

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

"The Last Outpost"
#40271-107

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REVISED FINAL DRAFT

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STAR TREK: "The Last Outpost" - 8/7/87 - CAST

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
"The Last Outpost"

CAST

| | |
|---------|-----------------------|
| PICARD | DAIMON TAAR (FERENGI) |
| RIKER | TWO TEEN BOYS |
| DATA | MATTHEWS |
| TROI | POLA |
| BEVERLY | TRANSPORTER CHIEF |
| TASHA | TASHA |
| WORF | FERENGI |
| GEORDI | LETEK (LEADER) |
| | MORDOC |
| | KAYRON |
| | PORTAL |

STAR TREK: "The Last Outpost" - 8/7/87 - SETS

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
"The Last Outpost"

SETS

INTERIORS

EXTERIORS

ENTERPRISE

USS ENTERPRISE

Main Bridge

Conference Room

Briefing Room

(re-dress of Ready Room)

Transporter Room

FERENGI VESSEL

PLANET SURFACE (GAMMA TAURI IV)

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
"The Last Outpost"
TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. SPACE - STARSHIP (OPTICAL)

A DOT OF LIGHT becomes a starship, as the USS Enterprise rockets directly TOWARD CAMERA, driving hard at warp speed... in chase.

PICARD (V.O.)
Captain's log, stardate 41194.6.
We are in pursuit of a starship
of Ferengi design. Our mission
is...

2 INT. ENTERPRISE - MAIN BRIDGE

At their regular stations, intent upon the chase, are PICARD, RIKER, TROI, DATA, GEORDI, TASHA and WORF.

PICARD (V.O.)
(continuing)
... to intercept and recover a T-9
energy converter which the Ferengi
stole from an unmanned monitor
post on Gamma Tauri IV -- a theft
which automatic scanners recorded,
providing us...

3 ANGLE ON VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)

Part of the vast galaxy STARFIELD, streaking by as the Enterprise plummets through in high warp. A computer targeting CIRCLE silently searches the screen.

PICARD (V.O.)
(continuing)
... with the long awaited
opportunity to make close contact
with a Ferengi vessel. If we
succeed in this chase, it
will be Starfleet's first look
at a life form... which discounting
rumor, we know almost nothing
about.

3 CONTINUED:

The circle stops, brightens, BEEPS -- a signal "on target."

4 EMPHASIZING PICARD

RIKER

There she is!

PICARD

Enlarge.

5 ANGLE INCLUDING MAIN VIEWER (OPTICAL)

The circle becomes a magnifier, homing in on a non-moving PINPOINT OF LIGHT, as the outside scene continues to streak.

PICARD

What is their course?

6 INTERCUT PRINCIPALS AND VIEWER (OPTICAL)

All eyes are intent on the viewscreen. Considerable excitement on the bridge in anticipation of seeing the Ferengi vessel. Suddenly the growing pinpoint veers sharply left.

GEORDI

They are now angling through that solar system, Captain.

PICARD

Identify.

DATA

Listed as Delphi Ardu, sir.
Eleven planets, unexplored.

RIKER

Stay with them, La Forge.

The Enterprise readjusts, and the starfield shifts to the right, placing its target back "on center." Another BEEP as that occurs.

TASHA

Sensors read a power surge on their last maneuver, Captain.

6 CONTINUED:

GEORDI

They are dropping to sub-warp
speed... !

PICARD

(quickly)

Reduce to impulse power... !

7 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

showing WARP TO SUBWARP EFFECT.

8 INT. MAIN BRIDGE - INTERCUT PRINCIPALS AND VIEWER
(OPTICAL)

The Ferengi vessel becoming LARGER, but its shape and
details still undefined.

TASHA

Sensor fluctuations in the energy
readings from it, Captain.

DATA

Possibility: a malfunction in
their engines, sir.

GEORDI

Breaks my heart.

WORF

In visual range, Captain.

PICARD

Fully enlarge!

On screen APPEARS the FERENGI STARSHIP: a strange
horseshoe crab-like design, a bit smaller than the
Enterprise. The alien vessel is now passing near a
CLOUDED PLANET.

GEORDI

Hello, stranger!

PICARD

Very impressive design.

From their reaction, the Bridge Crew realize this is an
historic moment.

8 CONTINUED:

RIKER

Anything on that design, Data?

DATA

Nothing specific, sir. As you know, Ferengi technology is estimated to be generally equal to our own...

PICARD

Which does not mean identical, however...

DATA

Correct, sir. We are no doubt advanced in some areas, they in others...

GEORDI

(interrupts)

They show another power surge, sir.

Then from the Ferengi starcraft, an electric-wave ARC RIPPLES out and back from the trailing sides. It is something like a spacebourne stingray.

WORF

They are firing on us!

The viewscreen abruptly FLARES as the neon-bright arc hits the Enterprise's forward quarter! (OPTICAL) All the Bridge lights dim and come back up from the crackling pulse attack!

PICARD

Damage report!

TASHA

Shields holding!

DATA

Mostly electromagnetic, sir. Fusion generator and batteries down by...

GEORDI

(interrupts)

Our impulse engines are surging!

WORF

They're firing again.

And then ANOTHER ARC hits! A second FLARE! (OPTICAL)

8 CONTINUED: (2)

TASHA

Deflector shield power weakening,
Captain.

(looks up)

Phasers ready, sir. Photon
torpedoes ready...

RIKER

Shall we return their fire,
sir... ?

PICARD

Negative, Number One. They are
reacting to close pursuit.

(to Geordi)

Fall back a bit but stay with
them.

On the viewer, the Ferengi starship now swivels toward
the Enterprise, pointing a snakehead-like prow in our
direction.

DATA

They are slowing too, sir.

TASHA

They may be turning to fight!

PICARD

Open hailing freq...

(to Geordi)

Why are we gaining on them? Don't
anticipate...

GEORDI

I'm not, sir! Something's wrong...

DATA

Sir, something is dragging us
forward.

PICARD

Yes, I read it, too. Lieutenant
Yar, what do your sensors show?

TASHA

Not certain, sir. I'm getting very
confusing readings.

9 EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE AND FERENGI STARSHIP
(OPTICAL)

Both spacecraft are moving toward adjacent orbits of
the clouded planet.

10 INT. MAIN BRIDGE - INTERCUTTING MAIN VIEWER
(OPTICAL)

On the viewscreen, the planet plus the Ferengi vessel
even closer now.

DATA

Captain, this shouldn't be. Our
ship's power systems are failing!

TASHA

Deflector shields failing, phasers
going inoperative, sir...

GEORDI

Something is completely
immobilizing us, Captain!

WORF

Immobilized by the damn Ferengi?!

PICARD

I need more information! Identify
what they are using!

11 EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE AND FERENGI VESSEL (OPTICAL))

in orbit of the planet, now locked together by that
"something."

12 INT. MAIN BRIDGE - EMPHASIZING PICARD (OPTICAL)

all his bridge crew intently seeking an answer.

RIKER

Obviously we've underestimated
their technology, Captain...

PICARD

(nods, rises;
alarmed)

Considerably. It appears the
Ferengi have us right where they
want us -- in their sights.

CAMERA TIGHTENS PAST our troubled command team to the
Main Viewscreen, on which the mysterious Ferengi
starship challenges the Enterprise, floating under the
murky globe above, as we:

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

13 EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE AND FERENGI STARSHIP
(OPTICAL)

Locked in adjacent orbit of the nearby clouded planet.

14 INT. ENTERPRISE - MAIN BRIDGE

as the professionals go about their business. Picard turns to Tasha:

PICARD

Are we searching all frequencies?
Any sign of any kind of message?

