

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

"The Loss"
#40274-184

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FINAL DRAFT

OCTOBER 1, 1990

STAR TREK: "The Loss" - REV. 10/8/90 - CAST

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
"The Loss"

CAST

PICARD	ENSIGN JANET BROOKS
RIKER	ENSIGN TESS ALLENBY
DATA	
BEVERLY	
TROI	
GEORDI	
WORF	
GUINAN	
COMPUTER VOICE	

Non-Speaking

MEDICAL PERSONNEL
ENGINEERING PERSONNEL
SUPERNUMERARIES

STAR TREK: "The Loss" - REV. 10/3/90 - SETS

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
"The Loss"

SETS

INTERIORS

USS ENTERPRISE

MAIN BRIDGE

CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

MAIN ENGINEERING

OBSERVATION LOUNGE

SICKBAY

CORRIDORS

TEN-FORWARD

TROI'S OFFICE

TROI'S QUARTERS

RIKER'S QUARTERS

EXTERIORS

USS ENTERPRISE

COSMIC STRING

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
"The Loss"
TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

Moving at warp speed.

2 INT. TROI'S OFFICE - CLOSE ON

ENSIGN JANET BROOKS, mid-thirties, trying to show confidence.

BROOKS

It's been five months since Marc's accident. I haven't missed a single hour of my duties. I've volunteered for extra time in the nursery. My language studies are better than they've ever been. Someone else might have given in -- but I didn't.

TROI

"Given in" to what?

Brooks shrugs.

BROOKS

Death is a normal part of life. Maybe some of us are better at facing that than others.

TROI

(gently)

Or maybe some of us aren't really facing it at all.

Some of Brooks' composure cracks, but she does her best to pull it back.

TROI

(continuing)

Sometimes, we suffer more than our suffering requires.

BROOKS

What do you mean?

2 CONTINUED:

TROI

Recovery from a great loss
involves a great deal of pain.
If we try to avoid that pain we
only make it harder on ourselves
in the long run.

BROOKS

But I feel fine.

TROI

Then why did you come to see me?

BROOKS

(exasperated)

I told you. I just wanted to...
check in.

TROI

Today would have been your
husband's thirty-eighth birthday.

BROOKS

(a beat)

You keep excellent records,
Deanna.

Troi studies her, gives her room to continue...

BROOKS

Last night. I dreamt Marc was
with me, celebrating. I held him.
I was so glad this nonsense was
finally over. Then I woke up --
Alone. And I knew he was dead.
For the first time, I knew it...

She's holding herself, like she even wants to cry, but
she still can't quite allow it to happen.

BROOKS

(continuing)

I looked everywhere for something
that belonged to him -- anything.

(shakes her head)

I forgot that after the funeral
I told them to take it all away.

She looks at Troi sadly.

2 CONTINUED: (2)

BROOKS

(continuing)

You were there, Deanna. What in
the world was I thinking?

Troi takes a small music box out of a drawer, and moves
over to Janet.

TROI

They didn't take everything away.

Troi hands her the box and she opens it... and it
starts playing music... The sound of it pushes Janet
over the hump. She begins to sob.

BROOKS

(softly)

How did you know... ? How did you
know... ?

Troi just holds her, letting her finally begin to
mourn.

3 INT. BRIDGE

PICARD, DATA, RIKER, WORF at their positions. ENSIGN
ALLENBY is at Conn.

PICARD

(rising)

... An ancient trail along the
Kabul River in the Himalayas...
it's a wonderful program...
Will, it'll do you good to get
a little fresh Holodeck air...

RIKER

Thanks anyway, but my horsemanship
is a little too rusty to take
on the Himalayas.

PICARD

(teasing)

Nonsense. We'll program an
appropriately docile steed for
you and...

3 CONTINUED:

WORF
(alarmed, interrupting)
Captain! Sensors indicate
a vast field of...

Confused, Worf continues to check the instruments.

PICARD
Of what, Lieutenant?

WORF
(surprised)
It's gone. But something did
appear to be directly in our
path.

ALLENBY
Deflector shields are not
encountering elevated levels of
interstellar matter...

RIKER
A sensor echo, Data?

DATA
Uncertain... I have no unusual
readings, Commander.

Everyone reacts.

4 INT. TROI'S OFFICE

Troi and Brooks are saying goodbye at Troi's office door. Brooks looks as though she's had a long cry, but it's done for now. Troi suddenly appears a bit dizzy, gasps lightly.

4 CONTINUED:

BROOKS

I promise I'll come by to see you tomorrow.

(noticing dizziness)

Deanna, are you alright?

TROI

(disoriented)

What... ?

BROOKS

You faded out there for a second.

TROI

No, I'm okay. Very... tired, that's all.

BROOKS

You're sure?

TROI

Yes... Will I see you tomorrow?

Brooks is a little puzzled since she just agreed to that moments ago.

BROOKS

Tomorrow. Thank you, Deanna.

TROI

Of course.

Brooks leaves. Troi takes a deep breath, leans for a moment against the doorway to regain some balance.

INTERCUTTING:

5 INT. BRIDGE - CLOSE ON DATA

who suddenly notices something on his own panel.

DATA

An aggregate field of plane-polarized objects has just appeared...

(puzzled)

And disappeared.

6
thru OMITTED
7

8 INT. TROI'S OFFICE

Troi is even more disoriented and dizzy, having trouble focusing her eyes. She knocks a vase to the floor. It shatters.

8A INT. MAIN BRIDGE

RIKER

(to Picard)

Recommend we run a diagnostic on the forward sensor array. We don't want a ghost tailing us all the way to T'lli Beta.

WORF

I'm not convinced it is a ghost, Commander. There may be something there...

PICARD

Ensign Allenby, full stop. We'll investigate both possibilities.

ALLENBY

Aye, sir.

Allenby complies.

8B INT. TROI'S OFFICE

Troi tries to reach a couch, doesn't get that far. She clutches her head, knees buckling, as she crumples to the floor, unconscious.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

9 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

Motionless in space.

PICARD (V.O.)

