



ALSO BY WIL WHEATON

JUST A GEEK

DANCING BAREFOOT

THE HAPPIEST DAYS OF OUR LIVES

SUNKEN TREASURE

MEMORIES OF THE FUTURE

VOLUME 1

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The body text is Adobe Garamond, an old-style serif typeface. Courier, first drawn by Howard Kettler for IBM in 1955, is used occasionally to evoke the feel of a teleplay. The header text is Futura, a Bauhaus-esque design by Paul Renner, released in 1927.

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DEDICATION

To my friends and family in the cast and crew
of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO

Andrew Hackard, Brent Spiner, David Gerrold, Jamais Cascio, John Rogers, Keith McDuffee, Memory Alpha, Phil Plait, Will Hindmarch, .tws, everyone who read and commented on my original posts at TV Squad, and especially to my wife and kids, who watched more TNG than they ever thought possible while I was working on this.

INTRODUCTION

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In August 2006, Brad Hill, an editor at Weblogs, Inc., hired me to write humorous reviews of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* from my unique point of view as an actor and a fan of the show.

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I started at the beginning of the first season, re-watching episodes that I hadn't seen in a decade or longer, faithfully recording and sharing the memories they released. Along the way, I came up with some silly episode recaps, and an interesting perspective on the first season, twenty years after we brought it to life. The columns were very well received, and tons of readers asked me if they'd be collected into a book. I didn't plan on it originally, but AOL cut TV Squad's budget before I'd made it to the halfway point of the first season and I decided that putting the entire season into a book wasn't just a good way to finish the season, it was a moral imperative.

A few months after I began working on this book in earnest, at the 2009 Nebula awards dinner, I sat at a table with David Gerrold, who is best-known for writing the original series classic "The Trouble With Tribbles." (Fun fact: David wrote and sold "The Trouble with Tribbles" when he was 19. Anne asked him how he had the courage to do that, and David told her, "Because nobody told me I couldn't." That's so awesome, and everyone who is creative should commit that to memory.)

We were talking about all kinds of writerly stuff, and I mentioned to David that I was working on this book. As I started to describe it to him, I could see that he wasn't into it, but was too polite to tell me why.

After a minute, he said, "You have to be careful with your tell-all book, because —"

"Ah, that's why he wasn't into it." I thought.

“It’s not a tell-all book. I hate those things,” I said. “It’s more like you’re flipping through your high school yearbook with your friends.”

I called on all my improv skills and held an imaginary book in my hands.

“It’s like, ‘Hey! I remember this, and I remember that, and did you know that this funny thing happened there, and... oh god... I can’t believe I thought that was cool...”

His face lit up. “That sounds like a book I’d like to read.”

Here it is, David. I hope you enjoy it. (Additional fun fact: David Gerrold suggested me for the role of Wesley. If he hadn’t done that, I don’t know that I’d have ever worn a pumpkin-colored sweater.

Despite that, though, I’m extremely grateful to David for convincing Bob Justman and Gene Roddenberry to take a chance on me.)

Volume One takes you from the pilot to Datalore. Volume Two will take you from Angel One to The Neutral Zone. During our journey together, we’ll certainly be going where no one has gone before, except those times when we go 20% to the left of where the original series went and talk about stuff a whole bunch without actually doing anything... but that’s part of what makes the first season so much fun to watch, especially knowing how great *The Next Generation* eventually became.

Put on your shoulder pads, set a course for 1987, emit an inverse-tachyon pulse into the heart of the anomaly, and engage! By Riker’s beard, you shall be avenged! (Um, as soon as Riker’s beard shows up, next season.)

Namaste,

Wil Wheaton
Pasadena
June 2009

"ENCOUNTER AT FARPOINT"

(PART I)

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ORIGINAL AIR DATE: SEPTEMBER 28, 1987

WRITTEN BY: D.C. FONTANA AND GENE RODDENBERRY

DIRECTED BY: COREY ALLEN

STARDATE: 41153.7

SYNOPSIS

The starship *Enterprise*, huge, beautiful, and majestic, cruises through space toward the audience. The camera zooms in on a darkened window, where her captain — the second bald man to command a starship called *Enterprise* — steps out of the shadows and gazes at the stars. He says that they're heading out to "the unexplored mass of the galaxy." Trekkies who have waited since the '60s to watch new *Star Trek* episodes on television let out a mighty cheer.

The captain's name is Picard, and we follow him on a tour of his spiffy new *Galaxy*-class starship, through Engineering and up to the bridge, while he tells his log (and the now tearfully celebrating Trekkies) that the ship is enormous, isn't entirely filled with crew just yet, and is on its way to Farpoint Station, where they'll pick up their new first officer and absolutely nothing else of interest will happen.

Wait. Of course something of interest will happen! There's a mystery at Farpoint, and he's totally going to solve it... just as soon as he figures how to get past this giant CGI net that's arrived out of nowhere and is cockblocking his ship.

While Picard struggles like a dolphin in a driftnet, a being who calls itself The Q shows up on the bridge. It's dressed as an Elizabethan ship's captain, and speaks in ye olde English(e). A little corny? Sure, but nobody cares when he delivers the very first Red Shirt blasting of the entire series! Yeah! Take that, guy-who-isn't-on-the-call-sheet! Bam!