TASHA

Negative, sir.

PICARD

Weapon report, Lieutenant Worf.

WORF

I have phasers and torpedoes
armed, but I show insufficient
power to fire them.

PICARD

Engineering, give me status on
power recovery.

(waits; no answer)

Engineering, come in.

(beat)

Why aren't they answering?

(waits; turns
to Geordi)

Go below, Lieutenant. Get me a
full report from Engineering.

GEORDI

Aye, sir.

Geordi EXITS to the turbolift, as Riker studies the viewer.

14 CONTINUED:

RIKER

(to Picard)

It seems impossible they could
be draining all power from all
systems.

Troi is still facing the viewer, her face a picture of
concentration, of mental penetration.

PICARD

Counselor?

TROI

I'm sensing nothing from them
Captain. Which could mean they
can shield their thoughts and
emotions from others.

PICARD

Which still makes it our move.

TROI

Sir, they may know as little about
us as we do about them.

RIKER

Except that they know they've got
us in deep trouble.

PICARD

If so, the question becomes how
will they use that knowledge?

(to Data)

Is there any hard information on
them in any file, Data?

DATA

None, sir. Only hearsay and
thirdhand reports, most of which
conflict.

RIKER

Which rumors do not conflict?

DATA

That the Ferengi are... well, the
best description may be "traders."

PICARD

What kind of "traders"?

14 CONTINUED: (2)

DATA

A more accurate comparison modern scholars have drawn from Earth history cites the ocean-going "Yankee Traders" of eighteenth and nineteenth century America, sir.

RIKER

From the history of my forebears? "Yankee Traders?"

DATA

(nods)

Who sail, in this case the galaxy, in search of mercantile and territorial opportunity.

RIKER

And are those scholars saying the Ferengi may not be too different from us?

DATA

Hardly, sir. I believe this analogy refers to the nefarious capitalist manner in which the Ferengi are known to conduct their affairs of commerce.

(thought)

"Never give a sucker an even break."

Picard and Riker exchange puzzled looks.

PICARD

And what does that mean, Data?

DATA

I'm not sure, sir. That entry was only identified as "slang", terms or expressions which typify everyday language of...

PICARD

I know what slang is, Data. I just haven't heard of that particular saying.

RIKER

But "Yankee Traders"...

(smile)

I like the sound of that. Has a nice historical ring to it.

14 CONTINUED: (3)

PICARD
(impatient)
Engineering?
(no answer; to Riker)
Join La Forge "down below", Number
One. Without our warp capacity,
we're just one big floating
target.

RIKER
Aye, sir.

Riker's OFF to the turbolift, as Picard studies the
viewer.

PICARD
(to Data)
What other pertinent meaning do
you draw from this analogy,
"Yankee Traders?"

DATA
Well, I doubt if they wear red,
white and blue, sir. Or look
anything like Uncle Sam.

Except for Picard, Data meets uncomprehending stares.
(That allusion dates too far back from the twenty-fourth
century.)

WORF
Uncle who?

TASHA
What have bright, primal colors
got to do with it?

PICARD
Yes, I understand the allusion.
(nods)
Colors that once identified
nations during the time when they
competed against each other. Red,
white and blue for the United
States...
(muses)
Whereas the French oddly used the
same colors in the order of blue,
white, and red...

DATA
... and the German nation black,
red and gold; the Italians green,
white and red; the British...

14 CONTINUED: (4)

PICARD
(annoyed)
Enough, Data!

DATA
Sir, it was you who...

PICARD
(snaps)
We're discussing the Ferengi,
Data!
(slow burn)
Mon Dieu, I wish I knew what they
will do next...

DATA
Given what is occurring to our
vessel, Captain, their weapons
could be vastly superior to ours.

Picard has to fight off irritation again.

PICARD
Yes, Data. That seems a
reasonable assumption.
(louder)
Engineering?!

But Picard is still without an answer.

14A INT. ENTERPRISE - ENGINE ROOM

Riker, Geordi and TWO ENGINEERS anguish over the control
board.

RIKER
Bottom line, La Forge.

GEORDI
Not good, sir. The Ferengi
forcefield that holds this ship
compensates...
(taps board)
Almost as fast as we increase
power.

RIKER
Almost?

Using his hands as a demonstration, Geordi tries to
explain the "isometric" problem of the forcefield.

14A CONTINUED:

GEORDI

There's a point-three-hundred,
seventy-two millisecond delay
between use of our power and the
neutralizing counter-force of the
Ferengi...

(stumped)

We push and they push back in
equal force, sir.

RIKER

(idea)

And what is our acceleration delay
between slow-reverse impulse and
top warp speed?

GEORDI

Point-three-hundred millisecond.

(big smile)

I know what you're thinking. Shift
down and then blow hard into warp
nine, yes? Come back fighting,
whooley!

RIKER

Can we do it, Geordi?

GEORDI

Ask me after it's done, sir.

(to Engineers)

I want a slow reverse-power
drop-off over five minutes...

(to Riker)

We'll show them what this baby
can do, sir.

RIKER

Give me everything you've got.

GEORDI

Aye, aye, sir.

At that, Riker EXITS, as CAMERA TIGHTENS on Geordi.

14B INT. ENTERPRISE MAIN BRIDGE

Picard studies the Ferengi vessel, as Riker details the
plan.

14B CONTINUED:

RIKER

... and with a sudden, abrupt power surge to high warp speed, Captain, I believe we can break loose from the Ferengi forcefield.

PICARD

I wish I knew how they are doing this to us.

RIKER

I wonder what they're thinking over there.

PICARD

That's easy. They're wondering what we are thinking... and what we might do next.

WORF

I say fight, sir. There is nothing shameful in falling before a superior enemy.

Geordi ENTERS the Bridge from the turbolift.

PICARD

(thin smile at Worf)

And nothing shameful about a strategic retreat, either.

GEORDI

All systems ready, Captain. And communication's restored to Engineering.

PICARD

Excellent, La Forge.

(to Riker)

Let's throw them off guard.

(turning)

Lieutenant Yar. Open hailing frequencies.

TASHA

Hailing frequencies open, sir.

PICARD

At least, I won't begin with weakness.

(MORE)

14B CONTINUED: (2)

PICARD (Cont'd)

(looking up; voice
AMPLIFIED)

Attention Ferengi starship! This is Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the USS Enterprise. In the name of the United Federation of Planets, I demand you return the T-9 energy converter you removed from Gamma Tauri IV.

(to Tasha; normal voice)

Send in all language forms.

TASHA

All language forms, sir.

PICARD

Sometimes, Riker, the best way to win a fight is not to be there.

RIKER

Yes, sir. "He will triumph who knows when to fight and when not to fight."

PICARD

Glad the Academy still teaches the strategy of Sun Tzu...

(to Geordi)

Let's hope that delay proves out, La Forge.

GEORDI

(nods)

Point-three-hundred milliseconds, sir.

PICARD

We'll blast full power into warp nine. Ready?

GEORDI

All systems ready, Captain.

PICARD

Countdown to three. Stand by on phasers.

(firm)

One. Set warp to nine.

(everyone tenses)

Two. Divert shield power to main engines...

(they brace)

Three!

14B CONTINUED: (3)

With the massive jolt of power let go from the combined forcefield energy-synergy of the Enterprise, all the bridge lights FLARE wildly! But other than a momentary tremble, Starfleet's finest remains in place... the Ferengi vessel still on the viewer, the planet above.

PICARD

(softly)

Merde.

(troubled)

Shields up.

