

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

"Unnatural Selection"

#40272-133

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FINAL DRAFT

NOVEMBER 10, 1988

STAR TREK: "Unnatural Selection" - DRAFT 11/10/88 CAST

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION  
"Unnatural Selection"

CAST

PICARD	RINA
RIKER	DR. SARA MANDEL
GEORDI	CAPTAIN TAGGERT
PULASKI	CREWMEMBER
WESLEY	TRANSPORTER OPERATOR
TROI	MEDIC
DATA	
WORF	
Non-Speaking	Voice-Over
USS ENTERPRISE	COM PANEL/COMPUTER VOICE
2 CREWMEMBERS	TRANSPORTER COM VOICE

USS LANTREE  
CREWMEMBER (DEAD)  
CAPTAIN TELAKA (DEAD)  
2 TWENTY-YEAR OLD "CHILDREN"

STAR TREK: "Unnatural Selection" - DRAFT 11/10/88 - SETS

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION  
"Unnatural Selection"

SETS

INTERIORS

USS ENTERPRISE  
BRIDGE  
CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS  
TEN FORWARD  
MAIN ENGINEERING  
ENGINEERING CONTROL ROOM  
TRANSPORTER ROOM  
CORRIDOR  
SICKBAY  
SICKBAY SCIENCE LAB  
CONFERENCE ROOM  
TROI'S OFFICE  
OBSERVATION LOUNGE  
CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM  
SHUTTLE BAY  
SHUTTLE BAY CONTROL ROOM  
SHUTTLECRAFT  
PULASKI'S QUARTERS  
TURBOLIFT

USS LANTREE  
BRIDGE  
CORRIDOR  
SICKBAY  
CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

DARWIN STATION/LABORATORY BUILDING  
ISOLATION LAB/OBSERVATION AREA  
ISOLATION CHAMBER

EXTERIORS

USS ENTERPRISE  
USS LANTREE  
DARWIN RESEARCH STATION

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION  
"Unnatural Selection"

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. DEEP SPACE (OPTICAL)

The USS ENTERPRISE moves through the galaxy at warp speed.

PICARD (V.O.)

Captain's log, Stardate 42303.7.  
The Enterprise is bound for Star  
Station India to rendezvous with  
a Starfleet courier.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

The lights on the bridge are down, with only the OPS  
and CONN stations illuminated. An n.d. crew goes quietly  
about it's business.

NOTE: THIS DIALOGUE HAS TO BE REWRITTEN:

PICARD (V.O.)

Hopefully the mission will  
provide an opportunity to  
evaluate our newest staff  
officer...

INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

A pensive CAPTAIN JEAN-LUC PICARD paces restlessly,  
pausing in front of the antique brass ship's barometer  
mounted on the bulkhead.

PICARD (V.O.)

In the short time she's been  
aboard, Doctor Pulaski has  
distinguished herself as a  
meticulous and competent  
physician. But can someone so  
focused on her own specialty also  
assume the broader duties of the  
ship's Chief Medical Officer?

CONTINUED:

Absently, Picard raps the barometer's face plate with his knuckle. Surprisingly, the needle moves -- pointing to "STORMY."

INT. TEN-FORWARD

COMMANDER RIKER, GEORDI and several male crewmembers from Engineering are seated around a table near the bow ports. The center of attention is clearly the new Specialist Trainee, RINA, an arrestingly beautiful young woman.

RINA

... warp drive theory always came easy for me, but I'm looking forward to some hands on experience.

RIKER

I'm sure we'll be able to accommodate you.

Rina is well aware that Riker is flirting with her, but she's not flattered. She concentrates on finishing her drink.

Geordi, on the other hand, seems oblivious to the tension.

GEORDI

I know what you mean. It's a really electrifying experience to be down there where the action is. Whenever I push the drive past warp six I still get a lump in my throat.

Riker takes Rina's empty glass from her hand.

RIKER

(standing)

Can I get you another?

RINA

Tell me Commander. Is it the custom on the Enterprise for the First Officer to wait on trainees?

CONTINUED:

RIKER

(smiling)

If they were all like you, I'm certain it would be.

GEORDI

(to Rina)

What's it like these days at the academy? Is Tsiolkovski still teaching Propulsion Theory?

RINA

Are you kidding? They'll have to tear down the building around him. The first time I saw him...

MOVE WITH RIKER as he heads for the bar carrying two empty glasses. He slides them across the bar to an n.d. bartender.

RIKER

Same again.

In the b.g. we see DOCTOR KATHERINE PULASKI leave her table and approach Riker.

PULASKI

Good to see you, Commander. When you missed your test this morning we all feared the worst.

RIKER

(turning)

My apologies, Doctor. A minor crisis...

(beat)

in Engineering.

PULASKI

(not buying it)

You know, a Rheinman tissue sample sounds a good deal worse than it is. I can assure you there's no discomfort involved.

RIKER

It's not that! It's just... my duties are so diverse.

(beat)

Suppose we leave the appointment open?

CONTINUED: (2)

PULASKI

Spontaneity is the sand in the  
clockworks of science.

RIKER

But it's just an unimportant  
detail...

A raised eyebrow from Pulaski tells Riker this is a  
dead-end.

PULASKI

If I didn't consider it important  
I wouldn't insist. Don't force  
me to relieve you of duty to make  
my point.

RIKER

You can't be --

(beat)

I'll work something out. But  
my schedule is tight for the next  
three or four days...

PULASKI

(smiles)

So I see.

They both glance toward the table where Rina and Geordi  
are still in conversation.

BEYOND THE PORTS the stars streak toward us at warp  
speed.

Rina has a clear view.

RINA

Beautiful, isn't it?

GEORDI'S POV -- He "sees" the ship's navigational  
shield as a gossamer scrim of shimmering color, and  
beyond, countless waves of energy bursting from  
exploding suns.

GEORDI

The most beautiful thing I know.

ON RINA as she turns to face him. She's not used to  
hearing men talk like this.

INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Picard stands in the darkness, his face bathed in starlight. He's staring out the port at the same view that fascinates Rina.

A CHIME SOUNDS.

PICARD  
(to com panel)  
Picard.

COM PANEL VOICE (V.O.)  
Captain, this is the bridge.  
We're receiving a distress signal  
on an open sub-space frequency.

PICARD  
(to com panel)  
Sound emergency stations, and  
respond on the same frequency.

Picard rushes for the door.

EXT. SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The great ship sweeps past at warp speed.

INT. BRIDGE

ENSIGN WESLEY CRUSHER emerges from the turbolift adjusting his uniform and rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

WE FOLLOW as he stops at the food slct, grabs a cup of tea, and moves to replace the n.d. crewmember at the CONN.

PULASKI (O.S.)  
(from com panel)  
Sickbay on full emergency  
status, Captain.

Picard is on his feet with Riker and COUNSELOR TROI next to him. COMMANDER DATA is at the OPS station and WORF is at TACTICAL.

PICARD  
Stand by, Doctor. Commander  
Data. Have we locked on to the  
signal yet?

CONTINUED:

DATA

Yes, sir. A voice only  
transmission from the USS  
Lantree, a Federation supply  
ship.

PICARD

(to viewscreen)

Lantree, this is Jean-Luc Picard  
of the USS Enterprise. What  
is the nature of your emergency?

A long beat of silence as they wait anxiously for a  
response.

VOICE (V.O.)

(from viewscreen)

-- can't hold out any -- dying  
-- too many -- help ...  
(silence)

Riker and Worf glance at each other.

DATA

Sir, we are still receiving their  
signal. There is simply no  
message.

CLOSE ON Picard's worried expression.

PICARD

(to viewer)

Lantree! Are you under attack?

FADE OUT:

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

Underway at warp speed.

INT. BRIDGE

Picard and the others are at their stations.

PICARD  
(to com panel)  
USS Lantree, this is the  
Enterprise, come in, Lantree.

Nothing.

PICARD  
Replay that last transmission.

