

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

"In Theory"
#40274-199

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FINAL DRAFT

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STAR TREK: "In Theory" - REV. 4/1/91 - CAST

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
"In Theory"

CAST

PICARD	ENSIGN JENNA D'SORA
RIKER	
DATA	ENSIGN McKNIGHT
BEVERLY	
TROI	
GEORDI	
WORF	
GUINAN	
O'BRIEN	
KEIKO	
COMPUTER VOICE	

Non-Speaking

NURSE
SECURITY OFFICERS
THORNE
LIEUTENANT VAN MAYTER
DATA'S CAT
SUPERNUMERARIES

STAR TREK: "In Theory" - 3/20/91 - SETS

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
"In Theory"

SETS

INTERIORS

EXTERIORS

USS ENTERPRISE

USS ENTERPRISE

MAIN BRIDGE

CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

SHUTTLE

OBSERVATION LOUNGE

CORRIDOR

DARK MATTER NEBULA

MAIN ENGINEERING

SICKBAY

TEN FORWARD

TROI'S OFFICE

DATA'S QUARTERS

JENNA'S QUARTERS

TORPEDO BAY

CONCERT HALL

SHUTTLE

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
"In Theory"
TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The ship is on the outskirts of a DARK MATTER NEBULA. This material is not normally visible to the eye, so all we should see at this point is a large black space devoid of stars hanging in front of the ship. Perhaps some nearby stars around the periphery of the nebula are partly obscured by the gaseous material, thus indicating that something is blocking our view.

PICARD (V.O.)

Captain's Log: Stardate 44932.3
The Enterprise is preparing to enter the Mar Oscura, an unexplored dark matter nebula first identified over a century ago.

2 INT. TORPEDO BAY

This is the torpedo operations center. Launch bays for torpedos are set into one of the bulkheads. DATA is working on a photon torpedo which has been slid out of one of the launch bays.

PICARD (V.O.)

Commander Data is modifying several of our photon torpedos for an experiment designed to elicit more information about this unusual phenomenon.

3 NEW ANGLE

Revealing ENSIGN JENNA D'SORA as she moves over to assist Data. Jenna is of Mediterranean descent, petite, and almost fragile in appearance. But her doll-like face belies the fact that she is a veteran security officer who could probably hold her own against anyone aboard ship. Emotionally, as we will learn, she is more fragile.

3 CONTINUED:

On the surface this manifests itself only as an eagerness to please, a puppy-dog friendliness that asks for approval and affection.

3 CONTINUED:

DATA

The initial dispersal pattern
should not be more than seven
kilometers in diameter.

JENNA

(makes adjustment)

Six point eight kilometers...

Jenna is just a tiny bit distracted, a little quiet...
but it's enough for Data to pick up on.

DATA

That should suffice.

(beat)

Is there something occupying your
thoughts, Jenna? You are somewhat
subdued today...

JENNA

I bumped into Jeff in the
turbolift again this morning.

DATA

Was the experience as emotionally
problematic as last week's
encounter?

Beat... Jenna doesn't answer directly, but keeps going
with her thought.

JENNA

He... asked me to dinner.

DATA

What was your response?

JENNA

I told him I'd think about it.

DATA

As you requested, I must now
remind you of the reasons you
decided to end your relationship
with Jeff.

Jenna's eyes roll slightly... and there's a bit of
humor in her expression... a small bargain between
friends.

3 CONTINUED: (2)

JENNA

I guess I asked for this... go ahead.

DATA

You objected to the fact that Jeff seemed unwilling to set aside sufficient time for you. You said he never did... the little things. He was unresponsive. You disliked the sound he made when he ate his soup...

JENNA

(with humor)

Okay, okay... I remember.

DATA

This is the third time I have refreshed your memory. Do you wish to rescind our agreement?

JENNA

No, no. It's for my own good. It's just so easy to forget.
(indicates device)
Hand me that sequencer.

DATA

Many lovers throughout history have had similar difficulties. Anne Boleyn was quite distressed that Henry the Eighth preferred the company of his huntsmen to that of his wife.

Data hands her a small instrument. She waves it a few times over the inside of the torpedo, taking a reading.

3 CONTINUED: (3)

JENNA

(wryly)

As I recall, she ended up losing her head. I guess I'm well out of this.

(beat)

When did you develop an interest in romantic historical figures?

DATA

Six weeks ago, when you and Jeff dissolved your relationship, I saw an excellent opportunity to study that aspect of human intimacy. Also, I believed it was my obligation to do so.

JENNA

"Obligation"? What do you mean?

DATA

I anticipated this would be a difficult period for you. As your friend, it is my responsibility to be supportive in times of need.

JENNA

(genuinely touched)

That is really sweet, Data.

She looks at him with gratitude, affection... and something more...

4 NEW ANGLE

Data closes the panel on the torpedo. Jenna moves to a control console on the bulkhead. Data gives everything one final check and then steps away from the torpedo and nods to Jenna. She works the controls and the torpedo SLIDES INTO the launch bay.

DATA

(hits communicator)

Data to Bridge. We are ready for the first illumination test.

5 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

RIKER in Command, ENSIGN MCKNIGHT at Con, WORF at Tactical.

RIKER

(to com)

Acknowledged. All science stations stand by... we're about to light up the nebula. Mister Worf?

WORF

(reading console)

Launch bay one shows ready, Commander.

RIKER

Fire torpedo.

Worf works the console.

6 INT. TORPEDO BAY (OPTICAL)

Data and Jenna are reading displays and working consoles. A SOUND EFFECT is heard and some lights FLASH to indicate the torpedo launch. A display monitor gives an EXTERIOR VIEW of the nebula outside the ship.

7 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The torpedo DISAPPEARS into the nebula. After a couple seconds, the torpedo EXPLODES and there is a BRILLIANT SHOW OF LIGHT. The dark matter has been illuminated by the display and the gaseous cloud can be seen clearly for the first time.

8 INT. TORPEDO BAY (OPTICAL)

Data and Jenna watch the monitor.

JENNA

(softly)

It's beautiful.

(she moves closer to

him)

Like watching fireworks when I
was a little girl.

Jenna turns her gaze to Data... and there is a great deal more in her look than simple friendship. We get another hint of her growing feelings for him. As they watch the brilliant light show together...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

9 INT. TEN FORWARD

A woodwind quintet composed of Data (oboe), Jenna (flute), KEIKO, (clarinet) and TWO N.D. MALE CREWMEMBERS (bassoon, French horn), is playing a piece of music to the patrons in the room, including O'BRIEN.

The music comes to a stop and there is APPLAUSE from the audience. The members of the quartet stand and acknowledge the crowd. O'Brien moves toward the "stage" area along with a few other well-wishers.

O'BRIEN
(to Keiko)
It was wonderful.

He gives her a quick kiss.

KEIKO
Thanks.

Data sets down his instrument, Jenna keeps her flute in hand, still stares at her music, obviously unhappy. Data cocks his head in puzzlement.

DATA
Is anything wrong?