This makes Picard exceptionally unhappy, so he grabs the Red Shirt's phaser and tries to rub Q's nose in its "stun" setting. Q, a big Tom Petty fan, says that he won't back down and tells Picard that he had better turn around and take his spaceship home, or he's totally going to kick him right in his spandex-covered nuts.

Before Picard can offer one of his soon-to-be-trademark rebuttal speeches, Q transforms into a WWII-era American military officer, and lays into Picard about how humans are a savage race that's unfit for tooling around the galaxy in spaceships, before ominously promising Picard that they'll meet again one day, and vanishing. (A personal observation on this exchange: This scene is terrifically important — maybe even the most important scene of the entire pilot — because it sets up the tone of the show, introduces Picard's character, and needs to grab the audience's attention so they'll stick around for at least the next hour, to say nothing of the rest of the season. Or two.

John de Lancie's outstanding acting ability and dramatic instincts can not be praised too much in this regard. He doesn't just wear different costumes and speak in different voices; he actually becomes different characters as he accuses humanity of being a bunch of shitcocks. Patrick Stewart responds with an equally powerful performance, attempting to genuinely enlighten this strange being but betraying just the right amount of indignation. We didn't know it at the time, but we were going to struggle to find ourselves for the next couple seasons. For better and for worse, this exchange laid the foundation for what *The Next Generation* would be about for much of its first three years. I don't know if the significance of this moment was appreciated by the actors when they filmed it, but they turned in great performances nevertheless.)

Well, now the *Enterprise* has a problem: fight or run away? Before he can seriously consider building a large wooden rabbit, Picard decides that the best way to protect his crew is to do a little of both. He'll take the ship to maximum warp speed, drive it away from the mysterious net, and separate the saucer section from the stardrive section, because

this isn't your mommy's *Enterprise*, bitches. This spaceship comes apart, just like that TIE fighter you got for Christmas in 1979. All the families head up into the saucer section, which will be commanded by Lt. Worf. (Did we mention that there are families aboard the *Enterprise* D? Yeah, turns out that there are, because Starfleet did this study and realized that space herpes — also known as Kirk's Syndrome — spreads considerably slower if its officers have their spouses and children on board their ship.) Meanwhile Picard takes Tasha, Data, and Troi with him into the stardrive section, where he assumes control of the battle bridge, and makes plans for a sexy party, complete with a spandex sailor suit. Precious!

The mysterious net turns into a mysterious shiny ball that chases the Enterprise at mysteriously fast speeds. After a mysterious minute, Picard orders the emergency saucer separation, a process which, though untested at warp speed and therefore theoretically deadly and dangerous, is made kind of silly by our knowledge as the audience that it's obviously going to work. It doesn't reach *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* levels of excess, but it sure comes close, especially when the saucer section pulls away and the stardrive section makes an actual burning-rubber-hot-rod-racing sound as it turns past the camera and heads back to face off against Q.

Once they get there, Picard surrenders and Q transports the crew to a late-21st-century courtroom, where the cast of *Time Bandits* prepares to watch them stand trial for "the multiple and grievous savageries of the species."

Well, this should be interesting... except it really isn't. It's page after page of Q and Picard arguing about mankind. Q says we're a bunch of assholes, and Picard says that we're actually pretty awesome once you get to know us. It's not as preachy as some future episodes will be, but it could get to its point much more quickly than it does, and it delays what the audience really wants: getting into far-out situations involving robots and magic powers while solving real-life problems. Eventually, even Q gets bored with the scene, and sends them all back to the battle bridge after declaring that the fate of humanity rests on

how Picard handles his encounter at Farpoint. Oh? Is that all? Listen, Q, don't know who you've been talking to, but in Starfleet, we save the universe and fuck the green alien chick twice before breakfast, every day. We've got this one, dude.

After a commercial break, the audience gets its first encounter at Farpoint Station, a pointy, crop-circle-looking place on the planet Deneb IV, where we meet the *Enterprise's* first officer, Commander William Riker. Riker is talking with Farpoint's Groppler Zorn, in a scene that makes it painfully clear to the audience that something mysterious and weird is going on at Farpoint Station: It was built very quickly, a little too perfectly, and way under budget. Obviously not a Defense Department project.

Groppler Zorn reminds Riker of that time he totally stole his girlfriend, and asks him if he likes apples. Riker says he does, and wouldn't you know it, a bowl of them apples mysteriously appears. Riker takes one and leaves before he has to endure the mysterious appearance of Ben Affleck. As soon as Riker is gone, Groppler Zorn freaks out at something we can't see, promising all sorts of angry retribution if whatever it is he's yelling at pulls that sort of bullshit again. Well, that's a whole lot of mystery crammed into one scene, so let's take a break and meet some new characters.

We cut to a huge outdoor shopping mall, where Riker meets his ship's doctor, Beverly Crusher, and her son Wesley. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is full of wonderful surprises about the future, and this is one that will make everyone happy: in the 24th century, there are still outlet malls, and they're just as plentiful in the rest of the galaxy as they are on 20th-century Earth.

