

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

Hide And "Q"
#40271-111

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Teleplay by
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REVISED FINAL DRAFT

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STAR TREK: Hide And "Q" - 9/25/87 - CAST

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
Hide And "Q"

CAST

PICARD	"Q"
RIKER	WOMAN (SURVIVOR)
BEVERLY	BEVERLY
DATA	Non-Speaking Roles
TROI	CREWMEMBERS
TASHA	SICKBAY STAFF
GEORDI	TWO SENTRIES
WORF	ANIMAL-SOLDIERS
WESLEY	DOZEN SURVIVORS
	CHILD (FEMALE SURVIVOR)

STAR TREK: Hide And "Q" - 9/25/87 - SETS

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
Hide And "Q"

SETS

INTERIORS

USS ENTERPRISE
CORRIDOR

MAIN BRIDGE

CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM
TRANSPORTER ROOM
PLANET DISASTER AREA

EXTERIORS

USS ENTERPRISE

PLANET - QUADRA SIGMA III

PLAIN

THIRD RIDGE

BIVOUAC AREA

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
Hide And "Q"

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. ENTERPRISE IN SPACE (OPTICAL)

The great ship streaks through space at warp speed.

2 INT. ND CORRIDOR

Two crewmembers, their arms loaded with supplies, race along the corridor. They pass DOCTOR CRUSHER in the corridor.

3 NEW ANGLE

Beverly checks her Staff as they pass with emergency medical packets on way to turbolift.

BEVERLY

Include a burn unit with each kit. On arrival, identify the most critically injured and beam them up to Cargo Bay Six...

PICARD'S COM VOICE

(interrupting)

Doctor Crusher, this is the Captain.

BEVERLY

(touching wall panel)

Doctor Crusher here.

PICARD'S COM VOICE

Additional information. The number of colonists at the site is five hundred-four - including thirty-eight children.

4 INT. ENTERPRISE - MAIN BRIDGE

PICARD is in his Command chair, TROI to his left. Worf at the Aft Station. GEORDI has the Conn, DATA on Ops. TASHA at Tactical.

4 CONTINUED:

The tension level is very high. The mission is urgent. As Picard answers, RIKER ENTERS from the turbolift, CROSSES the bridge and takes his position.

PICARD

So far nothing more than the initial message. Explosion - cause unknown - many injured. Are you prepared, Doctor?

BEVERLY'S COM VOICE

We believe so, sir.

GEORDI

Captain, we are now at warp nine point one.

DATA

Which will bring us into the Quadra Sigma System in three point two hours.

Riker takes his position.

RIKER

Captain, I have a schematic of the explosion site. It suggests the cause as a methane-like gas seeping in underground...

TROI

(with alarm)

Captain, I am...

5 ANGLE ON TROI

Her face is full of apprehension.

TROI

I am sensing what we encountered months ago...

Interrupted by the SOUND of the BRIDGE ALARM.

6 ANGLE ON PICARD

He turns. KLAXON HONKING - LIGHTS FLASHING.

7 ANGLE INCLUDING MAIN VIEWER - PICARD'S POV (OPTICAL)

The Main Viewer SHIMMERS as an unusual SHINING, SPARKLING GRID SHAPE APPEARS, seeming to stretch across the whole of the galaxy ahead of them.

8 ANGLE ON PICARD (OPTICAL)

He recognizes the shape - he has seen it before en route to Farpoint Station.

DATA

The "Q" Entity, sir? It is identical to the grid we encountered when...

WORF

It reads solid, sir. If we hit it... !

PICARD

Not now, damn it, "Q"...
(to Helm)
Emergency full stop!

GEORDI

Yes, sir.

TASHA

Shields and deflectors, up, sir.

The familiar SHIMMERING GRID on the viewer is now very close to the Enterprise. Forward movement stops.

8A EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE IN FRONT OF GRID (OPTICAL)

8B INT. MAIN BRIDGE (OPTICAL)

GEORDI

Now reading full stop, sir.

The words overlapped by something akin to ROLLING THUNDER, accompanied by a BRILLIANT and SUSTAINED FLASH which becomes RAPIDLY ROTATING, BLINDINGLY BRILLIANT, DIAMOND-BLUE LIGHT. While there is no hard-edged Shape, it is of about the same volume of a very large man.

8B CONTINUED:

"Q" (V.O.)
(amplified and powerful)
Humans, I thought by now you
would have scampered back to your
own little star system.

PICARD
(waits, then)
If this is "Q" I'm addressing,
our vessel and crew are on a
mission of rescue where a group
of badly injured...

"Q" (V.O.)
(interrupting)
We of the "Q" have studied our
recent contact with you... and
are impressed. We have much to
discuss, including perhaps the
realization of your most
impossible dreams.

The expressions of the bridge crew reveal they are intrigued by this statement... and in the potential of the "Q" entity to do remarkable things, however annoying its actions in the past. Even Picard takes a moment to absorb this.

PICARD
(sarcastically)
However intriguing we may find
that to be, we are now in the
midst of an urgent journey. Once
we have completed that...

"Q" (V.O.)
(louder; angrier)
You will abandon that mission,
Captain. My business with you
takes precedence!

9 INT. MAIN BRIDGE - ANGLE ON BRIDGE CREW

Reflections of the BRILLIANT DIAMOND-BLUE LIGHT on their faces as they look ahead toward this newest Shape of "Q". They shield their eyes from it.

9 (CONTINUED:)

"Q" (V.O.)

If my magnificence blinds you,
then perhaps something more
familiar...

An explosion of sudden HISSING SOUNDS startles the
bridge crew into expressions of mixed surprise, fear
and loathing.

10 OMITTED

11 ANGLE ON "Q" SERPENT

A WRITHING SNAKE with snapping fangs, continuing mixed
HISSING, DARTS toward them from whence came the "Q"
light image.

12 REVERSE ANGLE

Both Worf and Tasha vaulting down onto the Command
deck, instinctively drawing phasers as they try to
position their own bodies between the frightening
Snake-thing and the bridge Crew, as we:

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

13 INT. MAIN BRIDGE - ANGLE ON TASHA AND WORF

First one, then the other, discover phasers inoperative. The snake head seems an instant away from fanging them...

WORF

Damn, the phasers are useless!

PICARD (V.O.)

"Q", STOP THIS!

14 EMPHASIZING PICARD AND RIKER

on their feet.

PICARD

Stop this and we agree to talk for a moment!

At which WE SEE the reflection of a familiar BRILLIANT LIGHT FLASH, blinding Picard and Riker again. Then as they lower their protecting hands, they REACT at the sight of:

15 ANGLE EMPHASIZING "Q"

in the full-dress uniform of a Starfleet ADMIRAL.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)

Starfleet Admiral "Q" at your service!