JENNA
My tempo was off. I felt like
I was really rushing it.

DATA
I do not believe that is so. Your
rhythmic control has improved
markedly. I heard no fluctuations
during the performance.

She relaxes a bit -- Data's support means a lot to her.

JENNA
Well, maybe. But I ruined the
coda. I got confused with the
phrasing... I kept breathing at
the wrong times.

9 CONTINUED:

DATA

The contrapuntal nature of the composition is quite demanding. We will give the rhythmic patterns more attention in our next rehearsal.

(beat)

However, I am quite certain that the audience was oblivious to such nuances. They seemed to enjoy the performance thoroughly.

She looks at him and smiles -- his kind attention makes her feel better.

JENNA

Thanks, Data... you're really sweet.

10 INT. TEN FORWARD - LATER

A short time later. Data, Jenna, Keiko, and O'Brien are sitting at one of the tables, sharing drinks.

10 CONTINUED:

KEIKO

... every night, Miles leaves his socks on the floor. When we got married, I made the mistake of picking them up a few times... then I realized if I kept it up I'd be doing it the rest of my life... so I stopped... figuring he'd get the message and do it himself.

Miles smiles easily, unbothered.

KEIKO

One night goes by... two... a week... ten days... by now there's a pile of socks half a meter high!

O'BRIEN

Come on... it wasn't half a meter...

KEIKO

After two weeks I couldn't stand it any more -- I bundled them up and put them in the cleaning processor. And I'm still doing it.

O'BRIEN

And a very good job of it she does, too...

He winks broadly at Data as Keiko whirls on him, rising to the jibe. O'Brien laughs and puts his arm around her. They kiss lightly on the lips, a loving couple accepting each other's faults and foibles. Jenna regards them, a look of faint envy crossing her face. She glances at Data, touches his arm occasionally, and as she talks, her manner suggests that they, too, are a couple...

10 CONTINUED: (2)

JENNA

Keiko, you sound just like Data.
He came to my quarters the other
day to give me a music lesson,
and he said the funniest thing...
how did you put it, Data?

DATA

I believe I observed that you seem
to have an aversion to
orderliness... but it was not
intended as a humorous remark...

JENNA

So before we started, he gallantly
offered to help me straighten up.

She threads her arm fondly through his, clearly wanting
to establish that they, too, have this easy-going
relationship.

DATA

And a very good job of it I did,
too.

He gives O'Brien a broad wink and the group laughs.
Data is pleased that he has caused this reaction --
though he's not entirely certain why.

CUT TO:

11
thru OMITTED
13

14 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The ship near the nebula.

15 INT. MAIN BRIDGE (OPTICAL)

Data is at the aft science station, studying
information from the nebula.

PICARD
Report, Mister Data.

DATA
I am nearly finished compiling
the readings from our most recent
illuminatory burst. They differ
considerably from surveys of
similar nebulae.

PICARD
How so?

DATA
Dark matter density is nearly one
order of magnitude higher than
previously found.
(beat)
Lifeforms here may have developed
in ways never before observed.

RIKER
(to Data)
Interesting hypothesis. Are there
any M-Class planets we could check
out?

DATA
Several, Sir. The nearest is
approximately three light years
from our present position.

15 CONTINUED:

PICARD

It's worth a look. We'll continue
with our survey along the way.

(to McKnight)

Ensign, get the planet's
coordinates from Commander Data
and plot a course, three quarters
impulse.

CUT TO:

16 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The ship ENTERS the nebula at impulse.

16A INT. SICKBAY (PREVIOUSLY SCENE 11)

BEVERLY and a NURSE are standing at the large wall
monitor, running a complex experiment.

BEVERLY

(to Nurse)

Let's increase the flow rate --
see if that helps.

The Nurse nods and then leaves. Beverly looks at the
monitor for a beat, then moves toward her office.

16B ON BEVERLY (PREVIOUSLY SCENE 12)

As she walks by a RACK OF INSTRUMENTS on the wall...
Several steps past it she hears a glassy, metallic
CLINK! She stops... looks back at the rack in
puzzlement... then looks down at the floor.

16C NEW ANGLE (PREVIOUSLY SCENE 13)

Revealing a MEDICAL INSTRUMENT lying on the deck
beneath the rack. She's puzzled.

She looks around, but there's no one here at the
moment. With a trace of annoyance, Beverly picks up
the instrument and replaces it in the rack.

CUT TO:

17 INT. TORPEDO BAY

Data and Jenna are working on an open photon torpedo. Jenna is installing a small cannister inside the central chamber of the torpedo. Data monitors with a small digital instrument. The work doesn't require their constant attention.

JENNA

Sometimes in the summer we went on cookouts... just my little brother and me, and Mother... She was hopeless without a replicator. But we didn't care.

DATA

Children often do not develop a discerning palette until well beyond adolescence.

JENNA

It's wasn't that. It just felt... so good to be together... as a family. We didn't have much of that after my father died... so those times were really special.

(beat)

I wish we were back there now... you and I...

DATA

The unidirectional nature of the time continuum makes that an unlikely possibility.

JENNA

(laughs)

That's one thing I've always loved about you. You make me laugh.

(beat)

You know, maybe I've been with the wrong men. Why couldn't they be like you, Data? You've got everything.

DATA

That is not true. I have no human feelings.

She takes his hand in a friendly fashion.

17 CONTINUED:

JENNA

But you've still given me more
than any of them. You've spent
time with me when I was lonely...
you've encouraged me when I was
down. No one could have been
kinder to me... those are the
things that matter...

17 CONTINUED: (3)

Jenna smiles.

JENNA

(continuing, re: the
job)

Well, I think that's it.

(with put on formality)

With your permission, Commander,
I'll be going.

DATA

(straight)

Permission granted.

She gives him a friendly kiss on the cheek, but only
pulls a short distance away afterwards.

JENNA

I don't know if you're aware of
it... but you're very handsome...

She kisses him again, this time longer and on the lips
-- a real kiss, which Data doesn't resist. Jenna
smiles.

JENNA

(continuing)

See you tomorrow...

She turns and leaves the room. OFF Data's reaction.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

18 INT. TEN FORWARD

It's after hours and the room is deserted. GUINAN is mixing several drinks in odd-shaped glasses on the bar. Data ENTERS, there is a lost, puzzled expression on his face.

GUINAN

Hi, Data. Want to try something new?

Data sits at the bar and looks at the drinks she's making with only slight curiosity.

GUINAN

(continuing)

This is a concoction I heard about on Prakal Two. I think it's great, but I want another opinion, so...

She carefully combines a yellow and a blue liquid in a glass, producing a sickly green potion. She offers it to Data. He takes a small drink. She waits for a reaction.

DATA

Eighty-seven percent Saurian Brandy... Targ milk and Denevian mead comprise the rest... an unusually high concentration of mono-saccharides and fructose compounds.

GUINAN

Too sweet, huh?

Data gives her a look -- "Kool Aid." Guinan drinks some of the potion herself and Data retreats into thoughtful silence.