The Lantree's last desperate call is replayed.

VOICE (V. O.)  
(from viewscreen)  
-- can't hold out any -- dying  
-- too many -- help ...  
(silence)

PICARD (CONT.)  
(to Troi)  
Counselor?

TROI  
Great stress is all I'm able to  
sense.

RIKER  
Have we got a fix on her?

DATA  
Two point two milli-parsecs,  
bearing three-zero at one-four-  
five degrees.

PICARD  
(to Riker)  
Number One?

CONTINUED:

RIKER

We better take a look.  
(to Data)  
What vessel is it?

Data accesses the computer.

DATA

USS Lantree, a class R Starfleet  
supply ship assigned to Gamma  
seven seven, Captain L.I. Taleka  
commanding. Normal complement,  
twenty-six officers and crew.

RIKER

Armed?

DATA

Class three defensive only.

RIKER

Is she still underway?

DATA

Indeed. She is at maximum speed.

Picard and Riker glance at each other.

PICARD

Alter course to intercept.

WESLEY

(enters course)  
Course to intercept.

RIKER

Execute.  
(to Worf)  
Let's go to Yellow Alert.

WORF

Yellow Alert, sir.

The KLAXONS SOUND.

RIKER

Engineering?

INT. ENGINEERING

KLAXONS continue as the crew moves to alert stations.

CONTINUED:

GEORDI  
Engineering.

Geordi replaces an n.d. crewmember at the command console.

RIKER (V.O.)  
(from com panel)  
Give us maximum warp.

GEORDI  
Maximum warp, sir.  
(to crew)  
Let's show 'em what we've got.

The crew springs to action. Rina is electrified.

GEORDI (CONT.)  
(to Rina)  
Go to the backpanels and give  
me a direct reading of the  
dilithium temperature spread.

INT. ENGINE ROOM

Rina enters...

And up on the catwalk, one of the crewmember is distracted by her; he trips, and tumbles over the railing onto the main deck.

The automatic ALARM SOUNDS. Rina and several others rush to the man's aid. His leg is broken.

Geordi runs in.

GEORDI  
What happened?

CREWMEMBER  
My fault, sir. Missed the turn.

Geordi looks up at the catwalk, then down at the crewmember. Then he looks at Rina.

GEORDI  
(pained)  
Ensign... maybe you better stay  
in the control room.

Rina recoils as if she'd been slapped. But she says nothing. Wounded, she gets to her feet and exits.

EXT. ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

In the distance is the USS Lantree, underway at warp speed. The Enterprise is closing on her slowly.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

The bridge crew is at stations. On the viewscreen is the Lantree.

PICARD  
Open hailing frequencies.

WORF  
Hailing frequencies open.

PICARD  
Lantree, this is the Enterprise.

No response.

PICARD (CONT.)  
Captain Telaka, this is Picard,  
USS Enterprise. Do you read me?

Only the EMPTY WHISTLING TONE of the Lantree's carrier signal answers. The bridge crew is uneasy.

DATA  
No life signs, Captain.

PICARD  
Nothing?

DATA  
Nothing, sir.

WORF  
This could be an ambush.

RIKER  
Force fields up. Arm photon  
torpedoes.

WORF  
Force fields up.

CREWMEMBER  
Torpedoes armed and ready.

RIKER  
Red alert.

The KLAXONS SOUND.

CONTINUED:

RIKER (cont.)

What else have we got in the neighborhood?

WESLEY

No other vessels of any kind within two parsecs.

The Lantree is now larger in the viewscreen.

PICARD

No battle damage.

DATA

All systems seem functional, Captain. Everything is in perfect order.

PICARD

And no life signs.

DATA

No life signs.

Picard turns to Riker.

PICARD

We're going to have to board her, Will.

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise and the much smaller Lantree streak along together at warp speed.

INT. ENGINEERING

Riker talks to Geordi. Rina is here as well.

RIKER

The only way we can wind up in the same starfield is if you bring us out of warp speed at precisely the same instant as the Lantree.

GEORDI

First I have to get control of the her engines. Very tricky.

CONTINUED:

RIKER

That's why we gave you the job.  
(friendly pat)  
Let me know as soon as you're  
set.

GEORDI

Will I be on the away team?

RIKER

(aware of Rina)  
Too dangerous for a valuable man  
like you.  
(smiles)  
Fortunately, first officers are  
expendable.

He starts out, then turns to Rina.

RIKER (cont.)

Just in case we don't make it  
back...  
(kisses her hand)  
It was a pleasure.

He exits.

Geordi turns to the crew.

GEORDI

I'll man the bridge station.  
Our first problem is to gain  
control of the Lantree's drives.  
(to Rina)  
Come on. You'll get a chance  
to see what the bridge is like  
on alert.

Her eyes widen.

INT. BRIDGE

The first team is on the bridge as Geordi enters,  
followed by Rina.

GEORDI

Ready to give it a try, Captain.

Geordi sits at the console with Rina watching over his  
shoulder.

CONTINUED:

GEORDI

First we have to download the  
Starfleet access codes for the  
Lantree...

(punches buttons)

Not even Picard is immune to Rina's beauty.

PICARD

(smiling)

Ensign?

Rina is flattered at being noticed by the captain, but she's still trying to keep an eye on what Geordi is doing.

RINA

Yes, sir.

PICARD

Perhaps you'd like to take a look  
from down here.

(indicates the area  
in front of the  
viewscreen)

Frustrated again; but she has no choice.

RINA

Thank you, Captain.

INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM

Worf, Riker, Data and a couple of n.d. crewmembers are preparing to be transported.

RIKER

We're going in amidships  
protected by an isolation  
forcefield. We'll take one quick  
look. Fifteen seconds. If we  
don't like what we see, we beam  
back immediately.

GEORDI (V.O.)

(from com panel)

We have a lock on the Lantree,  
Commander.

RIKER

(to com panel)

Okay, let's drop out of warp  
speed. And see if you can keep  
us in the same galaxy.

EXT. SPACE

The Enterprise and the Lantree travel side by side.

AS THE TWO SHIPS DROP OUT OF WARP SPEED, they wind up separated by some distance.

INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM

Riker and his team are ready.

GEORDI (V.O.)

(from com panel)

Sorry about that. We got as close as we could.

RIKER

That's okay, Geordi. What's a light year among friends?

Riker turns to the others.

RIKER

If it looks secure at first glance, we'll proceed to the bridge.

(beat)

If we find anyone alive, the medical team will beam over.

WORF

Set phasers for kill.

They set phasers.

RIKER

Let's do it.

The controller touches the panel and they beam away.

INT. USS LANTREE

The away team materializes adjacent to the central computer. Phasers at the ready, they find no one in sight.

Data plugs a memory module into the computer, touches a few buttons, then takes the module with him.

DATA

I have the ship's logs, sir.

Riker scans the area. He glances at Worf.

CONTINUED:

RIKER

Let's see if anybody's home.

Cautiously, they open the door to the adjacent area. It's empty.

INT. CORRIDOR

Worf emerges. He checks the corridor. Still no one in sight. Riker, Data and the others follow him out.

Slowly they move on. They come to the sickbay door. Worf opens it, glances in--and freezes.

RIKER

What is it?

INT. SICKBAY

Every bed contains a body. Worf guards the entrance as Data scans the bodies with a tricorder.

RIKER

How's the environment?

DATA

No abnormal viral or bacterial forms.

Riker goes to the nearest bed and looks at the dead crewmember's face. The man is wrinkled and ancient.

RIKER

They were carrying passengers?

DATA

He is not a passenger. He is a crewmember.

RIKER

But he's nearly two hundred years old!

DATA

It would seem they all are.

Riker looks around the room in astonishment. The other corpses are equally antique.

Riker looks from one to the other in horror.

They back away.

INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

The door opens and there is Worf at the ready with his phaser. Data and Riker enter the room.

CAPTAIN TELAKA is sprawled across his desk, face down. His hand still holds a communications device. Riker looks down at it. The hand is thin, bony, and wrinkled.