PICARD

You are not a Starfleet admiral, "Q"...

"Q" (ADMIRAL)

Neither am I an Aldebaran serpent, Captain. But you accepted me as such.

Riker nods, a hint of the irony of this on his features.

15 CONTINUED:

RIKER

He's got us there, Captain.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)

(nods)

The redoubtable Commander Riker whom I noticed before. You seem to find this amusing.

RIKER

I might, if we weren't trying to rescue a group of suffering and dying humans who...

"Q" (ADMIRAL)

Your species is always suffering and dying...

PICARD

(interrupting)

No, Lieutenant Worf... !

16 ANGLE TO INCLUDE WORF

trying to ease himself into a clear line of fire toward "Q". He freezes at Picard's order, eases his almost hidden small phaser back into his belt.

PICARD

You'll make no move against him unless I order it.

"Q" smiles toward Worf.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)

Pity. You might have learned an interesting lesson. Tsk, a macro head, a micro brain.

Worf is obviously unrepentant. Picard, thinking furiously, tries another direction.

PICARD

"Q", you said you had the realization of "some impossible dreams" to offer us. Once this rescue is complete, I'll listen seriously to whatever proposal you wish to make and then, subject to it being acceptable...

16 CONTINUED:

"Q" bursts into what sounds like genuine LAUGHTER.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)

"... subject to" your foolish
human values? Picard, why do
you people distrust me so?

Picard starts to open his mouth, shuts it.

DATA

Sir, if...

Picard shakes his head, forcing Data into silence...
also clearly including the rest of his bridge crew in
this.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)

Yes, Captain, it is best they
don't answer that. But you... you,
Picard, I grant the freedom to
answer me honestly. Why do you
distrust me so?

PICARD

"Q", right now humans may be
dying because you...

"Q" (ADMIRAL)

(angry now)

SPEAK! Why do you distrust me?

PICARD

(beat)

Why? On our first meeting, "Q",
you seized my vessel, condemned
all humans as savages and on that
charge, you tried us in a
post-atomic twenty-first century
court of horrors where you
attacked my people... then you
again seized my vessel...

"Q" (ADMIRAL)

How that angers you: "Seized my
vessel, seized my vessel... "

16 CONTINUED: (2)

PICARD

(without pause, ignoring
this)

... and then proceeded to interfere
with our Farpoint mission,
threatening to convict us as
ignorant savages if, in dealing
with complex and powerful
life-forms, we made the slightest
error... and when you failed even
there...

"Q" (ADMIRAL)

(interrupting)

At that point, the "Q" became
interested in you.

(turns to include bridge
crew)

Cannot some of you understand your
incredible good fortune?!

(to Picard, mimicking)

"Seized my vessel, seized my
vessel... " The complaint of a
closed mind too accustomed to
military privileges.

(to Riker)

But you, Riker, and I remember
you well, what do you make of my
offer?

RIKER

I stand with my Captain.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)

(smiles)

Of course, you do. Commendable
loyalty.

(indicating bridge crew;
to Riker)

And what of these others? Since
humanity now interests us, how
shall we come to know them better?

RIKER

We don't have time for these
games.

"Q" (ADMIRAL)

Ah, yes! A game... for interest's
sake, a deadly game. To the game!

And, at a wave of "Q"'s hand, the entire bridge crew
except for Picard... DISAPPEARS, leaving Picard alone
on the bridge.

17 EXT. PLANET PLAIN (OPTICAL)

The bridge crew are standing in approximately their previous bridge positions on a treeless planet plain. They have just been snatched from their ship, their captain and they are understandably confused and uncertain except for Tasha and Worf whose security orientation have them immediately combat ready. This place is bright, hot.

18 EMPHASIZING RIKER

looking up.

19 RIKER POV - TWIN SUNS (OPTICAL)

close together (avoiding the necessity of twin-shadows), apparently rotating about each other. Both suns are brilliant but the smaller sun, about one-quarter the size of the larger, is not quite as brilliant as the large one.

20 BACK TO EXT. PLAIN (OPTICAL)

Data and Geordi, looking up too, move in next to Riker.

DATA

Obviously a Class-M world, gravity
and oxygen within our limits...

GEORDI

... but a twin sun? Where are
we?

DATA

Considering the power
demonstrated by "Q" the last
time... Anywhere! Assuming this
place even exists.

RIKER

But this won't be boring. If
"Q"'s anything, he's imaginative.
(to the others)
Apparently the captain wasn't
meant to be with us here.

TASHA

(overlapping)
Sir! Over here... !

21 ANGLE INCLUDING "Q"

who stands where a rock formation has previously hidden him. He is now wearing a French MARSHAL'S uniform, circa the Napoleonic Wars. As Riker, very curious, moves toward "Q", CAMERA MOVES AND PANS TO REVEAL also a headquarters-type campaign tent of the same era, complete with shade canopy and transportable field furniture. "Q" indicates two such chairs with a small table which holds a pair of tall, cool drinks.

"Q" (MARSHAL)

Join me, Riker. A good game
needs rules and planning...

Riker hesitates.

"Q" (MARSHAL)

(continuing)

Wasn't it your own Hartley who
said "Nothing reveals humanity
so well as the games it plays?"

(smiles; nods)

Almost right. Actually, you
reveal yourselves best in how you
play.

Data has moved in next to Riker and speaks quietly.

DATA

Sir, what he has in mind could
provide us with vital information.

Riker nods, moves toward the campaign tent. "Q" sits, waves invitingly toward the empty seat. He also picks up one of the tall drinks and WE CAN HEAR ICE CLINKING in it.

22 RIKER AND "Q"

as Riker inspects the remaining drink without sitting yet, picks it up and looks a question toward Troi.

TROI

(registering surprise)

What I sense is... pleasure, sir.

Riker sips the drink, registers surprise too.

RIKER

Incredible. I was just thinking
of an old-fashioned lemonade...

22 CONTINUED:

"Q" (MARSHAL)

... and so it became that. An excellent thirst quencher; it becomes quite hot out on this plane.

RIKER

What about my people?

"Q" makes a waving gesture.

"Q" (MARSHAL)

Whatever they want, of course!

23 ANGLE INCLUDING OTHERS

REACTING to the fact they suddenly have tall drinks of various colored liquids in their hands. Hesitantly, a couple of them sip. Worf, however, tilts his glass pouring the contents out onto the sand. Strangely, this pleases "Q"'s sense of humor.

"Q" (MARSHAL)

The rigid Klingon code! Drink not with thine enemy!

(to Riker)

Which explains something of why you defeated them.

RIKER

Still arguing the human past? Perhaps you're not that original.

"Q" (MARSHAL)

Au contraire! It is the human future that now intrigues us... and should concern you most. Of all species, yours cannot abide stagnation... change is at the heart of what you are. But change into what? That's the question!