18 CONTINUED:

Guinan quickly picks up on the fact that something's on his mind.

GUINAN

If I didn't know you better, I'd say you were... preoccupied.

DATA

Ensign D'Sora just gave me what could be considered a very... passionate kiss in the Torpedo Bay.

Guinan gives him a long piercing look.

GUINAN

Really?

(beat)

How did it make you feel?

DATA

I cannot feel because---

GUINAN

I know, I know. You have no emotions.

(very intrigued)

What I mean is, what's going on in there?

(points at his head)

What did it make you think about?

DATA

I was... intrigued. Jenna seemed to be displaying genuine affection toward me.

18 CONTINUED: (2)

GUINAN

And then?

DATA

I calculated that Jenna's actions to date would tend to support the supposition that she wishes to initiate a non-platonic mutually exclusive relationship.

GUINAN

You're just a starry-eyed romantic, aren't you?

(before he can answer)

What do you think of her?

DATA

I find her to be a competent officer... highly motivated... lacking somewhat in her understanding of the theory underlying dilithium matrix applications---

GUINAN

But what do you think of her personally?

(beat)

Do you like her?

DATA

I have become... used to her.

GUINAN

It sounds like the next step is up to you.

(beat)

So what are you gonna do about it?

DATA

I do not know. Clearly, an ongoing intimate relationship is an option. However, I am inexperienced in such matters. I require advice.

Beat.

18 CONTINUED: (3)

GUINAN

Well, don't look at me.

Data obligingly looks away from her.

GUINAN

No, no. I mean, this time I don't have any advice to give. You can't tell someone how to handle their first love affair. They have to find a way to do that themselves.

Data thinks for a moment.

DATA

But I am incapable of love.

GUINAN

(knowing look)

Then this should be a very unique experience.

On Data's expression...

CUT TO:

19 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

In the nebula.

20 INT. CORRIDOR

Data is about to go into his quarters. From o.s. we hear...

GEORDI'S VOICE

Missing someone?

21 NEW ANGLE

Revealing GEORDI walking toward Data. He is carrying Data's CAT in his arms.

GEORDI

I found Spot wandering through the corridor two sections away.

Geordi hands Data the cat.

21 CONTINUED:

DATA
(puzzled)
Thank you.

GEORDI
Forget to secure the door when
you left?

DATA
The door sensor has been
programmed to recognize only
humanoid forms for entry or
egress. Spot could not have
triggered the mechanism.

They EXIT to...

22 INT. DATA'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Data puts the cat down.

GEORDI
Maybe someone came in while you
were away and let him out by
accident. Has anything been
disturbed?

DATA
(looks around very
quickly)
No.
(to com)
Computer, has anyone entered my
quarters in the last twelve hours
other than myself or Commander
La Forge?

COMPUTER VOICE
Negative.

GEORDI
That's pretty strange... we should
report a possible unauthorized
entry to security, just to be on
the safe side.

Data nods in agreement and Geordi moves toward the
door, but Data stops him.

22 CONTINUED:

DATA

Geordi, may I ask your advice concerning a... personal matter?

GEORDI

Sure, Data.

DATA

Should I pursue a relationship with Ensign D'Sora?

Geordi is caught off-guard and it shows.

DATA

(prompting)

Ensign Jenna D'Sora. Serial number CL-10928---

GEORDI

Yeah, I know who she is. I thought she and Jeff Arton...

DATA

They discontinued their association. Now she has made the... first move in initiating a relationship with me.

(beat)

What should I do?

Geordi thinks for a long beat, then gropes for something to tell his friend.

GEORDI

Hmmm... if she just ended a bad situation... sometimes it takes people a while... but if they jump into another relationship

--

From the confused look on Data's face, Geordi can tell this isn't helping much, but he keeps going.

GEORDI

(continuing)

... see, that can be a problem... unless, of course, she is ready... and then it depends if you're really serious. It's uh... kind of complicated.

22 CONTINUED: (2)

Geordi tries to think of the right thing to say... but he feels a little helpless here... finally gives up.

GEORDI

(after a beat)

My advice to you is... to ask someone else for advice. Someone with a little more experience in these things.

CUT TO:

22A OMITTED

23 INT. TROI'S OFFICE

TROI and Data sitting.

TROI

I think you should be careful. This is not some experiment you're running. Jenna is a living, breathing person with needs and feelings that have to be considered.

DATA

Then you believe I should not pursue this any further.

TROI

No, I didn't say that... I just want you to be aware that this will be unlike any other... more casual relationship that you've attempted.

DATA

I have studied a great deal of human literature on the subject of love and romantic liaisons. There are many role models for me to emulate.

TROI

Ultimately, Jenna will care for you because of what you are. Not what you imitate out of a book.

23 CONTINUED:

DATA

My programming may be inadequate
to the task.

Troi gives him a sympathetic smile.

TROI

We're all more than the sum of
our parts, Data. You'll have to
be more than the sum of your
programming.

CUT TO:

24 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Worf and Data near the Tactical station.

WORF

Klingons do not... pursue
relationships. They conquer that
which they desire.

Data nods and moves to leave, but Worf stops him.

WORF

(continuing)

However...
(quietly, with meaning)
Ensign D'Sora serves under my
command. If she were...
mistreated, I would be very...
displeased.

Data gets the message.

DATA

I understand.

Data walks away... glances back once at Worf... then
turns and keeps going.

CUT TO:

25 INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE

RIKER

I think you should pursue it.
First of all, she's a beautiful
woman who seems to be crazy about
you.

Data is still troubled by something.

DATA

Jenna has clearly demonstrated
how she feels about me. But I
am not capable of returning those
feelings.

RIKER

I'm sure she's aware of that.
(beat)
Data, when you get involved with
another person, there's always
a risk. Of disappointment. Of
getting hurt.

DATA

I cannot get hurt. But she can.

RIKER

Jenna knows that. And she's
obviously decided to take the
chance. Data, when it really
works between two people, it's
like nothing you've ever
experienced -- the rewards are
far beyond simple friendship.

DATA

How far beyond, sir?

RIKER

Well, that's what I hope you're
about to find out.

Data thinks for a beat.

DATA

Thank you, Commander.

Data EXITS to...

26 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Data intercepts Picard as he's heading for his Ready Room.

DATA

Captain, I am seeking advice in---

26 CONTINUED:

PICARD

Yes, I've heard, Data... and I would be delighted to offer you any advice I have on understanding women.

(beat)

As soon as I have some, I'll let you know.

Picard continues to the Ready Room. OFF Data's reaction.

CUT TO:

27 INT. CORRIDOR

Data is walking purposefully along the corridor, a bouquet of flowers in his hand.

DATA (V.O.)

Second Officer's personal log, Stardate 44935.6. After conferring with my colleagues regarding the nature of romantic love in general, and my own situation in particular, I have reached a decision.

He stops in front of a door. It chimes and opens. Jenna is standing inside, wearing an attractive, off-duty outfit.

28 INT. JENNA'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Jenna smiles about the flowers.

JENNA

They're beautiful. Come in.