For a defeated beat, the crew resume their vigil.

14C ANGLES ON COMPUTER DISPLAYS

All the computers go crazy, violently ALIVE in a flood of flashing information "read!"

14D BACK TO SCENE

DATA

Captain? I think you better see this...

PICARD

(moving to Data)

What's wrong?

DATA

In my opinion, someone is reading every file, every "bit" of information stored in the Enterprise memory banks...

GEORDI

(impressed)

They can do that?

DATA

And more, perhaps.

A pall of defeat darkens the room.

PICARD

(into Com)

Doctor Crusher to the bridge.

(to entire bridge)

Conference evaluation.

Picard stands and the Main Bridge crew begins to MOVE OFF.

14D CONTINUED:

TROI

If I may recommend something,
Captain, with our attention on
the Ferengi vessel, we have
ignored the planet.

15 ANGLE INCLUDING VIEWER (OPTICAL)

Picard CROSSING Bridge, checks the Main Viewer on which
the cloud shrouded planet is prominent, although not
particularly unusual from this perspective. Picard
glances there, then:

PICARD

Consult the charts on this
planet, Data. See what we have
on it in the library.

Picard leads the way OFF to the Conference Room.

16 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

as Picard faces Riker, Beverly, Troi, Geordi, Tasha and
Worf.

BEVERLY

No response on hailing
frequencies?

PICARD

We had no response.
(including the others)
So, while we still have some power
left, it is time for difficult
decisions.
(thin smile)
While we cannot have a democracy
aboard, I value your considered
opinions.

Tasha is the first to look up.

TASHA

I say put all available power into
a full-out combined phaser and
photon torpedo salvo. Destroy
their ability to sustain this
forcefield, sir.

WORF

Yes! Hit them hard and hit them
fast.

16 CONTINUED:

PICARD

Impractical and provocative.
Assuming even that we have the
power to support that tactic.

TASHA

But Captain, firing on us was not
an act of war?

TROI

The facts are that the Ferengi
did fire at us, but we were
chasing them. Since then, they've
only searched our computers,
trying to learn who and what we
are.

PICARD

Your point, Counselor?

TROI

Let's talk to them.

PICARD

That has been tried; no response.

TROI

But did we tell them anything they
wanted to hear?

There's not a person present who doesn't know the
implication of that statement.

PICARD

Any other observations?

Picard waits; there are none.

PICARD

(continuing)

Thank you all for your advice and
counsel. Now if you will excuse
me, I'd like to be left alone with
Commander Riker.

All his Officers EXIT the Conference Room, except Riker.

PICARD

As my first officer, I assume you
fully realize our situation.
Although the final decision must
be mine, this is your opportunity
to speak your mind.

16 CONTINUED: (2)

RIKER

I believe we have covered all available alternatives, Captain, but...

(supportive)

Are there any other options you wish to analyze?

PICARD

The only one left needs no conversation, Number One. And it is the only one we must avoid.

RIKER

Sir?

PICARD

Total annihilation.

And Riker nods understandingly, EXITS, leaving Picard with the most difficult decision of his Starfleet career, perhaps his last....

17 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

All crew are at their stations, expectant -- the Ferengi menace still commanding the viewscreen. A beat, then Picard ENTERS, going to his chair.

PICARD

Open hailing frequencies.

DATA

Open, Captain.

PICARD

(a pregnant beat)

Attention, Ferengi starship! This is Captain Picard. It is obvious we have a situation here that needs resolving... And we are willing to do whatever is reasonable and necessary. I would like... I would appreciate... your presenting your terms to us.

17 CONTINUED:

The unspeakable spoken, as CAMERA TIGHTENS on Picard's
grim visage... the return sub-space channel empty save
for static, as we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

18 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

still locked together with the silent Ferengi starship,
near the mysterious murky globe.

PICARD (V.O.)

Captain's log, stardate 41194.8. It
is with a heavy heart that I have
offered to meet...

19 EXT. SPACE - CLOSE ON FERENGI STARSHIP (OPTICAL)

enigmatic, baffling and also immobile.

PICARD (V.O.)

(continuing)

... whatever reasonable and
necessary terms are demanded by
the Ferengi. I fear for my people
and my vessel in the event the
unknown Ferengi ask the
unreasonable. How...

20 INT. ENTERPRISE - MAIN BRIDGE

all waiting to hear from the unknown Ferengi.

PICARD (V.O.)

(continuing)

... can I oppose even unreasonable
demands?

RIKER

It's moving, sir.

21 ANGLE ON MAIN VIEWER - FERENGI STARSHIP (OPTICAL)

The snakehead-like prow's pushing out from the ship
body.

WORF (V.O.)

We ask to surrender and now they
fire on us?

22 INTERCUTTING - BRIDGE REGULARS AND MAIN VIEWERS
(OPTICAL)

as our Bridge Crew react.

TASHA

Ready torpedoes, sir? There's
enough power for a couple of them.

PICARD

Ready. But hold at ready,
Lieutenant.
(to Data)
Open hailing frequencies.

DATA

Hailing frequencies open, sir.

The Ferengi ship now extends gun-like arms from either
side of the prow...

PICARD

Ferengi vessel, we are awaiting
your response.

They await an answer, get none.

TASHA

Suggest first strike, sir. Our
shields now only have sixty-three
seconds of power available before
lowering.

WORF

If the Ferengi ship's sensors can
read us, sir, they will be waiting
until we are most vulnerable...

RIKER

Captain, I'm afraid I agree.
Since they haven't bothered to
answer us...

PICARD

(interrupting; quiet
voiced)
I'll wait a bit more, Number One.

Picard is like an old war dog at work for peace. The
suspense on the bridge is electric...

TASHA

Fifty seconds...

22 CONTINUED:

PICARD
Patience. Patience...

At that moment, the sub-space channel CRACKLES loudly,
the Ferengi accent alien, clipped, arrogant.

TAAR'S COM VOICE
The quicker we can come to terms,
the better, NCC 1701-D.

There's no visual sent, but Picard is relieved.

PICARD
Who is speaking?

TAAR'S COM VOICE
I am Taar. DaiMon of the Ferengi.
You wished to discuss surrender,
Captain Picard?

PICARD
What I actually said, DaiMon,
is...

TAAR'S COM VOICE
(interrupting)
UNCONDITIONAL...

The Bridge reverberates with Taar's booming voice,
shattering every last hope.

TAAR'S COM VOICE
(continuing; a difficult
beat)
... Surrender, I warn you, is...
(emphatic)
Totally unacceptable!!
(desperate but proud)
We will die to the last one of
us before such dishonor!

Nobody can believe their ears! Picard shares a look with
Riker and Troi, understanding now the incredible thing
that has happened. Picard turns quickly to Tasha, makes
a hand/slash signal. In response, Tasha touches her
panel.

TASHA
Hailing frequency off, sir.

Now WE SEE Picard at his command best as he gives a
series of orders.

22 CONTINUED: (2)

PICARD

(to Riker)

Something has seized their ship too. They're in the same predicament as us.

(to Geordi)

Launch a sensor probe. Set it to search for the source of this "something" that's holding us both.

(to Tasha)

Back to hailing frequencies, fast.

(Com technique)

... and so I regret DaiMon Taar that I can no longer negotiate unless it is conducted visually.

TAAR'S COM VOICE

(beat; concerned)

Your complete message not received, Enterprise. But visual communication is against our custom.

PICARD

(into Com)

And it is against Starfleet orders to accept a surrender otherwise. Do you withdraw your surrender offer?

A long delay -- enough time for the Enterprise Crew to become nervous. Then:

TAAR'S COM VOICE

You give us no choice, Enterprise. May we have a visual on you too?