DATA

That is what humans call a truism.

"Q" (MARSHAL)

(annoyed)

Meaning "hardly original"...

23 CONTINUED:

RIKER

(hint of humor)

You're the one who said it. And
while we're at it...

(indicating "Q"'s
uniform, tent)

... this isn't part of any human
future...

"Q" (MARSHAL)

True, I borrowed this from your
stodgy captain's mind. It is
dressing for the game we will play
and games require boundaries,
dangers, rewards, familiar
settings, that sort of thing.

Riker looks over "Q"'s uniform, the tent, etc.

RIKER

It's not that familiar to me...

(calls)

Data?

DATA

(stepping in)

It is from Europe's Napoleonic
Era, sir, late eighteenth, early
nineteenth centuries. This is
a campaign headquarters tent, his
uniform is that of a French Army
marshal, the...

RIKER

(to "Q")

And a marshal outranks even an
admiral...

"Q" (MARSHAL)

Would I go from a Starfleet
admiral to anything less?

RIKER

(hint of a smile now)

Of course, you wouldn't.

(indicates)

But Napoleonic equipment on an
alien planet with dual suns... ?

23 CONTINUED: (2)

"Q" (MARSHAL)

As you've said, I'm nothing if not imaginative. And the game should reflect that. Shall it be a test of strength? Meaningless, since you have none. A test of intelligence? Equally meaningless...

(eyeing Riker)

A game needs risk... Something to win; something to lose.

RIKER

If we must play a game, what would we win?

"Q" (MARSHAL)

The greatest possible future you can imagine!

(beat; thinking)

Which, of course, requires something totally disastrous if you lose!

(thinking again)

The point of this game will be whether any of you can stay alive.

24 EMPHASIZING TASHA AND WORF (OPTICAL)

As the others react, Worf responds:

WORF

If your "game" is fair, we will.

"Q" (MARSHAL)

For shame, Lieutenant Worf. Fairness is a human concept.

(to Riker)

Think imaginatively! It will, in fact, be completely unfair...

TASHA

You've gone too far.

She is drawing her phaser but "Q" is pointing his finger at her just as fast.

"Q" (MARSHAL)

Game penalty!

24 CONTINUED:

Visible even in this bright desert setting, a FLASH OF LIGHT in which Tasha DISAPPEARS. Reacting, Riker turns angrily to "Q".

RIKER

Where is she, "Q"? You can forget your game if...

"Q" (MARSHAL)

To use a twentieth century term, Commander, she's in a... a "penalty box." Where she can remain unharmed unless one of you merits a penalty.

(smiles)

Unfortunately, there is only one penalty box. If any of you should be sent there... dear Tasha must give up the box to you.

GEORDI

And... where does she go?

"Q" (MARSHAL)

(to Geordi)

Into "nothingness."

(looking to the Others,
individually)

I entreat you to carefully obey the rules of the game. The only one who can destroy your Tasha now... is you.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

25 EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

but not in orbit of a planet. Instead, it seems to be traveling somewhere at what we know as normal warp speed. MUSIC only.

26 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Picard at a turbolift, touches the door, without effect. Then he tries to bang it.

PICARD

Turbolift Control, do you read?
This is the captain.

No response. Picard CROSSES to his bridge position, touches his panel controls.

PICARD

(continuing)
Engineering, this is the bridge.

No response.

PICARD

(continuing)
Security -- this is the Captain.

Again -- nothing.

PICARD

(continuing)
Computer?
(waits)
Computer on!

The computer still doesn't respond. He's cut off. Isolated. Picard touches his insignia.

PICARD

(continuing)
Captain's log...

The SOUND is wrong, indicating that:

26 CONTINUED:

PICARD

(continuing)

Damn... I can't even make a log entry.

TASHA (O.S.)

I wish I could help you, Captain.

27 WIDER ANGLE

as Picard, startled, whirls toward the VOICE. It is Tasha who stands at her familiar position at security. Unusually for Tasha, she is showing some strain over what has been happening.

PICARD

What... what are you doing here?

TASHA

I... well, this sounds strange, but... I'm in the penalty box.

PICARD

You're what?!

TASHA

(tightly)

In "Q"'s penalty box. As I said, it sounds strange but it definitely isn't. Somehow I know that one more penalty... by me or anyone... and I'm gone.

Curious and concerned, Picard moves toward her.

PICARD

Gone?

TASHA

(distraught)

Please do not keep reminding me...

PICARD

I'm sorry...

TASHA

(instantly)

No, I'm sorry. It's so frustrating to be controlled like this...

27 CONTINUED:

There's a half-SOB in the ordinarily strong and controlled VOICE and Picard REACTS to it.

PICARD

Lieutenant...Tasha... it's all right...

TASHA

(astonished and angry)

What the hell am I doing? Crying?

PICARD

Don't worry. There's a new ship's standing order.

(smiles)

When in a penalty box, some tears are permitted.

Tasha looks up warmly, comforted by this.

TASHA

Captain... if you weren't a captain...

"Q" (MARSHAL) (O.S.)

(interrupting)

Consorting with lower rank females, Captain?

28 ANGLE TO INCLUDE "Q"

seated in the Captain's Command position. He smiles, enjoys having startled Picard this way.

"Q" (MARSHAL)

Destructive to discipline, they say. But you are, after all, only human, eh?

Picard has made his way down to the Command level where he now looks "Q" and the uniform over.

PICARD

A marshal of France? Ridiculous!

"Q" (MARSHAL)

One takes what jobs he can get. For example, your log entries.

(MORE)

28 CONTINUED:

"Q" (Cont'd)

(looks up)

Starship log, stardate today...
This is "Q", speaking for Captain
Jean-Luc Picard, who we consider
too bound by Starfleet custom and
tradition to be useful in this
activity.

PICARD

But who proved himself a
resourceful opponent when he
defeated you at Farpoint.

"Q" (MARSHAL)

(with "log" tone again)

The Enterprise is now helpless,
stuck like an Earth insect in
amber while its bridge crew plays
out a game whose real intent...

(aiming this at Picard)

... is to test if their first
officer is worthy of the greatest
gift the "Q" can offer.

Picard takes a long moment to absorb this, then he
nods.

PICARD

So, you're taking on Riker this
time.

(smiles)

Excellent! He'll defeat you just
as I did!

"Q" (MARSHAL)

A wager on that, Captain? Your
command of this starship
against... ?

PICARD

Against your staying out of
humanity's path... forever! Done?

"Q" (MARSHAL)

Done!

(smiles)

And you've already lost, Picard.
You see, Riker is to be offered
something impossible to reject.

"Q" storms toward the Ready Room.

29 EXT. THE PLANET

All but Worf are there, studying a point on the distant terrain.

