA'S QUARTERS

Deanna is sitting in one of her chairs, reading a PADD, a mug of something that is no longer steaming at her side. Exhaustion is visible on her features, and she looks disinterested in whatever she is reading. She lowers the PADD and sighs, but before she can start reading again, her monitor chimes. Perking up abruptly, she sets the PADD down and rushes to it, turning the monitor towards her and tapping it on. Lwaxana's smiling face appears on the screen.

LWAXANA

Little one, you spoil me!

Lwaxana's smile fades quickly and genuine concern takes over.

LWAXANA

Deanna, what's wrong?

DEANNA

I need your help Mother, getting something back that belongs to us.

LWAXANA

I don't understand.

DEANNA

The last holy ring of Betazed. It's on a planet in the Lasantian system, on the edge of the Federation-Klingon border.

LWAXANA

(beat)

That was lost centuries ago, to an act of barbarism. How in all of the galaxy did you find it?

DEANNA

It was right there, on the hand of boy. A...

(seething)

trophy.

Lwaxana is for a moment speechless. Her expression is aghast and furious as she looks away, but it focuses a bit as she turns back to Deanna.

LWAXANA

What does Jean-Luc intend to do about it?

Deanna takes a breath and her practiced calm returns.

DEANNA

Nothing. There's is nothing he can do. The captain is weighing a relic of the past against peace, now. He has his orders and his principles, and I don't know what to do.

Lwaxana leans in a little, the rage building once more in her eyes.

LWAXANA

You take matters into your own hands. My heritage--your heritage, Deanna--is not something to be bartered with.

(MORE)

LWAXANA (CONT'D)

Whatever I have done for the Federation, however grand, it has NEVER come at the expense of Betazoid people or our culture. I will fight to the bitter end for what I hold dear, and I have more spirit than a thousand bloodthirsty warriors--and so do you.

(beat)

Now, do what you need to do to be a daughter of the fifth house of Betazed.

(flicks hand)

I'll see to the proper authorities.

DEANNA

Thank you, Mother. I needed to hear that.

LWAXANA

Don't ever forget it again, little one.

Lwaxana's stern expression break just a little, before the communication ends.

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIEFING ROOM

The two sides remain at the table. Picard and Riker share disheartened looks, while the Lasantians maintain expressions of disdain. Obviously, no one is pleased with the current state of affairs.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

Our position stands, Captain. The moment we leave this ship, our peoples will be at war. The Federation has not demonstrated itself worthy of respect of a lasting allegiance. You have spared the lives of our crew--

Garus angrily huffs and looks away.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

--And for that, we listened to what you had to say, though it goes against centuries of teachings.

(MORE)

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

Those teaching were not wrong.

PICARD

So you will not accept even a simple agreement to end hostilities? If you wish to be left in peace, the Federation can and will respect that.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

Left in peace... you mean forever isolated. Under blockade, cut off by Federation respect?

PICARD

The Federation will not intrude on your people or your planet, but we cannot tolerate acts of aggression against our citizens. A perimeter will be setup around this system, and monitored. No vessels will be permitted in or out.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

If your intent is imprison or corrupt us, then we choose to resist.

Kalkhan stands, with the indisputable air of a leader.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN

There will be no peace. That is the will of my people.

The remaining Lasantians stand with their Chancellor. The Enterprise crew all stand, slowly and resigned.

PICARD

If that is what you wish, I have no choice but to honor that. I hope one day, you can allow us another chance. I'll escort you back to the transporter room.

The Lastantians brusquely walk to the door, followed by the Enterprise crew.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE

The Lasantians are being lead by Picard to the back turbolift, passing Worf at his post at tactical. Kalkhan, Farak, and Parin all ignore him completely, but the other younger Lasantians glare at him as they pass. Worf pointed refuses to meet their looks, focusing on his console and the viewscreen. Before the group has crossed the bridge however, the turbolift door opens and Deanna steps out, looking absolutely determined with PADD in hand. She walks directly to Picard.

PICARD

Counselor? Whatever it is, I'm sorry it will have to wait. Our guests are returning to the planet.