She takes the flowers from him, and he follows her into the room, the door closing behind.

Jenna's quarters are more "personal" than any we've seen on the Enterprise. "Creative disorganization" seems to be the dominant motif. A profusion of art objects and decorations are combined with a couple of clothing articles casually left where they were dropped. It looks very "comfortable."

28 CONTINUED:

She raises the flowers to catch their pleasant fragrance.

JENNA

(continuing)

Mmmm. What are they?

DATA

Crystilia. Their fragrance is an evolutionary response to the acrid nature of the atmosphere on Telemarius Three.

28 CONTINUED: (2)

JENNA

(re: Data)

You silver-tongued devil.

(turns)

Let me find somewhere to put these.

She scans the densely decorated room.

JENNA

(continuing)

Hmmm. That might not be so easy...

As Jenna looks around, Data follows her further into the room.

DATA

It seems that your quarters have reverted to their earlier state of disorder.

JENNA

I know. I'm hopeless.

Jenna finally locates a vase and arranges the flowers in it.

JENNA

(continuing)

There.

(regarding them)

They're beautiful, Data. It's so sweet of you...

DATA

It was Commander Riker who suggested this particular flower. He said that it had worked for him in the past.

28 CONTINUED: (3)

Jenna raises an eyebrow.

JENNA

You didn't talk to the entire ship
about us...

DATA

No. In actuality, less than one
percent of the Enterprise crew
was involved. It was necessary
to balance theory with
experiential referents. Both are
required for a program of this
nature.

(to Computer)

Computer, decrease illumination
level by one third standard lux.

The lights dim to a romantic glow. Data purposefully
sits down on the couch, Jenna remains standing, a
puzzled look on her face.

28 CONTINUED: (4)

JENNA

(re: the situation)

This is all part of a program?

DATA

Yes. One which I have just
created for romantic
relationships.

Jenna smiles, sits down next to him, much closer than
she would to "a friend."

JENNA

(with humor)

So... I'm just a small variable
in one of your new computational
environments?

DATA

You are much more than that,
Jenna. I have written a
subroutine specifically for you
-- a program within the program.
I have devoted a considerable
share of my internal resources
to its development.

Jenna looks touched. She leans toward him, still
appreciates the humor of the situation.

JENNA

That's the nicest thing anyone's
ever said to me.

Jenna puts her arms around him and they kiss...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

29 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

travelling through the nebula.

30 INT. BRIDGE

Picard, Riker, Worf, McKnight at Con, Data at Ops.

PICARD

Estimated time of arrival, Mister
Data?

DATA

We will reach the M class planet
in approximately eleven hours.

Picard nods.

PICARD

You have the Bridge, Number One.

Riker takes the Captain's chair; FOLLOW Picard into the
Ready Room.

31 INT. READY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Picard ENTERS the room, walks casually towards his desk
-- and STOPS.

The top of his desk is completely bare. Puzzled, he
glances around.

32 INCLUDE THE FLOOR

under the desk. Where everything once on top --
computer terminal, PADDs, PADD holder, tea mug -- have
been somehow dumped onto the floor.

Picard reacts, curious. He stares at the mess for a
beat.

PICARD

(keying insignia)
Picard to Lieutenant Worf.

32 CONTINUED:

WORF'S COM VOICE

Yes, Captain?

PICARD

Step into my Ready Room, please.
And bring a tricorder.

WORF'S COM VOICE

Aye, Sir.

Picard crouches down, inspecting the objects. Worf
ENTERS the room and Picard stands back up.

WORF

Captain?

Worf stares at the floor for a moment. Then back to
Picard.

PICARD

What do you make of this?

WORF

I am puzzled, Sir.

PICARD

So am I, Mister Worf.

Worf aims the tricorder at the objects and takes a
quick reading.

WORF

Captain, the only detectable
bioelectric residuals are your
own.

(a beat)

You did not --

PICARD

-- No. I did not.

Worf scowls. He quickly checks the bathroom.

PICARD

(continuing)

It seems we have a poltergeist.

WORF

Sir?

PICARD

A mischievous spirit.

32 CONTINUED: (2)

WORF
(understanding)
Hoq-JoH.

PICARD
(beat)
Perhaps this is some kind of
practical joke.

WORF
(taken aback)
Sir?

PICARD
Perhaps not.

WORF
I cannot explain how an intruder
could have entered this room...
I recommend we go to Red Alert.

PICARD
Not yet.

WORF
Then I will order one of my
officers to stand watch.
(keys insignia)
Worf to Ensign --

PICARD
(cutting him off)
-- That's alright, Mister Worf.
For now, I think circumstances
warrant our caution -- nothing
more.

32 CONTINUED: (3)

WORF
(reluctantly)
As you wish, Captain.

Picard dismisses him with a nod, and Worf turns and goes out the door. Picard stares again at the objects beneath the desk. OFF his still puzzled face.

33 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

In the nebula.

34
thru OMITTED
35

36 INT. DATA'S QUARTERS

Data is painting at an easel. The door CHIMES.

DATA
Enter.

He stops painting and turns toward the door as Jenna steps inside, carrying an object in both her hands.

JENNA
I know it's a little unexpected...

36 CONTINUED:

DATA

You are correct. I did not anticipate your arrival until nineteen hundred hours.

Data stays at the easel, continues to paint.

JENNA

I couldn't wait... I wanted you to have this.

She holds the object out to Data -- it is a small alien sculpture, exotic and beautiful. He studies it, but does not take it.

DATA

You have often expressed dissatisfaction with the Spartan nature of my quarters. Is this an attempt at embellishment?

JENNA

The cat's out of the bag.

DATA

(looking around)
Spot?

JENNA

I mean you've caught me in the act. I'm just trying to brighten things up around here.
(re: the sculpture)
It's Tyrinean. What do you think?

Data studies the object for a moment.

DATA

Its line is both fluid and formal, yet retains an unpremeditated quality. The tactility of the surface enrichment is evocative of the neo-primitive period in Tyrinean blade carving.

JENNA

I hadn't thought of it that way.

Jenna looks at Data, still seated at his easel.

36 CONTINUED: (2)

JENNA

(re: painting)

I'm sorry. Don't let me
interrupt.

DATA

Alright.

36 CONTINUED: (3)

Then he turns back and continues painting. If it was anybody else, the action would be the height of rudeness. Jenna can't help but react a moment, even though she knows he doesn't intend a slight. She recovers.

JENNA
(playfully)
Data.

DATA
(looks up)
Yes?

JENNA
The Book of Love, chapter four,
paragraph seventeen: When your
girlfriend arrives with a gift,
stop whatever it is you're doing,
and give her your undivided
attention.

DATA
My literature search was
apparently incomplete. I
discovered twenty-nine books with
that title, but none contained
that particular admonition.

JENNA
(playful)
That's because we're writing our
own version as we go -- you and
I.

A long beat as Data thinks about this. He sets down his paintbrush.

DATA
I should not have resumed my
painting?

JENNA
No.

DATA
Despite your suggestion that I
continue?