Captain's log, stardate 44356.9.
Sensor diagnostic has been
completed and indicates that all
systems are normal. There remains
no explanation for the images
which appeared in our path.

10 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

As before.

DATA

I have completed another full scan
of the area, sir. There is no
further indication of the
anomaly...

Picard gives it a moment's thought and then shrugs...

PICARD

Prepare to resume course to T'lli
Beta, Ensign. Mister Data, what
velocity will put us back on
schedule?

DATA

An immediate resumption of our
course at warp six will place
us in the T'lli Beta system in
six days, thirteen hours and
forty-seven minutes.

RIKER

What, no seconds?

DATA

I have discovered, Sir, a certain
level of impatience when I
calculate a lengthy time interval
to the nearest second. However,
if you wish...

10 CONTINUED:

RIKER
(sorry he asked)
No, no. Minutes is fine.

Picard smiles. Turns to Allenby.

PICARD
Ensign, set course and stand
ready at warp six.

ALLENBY
Aye, Sir.

PICARD
Engage.

Allenby touches the console. The ship is jolted. All are thrown from their seats and knocked to the deck. CLAXONS SOUND and RED ALERT lights flash as they get to their feet.

RIKER
Riker to Engineering... what the
hell happened, Geordi?

10A INT. ENGINEERING

Geordi, on the move, checking readings... everyone's putting themselves back together from the shake... RED ALERT alarms and lights continue in the background.

GEORDI
Checking... looks like the field
collapsed before we could enter
warp...

RIKER
Reason?

GEORDI
Damned if I know. There doesn't
seem to be any permanent damage
to the nacelles. Recommend full
stop while I check it out...

11
thru OMITTED
12

13 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

PICARD
(nods)
Back to full stop, Ensign.

ALLENBY
Aye, sir.

DATA
All decks reporting. Minor
injuries only.

PICARD
Damage?

DATA
None.

WORF
Weapons and shields normal.

RIKER
Go to yellow alert.

Worf complies. The RED ALERT shuts down.

13 CONTINUED:

Allenby reacts as she sees something on her panel.

ALLENBY

Captain... we've started moving
again... something's pulling
us...

Off reactions...

14 INT. TROI'S OFFICE

Troi is on her couch, head held in hands, now
apparently in excruciating pain. Troi slows her
breathing, touches her insignia.

TROI

(touching insignia)
Troi to Doctor Crusher.

BEVERLY'S COM VOICE

Yes, Deanna?

INTERCUT:

15 INT. SICKBAY

BEVERLY is in the midst of a Sickbay busy with
attendants preparing for the rush of patients.

TROI'S COM VOICE

Beverly, I'm feeling very...
dizzy...

BEVERLY

Did you hit your head... ?

TROI

I'm not sure. I'm not sure what
happened.

BEVERLY

Lie down, breathe deeply, stay
calm... we've got calls coming
in from all over the ship. I'll
be there as soon as I can.

16 INT. BRIDGE

ALLENBY

New heading confirmed: zero-two-five
mark two-seven-three.
Speed is holding at one-tenth
impulse...

RIKER

Whatever's pulling us sure isn't
in a hurry...

PICARD

Picard to La Forge.

GEORDI

Go ahead, Captain.

PICARD

If your engines are functional,
we'll attempt to break free.

INTERCUT:

17
thru OMITTED
18

19 INT. ENGINEERING

Geordi is looking at his instruments.

GEORDI

Everything down here seems normal
enough, sir... but I suggest we
take it a little slower this
time...

20 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

PICARD

Ensign, bring us around ninety
degrees to starboard from our
current heading...

ALLENBY

(tapping panel)
New course laid in, ninety
degrees to starboard.

PICARD

One-quarter impulse. Engage.

ALLENBY

Aye, sir.

Allenby does... no change...

ALLENBY

Nothing, Captain. Course and
speed are unaffected.

PICARD

One-half impulse.

Allenby touches controls. A beat.

ALLENBY

No change.

Picard frowns...

20 CONTINUED:

PICARD

Full impulse... rotate heading
in five degree increments.

ALLENBY

Aye, sir.

20A
thru OMITTED
22

23 INT. ENGINEERING

Geordi is at his control panels. The impulse engines
are straining, but not alarmingly.

23 CONTINUED:

The ship shudders. He reacts.

RIKER'S COM VOICE

La Forge?

GEORDI

There's nothing wrong down here!
The engines are fine!

24
thru OMITTED
25

26 INT. BRIDGE

Data looks up from his instruments.

DATA

Integrity field stress now
exceeding eighty-two million
kilo-dynes. Recommend immediate
shutdown.

26 CONTINUED:

PICARD

Ensign.

Allenby hits the panel.

ALLENBY

All engines down.

The shuddering immediately stops. She checks her instruments.

ALLENBY

We're still being pulled. Same heading. Same speed.

OFF an exasperated look between Picard and Riker.

27 OMITTED

28 INT. TROI'S OFFICE

The door opens and Beverly ENTERS. Troi is sitting on her couch, appearing to be in much less pain than previously, but she's still rubbing her head.

BEVERLY

(apologetic)

I got here as quickly as I could. We've got a Sickbay filled with headaches. How are you?

TROI

I was feeling intense pain when I first called you. Now it's gone. But I'm still a bit... foggy.

Beverly runs her medical tricorder around Troi's head. Seems puzzled at the results, but not alarmed.

BEVERLY

I'd like to take you to Sickbay and run an internuncial series. I'm getting some unusual readings. Can you walk?

Troi stands, doesn't seem as dizzy.

28 CONTINUED:

RIKER'S COM VOICE

All senior staff report to the
Observation Lounge.

BEVERLY

Are you up to that?

TROI

Yes, I think so.

They head for the door, but Troi pauses, looks oddly
for a moment at Beverly.

BEVERLY

Is something wrong?

TROI

(shaking it off)

No, I'm fine.

29 INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE

Picard, Riker, Data, Worf, Geordi, Beverly, Troi.

RIKER

Could it be some sort of tractor
beam?

DATA

No other ship is indicated.