23 EMPHASIZING MAIN VIEWER (OPTICAL)

as Picard answers on Com, signaling Troi to set the viewscreen accordingly.

PICARD

(into Com)

Agreed, DaiMon Taar. You should be able to view us now.

(waits)

Do you have us on your screen?

TAAR'S COM VOICE

We... are now viewing you.

24 CLOSE ON MAIN VIEWER

The MAIN VIEWER FLICKERS and AN IMAGE OF DAIMON TAAR'S FERENGI FACE comes into sight -- large, menacing, lens-twisted and very brightly lit.

25 WIDER ANGLE ON MAIN BRIDGE

giving reactions of our principals.

TAAR'S COM VOICE

I do not know how your twisted alien culture has paralyzed our vessel but I concede your 'Enterprise' is superior.

(snaps)

We will return your worthless T-9 device and we offer the life of our second officers as required by the Ferengi code.

The Enterprise crew does not give themselves away with cheers, but the relief is evident.

DATA

I am relieved we have no such code involving our second officers.

TAAR (V.O.)

Is this to your satisfaction, Picard Captain?

PICARD

Your offer may be inadequate, but I will discuss it with my staff. Stand by for further communications.

The CRACKLE ends, the Ferengi transmission complete.

26 INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE

It is a place dominated by a viewing screen which is flanked by computer panels. TWO TEEN BOYS are inspecting the starship reliefs. They see Picard coming, make their hasty EXIT as the bridge personnel ENTER... leaving a plaything near the viewscreen, a Chinese finger PUZZLE.

26 CONTINUED:

RIKER

(to the Teens on

ENTERING)

Matthews! Pola! You know this
area is off-limits.

(as Boys LEAVE)

Boys will be boys, Captain.

Picard gives Riker a withering look at this statement.
Data and Geordi also ENTER.

PICARD

(to Geordi)

Have you launched the probe?

GEORDI

Yes, sir. We'll get readings
soon.

PICARD

(to Geordi)

If we're not holding the Ferengi
and they're not holding us... then
who the hell is?

(to Data)

Next, you wanted to show us
something?

DATA

As requested, Captain,
library-computer information on
this planet.

27 ANGLE EMPHASIZING DATA AND VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)

Data has picked up the finger-puzzle game, plays with it
abstractly, as:

DATA

It has been charted only, from
long range scans. It is Class
M, but with no indications of life
forms, sentient or otherwise.
However, you may find this of
interest...

Data touches a panel and on the screen APPEARS AN IMAGE
OF A HOLOGRAPHIC STAR MAP with a huge ball of artificial
connecting lines. An INCOMPREHENSIBLE ALIEN LEGEND
APPEARS TOO.

27 CONTINUED:

DATA
(continuing)
Resolving it into our language...

Data touches a control and an unusual SYMBOL APPEARS,
together, with the words "TKON EMPIRE."

PICARD
A space federation of some sort.
But I've never heard the word
"Tkon."

DATA
(distracted by stuck
finger)
Understandable. It has been
extinct six hundred thousand
of... of our years.
(back to viewer; back
to finger problem)
According to... legend, these
planets... were outposts... of that
empire...

Data has put his opposing finger from his other hand
into the open puzzle end... and pulls it tight, trapping
himself. Another snap or two finds him quite ensnared.

PICARD
Data. What are you doing?

DATA
Apologies, Captain. I seem to have
reached an odd functional impass.
I am, ah...
(futile tug)
Stuck.

PICARD
Then get unstuck and continue your
briefing.

DATA
Yes, sir. That is what I am trying
to do...
(no go again)
But the solution eludes me.

GEORDI
(laughs)
My hero.

Picard reaches over, grabs Data's hands in his own and
pushes in... releasing Data's trapped fingers.

27 CONTINUED: (2)

PICARD

Continue, Commander. Now!

DATA

(eyeing the puzzle)

Intriguing.

(then quickly indicating
viewscreen)Again, only legend, but it
describes the Empire as impossibly
huge and powerful.

RIKER

(eyeing viewscreen)

Surrounded by stars whose planets
formed its defensive system?

DATA

Correct, sir. Outposts. And the
planet below was possibly one of
them...

Interrupted by the Bos'n SIGNAL, followed by:

TASHA'S COM VOICE

Excuse the interruption, Captain,
but this may be worth it. We're
now receiving a signal from the
probe.

PICARD

We'll take it here, please.

The VIEWSCREEN FLICKERS, BECOMES AN IMAGE SHOWING
PLANET, FERENGI VESSEL, AND THE ENTERPRISE. WAVY,
PULSATING, EERIE-GREEN CURVILINEAR LINES reach up
mushroom-like from a point on the planet surface -- up
and around the two space vessels.

GEORDI

Incredible!

RIKER

That's our mysterious "something,"
Captain. It is a forcefield of
some kind...

PICARD

Reaching up from the planet
surface. What enormous power!

(to Data)

How does the legend describe the
end of the Tkon Empire?

27 CONTINUED: (3)

DATA

By their Sun going supernova, sir.

PICARD

Could this planet have escaped that?

28 ANOTHER ANGLE

Data touches the panel and VIEWER IMAGE CHANGES BACK TO THE TKON EMPIRE CHART. He indicates a distant one of the surrounding stars.

DATA

This planet, Gamma Tauri IV, could have been the most distant outpost, sir, in theory. But since it shows no life form readings...

PICARD

(to Riker)

We'll have to look it over, Number One. Stand by with an away team.

RIKER

(stands)

And if the Ferengi also realize the forcefield emanates from the planet, sir?

PICARD

(considers it)

That's a complication. We may have to ask them to join us in this.

GEORDI

(surprised)

Team up with the Ferengi, sir?

PICARD

We were ordered to learn what we can about them. Do you know of a better way than that?

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

29 EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE AND FERENGI VESSEL (OPTICAL)

PICARD (V.O.)

Captain's log, supplemental. In orbit of the mysterious planet Gamma Tauri IV in the Delphi Ardu star system, whose unexplained forcefield has seized us with a power almost beyond imagination. If...

30 INT. ENTERPRISE MAIN BRIDGE - WIDE ANGLE INCLUDING VIEWER (OPTICAL)

The viewer carries an IMAGE of the planet. The bridge crew is tense, awaiting communications with the Ferengi.

PICARD (V.O.)

(continuing)

... there is a solution to this, it almost certainly will involve cooperation from the Ferengi... a life form which seems as unknown and mysterious as the planet we orbit.

31 ANGLE INCLUDING TASHA

as she looks from the panel to the Captain.

TASHA

Ship's power drain is critical, Captain. I must now shut down our shields to maintain life support systems.

PICARD

Understood, Lieutenant. Open hailing frequencies.

TASHA

(touching controls)

Hailing frequencies open, sir.

PICARD

Ferengi vessel from Enterprise, this is Captain Picard. Come in.

32 ANGLES INCLUDING VIEWER (OPTICAL)

as Main Viewer ripples into IMAGE OF THE FACE OF DAIMON TAAR again -- and it is still lens-twisted, appearing as large and foreboding as before. He looks up at the screen and then:

TAAR

Your alien images again shock us.

PICARD

DaiMon Tarr, regarding your surrender to us, the facts are somewhat different...

TAAR

(interrupting; angrily)

Our own probe has already shown us your trickery, hu-man.

(emphatic)

We withdraw our surrender.

Picard has exchanged a look with Riker. He nods toward the viewer:

PICARD

Agreed, DaiMon. May this may be a far more productive relationship.