JENNA
Exactly.

36 CONTINUED: (4)

Another thoughtful beat.

DATA

The nature of our interactions
is considerably more subtle and
complex than I had anticipated.
I have much to learn.

A beat as Jenna gets an idea.

JENNA

Let's start with this.

She hands him back the sculpture.

JENNA

(continuing)

A critical analysis isn't
necessarily the best response to
a gift.

A beat.

DATA

Perhaps if I looked for a suitable
place to display it.

JENNA

(pleased)

Much better.

Data stands and walks with the carving to a remote
corner of the room, placing it onto a bare surface.

DATA

The ambient light in this location
accentuates its contours.

Data observes Jenna's neutral response. Then thinks
for a beat. He returns to a much more central table.

36 CONTINUED: (5)

DATA

(continuing)

However, a gift should not necessarily be placed according to aesthetic criteria. A more central location will carry added meaning.

He places the carving in the more noticeable location. Jenna steps over to him, takes his hand.

JENNA

Data, what's important is that you're trying. You don't know how much that means to me.

She indicates the easel.

JENNA

(continuing)

Now, go back to your painting.

Data starts to go back to the easel... hesitates, looks at her.

JENNA

(smiles)

This time I really mean it.
(kisses him on cheek)
I'll see you tonight.

FOLLOW Jenna as she goes out the door, smile on her face.

37 INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS (OPTICAL)

Jenna walks out of Data's quarters and the door closes behind her. She takes a few steps, still smiling, then pauses a moment. The smile fades for just an instant, replaced by the hint of a doubt about this situation. She walks back into her room... as a wall panel on the corridor bulkhead DEMATERIALIZES, briefly showing the wiring within.

CUT TO:

38 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The ship in the nebula.

38A INT. READY ROOM

Picard is working on a terminal at his desk.

RIKER'S COM VOICE
Riker to Captain Picard. You're
needed on the Bridge.

PICARD
(to COM)
Acknowledged.

FOLLOW Picard as he stands and heads to the door and
onto the Bridge.

39 INT. MAIN BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Picard steps onto the Bridge from the Ready Room.
Riker is in Command, Data, Worf, McKnight at their
respective positions.

RIKER
We've reached the designated
coordinates.

Riker indicates the viewscreen and they turn to look.

RIKER
(continuing)
But the M-Class planet... it's
gone.

40 INCLUDE VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)

Nothing but the nebula and empty space.

OFF Picard's reaction.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

41 INT. BRIDGE (OPTICAL)

Picard, Riker, Worf, Data, and McKnight turn from the viewscreen.

PICARD

Are you sure there was no malfunction in the sensors?

DATA

No, sir. Lateral EM scanners registered radiation indicative of an M-Class planet.

WORF

Sir!

42 INCLUDE VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)

A reddish-brown planet now fills the screen. Everyone reacts to the sight.

43 RESUME

Picard and Riker exchange a bemused look.

PICARD

(to Data)

Mister Data, run a complete systems diagnostic --

Picard is interrupted.

COMPUTER VOICE

-- Atmospheric decompression in Bridge Observation Lounge...
Environmental compensation sequence has been initiated...

43 CONTINUED:

Everyone is taken aback.

WORF

(looks up puzzled)

I am not registering a hull
breach.

43 CONTINUED: (2)

PICARD
Scan for lifeforms.

WORF
(scanning)
None, Sir.

RIKER
(to Computer)
Computer, boost the structural
integrity field around the hull
by one hundred percent.

COMPUTER VOICE
Field augmented...

DATA
(off instruments)
Captain. Standard air pressure
has been reestablished in the
Observation lounge.

Everyone looks at each other -- another mysterious
development.

PICARD
Let's have a look.

Picard, Riker, Data, and Worf head for the obs lounge.

44 INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE

The door opens from the Bridge and Worf ENTERS first,
phaser drawn. He is taken aback by what he sees.

WORF
Captain.

Picard, Riker, and Data immediately follow him inside.

45 THEIR POV

The entire room has been tossed. Everything not nailed
down -- PADDs, chairs, displays -- looks as though it's
been bounced off the walls.

46 RESUME

Everyone reacts.

 WORF
 (frustrated)
 I do not understand.

Worf rights an upturned chair as Data quickly goes to the outer wall and begins running his tricorder along it.

 RIKER
 Data, are you picking up anything?

 DATA
 I detect no unusual readings.

Data reaches the window, passes the tricorder over it -- reacts.

 DATA
 (continuing)
 Curious. The transparent aluminum alloy of this window is exhibiting a pattern of transient electrical currents.

 PICARD
 Explanation?

 DATA
 I have none. The rate is characteristic of a subspace distortion. But I am not picking up evidence of subspace fields.

A beat. Picard turns to his officers.

46 CONTINUED:

PICARD

We will hold position while we seek an explanation for these anomalies. Divert all resources to that end.

Everyone knows their jobs and as they move to EXIT...

CUT TO:

46A EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The Enterprise at impulse, nebula in the background.

47 INT. JENNA'S QUARTERS (OPTICAL)

Data ENTERS, carrying a PADD under his arm like a briefcase, looking like a cross between Ward Cleaver and the Man in the Grey Flannel Suit. Jenna has just come in, is still in uniform, and looks a little frazzled.

DATA

Hi, honey, I am home.

JENNA

Hi.

He kisses her on the cheek. She reacts a moment to his manner -- they aren't living together, and Data's home from work attitude is a bit odd. But she brushes it off.

JENNA

Any luck at your end?

DATA

Negative. We performed a full systems diagnostic and found no malfunctions.

JENNA

We did a full security sweep.
Nothing.

She flops down on the couch, takes off her shoes, and drops them on the floor. There are several other pairs there -- this is something she does every night.

47 CONTINUED: (2)

DATA

Can I get you a drink, dear?

Another little take... Data's saying the right things,
but it comes off a bit strangely.

JENNA

Well, yes. I think I'll have...
a Calaman Sherry.

DATA

Excellent choice. I shall join
you.

He moves to the replicator.

DATA

Two Calaman Sherries.
(to Jenna)
Would you like some dinner as
well?

JENNA

I'm too tired to think about what
I want... maybe later.

The replicator produces the drinks; he carries them to
her.

DATA

Whatever you like, dear.

He gives her a drink and she starts to sip. But he
stops her arm, indicates that they should toast. He
lifts his glass.

47 CONTINUED: (2)

DATA

Darling, you remain as aesthetically pleasing as the day we first met. I believe I am the most fortunate sentient in this sector of the galaxy.

He touches her glass with his, and then takes a drink. So does Jenna, though she eyes him a bit warily. This is feeling really strange...

DATA

Now... you must relax. Put your feet up. I will take care of everything.

He rises and begins to straighten things in the perpetual clutter of Jenna's quarters. He picks up the shoes which have collected on the floor.

DATA

I could organize your closets. I have found that by grouping apparel first by function, and then by color from light to dark, one can more easily locate one's desired choice.

He heads toward the bedroom with the shoes.