RIKER

Geordi, can you still see Worf?

GEORDI

(nods)

I'd see the freckles on his nose, if he had them, sir. He's at the third ridge now...

TROI

The third ridge... ?

GEORDI

Moving well.

(distracted)

Oh, oh!

(peers)

Good, he sees them. They look like sentries, sir.

30 EXT. THIRD RIDGE

Worf -- the trained warrior -- approaches with caution. It is indeed a bivouac area. Worf can hear the unseen men SPEAKING IN FRENCH. He edges closer.

31 ANOTHER ANGLE

Worf pushes through the rocks, FREEZES.

32 ROCKS - WORF'S POV

Two sentries are walking a perimeter patrol. They are dressed as Bonapartist soldiers, carrying muskets. As they approach, WE SEE their uniforms look genuine enough... but then we make out their faces! Humanoid but with fearsome, fanged, unhuman features.

33 BIVOUAC AREA

Worf reacts at this. Then he moves as close as he dares. Those in the camp appear to be preparing for a battle. But where human troops would be yelling, these soldiers are GROWLING, SNARLING. Over that, the CLATTER of caissons -- equipment being assembled.

34 ANGLE ON WORF

He hears a squad approaching -- slips back among the rocks and DISAPPEARS.

35 INT. CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

Picard comes to the door. "Q" is sitting in the chair with his back to Picard.

PICARD

"Q", listen to me. You seem to have some need of humans...

"Q" (MARSHAL)

Or concern regarding them.

PICARD

Whichever it is, why try to solve it through this confrontation with us? Why not a simple direct explanation, a statement of what you seek? Why these games?

"Q" turns and WE SEE he is holding Picard's complete works of William Shakespeare. He indicates the books.

"Q" (MARSHAL)

I'm surprised you have to ask when your human Shakespeare has already explained it so well.

PICARD

Indeed he did, "Q". But careful you don't depend too much on any single viewpoint he...

"Q" (MARSHAL)

(ignoring this;
interrupting)

Why these games I require of you? A pity you're not familiar with the contents of your own library. Hear this, Picard, and reflect.

(lifts book, quotes from
it)

"All the galaxy's a stage, and... "

PICARD

(interrupts)

"All the galaxy?" "All the world's a stage... "

35 CONTINUED:

"Q". (MARSHAL)

Oh, you know that one? Then how about, "... Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

PICARD

And so you say, how we respond to a game tells you more about us than our real life, a "tale told by an idiot."

(still amused)

Interesting, "Q".

"Q" (MARSHAL)

(lifts book)

Shall I quote from Hamlet?

PICARD

No. I know Hamlet. And what he said with irony I prefer to say with conviction.

(quoting)

"What a piece of work is man!
How noble in reason! How infinite
in faculty. In form, in moving,
how express and admirable. In
action, how like an angel. In
apprehension, how like a god... "

"Q" (MARSHAL)

(upset; interrupting)

You don't really see your species like that?!

PICARD

I see us one day becoming that,
"Q". Is that what concerns you?

"Q" comes angrily to his feet, SLAMMING the volume down and DISAPPEARING in a FLASH. A startled and puzzled Picard watches him go, then turns to ponder the meaning of "Q"'s anger.

36 EXT. PLANET

The same plain. Riker, Troi and Data watch as Geordi scans the distant desert ridges.

RIKER

Can you still see Worf?

GEORDI

(shakes head)

It's hard to keep him in sight, sir. But the soldiers there... they've formed a "skirmishing line," I think you'd call it... and they're headed this way.

RIKER

Carrying ancient powder and ball muskets?

GEORDI

That's what their weapons look like, sir.

DATA

Muskets are appropriate to the 1790 - 1800 French army uniform.

(shakes head)

But it is hardly a "weapon" by our standards, sir. A lead ball propelled by gunpowder -- one-hundred meters at most with any accuracy...

GEORDI

Against phasers? Just one of our hand phasers could finish off an entire regiment of them.

RIKER

Except for one thing...

(to Troi)

That hardly sounds like "Q", giving us an advantage like that.

(puzzling; then

REACTING)

Unless...

37 SPECIAL EFFECT ANGLE (OPTICAL)

Suspecting some kind of trap, Riker draws his own hand phaser. He checks its setting, aims it well away from everybody else... touches the trigger lightly for just an instant.

37 CONTINUED:

The PHASER SOUND precedes an EXPLOSION OF DUST AND DIRT at a point where Riker was aiming the phaser. It causes a hole at least the size of one caused by a howitzer shell.

38 ANOTHER ANGLE

It also produces another effect -- the FORM of Worf, large phaser in hand, propelling itself INTO SCENE, rolling to a stop where the Klingon is aiming his phaser, seeking the away team's "assailant" which fired the phaser blast.

WORF
(growling it)
DROP YOUR WEAPONS!

He aims this way, then that, attempting quickly to spot who or whatever is menacing his friends.

RIKER
(exhibits hand phaser)
I'm afraid it was me, Worf.
Making certain our phasers still
operate.

Worf returns his own phaser.

WORF
A warrior's reaction.

GEORDI
Incredible, Worf! You came out
of nowhere!

RIKER
(to Worf)
Report. What did you find?

WORF
Sir... what they're wearing may
be old Earth uniforms, but what's
inside those uniforms isn't human
at all. More like vicious animal
things.

GEORDI
Oh, oh! Good old "Q". But how
can even the most savage animal
forms threaten us if they're armed
with the equivalent of popguns?

39 SPECIAL EFFECTS ANGLE (OPTICAL)

Geordi, who has been scanning the terrain, now turns to Riker.

GEORDI

They're moving in fast, sir.

40 ANGLE EMPHASIZING RIKER

Data's back is to him.

RIKER

Data, if you've got a theory on what's happening...

Data's FORM turns, REVEALING IT IS NOT DATA AT ALL, BUT "Q" -- and using his own VOICE despite the Data clothing.

"Q" (DATA)

Think fast, Commander Riker.

(REACTING; pointing)

And move fast... !

"Q" is pointing at two of the fierce-looking Animal Things in French uniform that have moved INTO SIGHT, aiming their "muskets" at Geordi who jumps behind a rock. TWO PHASER BLASTS. The first hits a rock near Geordi. The second BLASTS A BROAD FURROW in the desert floor.

RIKER

That's no "musket!"

41 ANOTHER ANGLE (OPTICAL)

"Q" is REACTING to the uniformed Animal Things seeing them now, swinging its weapon in their direction. Riker spins, FIRES HIS PHASER, DEMATERIALIZING both his opponents.

RIKER

(anxiously)

Troi, Geordi, Worf... !

"Q" pulls him down as:

"Q" (DATA)

You have only one chance to save them, now. Send them to your ship!