RIKER

How old was Captain Telaka?

DATA

Thirty-two earth years.

Riker reaches down and gently turns Telaka's head--knowing what to expect, and still shocked by what he sees.

The face is withered, and the transparent skin is stretched over a toothless skull.

INT. LANTREE BRIDGE

The door opens and Riker enters, phaser at the ready. Worf and Data follow him in.

At the CONN station, a crewmember is slumped over the console. Like the others, he is wrinkled and ancient.

Grim, Riker moves to the console and touches a panel.

RIKER

Enterprise... this is the USS  
Lantree.

Picard appears on the viewscreen.

PICARD

(from viewscreen)  
Enterprise here.

RIKER

Captain, the entire crew has been  
wiped out.

PICARD

What happened?

Riker looks down at the corpse of the toothless hag in the first officer's chair.

CONTINUED:

RIKER

It looks like they were in a  
battle with time, and lost.

FADE OUT:

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE (OPTICAL)

The Enterprise drifts through space alongside the smaller supply ship, Lantree.

PULASKI (V.O.)

Chief medical officer's log.  
Extensive autopsies performed  
on the crew of the Lantree reveal  
a gamut of primary organ failures  
as the direct cause of death.

INT. ENTERPRISE - SICKBAY

One of the ancient looking Lantree corpses is lying on a platform surrounded by a forcefield. The platform moves slowly through a twenty-fifth century CAT scanner as Dr. Pulaski and her assistants study the readouts with growing frustration.

PULASKI

(to com panel)

Transporter Room, we're finished here. Thanks for your help.

TRANSPORTER COM VOICE

You're welcome, Doctor.  
Energizing now.

The corpse sparkles briefly then disappears. One of the technicians touches a control panel and the area inside the forcefield is flushed with an electric blue light. Then the protective field is dropped.

PULASKI

(to com panel)

Captain. We've returned the last of the Lantree crew to their ship.

PICARD (V.O.)

(from com panel)

How soon will you have an autopsy report, Doctor?

PULASKI

(beat)

From everything we can see...  
they all died of natural causes.

INT. BRIDGE

Picard is seated at the command station.

PICARD

Natural causes? What in nature could kill an entire crew at the same time?

PULASKI'S COM VOICE

For the record Captain, these people died of old age.

Data, at the OPS station, enters a query into his console, and swivels to face Picard.

DATA

Sir, according to the Lantree logs the oldest crew member was seventy-three, and the mean age of the crew was thirty-two point six six.

INT. CONFERENCE LOUNGE

All of the regulars are seated around the conference table.

PICARD

Doctor?

PULASKI

Every member of the Lantree crew had a complete examination at the beginning of their last duty cycle just eight weeks ago.

(glances at Riker)

They were in perfect health.

TROI

Nothing since then? No geriatric symptoms reported?

PULASKI

A single medical entry noting that the first officer was treated for Thelusian flu five days ago.

PICARD

Thelusian flu?

CONTINUED:

PULASKI

(shakes her head)

An exotic, but harmless rhinal virus. And there was no evidence of infection in the first officer's autopsy.

RIKER

If we don't know what we're looking for, how can we be certain the Lantree is safe?

PULASKI

We can't. We'll have to assume whatever caused this is still aboard.

Picard clenches his jaw.

PICARD

Lieutenant Worf. You know what to do.

WORF

(standing)

Sir.

Worf exits.

DATA

Captain, the Lantree's last port of call was three days ago. The Darwin Genetic Research Station on Gagarin Four.

Picard and Riker look at each other.

PULASKI

At the very least they deserve a warning.

PICARD

(frowning)

I was thinking of a quarantine.

PULASKI

I'll consider that possibility.

PICARD

You'll con --

CONTINUED: (2)

PULASKI

Captain. If Starfleet had wanted you to make the medical judgments they wouldn't have assigned you a medical officer.

Picard gets to his feet, swallowing hard.

PICARD

Number One. Set course for Gagarin Four. Warp nine. We'll depart the moment our security officer returns.

INT. LANTREE - BRIDGE

Worf, surrounded by a protective force field, stands in front of the Lantree's security station.

WORF

(to com panel)

Codename Firestorm. Access A-D-three-three-two-four-nine.

COMPUTER VOICE

Federation security code recognized. Access confirmed.

Worf takes a last look around the bridge. With great sadness, his eyes move from one crewmember's body to the next -- comrades in arms -- slain by an enemy they never had a chance to fight.

WORF

Set auto-destruct. Twenty second delay.

COMPUTER VOICE

Auto-destruct active. Eighteen seconds... sixteen seconds...

Worf pauses for a moment, a silent salute to the bravery of the Lantree crew. he touches his insignia.

WORF

Energize.

He's transformed into glittering energy and vanishes.

COMPUTER VOICE

Twelve seconds... ten seconds...

EXT. SPACE (OPTICAL)

For a moment the two ships drift together as before. Abruptly the Enterprise warps away. In almost the same instant the supply ship, Lantree, is engulfed in a blinding flash.

INT. ENTERPRISE - TRANSPORTER ROOM

Worf steps off the transporter platform and heads for the door.

TRANSPORTER OPERATOR  
(good naturedly)  
Cutting it a little close weren't  
y--?

Worf turns to him, eyes burning. The operator's smile fades.

INT. ENGINEERING

Geordi approaches the maintenance table where Rina is working on an exotic piece of equipment about the size of a basketball. Two enthralled ENGINEERING CREWMEMBERS are watching her work.

GEORDI  
Find it?

RINA  
All set. It was the sensor  
contact.

GEORDI  
(overlapping)  
-- sensor contact.  
(smiling)  
Just like you said it would be.  
Let's get it back in the panel  
and do a quick line test.

RINA  
Yes, sir!

Rina lifts the unit off the table. The two crewmembers rush to help her carry it -- and the delicate device is knocked from Rina's hands. Geordi lunges and manages to catch it inches from the deck. Slowly he gets to his feet, trying to check his anger.

CONTINUED:

GEORDI  
(to Rina)  
Come with me.

The embarrassed crewmembers begin packing up the test equipment as Rina follows Geordi into the corridor.

INT. ENGINEERING - EQUIPMENT BAY

Geordi and Rina are working together to re-install the unit.

GEORDI  
Running the Engineering Section is no different than running the drive system. I've got to keep everything in balance. To get maximum efficiency out of --

RINA  
Don't bother, I've heard it all before. It's not your problem, anyway. It's me.

Geordi turns and studies her. He doesn't need to "see" her face to read the disappointment in her voice. It makes what he has to say next even harder.

GEORDI  
That's right. You've got plenty of aptitude, but you're attitude's not makin' it.

RINA  
What do you know about my attitude? How'd you like it if people always behaved as if you're some kind of freak?!

Geordi finishes the installation. He closes the access panel a little harder than he needs to.

GEORDI  
(tapping his VISOR)  
What do you think this is? My ticket to success?

He starts past her, but she reaches out and grabs his arm.

CONTINUED:

RINA

Wait.

(withdraws her hand)

I'm... sorry. Maybe I'm the one  
who's blind.

GEORDI

What you are is maybe the most  
talented engineer to come out  
of the Academy since... well  
since me. Doing this job's in  
your blood. Now all we've got  
to do is convince the rest of  
'em.

(extends his hand)

Deal?

RINA

(shakes his hand)

Deal.

EXT. SPACE (OPTICAL)

The Enterprise flashes past at maximum warp.

INT. BRIDGE

Picard faces the viewscreen flanked by Doctor Pulaski  
and Riker. The rest of the bridge crew are at their  
stations.

PICARD

Open hailing frequencies.

WORF

Hailing frequencies open.

PICARD

(to viewscreen)

Darwin Station. This is Captain  
Jean-Luc Picard of the USS  
Enterprise, on course for Gagarin  
Four.

After a moment DOCTOR SARA MANDEL, a woman in her  
fifties, appears on the viewscreen. She's haggard and  
exhausted.