TAAR

I prefer a profitable one, hu-man.

DATA

(quietly, toward Picard)

"Yankee Traders."

TAAR

(bristling)

Explain. What means this

"yangeetraters"?

GEORDI

He heard that?

Picard gives Data an irritated look, searches for an answer.

PICARD

It... acknowledges your interest in profit, DaiMon Taar. Is that an incorrect assumption?

TAAR

We seek only what is equitable.

(angrily)

What do you seek? Why did you begin by attacking us?

32 CONTINUED:

PICARD

We did not attack. We gave chase in order to recover a Federation-owned energy device which...

TAAR

(interrupting)

... which we know is ours. Your barbarous Federation chose to place it on one of our planets!

PICARD

On the contrary, Gamma Tauri IV is recognized by all civilized members of...

TAAR

(outraged)

The Ferengi are not uncivilized, hu-man! Is that what you suggest?!

Picard takes a breath, this is not going well.

PICARD

All I am trying to say is you have taken a device clearly not your own from...

TAAR

(incredulous)

Are you now calling us thieves?!

Picard shifts to a different tack, to let off Ferengi steam.

PICARD

Certainly not. And I have no wish to argue issues of territory or property, when our mutual problem remains. Like it or not...

(firm)

We are both trapped by the power draining forcefield of this planet.

TAAR

(lets up)

On that matter, there can be no argument.

PICARD

Might I propose a swap?

32 CONTINUED: (2)

Taar's face grimaces at the foul-sounding new word.

TAAR

And... what is a "szwop"?

PICARD

An exchange, a trade...

TAAR

Yes, trade, hu-man. What is your offer?

Picard's getting somewhere, and Troi acknowledges the progress with a smile to her captain.

PICARD

We will give you what we know about the planet, and in trade, you will give us your information.

TAAR

Ridiculous. How will we know you have not cheated us?

PICARD

We must trust each other, Taar.

Tarr responds with a grating laugh at this idea.

TAAR

Amusing, hu-man. But impractical.

PICARD

Then may I propose we both cooperate in a joint examination of the planet surface?

TAAR

And what profit is in this, Picard Captain?

PICARD

The profit, DaiMon Tarr, lies in saving all our lives.

Taar considers a beat, then answers, a deal being done.

TAAR

We will agree to this. But I warn you now, any further trickery on your part will be met with no mercy. Understood?

32 CONTINUED: (3)

PICARD

Understood.

(onward)

If you care to join us, we have
a well-proven transporter
device which...

TAAR

We have a matter-energy device
of our own. We will beam a
science team of three to whatever
coordinates you propose.

PICARD

Excellent. We will transmit that
information shortly. Enterprise
out.

Picard nods at Tasha.

TASHA

Hailing frequencies off.

The Main Viewer has returned to an image of the Ferengi
vessel and the planet.

PICARD

I'll log that as "promising," at
least.

RIKER

I wonder, Captain. Ordinarily,
I don't believe in distrust at
first sight... but this may be
an exception.

DATA

Especially in view of the fact
the image he transmitted was
likely distorted somehow, sir.

TROI

I felt the same thing, Captain.
He was hiding something.

RIKER

(stands)

With this power drain I see no
reason to delay, sir.

(looks around)

I'd like some additional help
on this. Can you spare Worf?

32 CONTINUED: (4)

PICARD

(nods)

Take him. And be careful, Number
One.

Riker CROSSES toward the turbolift, FOLLOWED by Data,
Geordi, Tasha and Worf. Their Bridge positions are
immediately filled.

33 INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM

A strong away team of five: Riker, Data, Tasha, Geordi
and Worf. All are armed with phasers, including a
couple of large ones, plus a couple of tricorders. They
step onto the "pads."

TRANSPORTER CHIEF

With this power drain, we may have
trouble communicating with you,
sir.

RIKER

Understood. Anything else?

TRANSPORTER CHIEF

(reluctant)

Due to this forcefield, there is
presently no way... to beam you
back, sir.

GEORDI

You had to ask.

RIKER

Understood.

(checking the others,
then)

Energize!

WE SEE the TRANSPORTER EFFECT.

34 EXT. CLOUDED PLANET - SURFACE

Dimly lit, a twilight world of overcast, turbulent skies
hanging heavily over a strange landscape of coral-like
"trees." LIGHTNING explodes above, as a dull THUNDER
echoes through this eerie labyrinth.

In a relatively clear area, Riker suddenly
materializes... alone! He's woozy, but in one piece.
He looks around, perplexed, worried.

34 CONTINUED:

RIKER

Tasha? Data? Geordi? Worf?!

No answer. Riker scrambles toward a nearby rise, through the "forest," and up the incline... reaching the top.

35 CLOSE - RIKER

He surveys the surrounding area, with no luck.

36 RIKER'S POV - PLANET SURFACE

Landscape. No sign of anything lifelike.

37 BACK TO SCENE

More THUNDER O.S.

RIKER

Anybody?!

DATA

Very intriguing, sir.

38 WIDER ANGLE - TO INCLUDE DATA

atop one of the coral "trees," as the curious android examines it.

RIKER

What are you doing up there?

DATA

(climbs down)

I assume a problem of program coordinates due to the energy field around the ship, sir.

(glances around)

Are we alone?

RIKER

Unfortunately.

(indicates trees)

What do you make of these?

DATA

Crystalline, quite inert.

"Nothing to write home about."

38 CONTINUED:

RIKER
(delayed take)
Excuse me?

DATA
That is slang, sir.
(concern)
I did use it correctly, did I not?

RIKER
(why me?)
Let's find the others...

And they MOVE OFF.

39 EXT. MORE PLANET SURFACE

A tangled mass of interlocking "limbs," shimmering in the cloudy light. WE HEAR our people before we see them.

RIKER (V.O.)
... they can't be too far.

DATA (V.O.)
Actually, the forces responsible for this effect would create a random...

As CAMERA ANGLES DOWN, WE SEE Riker crawling under a limb, and Data in glimpses just behind him.

DATA
(continuing)
... transporter distribution inversely proportional to the density of...

RIKER
Who's that?

DATA
What?

Riker squats, peering through the forest ahead.

RIKER
That!

Data crawls forward to get a look where Riker is pointing.

40 DATA'S AND RIKER'S POV

It's Geordi! But he's inverted, limply hanging upside down from a higher limb, one foot firmly lodged in a crook... and not moving.

RIKER/DATA (V.O)

Geordi!

41 BACK TO SCENE

With difficulty, Riker and Data make their way to their hapless crewmember. Geordi is motionless, maybe dead. Riker reaches through the tangle.

RIKER

Geordi?! Are you conscious?

A beat, then Geordi smiles. Data runs a tricorder nearby.

GEORDI

Do I look conscious?

RIKER

No. What are you doing?

GEORDI

Trying to relax, sir. My foot's caught...

(points up)

Up there. I materialized upside down about ten meters above the surface.

DATA

Tricorder is useless here, sir. Communications are gone, too.

Riker and Data are now in a position to attempt rescue, as they brace Geordi up. THUNDER AND LIGHTNING AGAIN
O.S.

DATA

(continuing; to Geordi)

It is fortunate you did not break anyth...

GEORDI

Who's that?!

At that, both Riker and Data turn to see:

42 POV (OPTICAL)

Backlit by LIGHTNING, THREE SMALL, HAIRLESS HUMANOIDS with protruding cupped ears, dressed in strange clothing. They are armed with odd whip-like weapons.

RIKER (V.O.)

Who are you?

At that, the Leader snaps his whip toward them, unleashing a rippling electra-plasmic WAVE that races TOWARD CAMERA (OPTICAL).