41 CONTINUED:

RIKER
You'll let me beam them?

"Q" (DATA)
(shakes head)
Send them the same way as I do.
I've given you that power.

Geordi comes scrambling INTO VIEW.

"Q" (DATA)
(continuing)
Do you understand? I've given
you the power of the "Q".
(demonstrates with
sweeping gesture)
Use it!

Worf and Troi come INTO VIEW too.

42 ANOTHER ANGLE (OPTICAL)

Riker becomes aware of someone scrambling toward him.
It's Data, the real Data using his own body. "Q" has
gone. CAMERA JIGGLES WITH ANOTHER MAJOR PHASER HIT.

"Q" (V.O.)
(echo chamber)
Use your power!

With little other choice, Riker makes a hand gesture --
causing FLASHES OF BLINDING LIGHT in which
Data, Geordi, Troi and Worf DISAPPEAR. On Riker's
stunned expression:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

43 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

The bridge is empty -- the displays and readouts are still frozen. The ambient noise is still absent. SLOW PUSH IN to Tasha sitting on the bench beside Riker's position. Head in hands, she stares at the floor. Suddenly the room noise changes and on the SOUND her head comes up.

44 WIDER ANGLE ON THE BRIDGE (OPTICAL)

The display screens are alive. All the bridge's ambient SOUNDS are back. Tasha looks over to Picard's Ready Room.

45 READY ROOM DOOR

Picard STEPS OUT. He too has heard the change. He walks to his Command position.

PICARD

Take the Conn, Lieutenant.

Tasha rises.

46 ANGLE ON PICARD

He sits and touches his arm-panel.

PICARD

Engineering -- this is the bridge.

ENGINEER'S COM VOICE

Engineering here, sir.

PICARD

Are all systems back on line?

ENGINEER'S COM VOICE

Back on line, sir? They were never off.

47 ANGLE ON TASHA

at the Conn position.

47 CONTINUED:

TASHA

Captain, you had better look at
this.

Picard walks over to Tasha.

48 ANGLE ON TASHA AND PICARD

He looks at the readout.

TASHA

There has been no interruption
in course or speed. Both have
remained constant. Captain -- it's
as though we never stopped.

Picard straightens up.

PICARD

We never did. "Q" suspended time.

49 WIDE ANGLE - MAIN BRIDGE

FLASHES OF LIGHT and the members of the bridge crew
REAPPEAR except for Riker. Alive and unharmed.

50 INTERCUT ANGLES OF CREW

All of them are naturally disoriented -- the shock of
the experience cannot be instantly thrown off.

TASHA

Where's Commander Riker?

They look around.

WORF

He was with us.

GEORDI

He must still be on the planet.

(to Picard)

We were under attack by... by
animal things...

PICARD

Animal things?

50 CONTINUED:

GEORDI

Animal things in uniform, sir...
(quails at Picard's
expression)
Which I think Data could probably
explain better, sir.

As Picard turns to Data, the android decides he wants
no part of this.

DATA

You may find it aesthetically
displeasing, sir. I could just
file a computer report on that...

TROI

(interrupting)
Sir, the important thing right
now is why is Commander Riker
missing?

PICARD

Understood, Counselor, but Will
is almost certainly safe...
(troubled)
... at least "safe" in a physical
sense. "Q" has an interest in
him... in fact, "Q"'s entire visit
has something to do with our
first officer.

DATA

And the reason for that, sir... ?

PICARD

I wish I knew. "Q" became
interested in him at Farpoint.
(shakes head)
I've no idea what it means.
(to the others)
Meanwhile, we must proceed with our
rescue mission...

51
thru OMITTED
52

53 EXT. DESERT

Empty -- no Riker. But there are footprints in the sand
indicating a direction toward which is a jagged rock
formation on the otherwise unbroken sandscape.

54 ANGLE AT ROCK FORMATION

REVEALING Riker who has managed to find himself a little shade. He sits, leans back against a rock. Then, starts to laugh. It is a deep, satisfying laugh from one who has just been let in on a cosmic joke.

"Q" (O.S.)
Something amuses you?

Riker looks up.

55 ANGLE UP ON "Q" - RIKER'S POV (OPTICAL)

Standing on a ledge above Riker, heavily back-lit by the two suns. (If possible, formed here by two brightly illuminated OUT-OF-FOCUS balls as described earlier.) We'll see more clearly in a moment also that "Q" wears rank and uniform identical to Riker's.

"Q" (COMMANDER)
Perhaps you would share the joke with me?

56 ANGLE ON RIKER

as "Q" moves down into TWO SHOT. Riker eyes "Q" for a long beat, then:

RIKER
The joke is you, you silly son of a bitch.

"Q" glares at Riker who now seems confident and at ease about something.

"Q" (COMMANDER)
Strange gratitude from one who has been granted a gift beyond any human dream. How can you not appreciate being able to send your friends back to their ship...
(the sweeping gesture)
... or sending the soldiers back to the "nothingness" from which they came?

"Q" takes a beat, sits on a piece of rock next to Riker, leans toward him confidentially.

56 CONTINUED:

"Q" (COMMANDER)

(continuing)

Certainly, you understand that at this moment you can send yourself back to your ship... or to Earth, or change your shape and become anything else you want to be...

RIKER

(interrupting;
strongly)

What do you need, "Q"?

"Q" (COMMANDER)

"Need?"

RIKER

You want something from us, "Q".
Desperately! What is it?

"Q" (COMMANDER)

Want something from you foolish, fragile, non-entities? Careful, Riker, you're beginning to sound like your captain.

RIKER

(grins)

Now that's a compliment, "Q".
But it's not an answer.

Stung by this, "Q" comes to his feet, raising a hand as if to make the gesture we've seen before... finds Riker still smiling up at him. He turns, walks angrily a few steps away, then a few back as if bringing his anger under control.

"Q" (COMMANDER)

(clipped; angry)

Riker... we have tried to offer you a gift beyond all other gifts... !

RIKER

... Out of the "goodness" of your heart?

They exchange looks for a long, long moment. Then "Q" seats himself again, and finally:

56 CONTINUED: (2)

"Q" (COMMANDER)

After Farpoint, I returned to where we exist... the "Q Continuum."

RIKER

Which means exactly what?

"Q" (COMMANDER)

(trace of annoyance)

The limitless dimensions of the galaxy in which we exist. We could hardly be capable of acting in ways that seem so astonishing to you... if we were limited to the primitive dimensions in which you live, dimensions which would make us prisoners of time and space.

RIKER

(beat; absorbing this)

What do you mean by we?

"Q" (COMMANDER)

(more annoyance)

In our Continuum the terms we and I mean much the same.

RIKER

I don't understand...

"Q" (COMMANDER)

Of course you don't, and you never will until you become one of us.