CONTINUED:

MANDEL

(from viewscreen)

Enterprise, this is Darwin Station. I'm Doctor Mandel. We've just declared a state of emergency here. We need your help, but you must stand off.

Picard and the others glance at each other.

PULASKI

(stunned)

Doctor Mandel, what is the nature of your emergency?

MANDEL

(from viewscreen)

To whom am I speaking, please?

PULASKI

I'm Doctor Pulaski, chief medical officer.

MANDEL

Katherine Pulaski? "Linear Models of Viral Propagation?"

PULASKI

(impatient)

Yes, but that was a long time ago.

MANDEL

And still the standard.

(a wave of relief)

I'm sorry to meet you under these circumstances, but I can't imagine anyone I'd rather be dealing with.

Picard and the others glance at each other, slightly amazed to realize their CMO is famous.

PULASKI

Bring me up to speed on your situation. What are the factors?

MANDEL

Rapid onset of geriatric phenomena. One hundred percent fatal in the advanced stages.

CONTINUED: (2)

PULASKI

Presentation?

MANDEL

Acute arthritic inflammation.  
Pervasive and virtually  
instantaneous.

PULASKI

Since Darwin is doing genetic  
research...

MANDEL

Our research, here, is limited  
to human genetics. I assure you  
we're not dealing with some  
mutated pathogen that "got away  
from us." We believe the  
infective agent was introduced  
by a supply ship that was here  
three days ago.

PICARD

Doctor, we encountered The  
Lantree a few hours ago.

(beat)

They lost all hands.

Mandel doesn't seem surprised by Picard's news.

MANDEL

That would seem to confirm our  
analysis. Were you able to  
establish a pathology?

PULASKI

Organ failure consistent with  
advanced geriatric --

PICARD

Doctor Mandel! Did you hear what  
I said? The twenty-six men and  
women aboard the Lantree are all  
dead!

MANDEL

I heard you Captain! And the  
prognosis is alarming. But my  
immediate concern is the  
children.

CONTINUED: (3)

PULASKI

(glances at Picard)  
Children?

MANDEL

We have thirty-two children here. They've been kept in positive isolation since the onset, and so far they've shown no symptoms. You must evacuate them as soon as possible.

Riker glances at Picard. Picard turns to the viewscreen.

PICARD

(grave)  
I'm sorry. We'll lend any assistance we can, but I won't risk the lives of --

MANDEL

Doctor Pulaski... you've got to convince him.

(beat)

These children are more than our progeny. They represent all our years of advanced genetic research. If he can't think of humanity, think of science!

PICARD

I heard you Doctor. And I understand completely. We'll reach Gagarin Four in a little over three hours. Until then.

The viewscreen shows a starfield as Picard leaves the bridge.

INT. CONFERENCE LOUNGE

Picard, Riker, Worf, Troi, and Pulaski are assembled around the conference table.

WORF

I recommend against contact, Captain.

PICARD

Number One?

CONTINUED:

RIKER

I agree, sir. I wish there was something we could do, but the risk is too great.

PICARD

Doctor?

Pulaski is scanning notes on a PADD. She looks up as if she hasn't heard any of this.

PULASKI

As a first step I'd like to bring a couple of the children aboard and examine them.

WORF

If they're infected... ?!

PULASKI

Doctor Mandel has assured us they are not.

Picard turns to Troi.

PICARD

Counselor?

TROI

Doctor Mandel clearly believes the children are safe, but she isn't telling us the whole truth. I recommend caution.

PULASKI

The two children could be encased in styrolite. They'll be in suspended animation. We can scan them for possible infection without any danger to ourselves...

(pointedly)  
or to them.

RIKER

Until we know what we're facing --

PULASKI

Exactly. And we won't know until we begin gathering data.

Pulaski leans across the table to Picard.

CONTINUED: (2)

PULASKI (cont.)

Captain, we're talking about saving children's lives. Isn't that worth some risk?

PICARD

We're always at risk, Doctor. You may proceed with your examination, but I shall demand positive proof that these children are harmless before placing the lives of my crew in jeopardy.

EXT. SPACE (OPTICAL)

The Enterprise drops out of warp speed in the Gagarin system.

INT. SICKBAY SCIENCE LAB

Geordi is supervising a flurry of activity as Picard and the others look on.

WESLEY (V.O.)

Approaching Gagarin Four on impulse power, Captain.

PICARD

(to com panel)

Thank you, Mister Crusher. Standard orbit.

WESLEY (V.O.)

Aye, sir.

A forcefield containment has been established in the center of the room. Geordi turns to Picard.

GEORDI

Containment forcefield ready, Captain.

PICARD

Activate.

The forcefield engages. Picard nods to Pulaski.

CONTINUED:

PULASKI

(to com panel)

Doctor Mandel, are you ready to transport?

MANDEL (O.S.)

(from com panel)

You have the coordinates. We have one male and one female, standing by.

Riker nods to Geordi.

GEORDI

(to com panel)

Transporter, energize.

Two blocks of transparent plastic begin to materialize inside the forcefield.

Encased within are two unclothed humans... but they are not "children" in the usual sense of the word. They are physical super-specimens. And they appear to be in their early twenties. Worf is the first to react.

WORF

A trick!

RIKER

(to com panel)

Transporter room. Reverse the trans --

PICARD

Hold on that, Number One. Whoever they are, they're in stasis. Lieutenant Worf?

Worf cautiously scans them with his tricorder.

WORF

The styrolite's intact, Captain.

TROI

Captain, I...

(beat)

There's a definite presence -- two distinct personalities. Even in stasis... It's quite strong.

(beat)

They are unquestionably telepathic.

CONTINUED: (2)

Everyone strains for a closer look.

DATA

Earth humans. Somewhat larger  
than normal. Approximately  
twenty years old --

Doctor Pulaski is transfixed by the Darwinian children.

PULASKI

Extraordinary.  
(awe-struck)  
We could be looking at the future  
of humanity.

PICARD

(controlled)  
Or at least Doctor Mandel's  
vision of it.

FADE OUT:

ACT THREE

EXT. ENTERPRISE

In orbit around Gagarin IV.

INT. SICKBAY SCIENCE LAB

The two Darwinian children stand frozen in their blocks of styrolite. They are being scanned by an array of devices as medical technicians study the readouts.

From across the room, Doctor Pulaski watches, chin in hand, thinking.

Picard enters. She looks up.

PULASKI

I want to free them from the styrolite.

Picard crosses to the children and looks them over. He turns to Pulaski.

PICARD

Are you absolutely certain they're safe?

PULASKI

These children are in better health than we are. Their immune system is so advanced, it may not even be possible for them to contract disease.

PICARD

But how can we be --

PULASKI

There's no way we can be absolutely certain until we know what's causing the disease.

PICARD

Then until we can answer that question, we can't --

CONTINUED:

PULASKI

We don't have that kind of time.

(beat)

Captain, look at these children.  
Set aside the fact that they are  
human beings and we are their  
only hope.

(beat)

We're talking about a new chapter  
in genetic science.

PICARD

But the risk. The risk is --

PULASKI

Minimal. They'll continue to  
be isolated inside a forcefield.

Picard studies her. Finally he turns to the com panel.

PICARD

(to com panel)

Commander Riker, assemble the  
bridge crew in the observation  
lounge in fifteen minutes.  
Doctor Pulaski has a proposal  
she'd like us to consider.

RIKER (V.O.)

(com panel)

Yes, sir.

He starts out, then turns at the door.

PICARD

And Doctor... I'm not one to  
discourage input, but I'd  
appreciate it if you'd at least  
let me finish my sentences once  
in a while.

He exits.

She puts a hand to her eyes.

INT. TROI'S OFFICE

Troi is working at her desk. She looks up as Doctor  
Pulaski enters.

PULASKI

You have a minute?

CONTINUED:

TROI

Of course.

Pulaski takes a seat, unsure how to begin.