43 CLOSE - OUR TEAM

Riker, Data and lucky-day Geordi are whacked with the WAVE all together... putting Geordi back to sleep. Data falls unconscious, too. Riker fights it but is hit again, and falls, unconscious.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

44 EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE AND FERENGI STARSHIP (OPTICAL)

United in orbit by the force which still holds them helpless.

PICARD (V.O.)

Captain's log, supplemental. It is now six hours since our away team beamed down to the planet surface. On the Enterprise...

45 EXT. SPACE - CLOSE ON ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

showing its LIGHTS DIMMING as unnecessary power is conserved.

PICARD (V.O.)

(continuing)

... our condition is rapidly worsening. Ordinarily, with reserve power alone, we could maintain life support for several months. But the force holding us...

46 INT. ENTERPRISE - MONTAGE

Various SHOTS REVEAL the exhausted and weakening crew still at their stations... Beverly is struggling to aid the stricken. She passes Picard who is doing the same.

PICARD (V.O.)

(continuing)

... has closed down all engines and is draining our reserve power too... Equally impossible, our oxygen level is also dropping.

47 ANGLE ON TROI

bringing an armload of silvery thermal blankets onto the bridge, distributing. She passes the captain.

TROI

It's getting much...

(stops; out of breath)

... much colder, sir.

47 CONTINUED:

Beverly ENTERS SHOT.

PICARD

How far down is it likely to go?

BEVERLY

A lot. Even in orbital space it gets past minus two hundred degrees.

TROI

We won't have to worry past...
(tries to smile)
... minus seventy or so.

PICARD

(shivers)

Feels like that right now.

48 EXT. PLANET SURFACE - CLOSE ON RIKER

As he begins groggily coming back to consciousness, a small grown HAND WITH BLUE COLORED NAILS roughly rips Riker's Starfleet communicator symbol from his uniform.

49 RIKER AND CAPTOR

Sitting opposite Riker on a crystalline rock is a little Ferengi humanoid, LETEK, leader of this group. His eyes "dart" around birdlike as he studies the Starfleet insignia just taken from Riker. He is fine-boned, small -- looking far different and less menacing than the image transmitted to the Enterprise Main Viewer.

50 WIDER ANGLE

Two other Ferengi MOVE INTO SCENE, puffing as they drag the heavy weight of Worf into the clearing to be laid out alongside Geordi and Data. They are KAYRON and MORDOC. At this time, Riker becomes sufficiently conscious to groan.

LETEK

If he moves, kill him.

MORDOC

Letek, has what we've done broken our agreement with their captain?

LETEK

We will accuse the hu-mans of preparing to ambush us. It will be our word against theirs and who is more trustworthy, Mordoc?

51 CLOSE ON LETEK

Beady-eyed and marginally blind, this dominant Ferengi male examines his booty... holding it close-up because of Ferengi weak eyesight.

LETEK
(to himself)
Hmmm. Looks like gold...
(gives it a lick)
... tastes like gold.

RIKER (V.O.)
It is gold!

The alien leaps back from the unexpected sound, his whip immediately in the air, poised to attack! Nearby, useless to our crewmembers, are their phasers, insignias and tricorders.

52 BACK TO SCENE

Riker's not going anywhere, having had a taste of the Ferengi electronic whip. The alien over Riker, whip ready... just as another clap of far-off THUNDER causes it to howl and cover its ears in pain, as do the others!

LETEK
(soft, low voice)
Accursed planet! What
pandemonium!

RIKER
Nothing compared to what my
captain will do...
(sees he's causing pain;
speaks softly)
... when he learns you've broken
our landing party agreement.

LETEK
What part of the agreement?

At that, Riker eases himself up, but the alien gestures him back down, the "whip" its "suggestion"...

LETEK
(continuing)
You appeared and attacked us.
Are you one of their assassins?

52 CONTINUED:

RIKER

I am Commander Riker, first
officer of the USS Enterprise.
Stop now unless you want our
vessel to retaliate...

Upon which, Worf rolls to his feet with a LOUD and
frightening KLINGON GROWL. The Ferengi immediately clap
their hands to their ears and Worf goes for the one
called Mordoc nearest him. But Worf finds he has a
wildcat on his hands.

53 ANOTHER ANGLE (SPECIAL EFFECT)

The Ferengi called Kayron moves to aid Worf's opponent,
lifting his whip to strike, but Data "leaps" from his
prone position, moving with android speed and ease,
grabbing him by the wrist and pulling him at arm's
length off the ground. We HEAR THUNDER again, LOUDER.

54 ANOTHER ANGLE - EMPHASIZING RIKER

as the Ferengi leader, Letek, makes a move.

RIKER

I've got this one!

DATA

Careful, Commander, they're much
stronger than...

Riker finds out how much stronger -- Letek smashes Riker
with a savage right-cross which rolls him over twice and
leaves him completely unconscious.

55 ANOTHER ANGLE

Data and Worf have their hands full.

WORF

(loudly)

PYGMY CRETINS... !

Although with hands over his ears, protecting his
hearing, one of the Ferengi rolls, clamps his legs
around the huge Klingon and brings him to the ground,
hard.

56 ANOTHER ANGLE (OPTICAL)

The remaining two Ferengi go after Data, one hitting him hard and high, the other equally hard and low -- bringing Data to the ground. Letek scoops up his "whip."

LETEK

Kill them.

It sounds no less lethal that the Ferengi says it quietly. As the other two scramble for their whips:

MORDOC

(hissing quietly)

Hideous monsters!

Kayron and Mordoc raise their "whips" to do the job, when:

TASHA (V. O.)

NOOO-O-O!!

All three Ferengi wheel around, as:

57 ANGLE WIDENS TO INCLUDE TASHA

training a major phaser at the hapless Ferengi. The small men let their "whips" drop, at Tasha's gesture.

TASHA

That's much better, now over there...

Letek and his "men" back off, incredulous, as Mordoc points to Tasha.

MORDOC

Is this a female?

KYRON

A hu-man... female, Letek?

The Ferengi are handling this with all the astonishment of seeing man-eating tigers. The Ferengi squint leeringly at Tasha.

LETEK

(to Riker)

Then it is true. You work with females, arm them, and force them to wear clothing?

MORDOC

How sickening.

58 EXT. ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

Nearly dark, as the lights weakly radiate. Beyond, the Ferengi vessel is slightly better lit.

59 INT. ENTERPRISE - MAIN BRIDGE

Picard comforts a crewmember, then CROSSES to Beverly. They're both very cold and weak, GASP OUT their words.

BEVERLY

I should visit... the family
decks...again...

PICARD

(shakes head)

I've diverted... all reserve...
power there. They'll... last
longest.

(looks around)

Is there anything else we can do,
Doctor?

Beverly shakes her head. Then Picard remembers something.

PICARD

(continuing)

Where is... your son Wesley?

BEVERLY

(beat)

I gave him... something. He'll
have a... terrible headache if we
live.

PICARD

You shouldn't have.

BEVERLY

Shouldn't have?

(weak but outraged)

He's my son. I love him...

PICARD

He has the... right to meet...
death awake.

59 CONTINUED:

Beverly eyes Picard for a long moment before she answers with a nod.

BEVERLY

That is... a male perspective!

From deep in his thermal blankets, Picard makes a MUFFLED SOUND.

BEVERLY

(continuing)

What?

(beat; louder)

What did you say, Jean-Luc?

PICARD

I said... rubbish!