RIKER

(reacting)

Until?... Would you mind going over that again?

"Q" (COMMANDER)

(nods)

If you'll stop interrupting me. This really isn't the time to teach you the true nature of the universe.

(MORE)

56 CONTINUED: (3)

"Q" (Cont'd)

(leans in again)

At Farpoint, we saw you as savages only, and thought to frighten you into scurrying back to your system. We discovered instead, that you are an unusual creature in your own limited ways... ways which in time may not be so limited.

RIKER

(nods)

We're growing. Something about us compels us to learn, explore...

"Q" (COMMANDER)

(nods)

The human compulsion. And, unfortunately, for us, a force that will grow stronger century after century, eon after eon...

RIKER

Eons! Have you any idea how far we'll advance?

"Q" (COMMANDER)

Perhaps in a future you cannot yet conceive... even beyond us. And so, we must know more about the human condition. We have selected you, Riker, to become part of the "Q"... to bring that human need and hunger to us so that we may understand it.

RIKER

(ponders, then)

I... suppose you mean that as a compliment, "Q"... or maybe it's my limited mind...

(stands)

... but... to become part of you?!
I don't even like you!

"Q" looks at Riker, seeming amused.

56 CONTINUED: (4)

"Q" (COMMANDER)

You're going to miss me!

"Q" makes the sweeping gesture and it produces the familiar BLINDING LIGHT FLASH in which "Q" DISAPPEARS. And almost immediately, the startled VOICES of the bridge crew, with Riker whirling in that direction:

TROI

Oh, no!

GEORDI

Come on, not again!

57 OMITTED

58 GROUP SHOT

where the entire bridge crew, including Picard and WESLEY, find themselves facing a line of the French uniformed "animal soldiers," who menace the Enterprise people, ATTACHING LONG AND DEADLY-LOOKING BAYONETS ONTO THEIR MUSKETS, clearly intending to use them.

WESLEY

(totally confused)

What's happening, Commander Riker?

I was sitting in school...

TASHA

(interrupting)

My phaser's gone. Worf, are you armed?

Worf checks, shakes his head, but nevertheless he and Tasha move to place themselves between the bridge crew and the danger. Picard has moved quickly to Riker.

PICARD

Where is "Q"? If you have any answer to this, Number One...

Interrupted by an animal soldier lifting a bugle, blowing the OLD FRENCH ATTACK CALL. A SNARL AND ROAR from an animal soldier with sergeant's stripes and the line of soldiers advance, bayonets leveled at the bridge crew.

59 SPECIAL EFFECTS ANGLE ON WORF

moving forward to take on the entire attack line. He moves fast, dodges a bayonet, trips, then a second animal soldier slashes him in the back with a bayonet, and Worf goes down in a SPURT OF RED BLOOD.

60 SPECIAL EFFECT ANGLE ON WESLEY

as he FREEZES, shocked.

WESLEY

Worf!

Then, the animal soldier who got Worf, pivots fast, leaps at Wesley... and skewers the boy through the middle.

61 ANGLE ON RIKER

Shocked, wildly angered!

RIKER

NO! DAMN IT, DAMN IT TO HELL... !

He makes the sweeping gesture he's learned.

62 WIDE ANGLE (OPTICAL)

as Riker's gesture creates a smaller version of the METALLIC GRID. IT APPEARS between where the bridge Crew has instinctively retreated and the advancing line of animal soldiers, blocking them completely. Picard REACTS strongly to what Riker just did.

PICARD

Riker, you... you did that?!

RIKER

And that's not all!!

Grimly, angrily, Riker makes the sweeping gesture even more strongly, and the ENTIRE SCENE IS FILLED WITH BLINDING LIGHT.

63 INT. MAIN BRIDGE - TIGHT ANGLE ON WESLEY (OPTICAL)

Wesley APPEARS, suddenly feeling at his torso where he was just stabbed. He's no longer hurt. Worf ENTERS SHOT, also whole in body.

64 ANOTHER ANGLE - INCLUDING PICARD AND OTHERS

Picard looking at Riker almost disbelievingly.

PICARD

That grid, their wounds... only
the "Q" could do that...

He cuts off his words, becoming aware of the formidable
expression Riker's face.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

65 EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

with the Disaster Planet in far distance ahead of the starship -- a small ball seen from here.

PICARD (V.O.)

Captain's log, stardate 41591.4.
Twelve minutes out from Quadra
Sigma III where the survivors of
an underground disaster
desperately need our help. Aboard
the Enterprise...

66 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Riker, Troi, Data, Geordi, Tasha and Worf at their positions. Riker's features showing the strain of what has happened, he makes little eye-contact with the bridge crew and they appear equally uncertain of how to handle him.

PICARD (V.O.)

(continuing)

... First Officer William T. Riker
needs help nearly as badly. But
this is a subject so far out of
my experience... out of any human's
experience.

Riker has made for the captain's Ready Room, EXITS into it.

67 INT. CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

Riker CROSSING IN and coming to a halt in front of Picard's desk. Picard waves him to a seat, almost angrily.

PICARD

Will, how the hell do I advise
you what to do?!

Riker looks up sharply at the angry tone... then understands it, nods.

67 CONTINUED:

RIKER

No one has ever offered to
turn you into "God?"

PICARD

(snaps)

Don't joke with me! What the
"Q" has offered you has got to
be close to "immortality," Will.
They're not lying about
controlling space and time; we've
seen it in what they can do.
But...

RIKER

You've also seen it in what I can
do.

Picard leans across his desk toward Riker, intent.

PICARD

Of all things, that troubles me
most, Will. Are you strong enough
to refuse to use that power?

RIKER

Certainly!

PICARD

No matter how tempted? No matter
how difficult "Q" makes it?

RIKER

(beat; then firmly)

You have my word.

DATA'S COM VOICE

In orbit of Quadra Sigma III, sir.
Ready to beam down rescue team
to underground emergency area.

Picard and Riker get quickly to their feet, EXIT.

68
thru OMITTED
69

70 INT. PLANET DISASTER AREA

The Away Reserve Team MATERIALIZES. They are in a passageway which has been severely damaged by explosions. Water SPRAYS from the ceiling and is already ankle deep on the floor. Data scans the area with his tricorder.

DATA

This way.

They push ahead.

71 ANOTHER ANGLE - CORRIDOR

as they ARRIVE at a doorway. The door has been jammed by the explosion. Data steps over and with his great strength - rips the door off his hinges and clears the opening.

The survivors are here. ABOUT A DOZEN of them, huddled together on the far side. Beverly and her teams wade through the water to them.

72 ANGLE ON BEVERLY AND SURVIVORS

As she kneels beside an injured WOMAN.

BEVERLY

You are going to be all right,
now.

RIKER

Where are the others?

The Woman shakes her head.