PULASKI

(beat)

Deanna... You've known the captain for some time...

(beat)

I guess I could use some advice. I don't think I'm dealing with him very well.

TROI

Why do you say that?

PULASKI

(shrugs)

My arguments seem to go right past him. We wind up shouting regulations at each other.

TROI

It takes time to get to know him. But he's very fair, and he has excellent judgment.

PULASKI

I know he's a talented commanding officer.

(beat)

But he's so caught up in... his ship, his responsibility... He doesn't seem able to step back... to see the whole canvas.

TROI

(puzzled)

Kate, I don't think he would be where he is if he couldn't see the "whole canvas."

They are interrupted by the com panel.

COM PANEL (V.O.)

Staff officers report to the Observation Lounge.

They stand and head for the door.

CONTINUED: (2)

TROI

Maybe your problem is that the two of you aren't all that different.

PULASKI

What do you mean?

TROI

Let's just say you're both well established personalities.

INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE

The A-team is assembled. Picard has the floor.

PICARD

Doctor Pulaski's studies indicate the children are harmless. She believes the rest of the colony's children should be beamed aboard and transported to a new environment while there's still time to save them.

RIKER

Are you sure they're safe?

PULASKI

No.

A murmur of alarm.

PULASKI (CONT.)

In the time we have available, the only true test is to expose the children to another human being.

An audible silence. Everyone is looking at her.

PULASKI (CONT.)

I plan to free them from the styrolite--inside a forcefield containment.

(beat)

I'll be inside the containment area myself.

Another murmur of concern.

CONTINUED:

WORF

You would risk yourself?

PULASKI

They're living beings and they need our help.

GEORDI

(shakes his head)

I don't like it. If we lost the force field for some reason... we could lose the ship.

PULASKI

But the children are in perfect health. And we can use double redundant forcefields.

PICARD

As Geordi says, forcefields can fail. And until --

PULASKI

Captain, I can understand your concern, but --

She's cut him off again. She glances at him. Picard eyes her coolly.

PICARD

You say you understand, Doctor, but I wonder if you do.

Pulaski is up against a wall. She stares at the table with a hand to her forehead. Picard studies her. He softens.

PICARD (CONT.)

If you can find a way to prove the children are biologically harmless without risking the crew, I'll do everything in my power to assist.

She nods. She gets up and heads for the exit. Picard motions to Troi. The two of them hold back until the others are gone.

TROI

Captain?

CONTINUED: (2)

PICARD

I'm concerned about our CMO.

(off Troi's look)

She's absolutley obsessed with the medical viewpoint. She doesn't seem able to step back and see the overall picture.

Troi has trouble suppressing a smile.

PULASKI

What's the matter?

TROI

Nothing, Captain. Perhaps you and the CMO just need to give each other a little more time.

INT. BRIDGE

Pulaski strides onto the bridge and addresses the viewscreen.

PULASKI

Doctor Mandel, this is Kate Pulaski.

Mandel appears on the viewscreen and Pulaski winces. Mandel is visibly older.

MANDEL

(from viewscreen)

Doctor? Do you have a decision?

PULASKI

(beat)

Yes. I'm afraid it's bad news.

MANDEL

How can that be?!

Pulaski stiffens her spine to carry the weight.

PULASKI

The risk to our ship and crew is too great. Until we're absolutely certain of the cause of the disease, the children --

CONTINUED:

MANDEL

But the children were never on  
the Lantree!

(beat)

You can't do this! For God's  
sake! I demand that you do  
something to save our children.

Pulaski is under tremendous strain.

MANDEL (CONT.)

(spreads her withered  
hands.)

We haven't much time.

PULASKI

(sets her jaw)

Stand by. I'll get back to you.

INT. ENGINEERING CONTROL ROOM

Geordi is studying a PADD. He's troubled. Rina senses  
something is wrong.

RINA

What's the it?

GEORDI

(glances up)

Our error rate is up nearly forty  
percent.

She looks at him squarely.

RINA

You mean: since I came aboard.

She's angry. She's about to reply, but she's  
interrupted by Pulaski, who comes storming into the  
control room.

PULASKI

I need your help. I've got very  
little time. I've got to find  
a way to test the children, to  
make sure they're harmless. And  
I need a fail-safe environment.

GEORDI

The problem is, there's no area  
on the ship that can be sealed  
off with absolute certainty.

CONTINUED:

PULASKI

What about the Sickbay?  
(glances at Rina)  
Doesn't the Sickbay have  
isolated systems?

RINA

The Sickbay has independant  
systems, but it's not possible  
to totally cut it off from the  
rest of the ship. The only  
truely independent environment  
would be the shuttlecraft, or  
something like --

PULASKI

The shuttlecraft?  
(to Geordi)  
Why didn't you say so?

INT. CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

Picard is looking in his microscope when the door chime  
sounds.

PICARD

Come.

Pulaski enters.

PULASKI

Captain, I'd like permission to  
take the children aboard the  
shuttlecraft

Picard reacts.

PULASKI (CONT.)

If the experiment is...  
unsucessful, the shuttlecraft  
can simply be abandoned here at  
Darwin.

PICARD

(studies her)  
And you along with it.

She shrugs.

CONTINUED:

PICARD

Doctor, you are the chief medical officer of the Starship Enterprise. You have a responsibility to this ship --

PULASKI

And to humanity.

PICARD

The Starfleet guidelines about contact with quarantined --

PULASKI

Listen, you don't need to quote the rule book --  
(a hand to her mouth)

She's done it again.

PULASKI (CONT.)

You were saying?

Picard studies her. Finally he gets to his feet.

PICARD

Request approved.

PULASKI

Captain, you said if I...  
(beat)  
Approved?

PICARD

Doctor, I can't condone the jeopardy you're assumming, but I recognize that you have satisfied my conditions.

PULASKI

(long beat)  
Thank you.

INT. SHUTTLE BAY

The children, still in styrolite, are being loaded aboard the shuttlecraft. Pulaski is supervising as Data enters.

DATA

Doctor? You sent for me?

CONTINUED:

PULASKI

I did, Commander. I assume  
you're qualified to pilot this  
shuttlecraft.

DATA

Certainly. I was trained at --

PULASKI

I'm sure you were. Please get  
aboard, we don't have much time.

Data looks at her quizzically. He starts to board as  
Riker rushes into the shuttle bay.

RIKER

Doctor, what's going on?

PULASKI

We're performing the experiment  
aboard the shuttlecraft.

RIKER

The captain approved this?

PULASKI

Yes. Now if you'll clear the  
area, please; we haven't much  
time.

RIKER

Doctor, I can't allow you to risk  
yourself like this.

(to com panel)

Captain, this is Riker --

PULASKI

Commander Riker... that item in  
your medical record is still  
unresolved, if I'm not mistaken?

RIKER

What does that...

(dawning realization)

You can't be serious.

PULASKI

(to com panel)

Computer, this is Chief Medical  
Officer Pulaski.

(more)

CONTINUED: (2)

PULASKI (Cont'd)

I'm relieving Commander William Riker from active duty for medical reasons effective immediately.

(to Data)

Let's go.

Riker is stunned. Doctor Pulaski enters the shuttlecraft. Data looks at Riker with a shrug. He follows Pulaski in and the hatch closes behind them.

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)

(from com panel)

All personnel, clear the shuttle bay.

Riker jumps to the com panel.

RIKER

(to com panel)

Computer -- override shuttle operations! Halt departure! Secure the shuttle!

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)

Riker, William T. Presently on inactive duty status. No command authorization.

(beat)

All personnel, clear the shuttle bay.

Dismayed, Riker joins the other crewmembers moving quickly to the air lock.

INT. SHUTTLECRAFT

Data, at the console, clearly has misgivings about what's happening.

PULASKI

You'll take us a few hundred meters away from the Enterprise, and hold position.

With a raise of an eyebrow, Data turns to the panel.

DATA

Begin shuttlecraft launch sequence.