30 CLOSE ON TROI

As she seems to be experiencing a growing puzzlement.

31 RESUME SCENE

PICARD

Mister Worf, your analysis.

31 CONTINUED:

WORF

Tactical sensor readings were
indeterminant.

GEORDI

(agrees)

They don't even give us enough
for an educated guess.

RIKER

(frowns)

And yet all sensors are operating
properly.

PICARD

Can there be an intelligence at
work here?

Any other time, Troi would just jump right in now. But
she doesn't. The silence is notable. After a beat.
Picard turns to her.

PICARD

Counselor, do you sense a
lifeform out there?

She looks up, blinks...

TROI

I don't think so... No, there's
nothing...

Troi strains to feel something.

TROI

(continuing)

Nothing.

(realizing)

Strange, I sense... nothing.

Noticing Troi's confusion, but not understanding it,
Picard tries to reassure her.

PICARD

It's alright, Counsellor. Perhaps
there's nothing out there to
sense.

32 TROI'S POV

as she moves her gaze in a growing panic from person to person.

DATA

Indeed, there are many races that are not empathically detectable. The Breen, the Ferengi, the --

33 RESUME

Troi interrupts, terrified.

TROI

-- No, you don't understand. I don't sense anything. Not out there, not in here. All of you, you're blank to me.

She grabs her head with her hands. Riker rushes to support her.

RIKER

Deanna.

OFF her terror stricken look.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

34 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

Still being pulled off-center at sub-light through space.

35 INT. SICKBAY

Troi is sitting on a diagnostic table as Beverly finishes examining her, looking up at the readout above the bed. Riker stands by.

BEVERLY

There's no indication of a concussion or a blow to the head... just a pattern of unresponsive neural cells throughout the cerebellum and cerebral cortex...

TROI

Unresponsive?

BEVERLY

(a beat, frank)

There's brain damage. How serious... I can't tell yet.

TROI

But I feel fine otherwise.

RIKER

Can you treat it?

BEVERLY

I'm not sure. I'll have to study up on Betazoid physiology.

TROI

The Betazoid brain has a remarkable ability to heal itself... this condition could reverse itself over time.

35 CONTINUED:

BEVERLY

It might. But you are half-human.
That changes the map a little.
I just don't want to offer you
any false hope.

Troi smiles.

TROI

It's just hope, Beverly. Not
false hope.

Beverly studies Troi...

RIKER

What would cause something like
this... ?

Beverly shakes her head, doesn't know.

RIKER

(I'm asking that
question...)
... because it happened to her at
just about the same time we
encountered the anomaly.

BEVERLY

(nods)
There may be a connection... I
don't know.
(beat, to Troi)
If you were anyone else, you know
the first thing I'd do?
(off her look)
I'd send you to Counselor Troi.

And Deanna is showing an unusual sense of humor about
all this...

TROI

Well, then I have an advantage,
don't I... I see her quite
often...

BEVERLY

Deanna, it's no different than
one of us suddenly going blind...

35 CONTINUED: (2)

TROI

(impatient)

Doctor, you don't have to tell me... I understand the psychology...

BEVERLY

You may understand it... but you've never had to live with it.

TROI

I may be perfectly fine by tomorrow.

BEVERLY

And you may not be. Now I'll do my homework... I'll see if there's anything we can do to regenerate those cells... but in the meantime, I want you to talk to someone... there are several people on board with degrees in psychology...

TROI

(laughs, interrupting)

Fine. Fine. Okay. If I need to. All I want to do now is go back to work.

RIKER

Deanna...

TROI

If there are no medical objections...

Beverly glances at Riker.

BEVERLY

No... medical objections.

She jumps down from the table.

TROI

Thank you, Beverly.
(perfunctory smile)
Will.

Troi heads quickly out the door. OFF a concerned look between Riker and Beverly.

36 INT. TROI'S OFFICE

Troi is at a table intensely focused on a report when the door chimes, startling her. She looks up, a little annoyed.

TROI

Come in.

The door opens and Riker ENTERS.

RIKER

I don't have a psychology degree
but if you want to talk...

Troi smiles. But it's not an entirely pleasant smile.

TROI

You know what the worst part of
this is... and I've seen it happen
with so many patients...

Riker smiles, misinterpreting, thinking she's opening
up to him...

RIKER

What?

TROI

It's the way other people change.
How they start to treat you
differently.

And Riker is rather rocked back on his heels as her
displaced anger grows...

TROI

They walk on egg shells around
you. Sometimes they avoid you
altogether. Sometimes they
become overbearing -- 'reach out
a helping hand to the blind
woman'...

RIKER

I'm sorry if...

TROI

Well, I won't be treated that way.

RIKER

Hey, Imzadi...

TROI
(give me a break)
Oh, please...

The look at each other a long beat.

RIKER
(softly)
I've never seen you... quite so
scared.

TROI
I'm fine. If I get better, I
get better. If not, I adapt.
Life goes on.

She is not convincing. A beat.

TROI
I'm a little busy now.

RIKER
Deanna --

She doesn't want to hear anymore.

TROI
-- I really must finish this.
I have some appointments this
afternoon.

It's a dismissal. Riker sees he isn't going to get
any further right now. He turns and goes out the door.
OFF Troi, as she steels herself and gets back to work.

37 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The Enterprise is still being pulled off-center. A
probe is suddenly launched from the ship.

38 INT. ENGINEERING (OPTICAL)

Data and Geordi at a computer console which displays
a moving graphic representation of the probe's POV.

DATA
Probe launch is successful.
(beat)
Telemetry transmissions are being
received.

38 CONTINUED:

GEORDI

Let's see what we've got.

Geordi looks at the numerical readout on the instrument panel below the screen.

GEORDI

Nothing unusual here... same readings as the ship sensors.

DATA

(touching controls)

Expanding analysis parameters.
Applying Bayesian functions...
broad E-M and subspace spectrum
polling...

GEORDI

(nothing)

Uh Uh... No change...

DATA

I am now adding virtual particle trajectories...

A beat, then suddenly an image on the screen surprises them both.

GEORDI

Whoa. What is that?