JENNA

Data... it's all right. You don't have to do that...

DATA

But I am happy to do it.

JENNA

Please... put them down.

Acquiescent, Data puts the shoes down right where he is -- in the doorway. He swoops down on the couch beside her, utterly attentive.

DATA

What would you like, dear? Am I not paying enough attention to you?

JENNA

It's not that...

47 CONTINUED: (4)

DATA

Perhaps I have not given you
enough compliments. Your hair
is looking particularly silky
tonight...

JENNA

Data... there's just something...
strange... about the way you're
acting...

Data tries to figure that one out.

DATA

Am I not behaving as a solicitous
mate?

JENNA

Well, yes, but...

DATA

Tending to your every need?

47 CONTINUED: (5)

JENNA

What is wrong with you tonight?

Data responds to her angry tone, matching it as best he can.

DATA

My most recent self-diagnostic revealed no malfunctions. Perhaps something is wrong with you.

Jenna stares at him, unbelieving.

JENNA

I've never seen you behave so... foolishly. Why are you doing this?

DATA

(still "angry")

You may not tell me how I should behave. You are not my mother.

JENNA

What?

DATA

"You are not my mother." Is that not an appropriate response to your statement that I am behaving foolishly?

JENNA

(completely frustrated)

Data, I think you should just leave.

Data cocks his head.

DATA

(calm)

You do not wish to continue our... lovers quarrel?

She stares at him, dumbfounded.

JENNA

Is that what this is?

47 CONTINUED: (6)

DATA

In my study of interpersonal dynamics, I learned that conflict followed by emotional release often strengthens a connection between two people.

JENNA

But there's just something forced and artificial about the way you're doing it. It's not the real you.

DATA

With respect to romantic relationships, there is no... real me. I am drawing upon various literary and cultural sources to help define my role.

Jenna takes a moment to absorb all this... the whole thing has been an act, a part of his "program"... the solicitousness, the helpfulness, the argument -- everything. After a beat she goes to him.

47 CONTINUED: (6)

JENNA

Kiss me.

He stands and obliges her. After a beat...

JENNA

What were you just thinking?

DATA

At that particular moment, I was reconfiguring the warp field parameters, analyzing the collected works of Charles Dickens, calculating the maximum pressure I could safely apply to your lips, considering a new food supplement for Spot...

His voice trails off as he notices the crestfallen look on her face. Jenna tries to hide her disappointment... even from herself.

JENNA

(half-hearted smile)

I'm glad I was in there somewhere.

She hugs him... but we can see the uneasiness growing on her face.

48 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

At full stop above the planet, the nebula dark in the background.

49 INT. BRIDGE (OPTICAL)

Picard, Riker, Worf, and Data are at the aft science station.

RIKER

(re: viewscreen)

A complete sensor scan of the planet and three survey probes turned up no surprises. No sign of life, nothing out of the ordinary.

49 CONTINUED:

RIKER

(re: viewscreen)

A complete sensor scan of the planet and three survey probes turned up no surprises. No sign of life, nothing out of the ordinary.

49 CONTINUED:

WORF

Seven more unusual incidents have been reported. No casualties or damage.

DATA

At present, we can only state that a subspace effect seems to exist within this nebula. After I have made further analysis, I may be able to adjust the ship's sensors to locate and identify the anomaly.

RIKER

(to Picard)

The ship is at risk as long as we're sitting here. We can always continue our investigation from outside the nebula.

49 CONTINUED: (2)

PICARD

Agreed. Ensign McKnight, plot the most direct course. Ahead warp one.

MCKNIGHT

(works instruments)
Yes, Sir.

PICARD

Engage...

McKnight touches the panel. The ship goes to warp. Immediately --

DATA

(standing back)
Captain.

Everyone turns to see Data's science station and a section of the wall DEMATERIALIZE for a moment.

WORF

(off instruments)
Captain! Explosive decompression on Deck Thirty-seven!

RIKER

Bridge to La Forge... damage report.

The CLAXON SOUNDS, and RED ALERT lights go on.

50 INT. ENGINEERING (OPTICAL)

Geordi and several N.D. engineers, including THORNE and VAN MAYTER, are reading sensors.

GEORDI

We're showing damage between decks -- we haven't localized it yet.

A section of the wall DEMATERIALIZES across its middle section. A violent BURST OF ENERGY arcs between the two ends, EXPLOSIVELY. Thorne is knocked to the ground.

50 CONTINUED:

GEORDI

Thorne!

Geordi goes to him, picks him up -- he's alright. The conduit REMATERIALIZES.

GEORDI

La Forge to Bridge... a cryogenic control conduit just blew out on us. I almost lost a man...

51 INT. BRIDGE

Everyone is alarmed.

PICARD

Full stop!

MCKNIGHT

Yes, Sir --

52 OMITTED

53 INT. BRIDGE - ANOTHER ANGLE

Everyone is tensed, hoping the full stop will lessen the strange dematerializations.

GEORDI'S COM VOICE

La Forge to Bridge...

PICARD

Yes, Commander?

54 INT. CORRIDOR

Geordi is hurrying along with two Engineers.

GEORDI

(to Comm)

I think we have some structural damage between Decks Thirty-Six and Seven. We're checking it out now.

(MORE)

54 CONTINUED:

GEORDI (Cont'd)
(to one engineer)
Van Mayter, you take access tube
twenty-three M and look at the
the Bridge connectors.

Van Mayter heads off around a corridor as Geordi and
Thorne continue on.

GEORDI
I'll cover the aft section. You
go---

A TERRIBLE SCREAM OFF SCREEN. Geordi and Thorne
suddenly react -- bolting toward the sound, rounding
the corner...

54A INCLUDE VAN MAYTER (OPTICAL)

stuck half-way through the deck, at chest-level. Head,
upper torso and one arm are all that's visible. He's
limp, obviously dead.

OFF Geordi's reaction.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

56 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

At full stop in the midst of the nebula.

57 INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE (OPTICAL)

Picard, Riker, Worf and Geordi are sitting at the table. The atmosphere is one of grave concern. Data is standing next to an Okudagram displayed on the wall MONITOR.

DATA

During the series of events, I was able to measure the W particle inference which confirms one of my hypotheses.

Data indicates the Okudagram, which shows "lines" of normal space interrupted by pockets or deformations of varying sizes and shapes. A graphic depiction of the Enterprise is in the midst of it all.

DATA

The unusual preponderance of dark matter in this nebula is causing small gaps in the fabric of normal space.

He points from one "pocket" to another.

DATA

As the Enterprise moves through the nebula, it collides with these deformations.

PICARD

Like a carriage bouncing over a series of potholes.

DATA

That is an apt analogy.

GEORDI

So every time we hit one, part of the ship momentarily phases out of normal space.

57 CONTINUED:

DATA

(acknowledging)

Or when one of them hits us. My readings suggest that the deformations themselves are in motion.

RIKER

We're lucky one of these pockets didn't pass through a photon torpedo casing... or the matter/anti-matter containment pods.