INT. SHUTTLE BAY CONTROL ROOM (BLUE SCREEN)

Through the airlock viewing port, Riker watches, powerless and apprehensive.

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)  
(from com panel)  
Shuttle Bay One is clear. Access hatch sealed. Initiating decompression.

DATA (V.O.)  
Stand by to open shuttle bay doors.

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)  
Decompression complete. Opening main shuttle bay doors.

Beyond the shuttlecraft, the hangar bay doors begin to part, revealing the starry night.

RIKER  
(resigned)  
Good luck, Doctor.

EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The shuttlecraft emerges, drifting slowly away from the Enterprise.

INT. SHUTTLECRAFT

Pulaski has turned her attention to the two children, now lying horizontal, still encased in styrolite.

DATA  
We are in position, Doctor.

PULASKI  
(more to herself)  
This is the only way to prove they're harmless.

DATA  
And if they are not?

PULASKI  
(looks at him)  
I hate to keep reminding you, but you are a machine. You'll be perfectly safe.

CONTINUED:

DATA

That is by no means certain,  
Doctor, but I was referring to  
you.

PULASKI

(softens)

Medical research is sometimes  
a risky business, Commander.  
It's all part of being human.

Pulaski adjusts a dispersion device over the horizontal  
forms of the two children. She activates it and the  
styrolite begins to dissolve.

In seconds it melts away and the children scramble to  
their feet -- curious, friendly, and mute.

The female, ASTARTE, touches Pulaski and looks her in  
the eye.

PULASKI

(wide eyed)

... Your name is Astarte... this  
is your brother, David...

EXT. ENTERPRISE - (OPTICAL)

The shuttlecraft and the Enterprise orbit together  
above the planet Gagarin IV.

INT. SHUTTLECRAFT

Using a tricorder and other diagnostic instruments Data  
assists Doctor Pulaski with her self-examination.

DATA

All within tolerance, Doctor.

PULASKI

(a slight smile)

The manufacturer will be pleased  
to hear it.

(off his look)

I appreciate your help, but your  
bedside manner needs work.

The children are silently studying their surroundings.  
She moves toward them -- and FREEZES.

CONTINUED:

Wide eyed, suddenly gripped with fear, she slowly moves her arm -- and GROANS in pain.

Data looks at her in alarm.

FADE OUT

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE (OPTICAL)

With the shuttlecraft alongside, the Enterprise is in orbit around Gagarin IV.

INT. SHUTTLECRAFT

Moving with difficulty, Doctor Pulaski makes her way to the shuttle's command chair. Data rushes to assist.

PULASKI

There was no warning.

PICARD

(from viewscreen)

Doctor!

With Data's help, Pulaski lowers herself into the chair.

PULASKI

(wincing)

Acute arthritic inflammation of all joints. It's the initial symptom of the disease.

PICARD

(from viewscreen)

Good lord!

PULASKI

The children must be returned to their isolation environment.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

Riker steps out of the turbolift onto the bridge.

WORF

Transporter set to original coordinates, Captain.

PICARD

Energize.

(noticing Riker)

Glad you're here, Number One.

INT. SHUTTLECRAFT

Pulaski and Data watch as the Darwinian children vanish in a sparkle of energy.

PULASKI  
Thank you, Captain.

Doctor Pulaski self-administers a hypospray painkiller. Immediately she begins to relax.

PICARD  
(on viewscreen)  
We'll have a medical team waiting for you in the shuttle bay, Doctor.

PULASKI  
I'm afraid that's out of the question. We still don't understand what we're dealing with. That means I'm subject to the same quarantine as the Darwin Station.  
(beat)  
I recommend a delta-level decontamination of the Sickbay and the shuttle bay. Shuttle One out.

INT. ENTERPRISE

Picard is on his feet, addressing a viewscreen starfield.

PICARD  
Doctor!

WORF  
Captain, I'll see to the decontamination myself.

Picard nods, barely able to contain his frustration. Worf heads for the turbolift. Riker approaches Picard.

INT. SHUTTLECRAFT

Data watches nervously as Doctor Pulaski attempts to stand. She appears to be stiff, but not crippled by pain.

DATA  
How do you feel?

CONTINUED:

PULASKI

(slowly flexing her  
fingers)

Not exactly up to factory specs.

(off his look)

The pain is tolerable, thank you.

DATA

Set course for Darwin Station?

The doctor sinks wearily back into the command chair.  
She has already begun to show signs of aging.

PULASKI

We're already quarantined. What  
do we have to lose?

Data starts to give her a literal response, then thinks  
better of it. He punches in the course.

INT. SICKBAY SCIENCE LAB (OPTICAL)

The bio-decontamination team, in protective suits, are  
"hosing down" the area using back-pack plasma  
generators.

A stream of translucent blue light flows from the  
nozzles, filling the air and clinging to the exposed  
surfaces for a moment before evaporating. Worf's bulk  
is undisguised by the suit.

As they move on a second crew, also in full protective  
suits, enters the room carrying scanners and checking  
for any residual contamination.

INT. OBSERVATION LOUNGE

Picard and Riker are alone in the room, facing each  
other across the table.

PICARD

I wish it were that simple, Will.

RIKER

A meaningless detail on a medical  
form...

PICARD

I agree it seems insignificant,

CONTINUED:

RIKER

You have the authority to countermand it.

PICARD

My authority flows from the chain of command. If you, or any other officer, have anything less than full confidence that your orders will be carried out, then my rank of Captain is meaningless.

Riker understands the truth of this.

RIKER

(beat)

Sir, if there's any way I can help get them back...

PICARD

Of course.

The door opens and Troi enters, followed by Geordi and Rina. They take their seats. Neither Picard nor Riker comment on Rina's presence.

WESLEY (V.O.)

(from com panel)

Captain, Shuttle One is descending to Gagarin Four.

PICARD

(to com panel)

Thank you, Mister Crusher.

(to the group)

The medical emergency at Darwin Station is ongoing. We'll continue to assist, but our immediate concern is the evacuation of our two officers. Anyone?

TROI

Shouldn't Kate be involved in this?

PICARD

Judging from what we saw on the Lantree, Doctor Pulaski may not be able to help herself.

CONTINUED: (2)

TROI

(beat)

I suggest transporting them both back to the ship. We should use whatever time we have to seek the best medical resources available.

RIKER

The transporter won't protect us. The children went through the transporter and still infected Doctor Pulaski.

Geordi raps the table.

GEORDI

The bio-filter can be adjusted. We could alter the filter to screen out whatever it is that's causing...

PICARD

Precisely. We can't protect ourselves against the unknown. What we need is a filter that isn't bio-dependent.

They ponder. Finally,

RINA

What about the "trace?"

Everyone turns to Rina, their faces reflecting degrees of skepticism.

RIKER

The transporter trace?

RINA

The transporter keeps a computer record of every transmission, a footprint if you will. Usually it's only stored for security purposes, but if we used the trace data to control the reconstitution process...

PICARD

(to Geordi)

Is that possible?

CONTINUED: (3)

GEORDI

I hate to admit it, but it never occurred to me. All I can tell you is she hasn't been wrong yet.

PICARD

Very well. Thank you Ensign... ?

TROI

Excuse me, Captain. But where will we get the trace data? As far as I know Kate's never used the transporter.

PICARD

Never?

RIKER

She's... a woman of strongly held opinions, sir.

(beat)

What about a previous assignment?

TROI

Her last ship was the Repulse.

PICARD

(to com panel)

Bridge. Signal the USS Repulse on the sub-space captain's priority channel.

EXT. DARWIN RESEARCH STATION - DAY (OPTICAL)

The shuttlecraft settles on a landing pad near the Main Laboratory Building at Darwin Station.

INT. DARWIN STATION LAB BUILDING

Doctor Mandel several OTHER SCIENTISTS are waiting as Doctor Pulaski steps out of the lift with Data's help. During the short journey to the planet's surface she appears to have aged thirty years.

CONTINUED:

MANDEL

(extends her hand)

Doctor Pulaski...