39 INCLUDE SCREEN (OPTICAL)

which now displays what looks like a school of small, flat energy objects, moving in haphazard manner around each other on a flat plane. The image is beautiful, scintillating, diaphanous, almost not there at all.

DATA

Unknown. I am attempting to analyze motion patterns... results still inconclusive.

GEORDI

Last time I saw anything like that, I was skindiving off the Coral Reef on Bracas Five.

40 CLOSE ON SCREEN (OPTICAL)

where the movement of the clustering objects supports Geordi's image: it strongly resembles a school of tropical fish.

41 INT. TROI'S OFFICE

Troi is on her feet, slowly circling her client...

TROI (V.O.)

Counselor's personal log, stardate 44357.1. I hear their words, I see their faces, I know the techniques of therapy... and yet it all forms an incomplete equation. I am without insight. How do I help these people?

As she comes around, we see she's with Janet Brooks. Brooks is in apparent good humor. Troi decides on a new tact...

TROI

You said you woke up 'a new woman' this morning.

BROOKS

That's how I feel...

TROI

Tell me about her - this new woman...

BROOKS

She's not holding anything back anymore.

TROI

She's not?

BROOKS

I let it all out last night. I cried for two hours. I realized I'd never accepted the loss of my husband. I worked, I kept busy. I did everything to pretend it never happened.

TROI

You feel different, now.

41 CONTINUED:

BROOKS

Completely.

A long beat. Troi sits.

TROI

Can I share something important
with you?

41 CONTINUED: (2)

BROOKS

Of course...

TROI

I'm having a very difficult time today. And I feel you need to know.

BROOKS

What's wrong?

TROI

I've temporarily lost my empathic sense.

(smiles)

It's kind of like having one hand tied behind your back.

BROOKS

I'm sorry... do you want me to come back?

TROI

No, no, I'm fine. It's just... I feel before we continue it's important you know that. Okay... ?

BROOKS

(curious)

All right...

TROI

Because I can't tell how you feel this morning, but it... it seems to me... one night of crying can't make up for months of pretending.

BROOKS

(very convincing)

No. You're wrong. I feel better today than I have in ages. You're absolutely wrong, Deanna.

Troi smiles and nods, good... and her eyes tell us her desperation as she hasn't the slightest idea what to do next.

41A EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

Still being pulled.

42 INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE (OPTICAL)

Picard, Riker and Troi listen as Data and Geordi present their findings. Troi seems to want to participate, but is unsure of herself.

43 INCLUDE COMPUTER SCREEN (OPTICAL)

which displays the same probe graphic of the "school" of aliens pulling the Enterprise.

DATA

The probe's point of view reveals that the objects exist entirely in two dimensions. On a single plane.

GEORDI

They have length and width, but no height. Virtually flat.

DATA

That is why the ship's forward sensors did not detect them at first. We were looking at them along their edge. There was no surface to read. I will illustrate.

Data freezes the graphic...

43A CLOSE ON THE MONITOR

as the angle of the POV decreases... moves lower and lower until it eventually loses the Enterprise and reaches the same plane as the beings... and when it does, they disappear. As the graphic moves back to a higher angle, the entities reappear.

43B PICARD

moves to the screen, fascinated.

43B CONTINUED:

PICARD

Are they a lifeform?

DATA

(nods to screen)

The movement pattern within the cluster is not a naturally occurring phenomenon in the Newtonian sense. The objects appear to be alive.

RIKER

Can you explain why they're pulling us along with them?

Geordi makes an adjustment to the screen that illustrates --

GEORDI

Somehow, they polarize the graviton field around them as they move. We're caught in the wake.

RIKER

So how do we get out of it?

GEORDI

We've processed the limited information from the probe... best idea for now is to try a controlled overload of the warp drive... jump directly to warp six. The laws of a three-dimensional universe say it should work. Not so sure about a two-dimensional universe though.

PICARD

Fascinating. So many questions... how could a two dimensional entity have access to a three dimensional universe... and are they even aware of us... ?

(moving back)

Number One, if we can put off the T'lli Betans, I'd like to stay and investigate once we're free of this graviton field...

43B CONTINUED: (2)

GEORDI

It's too bad we can't tell if
they're sentient.

43B CONTINUED: (3)

Troi, who has been watching silently, now suddenly reacts.

TROI
(defensively)
What do you mean by that?

Geordi and everyone else look up in surprise.

TROI
(continuing)
I'm doing the best I can.

PICARD
No one has suggested otherwise,
Counselor.

Troi seems to clam up. Picard doesn't want to pursue this publicly. He turns to Data.

PICARD
(continuing)
Mister Data, try to isolate any
signal patterns from the cluster.
Perhaps we'll find a basis for
communication. Commander La
Forge, we'll attempt your warp
jump as soon as you're prepared...
(to everyone)
That'll be all.

As everyone gets up to leave, Picard turns towards Troi.

PICARD
Counselor --

-- But she's already half-way out the door and even though she must've heard him, she keeps going. OFF Picard's reaction.

44 INT. SICKBAY

Beverly is going about her work with some medical equipment when Troi comes in.

BEVERLY
How are you feeling?

44 CONTINUED:

TROI

Beverly, I can't do my job. I'm absolutely lost. You've got to do something.

BEVERLY

I cross-referenced your scan results with the baseline files in the computer. Nothing helpful turned up. And so far the lab work is inconclusive.

Troi seems to sag. She leans against a diagnostic bed.

TROI

Inconclusive. What does that mean?

BEVERLY

It means there's nothing I can do now. I'm still trying...

TROI

(interrupting)

How do you people live like this?

BEVERLY

(beat)

We get by pretty well actually. And so will you. In time.

Slowly building anger from Troi.

TROI

You have no idea. No idea what this is like. How can you know what it's like to lose something you've never had?

BEVERLY

I don't claim to...

TROI

But you're telling me I'm supposed to get used to it.

BEVERLY

If our positions were reversed, what would you tell me?

44 CONTINUED: (2)

TROI

If our positions were reversed,
I wouldn't have been in here
treating skinned elbows while you
were passed out on your office
floor. I would have been there
a lot sooner... maybe in time to
prevent this before it ever
happened.