WOMAN

Gone. It's just us.

GEORDI

(urgent)
Commander!

Riker turns.

73 ANGLE ON GEORDI

CAMERA MOVES IN TO E.C.U. Geordi is staring at a pile of rubble.

GEORDI

There's someone there!

74

thru OMITTED

75

76 ANGLE ON DATA

With great strength he moves huge rocks with remarkable rapidity.

77 ANGLE ON GEORDI AND RIKER

They stand and look for a beat, then:

78 ANGLE ON DATA

as he lifts and carries the limp body of a child.

79 ANOTHER ANGLE

Beverly rushes over and while Data holds the child, she quickly examines him.

80 ANGLE ON BEVERLY AND CHILD

From her expression it is clear the child is dead. All of her skill will not help.

BEVERLY

She's dead. If we'd only gotten here a little sooner... !

81 ANGLE ON RIKER

He steps closer. A dead child. A moment of truth.

DATA

Sir, if you indeed have "Q"'s power...

82 OMITTED

83 ANGLE ON RIKER

He is fighting his emotions.

84 ANGLE INCLUDING BEVERLY

Puzzled.

BEVERLY

I don't understand. Can you
bring her back to life?

RIKER

(long beat)

No!

84A EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

in orbit.

85

thru OMITTED

87

88 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Riker, followed by Data and Geordi, EXIT the turbolift.
Riker CROSSES to Picard. Troi is watching Riker with
such intensity she doesn't seem to be breathing.

RIKER

As soon as it's convenient
Captain, I insist on a meeting
with you and your staff.

There is about Riker now a little of the force, the
power, the arrogance of "Q". Modified by the man
himself -- but he is definitely carrying himself with
more presence.

89 ANGLE ON PICARD

It's as though he's been expecting this since the
incident with "Q".

90 ANOTHER ANGLE RIKER AND PICARD

The others are watching this exchange, curious about
how Picard will respond.

PICARD

As soon as we are secure from the
rescue operation, we'll meet in
the Conference Room.

90 CONTINUED:

RIKER

Thank you.

Riker turns, stalks to the turbolift. Troi gives him a look of apprehension.

PICARD

Counselor?

TROI

Power -- immense. Frightening.
I can't read the intent -- but
there is terrible anger in him.

Off Picard's reaction:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

91 INT. MAIN BRIDGE

Riker is already there, sits brooding. Picard ENTERS with Data, Troi, Geordi, Tasha and Worf. As Picard seats himself:

PICARD

We'll confer on the bridge here
if no one...

Without looking in that direction, Riker gestures Picard to be silent and, surprised, Picard hesitates during which Riker turns toward the others.

RIKER

The bridge is fine since I've
called the entire staff...

PICARD

(interrupting)

Correction, Number One; knowing
the decision you face, I've
permitted you this gathering.

Riker seems genuinely amused by Picard's correction, as if yielding to a bright but headstrong child. Riker nods, uses a gentle tone.

RIKER

Of course, Jean-Luc.

Riker looks up startled to see Beverly and Wesley ENTER bridge from the turbolift.

RIKER

(continuing)

This meeting isn't for you,
Wesley!

WESLEY

Why not, sir? You helped make
me a bridge officer...

(corrects self)

... an acting ensign.

Looking from one to the other.

91 CONTINUED:

RIKER

All right, he stays. The first thing he'll hear is... because I've been given unusual powers, I'm not suddenly a monster. Except for those abilities, and I don't yet know how far they go... I'm the same William T. Riker you've always known.

There's a long silence, no one speaking up.

RIKER

(continuing)

Well? Everyone still looks uncomfortable.

PICARD

Perhaps we're all remembering the old saying... "power corrupts... "

RIKER

... "and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Do you believe I haven't thought of that, Jean-Luc?

PICARD

And have you noticed that you and I are now on a first-name basis?

A flicker of surprise on Riker's features indicates he really hasn't.

PICARD

(continuing)

Will, something has happened to you already...

RIKER

In what way? Haven't you seen how much I've regretted not saving that child? Captain, using the "Q" power to save her might not have been wrong!

(to bridge crew)

No more than it was wrong to save the rest of you from those soldier things.

PICARD

Let's keep in mind that particular danger was invented by "Q".

91 CONTINUED: (2)

TROI

What we represent to the "Q",
Will, are lowly animals, tormented
into performing for their
amusement...

RIKER

Actually, they think highly of
us, Troi. We have a quality
of... of growth which they
admire...

GEORDI

Or fear?

PICARD

Number One, we've learned that
the "Q" power does not admire
us... "Q" has muddled your mind
somehow.

RIKER

It's your mind that troubles me,
Captain. Don't you understand
his incredible gift to me?

"Q" (BROTHER) (O.S.)

Are these truly your "friends,"
Brother?

92 ANOTHER ANGLE

All whirl toward the VOICE. It comes from a far corner
of the bridge where a Figure stands with its back to
us. "Q" turns now, revealing himself draped in what
is recognizable even in this century as the somber
robes of something like the Franciscan Holy Order --
and "Q" is playing it to the hilt with gentle voice,
kindliness shining from his face, fingers pointed
together as in prayer. He CROSSES IN to stand with
Riker, head bowed in humility.

"Q" (BROTHER)

Let us pray for understanding,
for compassion, for...

92 CONTINUED:

PICARD

(moving to "Q")

Let us do no such damned thing!

(pulls at "Q"'s robes)

What is this need of yours for costumes? Have you no identity of your own?

"Q" (BROTHER)

(softly; gently)

I come in search of truth.

The expression on Riker's face reveals that he is growing somewhat uncomfortable with this continuation of masquerade.

PICARD

You come in search of what humanity is!

"Q" has withdrawn a large cross symbol from his robes as if warding off Picard's words.

"Q" (BROTHER)

I forgive your blasphemy...

PICARD

(indicates "Q" to Riker)

Can't you see it, Number One?

He's nothing but a flim-flam man!

That's what he's been since his

first appearance at Farpoint!

WORF

(to Data)

Flim-flam?

"Q" (BROTHER)

(to Picard)

You offer Riker jealousy! What

I offer him is clearly beyond your comprehension!

(turning to the others

one by one)

How can you claim friendship for

Riker while obstructing his way

to the greatest adventure ever

offered a human?!

92 CONTINUED: (2)

PICARD

(alerted)

"Obstruct him?" Then it's not yet certain? He's not yet committed?

"Q" (BROTHER)

(quickly, loudly;
overlapping last line)

The truly evil part of this is your jealousy, Captain.

(to Riker)

You love each one of your people! Demonstrate it! You have the power to leave each of them with a gift proving your affection.

Riker isn't sure of this. He looks to Picard inquiringly, but speaks a bit thickly at times.