(beat)

I can only tell you how much I  
regret the burden we have imposed  
on you.

(a glance at Data)

On both of you.

PULASKI

Commander Data is an android,  
Doctor. He is unaffected. As  
for me, this was my choice, not  
yours.

MANDEL

I still can't believe the  
children had anything to do with  
this.

DATA

(gestures toward  
Pulaski)

The evidence is fairly  
conclusive.

MANDEL

But the children were designed  
to ward off any disease agents.

PULASKI

(pointedly)

I think it's time we talked about  
that.

INT. ISOLATION LABORATORY - OBSERVATION AREA

Doctors Pulaski and Mandel step into an observation  
booth overlooking the isolation lab. From here they  
can see the children. They are all physically  
exceptional.

MANDEL

(looks down)

Our ultimate achievement.

PULASKI

Genetically... engineered...

CONTINUED:

MANDEL

Created!

(beat)

Perfect in every way. Better  
than perfect. Their bone  
structure, their musculature...

(gestures)

their brains!

Mandel RAPS on the glass.

INT. ISOLATION LABORATORY

Two children playing chess glance up -- and all the  
chess pieces disappear.

They wave, and turn back to the game. An instant of  
concentration -- and the chess pieces reappear.

PULASKI (V. O.)

(shaken)

What about their immune system?

MANDEL (V.O.)

That was our masterpiece. An  
aggressive immunity that attacks  
any invader and destroys it  
genetically.

PULASKI (V.O.)

That's it.

INT. ISOLATION CHAMBER - OBSERVATION AREA

Mandel faces Pulaski.

PULASKI

Thelusian flu!

MANDEL

Thelusian flu?

PULASKI

The first officer of the Lantree  
had Thelusian flu -- an airborne  
virus.

(nods toward  
children)

How would their immune system  
react to it?

CONTINUED:

MANDEL

By altering the genetic pattern.  
Forcing the virus into  
extinction.

PULASKI

(beat)

I'm afraid that's what's  
happening to us.

Doctor Mandel is stunned. She stares down at the two  
chess players.

MANDEL

We were so concerned about  
protecting them -- we overlooked  
the obvious!

(beat)

The one decision we made with  
our hearts... turns out to be  
a mistake.

Pulaski puts a withered hand on Mandel's shoulder.

INT. CAPTAIN'S READY ROOM

CAPTAIN TAGGERT, of the Starship Repulse, has a full  
bushy mustache. He's somewhat younger than Picard,  
and his face fills the viewscreen in the Ready Room.

TAGGERT

(from viewscreen)

Sorry, Picard. We purged the  
Doctor Pulaski's trace right  
after her transfer. Not that  
she used the transporter much,  
she preferred using the  
shuttlecraft.

(shrugs)

I'd have given her a shuttle if  
it would have kept her here.  
Best CMO I ever served with.

PICARD

Tell me, Taggart. If she served  
you as well as you say, why did  
you let her go?

CONTINUED:

TAGGERT

(laughs)

I guess you haven't run into her stubborn streak.

(beat)

The moment she heard of the opening on the Enterprise, she put in a request for transfer. Knew your service record backward and forward. Apparently she's been an admirer of yours for some time.

PICARD

(shocked)

Extraordinary.

EXT. DARWIN STATION - DAY

The shuttlecraft is still on the landing pad outside the laboratory complex.

INT. DARWIN LABORATORY

Data is at a computer console. Pulaski and Mandel approach.

PULASKI

He's is trying to isolate the altered genetic pattern.

MANDEL

But the computer run could take months.

PULASKI

(smiles)

Not necessarily. Commander Data... has a way with computers.

The displays in front of Data are scrolling like lightning.

He looks up.

DATA

(points to display)

Comparing genetic samples indicates a transposition of these two proteins.

CONTINUED:

MANDEL

It appears that the antibodies  
have been too effective.

PULASKI

What do you mean?

DATA

I believe she is referring to the  
fact that the human genome is  
self replicating.

Mandel stares at the readout in horror.

MANDEL

He's quite right. Every cell  
in our bodies is now programmed  
for extinction.

EXT. ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

In orbit around Gagarin IV.

INT. BRIDGE

Captain Picard struggles to maintain his composure as  
he faces the viewscreen.

PICARD

Have you made any progress,  
Doctor Pulaski?

PULASKI

(from viewscreen)

The Darwin staff has amassed some  
amazing new data on the  
physiology of aging --

PICARD

(incredulous)

I'm sure, but right now I'm  
concerned about you.

INT. DARWIN LABORATORY

Doctor Pulaski is working at a lab station. Her face  
is wrinkled, and her hair is snow white.

CONTINUED:

PULASKI

(shakes her head)

We've isolated the altered DNA,  
but the process may not be  
reversible. The others are  
already at work in the primary  
lab -- where I should be.

PICARD

(from viewscreen)

No, Doctor. You and Commander  
Data belong here.

PULASKI

(long beat)

Commander Data is preparing to  
leave now.

PICARD

(from viewscreen)

Doctor...

PULASKI

Jean-Luc... I appreciate what  
you're trying to do.

(beat)

But I got into this by leaping  
before I looked, and I won't  
allow you to make the same  
mistake.

INT. BRIDGE

Picard looks at Riker in dismay.

PULASKI (cont.)

(from viewscreen)

It's still my responsibility,  
and the quarantine is still  
valid.

(smiles)

I'm afraid this is the moment  
of truth.

Grim, jaw locked, Picard sags into his chair in defeat.

On the viewscreen, Pulaski straightens her shoulders  
and stands as erect as she can.

CONTINUED:

PULASKI (cont.)

Chief Medical Officer Pulaski's  
final report to the Enterprise...

(beat)

Just as changes in evolution are  
known to be caused by changes  
in the environment, we now have  
evidence that the process also  
works in reverse.

(beat)

The quarantine of the Darwin  
Station must be maintained until  
the end.

(beat)

Pulaski out.

FADE OUT:

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

EXT. DARWIN RESEARCH STATION - DAY

The Enterprise shuttlecraft sits alongside the building.

INT. DARWIN ISOLATION LAB

Pulaski and Mandel say goodbye to Data. He turns to Pulaski.

DATA

I am sorry I could not be more helpful, Doctor Pulaski.

PULASKI

(a glimmer of admiration)

You did everything you could, Commander.

(extends her hand with a smile)

As androids go, you're in a class by yourself.

Solemnly they shake hands. There's an awkward silence.

DATA

Doctor --

PULASKI

Please give my best to the captain.

Finally, Data turns and exits.

EXT. DARWIN (OPTICAL)

The shuttlecraft rises from the pad next to the laboratory, then streaks into space.

EXT. ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The shuttlecraft approaches the Enterprise, but stands off some distance.

INT. SHUTTLECRAFT

Data enters a string of commands into the control console, then gets to his feet. He turns to the com panel.

DATA

Enterprise. Commander Data ready  
to beam aboard.

A shimmer of light and he's gone.

EXT. ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The shuttlecraft EXPLODES.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

Picard is grim. This defeat has taken its toll. Troi is concerned.

WESLEY

Sir. Commander Data is back  
aboard.

TROI

Jean-Luc, don't try to carry all  
the weight for this tragedy.  
Kate knew what she was doing.

PICARD

(angry)  
If I was certain we had tried  
absolutely every --  
(he's thinking)  
Stand by.

He gets up abruptly and strides to the turbolift. Troi glances at Riker.

INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM

Data, inside an isolation forcefield, is being scanned by medical monitors.

MEDIC

No life forms present.

Data glances up resentfully. He's about to say something when Picard enters. He strides forward and shakes Data's hand.

CONTINUED:

PICARD

Good to see you, Data.

DATA

Yes, sir.

PICARD

Tell me quickly -- you were unaffected because you have no genetic material?

DATA

Correct, sir.

PICARD

And Doctor Pulaski's DNA is altered -- and that's what brings on the aging?