Deanna turns and storms out of Sickbay, leaving a
devastated Beverly behind.

45 INT. CORRIDOR

Troi is walking quickly along the corridor, avoiding
the SUPERNUMERARIES who walk by. Her anger is turning
to panic as she finally reaches her quarters and goes
inside.

46 INT. TROI'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Troi steps inside, the doors closing behind her. She
moves to the middle of the room, stops, then slowly
sits down on the floor. She puts her arms around her
knees, and slowly rocks, like a terrified child.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

47 INT. PICARD'S READY ROOM - CLOSE ON TROI

who is not wearing lipstick... she does not look her best.

TROI

I've been working with Ensign Brooks since the death of her husband... she's avoided the reality of what happened... denied it to herself... and I realize I've been doing the same thing about my condition.

Pull back to reveal Picard at his desk.

PICARD

That's perfectly understandable...

TROI

It's time I accept the truth, Captain.

(beat)

And resign as ship's counselor.

PICARD

(reacts)

Resign... ?

TROI

I can no longer fulfill my obligations. What other option is there?

Picard steps from around the desk, wanting to remove all barriers between them... sits next to her, is very personal.

PICARD

Deanna, I have been fortunate in having had access to your Betazoid abilities. Most starship captains must be content with human counselors. Empathic awareness is not a requirement for the position.

47 CONTINUED:

TROI
(unyielding)
It is for me.

47 CONTINUED: (2)

A long beat as he studies her. She's unbending.

PICARD

I'm sure after awhile you'll be able to compensate. They say when one loses a sense, the other senses become stronger to help adjust... a blind man develops better hearing...

TROI

With all due respect, Captain, you don't know what you're talking about.

Picard blinks, not used to be talked to this way.

TROI

(continuing)

That is a common belief which has no scientific basis... no doubt created by normal people who feel uncomfortable around the disabled.

(beat)

I am disabled. And I'm telling you I cannot perform my duties.

Picard studies her a long beat, his mind searching for a way to reach her.

PICARD

(a beat)

There was a teacher of mine at the Academy who had been confined to a wheelchair since birth...

TROI

(interrupting, softly)

Spare me the inspirational anecdote and accept my resignation, Captain.

Off Picard's reaction...

48 INT. BRIDGE

Troi exits the Ready Room followed a beat later by Picard. She goes into the Turbolift, leaving, as Picard sits next to Riker.

48 CONTINUED:

Riker gives him a puzzled look re: Deanna.

PICARD
Counselor Troi has just resigned.

OFF Riker's reaction...

49 INT. TROI'S QUARTERS

Troi is pacing her room when the door chimes.

TROI
Come in.

The door opens and Riker ENTERS.

TROI
I really would rather be alone
right now.

RIKER
Too bad.

And he moves to her and they look in each other's eyes for a long silent beat... and she looks as though if he touches her, she will crumble. Much is said in the silence and finally he wraps his arms around her and holds her... and with the physical contact, she sobs and tears roll down her cheeks for the first time. After a beat...

TROI
(humor through tears)
Is this how you handle all of your
personnel problems?

RIKER
Sure. You'd be surprised how far
a hug goes with Geordi or Worf...

TROI
Will, I don't know what to do.

RIKER
So you resign, cut yourself off
from all the people who care for
you...

She moves out of his arms.

49 CONTINUED:

TROI

I look around me and all I see
are surfaces without depth.
Colorless and hollow. Nothing
seems real.

RIKER

I'm real.

TROI

No, you're not! You're a
projection. With no more
substance to me than a character
on the Holodeck.

Riker reacts...

49 CONTINUED: (2)

RIKER
I don't believe that.

TROI
You have no idea how frightening
it is for me to just be here
without sensing you, without
sharing your feelings...

RIKER
That's it, isn't it... we're on
equal footing now...

TROI
What do you mean?

RIKER
You've always had an advantage...
a little bit of control over every
situation... it must have been
a very safe position to be in.

And she thinks about it, and is forced to admit that
what he's saying is true.

RIKER
(kidding on the square)
To be honest, I always thought
there was something a little too
aristocratic about your Betazoid
heritage. It's as if the human
side wasn't quite good enough
for you.

TROI
That isn't true.

RIKER
Isn't it?

GEORDI'S COM VOICE
La Forge to Riker...

RIKER
Go ahead, Geordi...

INTERCUT:

49A OMITTED

49B INT. ENGINEERING

Geordi moves to a companel...

GEORDI

We're ready to attempt a
controlled overload jump to warp
six.

49C INT. TROI'S QUARTERS

RIKER

Acknowledged. I'm on my way to
the Bridge.

He moves to the door, pauses.

RIKER

(to Deanna)

I'll check in on you later.

TROI

Really, you don't have to...

RIKER

I'll check in on you later.

He EXITS.

49D EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

Still being pulled.

50 INT. BRIDGE

Riker, Picard, Data, and Worf at their stations.
Allenby keys a control at Conn.

ALLENBY

Setting new course at optimal
shearing angle: bearing two one
seven mark two zero three.

INTERCUT:

50A INT. ENGINEERING

GEORDI

Engaging impulse engines, now.

Geordi touches the controls. The ship "bumps" slightly against the pull of the creatures.

PICARD'S COM VOICE

Go to warp, Geordi.

Geordi touches the panel -- the ship jolts violently as everyone hangs on.

51 OMITTED

52 INT. BRIDGE

RIKER

Status?

ALLENBY

Unchanged. We have not broken free of the graviton field...

DATA

Integrity field pressure has increased by two hundred seventeen percent, Captain.

52 CONTINUED:

The RED ALERT alarms and lights come on.

COMPUTER VOICE

Warning. Differential stress
will exceed upper limit in
fifteen seconds.

PICARD

Disengage all engines!

COMPUTER VOICE

Warning. Differential stress
will exceed --

Geordi touches controls and the computer voice
instantly stops.

GEORDI

Engines disengaged, sir.

The shaking stops immediately. The RED ALERT systems
shut off.