DEANNA

I'm sorry Captian, but I don't believe I can allow that yet.

PICARD

I don't understand.

Deanna hands over the PADD to Picard.

DEANNA

By order of the Betazed government, a member of the United Federation of Planets, the stolen Betazed property, currently in the possession of those present, is to be returned.

Picard scans the PADD, looking dumbfounded.

PICARD

Counselor Troi, you cannot possibly expect--

Garus muscles his way right front of Deanna, holding his ringed fist aloft in her face.

GARUS

If you want this ring back, then you'll have to cut it off!

DEANNA

That won't be necessary. Security!

Garus turns back to the guards, readying himself for a fight.

The guards move their hands to their phasers but don't draw them, obviously waiting for more definitive orders. Riker and Worf stand ready to throw themselves at first Lasantian to draw a weapon.

PICARD
Hold you positions--

Kalkhan interrupts Picard with a deep, swelling belly laugh.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN
At last, one of you finally SHOWS
A LITTLE SPINE! GARUS! Give the
woman what she wants.

Garus turns to Kalkhan, looking betrayed.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN
NOW!

Garus huffs again, but does as he's told. He holds the ring out to Deanna, who steps forward to take it. Kalkhan watches the exchange with a smile on face, and turns to Picard.

CHANCELLOR KALKHAN
Watch, and learn, Captain. If you
do, when you return, perhaps you
finally understand how to earn our
respect.

PICARD
I think we shall.

The Lasantians follow Riker to the turbolift. Picard takes a moment to exchange a look with Deanna, before following them.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise leaves orbit, and warps off.

INT. ENTERPRISE READY ROOM

Picard is sitting at the couch, ready a PADD. The door chimes.

PICARD

Enter.

The door opens and Deanna walks in. She looks calm but not relaxed, as if sensing the Captain is as conflicted as she is uncertain.

DEANNA

You wanted to see me, Captain?

PICARD

Yes.

Deanna respectfully sits down, on the other side of the couch.

PICARD

I've been reviewing the order of
from the Ambassador.

(beat)

Starfleet Command rarely
appreciates such direct
intervention, but I don't believe
any of the admiralty would be
willing to challenge your Mother.

DEANNA

I have rarely felt her so
impassioned myself.

PICARD

I feel I could say the same thing
about you. In our time together,
I've never known you to set aside
the chain of command as you did.

Deanna starts into what sounds like a prepared statement.

DEANNA

Yes. Whatever my intent, and I
believe it to be a correct one, I
accept that I disobeyed orders,
and I am prepared to accept
whatever punishment you deem
necessary, Sir.

PICARD

I cannot ignore your actions.
However, I cannot ignore your
results either. Your actions may
well have achieved what the rest
of ours could not.

DEANNA
Surely my behavior requires some
form of demerit.

PICARD
It certainly does. I will note
this event in your record.
(beat)
Beyond that, perhaps to take the
advice of the Chancellor, I will
exercise my prerogative to let the
matter go.

Deanna relaxes, just a little.

DEANNA
Thank you, Captain. It won't
happen again.

PICARD
I always want to hear the opinions
of my officers. I hope that next
time, I will be more ready to
listen.
(beat)
That will be all.

DEANNA
Captain.

Deanna turns to walk out. Picard stops her as the door
opens.

PICARD
Counselor?

DEANNA
Yes, Captain?

PICARD
Please give your mother my
regards.

DEANNA
(nods)
Of course.

Deanna leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTERPRISE BRIDGE

Deanna walks up the side of the bridge to the rear turbo lift. As she passes the tactical console, she pauses and walks to Worf.

DEANNA

Worf?

WORF

What can I do for you, Counselor?

DEANNA

I just wanted to see how you were,
after what's happened.

WORF

It has been trying, but I am
managing.

DEANNA

I have no doubt of that, Worf.

(beat)

If you need to talk, my door is
open.

Worf bites his a tongue, before speaking up.

WORF

Do you suppose I did the right
thing, Commander?

DEANNA

I believe you did what Starfleet
expects of you.

WORF

Thank you.

Deanna nods and walks to the turbo lift. Worf returns to his console.

FADE OUT.