DATA

Precisely. An almost undetectable transposition in the human genome. It takes a number of interactions of the --

Picard grabs Data by the arm and heads for the door.

PICARD

Come on. We've got one more card to play.

INT. ENGINEERING

Geordi, Rina and the crew are making preparations to get underway.

Picard charges in with Data following.

GEORDI

Sir?

Picard moves past Geordi to Rina.

PICARD

Ensign, I need your opinion.

RINA

(taken aback)

Sir?

CONTINUED:

PICARD

You said the transporter could be altered to filter out changes in Doctor Pulaski.

RINA

If we'd had the trace...

PICARD

Well it turns out the changes are in her DNA. If we used a sample of the doctor's DNA -- say from a blood test -- that was taken before --

RINA

Could we filter out her genetic alterations? Absolutely!

PICARD

You're picking up some bad habits, Ensign, but yes, you took the words right out of my mouth.

(beat)

Can you make the modifications?

RINA

Of course!

PICARD

Make it so.

He exits with Data.

Rina is dumbstruck. She looks at Geordi.

GEORDI

(smiles)

Hop to it Ensign. You've got work to do.

INT. ENTERPRISE - BRIDGE

Picard enters and addresses the viewscreen.

PICARD

Darwin Station, this is the Enterprise.

On the viewscreen, Pulaski appears -- now well over 100 years old. Picard tries to keep his emotions under control.

CONTINUED:

PICARD

(to viewscreen)

We may have come up with an answer, Doctor. We're looking for a sample of your normal DNA to use as a filter. We think we'll be able to transport you while cancelling out any changes that have taken place.

INT. DARWIN ISOLATION LAB

Pulaski and Mandel stand before the viewscreen.

PULASKI

(to viewscreen)

An interesting idea, Captain.

(beat)

But what about Doctor Mandel and her colleagues?

MANDEL

Kate.

(beat)

If this works -- we may be able to use the same technique to save ourselves. We have DNA samples.

INT. ENTERPRISE - SICKBAY

Riker and Data frantically search the medical records.

RIKER

A blood test or tissue specimen -- anything that would provide a sample of Pulaski's original DNA.

They've been through everything.

DATA

Afraid not, sir. Her records were shipped by way of Starfleet headquarters. They haven't caught up with us yet.

Riker is stupefied.

CONTINUED:

RIKER  
This is ridiculous.  
(slams his fist)  
A single cell! A single --

They look at each other for a beat -- then dash for the exit.

INT. ENTERPRISE - CORRIDOR

Riker and Data race for Pulaski's quarters. The door is locked. Riker speaks to the com panel.

RIKER  
(to com panel)  
This is an emergency! Unlock  
Medical Officer Pulaski's  
quarters!

COM PANEL (V.O.)  
Riker, William T., relieved of  
active duty on  
two-three-four-six-nine-point-seven...

DATA  
(embarrassed)  
Allow me, sir.

INT. PULASKI'S QUARTERS

Riker and Data rip the place apart.

RIKER  
Anything! Even a fingernail  
clipping!  
(looks at Data)  
Or a hair!

He lunges for the dressing table. There, on her hairbrush, is a single blonde strand.

They dash for the exit.

INT. BRIDGE

Picard addresses Pulaski on the viewscreen.

PICARD  
Doctor... you should know. This  
has never been done before. Are  
you willing to chance it?

INT. DARWIN LABORATORY.

Every movement is now painful for Pulaski.

PULASKI

(to viewscreen)

I'll tell you one thing. If I  
live through this...

(bends elbow and  
flinches in pain)

I'll have a much better  
understanding of geriatrics.

(weak smile)

Standing by, Captain.

INT. TRANSPORTER ROOM

Several of the panels are off, technicians are all over  
the place, and Rina is supervising the modification  
of the circuitry. Geordi, Riker and Data are making  
last minute adjustments to the control console.

Picard enters, followed by Worf.

RINA

Ready, Captain.

WORF

The isolation forcefield is in  
place.

Picard surveys the scene.

PICARD

(beat)

I'll operate the transporter  
myself.

WORF

That's not necessary, sir.

PICARD

I'm afraid it is. If something  
should go wrong. If Doctor  
Pulaski is not fully... restored.

RIKER

(understanding)

Then she's still capable of  
contaminating the ship.

CONTINUED:

PICARD

(nods)

In that event there should be time to redirect the transporter and... disperse her. It's not a responsibility I can delegate.

Picard steps to the control panel.

GEORDI

Don't worry, Captain. It's not going to come to that.

PICARD

You seem to have absolute faith in the ensign's work.

GEORDI

(glances at Rina)

Like I said, she's never wrong.

PICARD

Very well, then.  
(to com panel)  
Engage forcefield.

The isolation forcefield rises around the transporter platform.

PICARD (Cont.)

(to com panel)

Doctor Pulaski, are you ready?

PULASKI

(from com panel)

I suppose I --

Picard touches the panel. His eyes narrow as he focuses on the empty transporter platform. Everyone is holding their breath.

Rina looks at Geordi anxiously.

In the transporter bay, Pulaski's form appears... STILL AGED! Then it fades... then re-materializes.

Riker and Worf glance at each other.

RIKER

Captain...

Picard reaches out, his hand poised above the controls.

CONTINUED: (2)

On the transporter platform Pulaski's energy field sparkles one last time -- she begins to coalesce -- and all signs of aging have disappeared.

Pulaski, seeing Picard, can't suppress a flicker of admiration.

Picard, too, has trouble concealing his admiration.

The forcefield is dropped. Picard steps forward and extends his hand.

PICARD

Welcome aboard, Doctor.

Everyone rushes to welcome the CMO back.

And Riker is ready -- anxious -- to bite the bullet.

RIKER

Doctor... I'm ready to take the Rheinman test.

Pulaski looks at him quizzically. Has she forgotten?

PULASKI

Glad you reconsidered, Commander.

(to com panel)

This is Chief Medical Officer Pulaski. Commander Riker is restored to active duty effective immediately.

(to Riker)

My schedule's a little tight.

(smiling)

What do you say we put it off for a day or so?

Picard is at the doorway. Pulaski catches up with him, and they exit together.

INT. TURBOLIFT

Pulaski and Picard step into the lift.

PULASKI

Captain... If this hadn't worked? If...

CONTINUED:

PICARD

(clears his throat)

It would have been necessary to beam your energy into empty space.

(beat)

Happily, there's no reason to concern yourself with --

PULASKI

Why should I be concerned about having my atoms spread across the galaxy? I imagine that's what's going to happen every time I use the damn thing.

Picard's smile turns to laughter.

INT. CORRIDOR

Geordi and Rina are walking together.

GEORDI

Looks like you'll be going to your next assignment with a captain's commendation in your record.

RINA

Thanks to you. And the way you... see things.

(turns to him)

Tell me. When you look at me, what do you see?

GEORDI

To me beauty is a constantly changing thing. Sometimes people have it and sometimes they don't. It all depends on their energy.

(beat)

I see your energy and it's beautiful. But it comes from within.

RINA

You're the only poetic chief engineer I've ever heard of.

CONTINUED:

GEORDI

And you're the most able trainee  
I've ever met.

(kisses her hand)

To quote our first officer, "It's  
been a pleasure."

He looks up, but she's still holding his hand.

RINA

Technically, I'm off duty.

GEORDI

(beat)

Technically, so am I.

They have arrived at the entrance to her room. They  
look at each other for a moment.

RINA

Maybe you'd like to come in.  
I've got a fabulous collection  
of antique star drive drawings.

GEORDI

Sounds riveting.

The door opens. They enter.

As the door closes, we see her arms encircle him, and  
they kiss.

EXT. SPACE - ENTERPRISE (OPTICAL)

The Enterprise moves away from Gagarin IV.

RIKER (V.O.)

Course and speed set for Star  
Station India, Sir.

PICARD (V.O.)

Engage.

The great ship clears Gagarin system and disappears  
in a flash of light.

FADE OUT:

THE END