60 EXT. PLANET SURFACE

The Ferengi are clearly unafraid of the larger humans and Tasha has had to be alert with her phaser to keep them in place. But now the Ferengi have evolved a plan. It begins with Letek seeming asleep -- the other two suddenly striding OFF. Tasha brings her phaser up:

TASHA

Stop! Hold it right there!

61 ANOTHER ANGLE (OPTICAL)

The two Ferengi are ignoring Tasha. (We're also now HEARING the mysterious THUNDER SOUND nearer and LOUDER.)

RIKER

Set for stun!

TASHA

(nods)

Already set.

In b.g. WE SEE Letek suddenly moving for his "whip" device as a baffled Tasha sends out a PHASER EFFECT which heads straight for the Ferengi but then ARCS IN A CURVE AND ENCIRCLES THE LARGEST NEARBY CORAL TREE.

TASHA

What is going on?!

62 ANGLE EMPHASIZING LETEK

With the attention of the human on the phaser, Letek snatches up his "whip" device and SNAPS it toward the humans. They turn in time to the WHIP EFFECT HEADED IN THEIR DIRECTION -- BUT LIKE THE PHASER EFFECT IT CURVES TOWARD THE "CORAL" TREE AND DISSIPATES THERE.

LETEK

What is this?!

63 ANGLE ON HUMANS AND FERENGI

Neither side is certain what to do next.

DATA

How intriguing.

(to Humans and Ferengi)

I believe we can deduce these crystalline tree-shapes to be energy collectors.

RIKER

(nods)

Along the same principle that is draining energy from our ships.

GEORDI

But the Ferengi weapons were working when we arrived here...

TASHA

Which means something new has happened...

Interrupted by a BLAST OF THUNDER. Then more of the strange THUNDER, CLOSER, STILL LOUDER. Pressing hands over ears, the Ferengi are in agony. Geordi reacts at something o.s., points.

GEORDI

Commander!

64 ANGLE ON TKON OBJECT (OPTICAL)

A SPINNING, CLEAR CRYSTALLINE SHAPE, GIVING OFF RAINBOW HUES as it MOVES INTO SCENE with the Humans and the Ferengi, stopping there. Then, HALF-VOICE AND HALF-THUNDER RUMBLE:

64 CONTINUED:

PORTAL FIGURE
BE YOU BARBARIANS?! SPEAK!

But its defiant inquiry is met by silence from all, as
we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

65 EXT. PLANET SURFACE - ANGLE ON PORTAL EFFECT (OPTICAL)

continuing from ACT FOUR FADE OUT. Both humans and Ferengi astonished at the SPINNING, CLEAR CRYSTALLINE SHAPE WHICH GIVES OFF RAINBOW HUES AND THE SOUND OF THUNDER RUMBLING.

PORTAL
WHO MEETS THE CHALLENGE?

66 ANGLE ON GEORDI AND RIKER

Geordi concentrating on the spinning SHAPE, then turning quickly to Riker.

GEORDI
I'm beginning to understand
what...
(touches VISOR)
... these "eyes" have been showing
me. Patterns of force everywhere.
This entire planet has been made
into... well, a power accumulator.

RIKER
(indicating crystalline
shape)
And that?

GEORDI
... is the whole point of this
place. I can "see" the planet's
power emanating from...

67 WIDER ANGLE - INCLUDING SPINNING SHAPE (OPTICAL)

as again they HEAR the HALF-VOICE, HALF-THUNDER SOUND:

PORTAL
WHO WILL IT BE?

Nobody's volunteering. Letek looks to Riker, then to his Ferengi cohorts. A beat, then Letek takes the plunge...

LETEK
Riker.

67 CONTINUED:

PORTAL
(to Riker)
YOU HAVE AWAKENED PORTAL
SIX-THREE. DO YOU PETITION TO
ENTER THE EMPIRE?

The Ferengi are still protecting their ears. Riker decides to answer.

RIKER
Who asks the question?

68 ANGLE ON PORTAL EFFECT (OPTICAL)

With the LOUDEST SOUND OF ALL, A THUNDER CLAP AND EXTENDED CRACKLING which cues ACCELERATED SPINNING to where the CRYSTALLINE SHAPE BECOMES FUZZY AND DISSOLVES INTO A TALL, THIN, AGED (make-up effect) HUMANOID FIGURE (PORTAL) IN A FINE LONG ROBE.

PORTAL
(echo effect)
I AM THE PORTAL, GUARDIAN OF THE
TKON EMPIRE.

69 ANGLE ON FERENGI

reacting, taking their hands from their ears as the SOUND FADES away.

70 ANGLE ON HUMANS

reacting.

RIKER
Why should we petition for entry
to an empire that no longer
exists?

71 APPROPRIATE ANGLES - PER ACTION

The Portal Figure examines the others, then looks down at itself. It speaks now in a NORMAL VOICE but with a slight ECHO-CHAMBER holdover.

PORTAL
Biped...extraordinary.
(looks up)
Why do you attempt deception?
The empire is forever.

71 CONTINUED:

RIKER

Your empire fell prey to a
supernova...

At that, the Portal Figure scans the cloudy sky above,
concerned but wary of trickery.

PORTAL

Nonsense!

RIKER

Data. Please repeat the file...

DATA

It is a matter of record, Portal,
in the Age of Makto, the central
star of the Tkon Empire
destabilized and...

PORTAL

(interrupts)

But the Age of Makto is an eon
in the future to come...

DATA

(interrupts back)

In fact, there have been many ages
which have come and passed since
Makto...

PORTAL

(and back again)

This is the Age of Bastu!

DATA

(relentless)

I am afraid not, as by the Tkon
use of galactic motionary starttime
charts, after Bastu, there has
been Cimi, Xora, Makto, Ozari,
Fendor...

PORTAL

(enraged)

ENOUGH!

(thunder clap)

This is absurd! That is over seven
baktun of time! How can this be?

71 CONTINUED: (2)

RIKER

You must have been asleep,
Portal, for hundreds of
thousands of our years...

Letek steps forward, acting polite and humble. He indicates Riker and the other humans.

LETEK

Deception is the way of these
hu-mans. We Ferengi will gladly
make a petition.

The away team members react, but Riker motions them into silence.

RIKER

(to Portal)

We invite their petition.

Both Geordi and Data smile at what they perceive is Riker's tactic.

DATA

Excellent idea, sir.

GEORDI

I can't wait to hear it...

The Portal Figure makes a strange gesture to the humans, in deep concentration, then turns to Letek.

PORTAL

Speak.

Letek thinks fast; this has happened almost too rapidly.

LETEK

We... our petition is that we be
allowed to... serve the Tkon
Empire...

(decides to add)

... at no profit! Return control
of our starship to us and we will
happily destroy both the hu-man
criminals and their vessel which
attacked us without provocation.

(too eager)

They came to loot your empire,
but we intercepted them!

71 CONTINUED: (3)

The away team is desperate for Riker to make an answer to this but he remains silent, awaiting the Portal Figure's answer. Again the Portal gestures, but this time to the Ferengi, then he turns back to Riker.

PORTAL

You have attempted deceit. Next you cannot answer these accusations. Do you give yourself up for judgment?

RIKER

(beat; considering this)
Yes. If you believe those accusations, you should act on them.

The other away team members are shocked at Riker's answer. Before the Portal can answer, Letek decides to go for the "kill."

LETEK

And there is even more! We can prove the hu-mans are destroyers of legal commerce ... also that they selfishly withhold vital technology from backward worlds...

MORDOC

(jumping in)
... and necessary defensive weapons, too. We Ferengi are now challenge this hu-man madness...

RIKER

I admit we restrict advanced technology to all...