RIKER

There'd be no... harm, would there, if I, if I gave them something I know they'd like?

Picard's next few expressions are a study in a change of decision. His first instinct is to recommend against it... and he almost voices it. But then, Picard begins to suspect that this may, in fact, give Riker a chance to understand the human effect of near-godlike power.

"Q" (BROTHER)

How touching. A plea to his former captain.

(watching Picard)

"May I please give some happiness to my friends, sir? Please sir?"

PICARD

(beat)

In fact... I authorize and support that idea, Riker.

(to the crew)

And please cooperate with him, if you wish.

TROI

(troubled; cautioning)

Are you certain, sir? If...

92 CONTINUED: (3)

PICARD

I'm quite certain, Counselor.

(to Riker)

By all means, demonstrate your gifts of affection.

Troi is clearly still nervous about this. Data too.

"Q" (BROTHER)

(eyeing Picard)

Remarkable! He rises now above jealousy.

93 ANGLE EMPHASIZING RIKER

turning to his friends.

RIKER

Don't be frightened. There is no way I could harm any one of you. Shall I guess your dreams?

BEVERLY

(quickly)

Leave now, Wesley!

RIKER

No! Wesley, I may know best of all.

(smiles at Wesley)

Our friendship, our long talks...

BEVERLY

No, please... !

94 EMPHASIZING WESLEY AND RIKER (OPTICAL)

RIKER

(to Wesley)

Have your favorite wish, my young friend!

With a LIGHT FLASH, "WESLEY" becomes a handsome young Starfleet officer of about 25 years.

95 INTERCUT OTHERS

Their REACTIONS. Their surprise is complete. On a very intimate level that concerns themselves, this seems godlike power they are witnessing. Picard, on the other hand, seems to be analyzing, measuring, what is happening.

GEORDI

Hey Wes, you've grown into a very good looking guy!

Tasha gives a "definitely" to that sentiment. Troi is concerned about Beverly who seems stunned as she walks nearer her son, scrutinizing him closely. Data gives Picard a puzzled "what are you up to" look. Picard appears to be holding his breath as he anticipates further developments.

96 ANOTHER ANGLE (OPTICAL)

Riker is eyeing Data now.

RIKER

Data...

DATA

(forcefully shaking head)

No!

RIKER

It's what you've always wanted, Data to become human!

Data almost says "yes," but then:

DATA

Yes, sir, that is true. But I never wanted to compound one illusion with another. It might seem real to "Q" -- even you, sir... but it would not be so to me. Was it not one of the Captain's favorite authors who wrote, "This above all, to thine own self be true?"

(beat)

Sorry, Commander, I must decline.

Riker turns to Geordi. As he moves to him and removes the VISOR, unobtrusively handing it to Geordi:

96 CONTINUED:

RIKER

Well, my friend, I know what you want. Welcome to the wonderful world of vision.

Geordi looks around in awe. His eyes come to rest on Tasha.

GEORDI

You're as beautiful as I imagined, and more.

RIKER

Then we can throw the VISOR away?

Geordi slowly replaces the VISOR over his eyes.

GEORDI

I think not, sir. The price is a little high for me. I don't like who I would have to thank. I can still steer the ship with this.

97 ANGLE EMPHASIZING WESLEY AND BEVERLY

as Beverly appraises the new form of her son.

BEVERLY

If you accept this new you, Wesley, you'll lose wonderful times, so many important experiences...

98 EMPHASIZING Worf (OPTICAL)

as Riker moves to inspect him in turn.

RIKER

And Worf, who wants nothing...

Worf

Except honor and my duty fulfilled.

RIKER

(interrupting)

Proud warrior Worf, without a single tie to his own kind...

98 CONTINUED:

In a LIGHT FLASH, it's not Worf who changes but someone else who APPEARS at his feet -- a Klingon warriorress. Her eyes flash as she looks up at her man Worf, an arm encircles him at the knees -- her other arm holds a Klingon weapon -- a kligat -- as she looks around, sees nothing but sliens. Then moving with surprising speed, she comes to her feet and lashes out with her weapon at Troi, who is the person nearest. Worf moves quickly too, takes the blow intended for Troi, SLAMS the warriorress down. In Klingon tradition, she flattens herself to the floor and crawls, SNARLING to embrace Worf's feet.

WORF

(whirling to Riker)

No! She is from a world now alien to me. I have no place in my life for this now!

99 ANGLE ON WESLEY

moving to Riker. His voice is that of an adult male.

WESLEY

Mister Riker...

(shakes head)

... it's too soon for this...

RIKER

If it's because your mother objects...

WESLEY

No, I'd just like to get there on my own. Honest!

Picard is now looking very pleased... both with himself for estimating this correctly, and with his people for their common sense. Riker sees and understands.

RIKER

How did you know, sir? I feel like such... such an idiot!

PICARD

Quite right, you should!

RIKER

But it was... such a pleasure to have been able to do those things.

99 CONTINUED:

As "Q" PASSES, Picard blocks his path.

PICARD

It's all over "Q". You have no further business here.

"Q" (BROTHER)

Human, you have just destroyed yourself... !

PICARD

But only after you've paid off your wager, "Q".

"Q" (BROTHER)

I recall no wager!

PICARD

I'm sure your fellow "Q" remember you agreed to never trouble our species again. Just as they're aware you've failed to tempt a human to join you. So, "Q", I strongly suspect you have some explaining of your own to do...

A sudden MAJOR FLASH OF BRILLIANT LIGHT... wiping out the entire SCENE for a moment. Then WE SEE REVEALED the bridge crew exactly as we saw them when this ACT began. "Q" is no longer there -- Wesley is fifteen again -- Worf is without his warriorress -- Tasha is the familiar security chief. And all are at their duty positions, with Wesley assisting Data at Ops, Beverly standing near Picard.

100 ANOTHER ANGLE EMPHASIZING PICARD

Everyone is speechless. Then, Picard breaks the silence.

PICARD

Extraordinary! "Q" sought to discover the distinguishing characteristic of humanity and never learned what Coleridge said: "It must be the possession of a soul within us that makes the difference."

GEORDI

Sir... we show the same "hole" in time again. Our instruments say we've just now beamed up from our rescue mission.

100 CONTINUED:

DATA

How can the "Q" handle time and space so well, and us so badly?

PICARD

Perhaps we'll discover some day that time and space are simpler than the human equation.

(toward Riker)

No coordinates laid in, Number One?

RIKER

Uh... yes, sir.

(toward Helm)

You have my coordinates, Mister La Forge.

Geordi gives Wesley a look, and a nod. Wesley calls it out eagerly.

WESLEY

Zero-zero-eight, Mark, three-three-nine, sir.

PICARD

(nods)

Engage!

101 EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

as it MOVES AWAY from us.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FIVE

THE END