RIKER

La Forge, report...

52A INT. ENGINEERING

GEORDI

The energy we wanted to transfer
to the nacelles was absorbed by
the graviton wake instead. It
set up a torsional wave that
rebounded back to the ship.
We're lucky the hull is still in
one piece.

52B INT. BRIDGE

Picard and Riker exchange a frustrated glance.

PICARD

This little nuisance is quickly
losing its fascination.

52B CONTINUED:

DATA

Sir, during our attempt to break away , I recorded a momentary alteration of the movement pattern within the cluster.

RIKER

You think we got their attention, Data?

DATA

Possibly. But only for an instant. The pattern immediately returned to its previous dynamic.

Picard doesn't look happy.

52B CONTINUED: (2)

PICARD

Follow up on it, Mister Data.
Input your observations into the
Universal Translator. Perhaps
the movements themselves are an
attempt at communication.

DATA

Aye, Captain.

OFF Picard's increasingly frustrated face.

53 OMITTED

53A INT. TEN-FORWARD

Troi is sitting by herself in a corner of the room,
not drinking, looking very isolated.

53B ANGLE ON GUINAN

as she approaches with a cup in hand.

GUINAN

Care for a little tea?

Troi glances up, startled at her presence.

GUINAN

(continuing)

I didn't mean to startle you.

TROI

That's alright. I'm getting used
to it.

GUINAN

Are you?

TROI

(honestly)

No.

Guinan smoothly sits down in the seat opposite, placing
the tea in front of Troi.

GUINAN

You want to talk about it?

TROI

No.

GUINAN

Good. I get tired of listening to everybody's problems anyway. They come in here looking for a shoulder to cry on... it's always my shoulder for some reason...

TROI

(smiles)

You'd make a good counselor...

GUINAN

You know, I always thought so myself. Maybe I ought talk to Picard, what do you think?

TROI

(reacts)

About what... you becoming a counselor?

GUINAN

(absolutely convincing)

You're leaving. With no counselor on board, there's gonna be a line at the bar... and it's not like I make a percentage on the drinks I sell... I'd just as soon have the nice office, you know?

TROI

(awkward)

Well, it's more than just letting them cry on your shoulder... it takes an enormous commitment...

GUINAN

I can do that.

TROI

Guinan, people come to you to talk about things they want to reveal. A ship's counselor has to get people to talk about things they don't want to reveal.

53B CONTINUED: (2)

GUINAN

I can do that.

TROI

Guinan... what are you doing... ?

(beat)

You don't really want to be ship's counselor...

GUINAN

Why do you say that?

TROI

I just know you're not serious.

GUINAN

Have I given you any reason to believe I'm not serious?

TROI

Well, not really, but...

GUINAN

Then how can you know?

(beat)

Your empathic abilities come back?

TROI

No. I suppose it's just... instinctive.

GUINAN

Interesting.

TROI

Ah, I get it. You're trying to make me see that I have other abilities to draw on... human intuition, instincts... but those skills only develop with years of experience, Guinan... it's not so easy...

GUINAN

Who said anything about 'easy'? It's even harder than you think... human intuition and instinct -- they're not always right.

(MORE)

53B CONTINUED: (3)

GUINAN (Cont'd)

(beat)

Makes life very interesting...

TROI

So I'm discovering.

Guinan rises. A couple of people move to the bar.

GUINAN

Well, they're starting to line
up... it's been nice...

TROI

Guinan...

53B CONTINUED: (4)

Guinan pauses, turns...

TROI

(not serious, 'thank-you')
If you want, I'll put in a good
word with the Captain about the
job...

Guinan gives her the same even look she always gives,
leaves.

54 INT. BRIDGE

Data at his science station. Worf and Riker at their
posts. A small BEEP goes off once at an instrument
panel a couple of steps from him. He moves over to
it and reacts to the reading. Riker picks up on it.

RIKER

Problem, Data?

DATA

Yes, Commander. Sensors are
detecting highly accelerated
interstellar gases...

RIKER

Suggesting?

DATA

Uncertain, Commander. The
phenomenon is within visual
range.

RIKER

On screen.

They look up to see --

54A ANGLE - INCLUDE VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)

A long view of a cosmic string.

RIKER

Magnify.

The image increases... it appears to be a something
akin to the wide mouth of a celestial vacuum cleaner...
sucking in stellar material.

54A CONTINUED:

DATA

It appears to be a cosmic string
fragment, sir. Only one hundred
seven kilometers long.

ALLENBY

Cosmic string?

RIKER

They're no wider than a proton
and have gravitational fields
as powerful as a black hole.

DATA

The two-dimensional beings seem
to be caught in the gravitational
pull of the string. Their course
is taking them directly toward
it.

RIKER

And us right along with them.

On concerned reactions...

55
thru OMITTED
59

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

60 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The ship being dragged off-center toward the cosmic string fragment.

PICARD (V.O.)

Captain's log, Stardate 44359.5.
What began as a curious inconvenience has turned into a serious threat. At current speed, the two-dimensional beings and the Enterprise will be drawn into the cosmic string fragment in seven hours.

61 INT. BRIDGE (OPTICAL)

Picard, Riker, Data, Worf and Geordi at their stations. The cosmic string is on the main viewer.

DATA

The entities offer no indication that they are aware of the string fragment, Captain. Their course and speed remain constant...

WORF

Sir, recommend we fire a spread of photon torpedoes into their field.

Picard hates the idea but must consider it.

PICARD

Must we destroy them to save ourselves...

DATA

It is not clear what affect a photon torpedo would have on a two-dimensional being, Captain.

61 CONTINUED:

PICARD
Nevertheless...

GEORDI
We don't necessarily have to fire
at them. Half-a-dozen photon
torpedo bursts directly in their
path could make them change
course.

Picard considers.

PICARD
Make it so.

Worf touches several keys on the panel in front of him.

WORF
Torpedoes armed. Fire
distribution set. Detonation at
seven kilometers ahead of the
cluster.

RIKER
Data, launch another probe and
patch the monitor through to the
main viewer.