KAYRON

(in chorus)
You see! They are demented; their values are insane. You cannot believe the business opportunities they destroy...

71 CONTINUED: (4)

LETEK

(exhibiting the
Starfleet insignias
taken)

Proof of their barbarism -- they
adorn themselves with gold, a
despicable use of rare metal...

(indicates Tasha)

And they shamelessly clothe their
females...

MORDOC

(leering at Tasha)

Inviting others to unclothe
them... the very depth of
perversion...

Mordoc reaches for a pawhold on Tasha's uniform in
disgust. But Tasha angles and parries his thrust, at
the ready.

TASHA

Paws off, Ferengi.

MORDOC

No female, hu-man or Ferengi, can
order Mordoc around! Submit!

TASHA

(moves toward Mordoc;
deadly)

Just try it, shorty.

RIKER

(warning)

At ease, Lieutenant!

GEORDI

(to Ferengi)

I wouldn't mess with Lieutenant
Yar if I were you...

(to Riker)

But maybe they'd like to find out
the hard way, eh, Number One?

RIKER

Seems their style.

(to Portal)

Would you like to hear more?

PORTAL

If you desire.

Riker gestures to Data, who willingly obliges.

71 CONTINUED: (5)

DATA

(nods)

They should add also that Starfleet has refused to prevent several civilizations from falling; we have sometimes let the violent and strong overcome the weak...

LETEK

(to Portal)

They admit their crimes! Hear them; they admit the evil which they... !

Interrupted by a ROLLING THUNDER SOUND.

72 ANGLE ON PORTAL FIGURE (OPTICAL)

as the Figure seems a bit younger, better muscled, the robe shorter and more practical, with a large, lethal appearing scimitar-like weapon in hand. It turns to Riker, its voice now carrying a hint of ROLLING THUNDER again.

PORTAL

BARBARIAN!

LETEK

Yes, you show wisdom...

PORTAL

(interrupting; indicates the Ferengi, too)

BARBARIANS, ALL!

(indicates Riker with sword)

But this one first. In the fashion the Empire has always challenged savages...

73 EMPHASIZING WORF AND TASHA (OPTICAL)

jumping forward.

WORF

No! For battle, come to me...

A flash of BLUE LIGHT with LIGHTNING BOLT SOUND hurls Worf violently back, rolling to a stop unconscious. Tasha wisely stops, then goes to Worf's assistance.

74 EMPHASIZING RIKER AND PORTAL FIGURE

as the Figure takes a fighting stance.

PORTAL

(mixed-THUNDER)

You have a single chance for life.
One only. What is the answer to
my challenge?

RIKER

(facing Portal Figure,
unmoving)

There is more! Self-determination
of all peoples...

Again, the Portal makes a strange gesture to Riker, in
deep concentration.

PORTAL

(interrupting)

You are being tested, Riker! WHAT
IS THE ANSWER?

Riker looks up sharply, puzzled at this.

RIKER

How do you know my name?

The Portal Figure suddenly rushes at Riker, scimitar
held high... an earth-shattering SHRIEK. Riker stands
fast as:

75 CLOSE ON RIKER AND PORTAL FIGURE

Portal cuts through the air in an unstoppable overhead
sweep... Then, the ugly looking weapon stops a couple
millimeters from Riker's head! Riker remains
motionless, even calm, serene...

PORTAL

Ahhh. You are of immovable mind,
Riker. One totally committed to
facing any fate with composure...
(sword still up)

But what is the answer to my
challenge?

All the away team members hold their breath. Riker
remains quietly at ease. Is he taking too long?

75 CONTINUED:

RIKER

Fear is the true enemy, the only enemy.

Portal tosses his weapon aside.

PORTAL

You are a noble being. And unlike these little ones who close their minds, your mind holds interesting thoughts.

(quoting)

"Know your enemy and know yourself, and victory will always be yours." Why that thought? And who is this "Sun Tzu" you revere?

RIKER

An old Chinese philosopher from ancient Earth history...

PORTAL

You must tell me more of this wisdom so much like our own.

RIKER

Gladly. First, our starship. Can you release it?

PORTAL

(nods)

It is released.

(looks upward, nods)

All power is restored.

76 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

suddenly freed, the LIGHTS back up to full strength!

77 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

as all power is restored, the bridge lights and a/c return to norm, not a lot too late. The crew begin to stir. Picard gets to his feet fast, but weakly.

78 CLOSE ON PICARD

opens his eyes, taking in a deep, fresh breath. He looks around. Beverly ENTERS SHOT.

BEVERLY

Not a hell of a lot too soon,
Jean...Captain.

79 EXT. PLANET SURFACE - VARIOUS ANGLES

with the Ferengi showing concerned expressions.

PORTAL

(to Riker)

I admit I had my doubts as your
ships battled each other...

LETEK

They tried to kill us!

PORTAL

(ignores him)

In overt acts of belligerence.
Normally, I would have destroyed
all of you and your ships, but
something confused me.

RIKER

Which was?

PORTAL

First you wanted to murder each
other, then you were willing to
help each other.

Letek's not one to be ignored, roughly forcing himself
in front of Riker, his cohorts nearby.

LETEK

What of our vessel? We knew the
same answer...

MORDOC

The truth is I gave those words
to this hu-man.

79 CONTINUED:

PORTAL

(to Riker)

What of them? Shall I destroy them?

RIKER

Then they would learn nothing.

PORTAL

Admirable conclusion. But what makes you think they will ever learn, Riker?

RIKER

(beat)

Is this a test also?

The Ferengi start to intrude again, but the Portal quickly silences them with a deadly wave of his hand.

PORTAL

In life, one is always tested.

RIKER

I find them very much as we were a few hundred years ago... but with the technology we have now. They're very dangerous...

KAYRON

(can't help the lie)

Untrue! We seek friendship with you...

RIKER

(unhearing; to Portal)

But we can hardly hate what we once were. They may grow and learn...

PORTAL

... And learn ways of destroying you.

RIKER

Our values require us to face that possibility. What of you? With your empire gone... ?

PORTAL

Even without the empire, the uncivilized must be tested.

(sadly)

I shall sleep... until needed again.

80 EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE AND FERENGI SHIP

Both vessels with power up.

81 INT. ENTERPRISE MAIN BRIDGE - EMPHASIZING GEORDI AND DATA

ENTERING from the turbolift. Troi, CROSSING in from the Ready Room, intercepts them.

TROI

What happened?

DATA

Something to write home about.

GEORDI

"Something to write home about?"
Data, that's very human.

Data is very pleased at that. Meanwhile, Riker has ARRIVED, CROSSES to the Command Area.

82 EMPHASIZING PICARD

as Riker joins him.

RIKER

The T-9 energy converter was beamed aboard and secured, sir.

PICARD

I commend your performance, Number One.

Data has also returned to his forward "Ops" station, carefully placing his finger puzzle above his console.

RIKER

I do have a request, sir.

83 CLOSE ON RIKER

A wicked thought.

RIKER

(continuing)

Permission to beam a box of Data's Chinese finger puzzles over to the Ferengi.

(postscript)

A "thank you" for all they tried to do.

84 CLOSE ON PICARD

PICARD
(smiles)
Make it so.

85 EXT. ENTERPRISE AND FERENGI STARSHIP (OPTICAL)

as both angle, and in opposite directions, WARP OUT AND AWAY from the mysterious, clouded planet - the "last outpost" of the once-mighty Empire of Tkon, as CAMERA MOVES IN on our starship, which QUICKLY RECEDES FROM CAMERA into a DOT OF LIGHT as we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE
THE END