PICARD

The question now is, how do we get out? Mister Data, can you reconfigure the sensors to detect these anomalies?

DATA

Yes, sir, but they can only be perceived at extremely close range. Even at minimal speed, it would be impossible to maneuver the Enterprise quickly enough to avoid them.

WORF

A shuttlecraft is more maneuverable...

RIKER

He's right.

Riker moves to the monitor, points to the Enterprise and a position far ahead of it.

RIKER

If we positioned a shuttle far enough in front of the Enterprise... it could detect the pockets and provide us enough time to maneuver out of the way.

57 CONTINUED: (2)

GEORDI

We could give the shuttle control
of our navigational systems --
that way, the corresponding
maneuvers would be virtually
instantaneous.

PICARD

Make it so.

58 INT. BRIDGE

Picard, Riker, Data, and Worf enter the Bridge from the
Observation Lounge. Jenna is standing at Tactical.
Worf approaches her.

WORF

You are relieved, Ensign.

Jenna nods and crosses to the turbolift. As she does,
she passes Data, now at the right science station,
working furiously at the instruments. She hesitates,
gives him a look... but he is oblivious, concentrating
on his task. She turns and proceeds toward the
turbolift.

59 OMITTED

60 ON PICARD AND RIKER

heading across the Bridge. Riker starts to peel off
toward the turbolift.

RIKER

I'll do my pre-flight once I'm
on board.

PICARD

Not this time, Will.

Riker stops, brought up short.

RIKER

Sir?

60 CONTINUED:

PICARD

I'm going to pilot the shuttle.

RIKER

Captain... my duty as First Officer is to safeguard the lives on this ship. Including yours. The Enterprise can't afford to lose you, sir. Not in this situation.

PICARD

I believe our best chance of escaping this situation is for me to pilot that shuttle.

(beat)

This is my ship, Will. I've got to do it.

A beat.

RIKER

(acquiescing)

Captain.

Picard heads for the turbolift.

60A
thru OMITTED
60B

60C EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The ship is in the nebula, the tiny shuttle far off in front of it. Both appear to be holding their positions.

61 INT. SHUTTLE

Picard at the console.

PICARD

Shuttle three to Enterprise,
telemetry link enabled.

He touches the controls and the blinkies respond by lighting up in a different pattern.

62 OMITTED

63 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Riker in captain's chair, Data at his post, Worf at Tactical, McKnight at CONN.

DATA

Ship's computer is accepting navigational inputs from the shuttle.

64 INT. SHUTTLE - INCLUDE MONITOR (OPTICAL)

in front of Picard, where there appears an OKUDAGRAM display, similar to the one Data had in the Observation Lounge, with "lines" of space displayed out in front of the shuttle. It resembles a vector graphic "POV" type videogame.

PICARD

Forward sensors are on line.
Ensign McKnight, plot a course for the shortest distance out of the nebula.

MCKNIGHT

Plot laid in, sir. Outer perimeter at thirty-two million kilometers.

PICARD

Point one impulse, Number One.

64A INT. MAIN BRIDGE

RIKER

Acknowledged, Captain. We're right behind you.

(to Comm)

Riker to O'Brien, lock on to the Captain's communicator. I want to be able to pull him out of there if I have to.

O'BRIEN'S COM VOICE

Aye, sir.

65 EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE & SHUTTLE (OPTICAL)

The shuttle in f.g., Enterprise behind it in the nebula. As the shuttlecraft slowly moves forward, the Enterprise follows.

INTERCUT AS NEEDED:

66 INT. SHUTTLE

Picard working controls, watching the monitor.

67 INCLUDE MONITOR (OPTICAL)

the lines in space suddenly display a distorting "pocket" similar in appearance to those on Data's obs lounge Okudagram. It is heading right toward him.

PICARD

Changing course... new heading
two-nine-nine mark zero-two-nine.

We see from the movement of the gassy whirls of the nebula that the shuttle has banked into a turn that is left and up. The monitor moves accordingly and the "pocket" disappears from the screen.

68 OMITTED

69 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

DATA

Main coupling is matching
navigational inputs, Captain.

MCKNIGHT

New heading confirmed.

PICARD

I missed it by less than a
thousand meters, Enterprise...
Advise your status...

69 CONTINUED:

WORF

(checking his panel)

Sensors indicate the deformation
passing five hundred meters off
the starboard bow. We're
clear...

RIKER

One down, Captain...

There is Bridge-wide release of tension.

PICARD

Resuming previous course.

MCKNIGHT

Confirmed. Outer perimeter now
at thirty-point-one million
kilometers.

Riker's eyes sweep the Bridge. There's still a long
way to go.

70
thru OMITTED
72

73 INT. SHUTTLE - INCLUDE MONITOR (OPTICAL)

Picard's eyes are glued on the monitor. Two pockets
appear on the screen, a small one and a larger one.

PICARD

Changing course... heading zero
seven three, mark --
two-eight-eight...

The shuttle veers right and down. The pockets
disappear from the screen. But suddenly, four more
pockets loom on the monitor -- like the next level in
a Nintendo game.

PICARD

New heading... two-eight-four
mark zero...

The shuttle swerves hard to the left.

74
thru OMITTED
74C

75 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

There is a jolt to the Bridge as the Enterprise makes the two corrections in close order.

76 INT. SHUTTLE - INCLUDE MONITOR (OPTICAL)

Three of the potholes appear on screen... There's not a minute for Picard to breathe. The potholes keep coming... big ones moving slowly, little ones that zip like hummingbirds. But this time there's a JOLT to the shuttle...

76A EXT. SPACE - SHUTTLE (OPTICAL)

There's an EFFECT on part of the shuttle... the thruster assembly flares, then hangs, damaged, on the shuttle.

77 INT. SHUTTLE - INCLUDE MONITOR (OPTICAL)

as the potholes keep coming... Picard tapping instructions... but...

PICARD
Enterprise... I'm losing
maneuverability...

CONTINUE INTERCUT:

77A INT. ENGINEERING

GEORDI
Sensors indicate damage to the
shuttle's starboard impulse
nacelle, Captain.

PICARD
I'm reading fluctuations in the
thermal control sub-system...

78 INT. BRIDGE

RIKER

Captain, I'm bringing you back.

PICARD

Belay that, Number One! I'm re-routing the secondary deuterium supply... switching to manual controls.

DATA

Transceiver signal is down forty-two percent. Navigational inputs are not registering.

RIKER

(what next?)

Captain, we've lost the link.

PICARD

You'll have to make course changes manually until we re-establish the connection.

RIKER

Understood. Get us back on line, Data. Geordi, try boosting the power to the L-U band. And increase the distance between the Enterprise and the shuttle. We're going to need some more room to make manual adjustments.

GEORDI

Aye, sir.

RIKER

How far do we have to go?

MCKNIGHT

Sixteen million kilometers.

Riker's face shows his grave concern that they're not going to make it that far.

79 INT. SHUTTLE

Where Picard is battling a bucking shuttle. Now he becomes a concert pianist... changing course to escape the oncoming potholes with one hand... working to correct the engine problem with the other.