DATA
Aye, sir.

Data hits the controls.

DATA
Probe has been launched. On
screen.

62 ANGLE - VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)

Now shows the polarized POV of the probe so we can see
the beings pulling the Enterprise... just as before...

PICARD
Mister Worf, proceed.

WORF
Launching photon torpedoes.

62 CONTINUED:

Worf touches a control. On the screen, we can see the volley of photon torpedoes... spread out...

WORF

Five seconds to detonation...

Three, two, one.

As the photon torpedoes explode in a display of polarized light, directly in the creatures' path.

62 CONTINUED: (2)

DATA

No change in the graviton field.
(looks up)
The torpedoes are having no
effect.

62A PICARD

And play this entirely on his face as he watches the
viewscreen.

PICARD

(frowns, no choice)
Fire another volley directly into
their field, Mister Worf.

WORF (O.C.)

Launching torpedoes.
(beat)
Five seconds to detonation...
Three, two, one.

Slow push in to Picard...

DATA (O.C.)

No affect, sir. Matter anti-matter
explosions appear to be
ineffective.

And on an ECU of Picard's reaction...

63

thru OMITTED

69

70 INT. TROI'S OFFICE

Troi is, in essence, packing. Putting together
personal things into an attache... The door chimes.
She glances up.

TROI

Yes?

The door slides open and Ensign Brooks ENTERS.

TROI

(continuing; surprised)
Janet. I'm sorry... I meant to
cancel your appointment today...

70 CONTINUED:

BROOKS

That's okay... tommorrow then... ?

TROI

Janet, I've resigned as ship's counselor.

BROOKS

But why?

TROI

(a beat)

Well, I think it was fairly clear during your last appointment... it was obviously non-productive and...

BROOKS

Non-productive. I don't understand... how could you say that?

TROI

(reacts)

But I couldn't sense what you were...

BROOKS

Deanna, you were right about me. I had to go back and look at what I was doing, why I was trying to convince myself and you that I was a "new woman"... and I realized I was doing the same thing to myself all over again... trying to hide from the pain... I have to accept that... it's really just beginning for me, isn't it...

A long beat as Troi takes it in.

BROOKS

So, as far as I'm concerned, it was very productive. Maybe you couldn't sense what I was feeling... but you helped.

Off Troi's reaction...

71 INT. READY ROOM

Troi ENTERS. Picard is at his desk.

TROI

You wanted to see me, Captain?

PICARD

Sit down, please.

She does so.

PICARD

(continuing)

Our situation has become critical. The cluster is still completely unresponsive. We have not been able to alter its course toward the cosmic string fragment.

TROI

How much time do we have?

PICARD

Less than five hours. That's why I've called you.

TROI

Sir?

PICARD

All that remains is the possibility of communication. There might be some way to warn them of their impending destruction.

TROI

I thought Data already tried to establish communications through the universal translator.

PICARD

He has tried every technical means at our disposal to reach them.

TROI

Captain, I wish I knew how to help. But under the circumstances...

71 CONTINUED:

PICARD

If there is a psychology to these creatures, we must discover it... if there is an explanation to their behavior, we must know it...

And push in on Troi.

PICARD

Even in your current condition, you are the most qualified person aboard this ship to assist.

Picard stands, Troi does the same.

PICARD

(continuing)

Data is currently in Observation, attempting to formulate a strategy. I'd like you to join him.

Troi doesn't answer, seems to waver.

PICARD

Deanna. We need you.

OFF the emotions on Troi's face.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

71A EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

A view of the ship and the cosmic string looming ahead.

PICARD (V.O.)

Captain's log, supplemental. If our speed and course remain unchanged, in one hour, the Enterprise will be torn apart by the gravitational forces of the cosmic string fragment.

72 INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE (OPTICAL)

Data is briefing Troi in front of a screen. A series of still frames of the previous probe image of the creatures appears on the screen throughout the scene. Troi appears hesitant, not confident of her role.

TROI

Are your signals reaching them at all?

DATA

Possibly. However, the beings may perceive them as negligible noise rather than an attempt at communication.

Data appears to be awaiting her next question. Troi's not sure how to proceed.

TROI

Is there any evidence at all that they're sentient?

DATA

Negative. The nature of their movement suggests a simple order of intelligence.

Troi takes a deep breath... doesn't know what to do, what to say, why is she here?

72 CONTINUED:

TROI

I'm sorry, Data... I don't seem to be much help without my empathic abilities... I just don't know how to draw on my human instinct...

DATA

As I have no human 'instinct' perse, I cannot advise you, Counselor.

TROI

Right now, I feel as two-dimensional as our friends out there... in this universe, but barely aware of it...

(musing)

... just trying to survive on...

A beat... a slow push in...

TROI

Instinct?

Turns to Data...

TROI

Data, what if they're simply acting instinctively... there are inherent, inborn forces that drive every species. What they need. What they fear.

(beat)

We've got to discover what drives this species?

DATA

I do not believe there is any way to know for certain, Counselor.

TROI

We can speculate based on the available evidence...

DATA

The only evidence we have at present is the brief interruption in their movement pattern during our last attempt to break away...

72 CONTINUED: (2)

TROI

(mind working)

Which may suggest some kind of awareness of our presence...

DATA

Otherwise their course and speed have been constant.

TROI

On a straight line to the cosmic string...

(beat)

You're convinced the string's gravitation is pulling them in.

DATA

Since the cluster is two-dimensional, I have no direct evidence to support that assumption. But it is the most reasonable hypothesis.

TROI

Why?

DATA

It is unlikely they would intentionally move toward a destructive force...

TROI

Moths fly toward a flame. Horses sometimes run into a burning barn. Data, don't you see, we've been thinking in three-dimensions. We have to get two-dimensional.

DATA

Pardon me?

TROI

Subspace signals, photon torpedoes, nothing's had an impact... it is reasonable to wonder if a gravitational pull... even as strong as a cosmic string's... would affect them.

72 CONTINUED: (3)

DATA
(curious where she's
heading)
Please continue.