PICARD

New heading... two-nine-nine mark
one eight...

MCKNIGHT

(working panels)

Yes, sir... I've got it... course
corrected.

Potholes swim at Picard; the shuttle dips and swerves for a tense moment. There's only time for --

PICARD

Enterprise -- hard starboard!

MCKNIGHT

Aye, sir --

79A INT. BRIDGE

WORF

Deformation impact on Deck
Fifteen... science section...

RIKER

Damage?

WORF

Report coming in, sir... minimal
damage.

PICARD

Hold steady... I've completed the
re-routing sequence... do you read
my navigational inputs?

RIKER

Data, do we have the telemetry
link back?

79A CONTINUED:

DATA

I have increased sensitivity in the L-U band... it should be sufficient.

RIKER

Captain, let's try it.

79B INT. SHUTTLE (OPTICAL)

Half a dozen pockets swarm toward the shuttle on the monitor. Picard barely has time to respond.

PICARD

New heading. Two-seven-five mark three nine!

DATA

Confirmed... the link has been re-established.

MCKNIGHT

Nine-point-four million kilometers to the perimeter.

79C EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE & SHUTTLE (OPTICAL)

continue their strange tandem dance through the nebula.

80 INT. BRIDGE

PICARD

Mister La Forge, I am still having difficulty controlling the shuttlecraft.

80A INT. ENGINEERING

GEORDI

Yes, sir, your krellide storage cells are losing their charge. Maintaining manual control is gonna get increasingly harder...

81 INT. SHUTTLE

The shuttle is bucking, barely under control.

PICARD

Estimated distance to the nebula's perimeter?

DATA

Four-point-seven million kilometers, sir.

PICARD

Is there a way to transfer the microfusion thrusters so I can get a power boost?

DATA

Possibly. If you augment the thruster sequencing so that the inertial dampening fields --

But as he's speaking a pothole appears on the monitor... then looms large... larger... this is the Mother Of All Potholes. Picard responds --

PICARD

Bearing -- two-seven... make that two-eight-five, mark two-five-five!

The shuttle banks hard left and plunges down at a steep angle... then whirls out of control.

82 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

as the Bridge begins to jolt in response to the shuttle.

DATA

Commander, the shuttle is out of control. Navigational link is severed.

RIKER

(to Com)

Mister O'Brien -- do you have the Captain's signal?

82A INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM

O'BRIEN

I'm having trouble locking on, sir.

82B INT. BRIDGE

DATA

Sir, the shuttle's inertial dampeners have failed. It is breaking up.

83 INT. SHUTTLE (OPTICAL)

The craft is spinning (SHAKING AS THE GASSY WHIRLS BLUR BY THE WINDOW). Picard can't even move from the g force.

PICARD

(to Com)

Now would be a good time, Mister O'Brien...

83A
thru OMITTED
86

87 INT. MAIN BRIDGE - INCLUDE VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)

Riker and the others react to a tiny explosion far out in front of the ship -- it's the shuttle.

RIKER

O'Brien -- did we get him?

87A INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM (OPTICAL)

As Picard MATERIALIZES, heads for the door.

O'BRIEN

Aye, sir, we got him.

PICARD

I'm a little dizzy, Number One... but none the worse... on my way...

87B INT. BRIDGE

RIKER

(relieved)

Acknowledged, sir.

87B CONTINUED:

DATA

Commander, we are nearing the
perimeter -- one million
kilometers away.

RIKER

All right, let's make a run for
it.

A tense moment -- will there be more potholes?

88 EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

As the great ship plows toward the edge of the
nebula... and then shoots out into normal space.

89 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

as Picard emerges from the turbolift.

RIKER

We're clear of the nebula, sir.

Picard looks out at the starfield... relieved to see
normal space again. He moves toward his chair.

PICARD

Ensign, plot a course for Starbase
Two-Sixty. Warp two. Engage.

90 OMITTED

91 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The ship at warp in normal space.

92 INT. DATA'S QUARTERS

Data is preparing two place settings for an intimate dinner. His cat passes by. The door CHIMES.

92 CONTINUED:

DATA

Enter.

The door opens and Jenna ENTERS the room, crosses toward Data.

DATA

(continuing)

Hello.

Jenna gives him a peck on the cheek. Her smile is a little weak.

JENNA

Hi.

She notices several potted plants and a couple of antique Japanese style hanging lanterns.

JENNA

(continuing)

The place looks great.

DATA

Thank you. It is much less Spartan, is it not?

JENNA

Much less... It looks... great... it really does... it looks great.

DATA

Jenna, you are repeating yourself. I have found this to be indicative of mental distraction. Is that a correct assumption in this instance?

JENNA

I'm afraid it is.

Data moves toward the replicator.

DATA

Then perhaps we should begin our meal. Among humans, a low serum glucose level is often responsible for --

JENNA

(interrupting)

-- Data.

92 CONTINUED: (2)

Data pauses.

JENNA
(continuing)
Let's talk... first.

She indicates his chair at the table. Data comes back, sits down. She sits opposite him.

JENNA
(continuing)
I'm not sure how to begin.

DATA
What is the subject?

JENNA
You and me. Our relationship.

DATA
Yes?

JENNA
(deep breath)
Data, sometimes people blindly make the same mistake again and again. Until it finally happens in a way so obvious and so blatant, that they can no longer deny what they've been doing.

DATA
Are you currently experiencing this phenomenon?

JENNA
I didn't see it until today. I got out of a relationship with an unemotional man. And went right back into another with a man who is absolutely incapable of emotion.

DATA
There does appear to be a recurring motif.

JENNA
You were so kind and attentive. I thought maybe that would be enough.

92 CONTINUED: (3)

DATA

It is not?

JENNA

No, it's not. Because as close as we are, I don't really matter to you. Not really. Nothing I could do or say will ever make you happy, or hurt you, or touch you in any way.

DATA

That is... a valid projection.

Data thinks for a moment.

DATA

(continuing)

It is apparent that my reach has exceeded my grasp in this particular area. I am perhaps not nearly so human as I aspire to become...

A beat.

DATA

(continuing, pleasantly)

If you are ready to eat, I will bring our meal.

Data stands. Jenna looks at him sadly for a beat -- this is just what she was talking about.

JENNA

No. That's alright.

She stands.

JENNA

(continuing)

I'd better go, Data.

DATA

If you wish.

Jenna reaches over and kisses him on the cheek. Starts to turn toward the door.

92 CONTINUED: (4)

DATA
(continuing)
Jenna. Are we no longer... a
couple?

Her eyes suddenly fill with tears.

JENNA
No... we're not.

DATA
Then I will delete the
appropriate program.

JENNA
(quickly toward the
door)
I'll see you later...

She goes out the door -- it closes behind her. Data
watches for a moment. The cat suddenly jumps up on his
lap.

DATA
Hello, Spot.

He reaches down to pet it, and the animal nuzzles up to
his hand.

OFF Data's face...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

THE END