72 CONTINUED: (4)

TROI

What if they've chosen a course to the cosmic string? A case of pure stimulus-response. Driven by instinct... just like the moth to a flame...

Off Data's reaction...

72A INT. BRIDGE

Data and Troi have brought their ideas to Picard. Riker, Worf, Geordi, Allenby are present.

DATA

If Counselor Troi's supposition is correct, Captain... a replica of the string projected behind the cluster could induce them to reverse course. Disrupting the graviton wake long enough for us to escape.

RIKER

How do you simulate a cosmic string? It has the gravitational force of a hundred stars.

DATA

I do not suggest we simulate the gravitational field of the string fragment, Commander. Rather the string's vibration.

PICARD

Vibration. This isn't a violin, Commander.

GEORDI

Data's right. The principle is the same. A cosmic string emanates a characteristic set of subspace frequencies as atomic particles decay along its event horizon. I could use the ship's parabolic dish to amplify and reflect those frequencies back toward the cluster. The Enterprise itself would echo the cosmic string.

72A CONTINUED:

PICARD
(reacts)
How much time do we have, Mister
Worf?

WORF
Twenty-three minutes.

PICARD
Make it so.

Geordi EXITS.

73 OMITTED

73A EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

Being drawn ever closer to the string fragment.

74 INT. BRIDGE - ON VIEWSCREEN (OPTICAL)

and the cosmic string, now looming directly ahead.

DATA
Frequency scan detectors
engaged.

INTERCUT:

75 OMITTED

75A INT. ENGINEERING

GEORDI
Receiving...

He presses some panels and is greeted by a chaotic mass
of signal noise. He reacts -- what a mess.

GEORDI
Data... we're picking up
frequencies across the entire
electromagnetic and lower subspace
spectrum... trying to isolate...

He touches a panel control. Some of the noise clears
up, not much.

75A CONTINUED:

GEORDI

Can you focus the reflector field
for me?

DATA

Stand by...
(working panels)
I am differentiating particle
emission signatures now.

Geordi studies his panel as the noise suddenly clears
up even more. Geordi reacts, pleased.

GEORDI

That's doing it... Patterns are
converging...

He quickly touches the controls. The noisy sound
immediately begins to come together -- almost like a
huge orchestra tuning up.

76
thru OMITTED
77

78 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

PUSH IN on the parabolic dish. We continue to hear
the sound as above.

79 INT. BRIDGE

ALLENBY

Same course. Same speed. No
change, sir.

A slight ship shake (different in nature than earlier
shakes). Reactions as frequencies suddenly become more
jumbled.

WORF

We are beginning to encounter the
gravitational effects of the
string. Impact is in four
minutes...

The sound grows even more chaotic.

DATA

Sir, the shear force turbulence
is impairing our ability to
create an accurate simulation...

RIKER

Geordi, fire up the impulse
engines and activate the ship's
stabilizers...

79A INT. ENGINEERING

Geordi on the move... pressing panels...

GEORDI

Stabilizers on.

79B INT. MAIN BRIDGE

DATA

Electromagnetic and subspace wave
fronts approaching
synchronization.

Again, the sound is coming together.

80 OMITTED

81 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

Close on the parabolic reflector dish as we continue
to hear the frequencies coming together into something
like a chord.

82 INT. BRIDGE

The sound has become "tuned." Everyone waits.

WORF

Three minutes to impact.

RIKER

Status?

ALLENBY

No effect on the cluster. Same course, same speed.

PICARD

Let's try to turn up the volume. Increase intensity, Mister Data.

DATA

Increasing by fifty percent.

The audio suddenly gets louder.

ALLENBY

They're slowing.

GEORDI

Graviton wake field collapsing.

PICARD

Mister La Forge, take us out of here.

82A INT. ENGINEERING

GEORDI

My pleasure, sir.

83 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The ship peels away from the string and warps out.

84 INT. BRIDGE

ALLENBY

Course two nine five, mark two zero four. Warp six. We're clear.

84 CONTINUED:

PICARD
Excellent work, Mister Data;
(nodding to Troi)
Counselor.

84 CONTINUED:

She smiles. She glances at Riker, they share a moment.

ALLENBY

The beings have resumed their course into the string. Three seconds to impact.

There is a beat. Troi suddenly experiences a rush of feeling that nearly knocks her over. Riker rushes to her support.

TROI

(pleasantly surprised)
It's all right. They're home. We were wrong. The cosmic string... it was never dangerous to them... it was the one place in the galaxy they most wanted to be.

RIKER

('you've recovered')
Deanna... ?

She straightens up, her strength returning.

TROI

Yes... I sensed it...

Reactions...

85
thru OMITTED
86

87 INT. TEN-FORWARD

At the bar with Guinan, Beverly, Riker, Troi.

TROI

Such overwhelming intensity of emotion. When we first encountered them, it must have been more than my senses could process.

RIKER

A short-circuit.

TROI

Something like that.
(apologetic)
Beverly...

87 CONTINUED:

BEVERLY

Apology accepted.

(to Riker)

Therapists are always the worst patients. Except for doctors, of course. Stop by and see me later, okay... ?

She EXITS.

TROI

I was so awful to her.

GUINAN

You were just being human...

TROI

I never fully appreciated how difficult... and rewarding... it is to be human...

(to Guinan)

I had a lot of help. Thank-you.

Guinan nods in reply.

GUINAN

You don't happen to know if that ship's counselor position is still open... ?

TROI

It's been taken.

GUINAN

Too bad.

(indicating bar)

Better hours.

She moves toward another customer's signal... Troi looks at Riker...

TROI

And you, Will Riker... Thank you for making me face my other half.

RIKER

(joking)

Frightening, wasn't it?

87 CONTINUED: (2)

TROI

A little.

(shrugs)

You were right, though. Maybe there's something to be learned when you're not in control of every situation.

RIKER

Welcome to the human race.

Riker moves in to kiss her cheek... but she turns and raises an eyebrow...

TROI

By the way. The next time you call me aristocratic...

Riker laughs. OFF the moment between them.

88 OMITTED

89 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

on its way to T'lli Beta.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

THE END