As they walk past Rigellian Pottery Barn, Three-Dimensional Chess King, and Pon Farr Topic, Riker tries to tell Dr. Crusher how mysterious the whole place is, but she interrupts him to admire a bolt of fabric. Just before Riker can tell her the exciting story about this one time? At band camp? Where there were these apples? The fabric mysteriously changes into exactly what the doctor ordered.

As Riker and the Doctor begin to discuss the mystery, Wesley interrupts them to explicitly point out how mysterious the whole thing is, and the Kill Wesley movement begins. Sorry, kid, but you had a good run of four, even five minutes, so try to focus on the positive.

Dr. Crusher and Wesley wander off into the mall to find a Cinnabon and get some cheap cell phone accessories, and we get to meet Geordi LaForge, who tells Riker that the *Enterprise* has arrived, but only with the stardrive section, and the captain wants Riker to beam up immediately. (Riker then becomes the very first character on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* to use the transporter, which I've always thought was incredibly cool.)

Riker is met by Security Chief Tasha Yar in the transporter room, and they head over to the battle bridge. (Okay, personal aside: I'd forgotten how ridiculously hot Denise was on the show. Damn, that girl pwned her spacesuit, didn't she? Over shared, just now, didn't I? Sorry about that.) Once they get to the battle bridge, Picard is such a dick to Riker, Data and the unnamed CONN guy (played by future *DS9* regular Colm Meaney) share a meaningful "WTF" look. Picard then plays the popular "Q Gone Wild" video for Riker, and Riker delivers a "WTF" look of his own.

The saucer section arrives, and Picard orders Riker to reconnect it manually. He's a total dick again, but right after Riker leaves to grab the controls, he glances up and gives the tiniest hint of an impish glint in his eye, as if he's enjoying testing him. I think we should all set aside for a moment how profoundly irresponsible it is to risk human error in a procedure that's obviously been automated for a good reason, and enjoy that moment. It's a cool bit of acting and character development that I don't recall seeing explicitly given in the script, and am fairly certain was brought to life solely through Patrick's acting experience. It layers his character with depth and complexity that won't be fully explored for a long time, but is integral to some of the most memorable episodes of the series when it is.

Riker earns the *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* award for unnecessary and entirely-too-long visual-effects jerk-off when he successfully reconnects

the stardrive section to the saucer section, in a scene that makes the earlier saucer separation feel brief and understated. He then spends some quality time with Picard, where we learn that Picard doesn't like kids. Well, that's an interesting fact. I'm sure the writers won't lean too heavily on that one note at all in the coming years.

Having put the ship back together, Riker reports to the bridge, looking for commander Data, but finds Worf, instead. Worf tells him that an Admiral who refuses to use the transporter is being escorted by Data to a shuttlecraft, and this is where we separate the Trekkies from the Trekkers, folks, because the hardcores know before they see or hear him that the Admiral is one Doctor Leonard McCoy. The ensuing scene remains one of my absolute favorites in the entire run of the series, and is quoted partially below. The episode ends with the two of them walking down the corridor, the Admiral telling Data that the ship has the right name, and "if you treat her right, she'll always bring you home."

QUOTABLE DIALOGUE

ADMIRAL

What's so damned troublesome about not having died? How old do you think I am, anyway?

DATA

137 years, Admiral, according to Starfleet records.

ADMIRAL

Explain how you remember that so exactly.

DATA

I remember every fact I'm exposed to, sir.

ADMIRAL

I don't see no points on your ears, boy, but you sound like a Vulcan.

DATA

No, sir. I'm an android.

ADMIRAL

Hmm. Almost as bad.

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

"... is a remarkable piece of bioelectronic engineering by which I quote 'see' much of the EM spectrum ranging from simple heat and infrared through radio waves etcetera, etcetera." —Geordi, describing his VISOR by directly quoting from the writer's bible.

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

I'll never forget how I got goosebumps and tears came into my eyes when I sat in a darkened theater at Paramount and saw the *Enterprise* fly by for the very first time, engines rumbling and shaking the room, while Patrick's commanding voice intoned "Space, the final frontier ..." When my name came up on that screen during the opening credits, I felt like I'd just seen it engraved on the Stanley Cup.

We shot the Farpoint Station mall sequence on Stage 16 at Paramount, which was one of our three permanent sound stages. The bridge, ready room, and something else which is lost to my memory were on stage 6, while the corridors, Engineering, sickbay, and transporter room were all on stage 9. (We moved the contents of stage 6 to stage 8 in season two, and made the observation lounge a permanent set behind the bridge, but in the first season it was a redress of sickbay on stage 9.) Stage 16 became known, more or less affectionately, as Planet Hell, because it was a huge stage that was freezing cold in winter, miserably hot in

summer, and too big to climate control effectively (or not; maybe they just didn't want to spend the money on it).

When we shot our scene with Riker in the mall, Gates (who at the time was still known as “Cheryl”) and I noticed that the same background actors were crossing behind us numerous times during our scenes. We naively assumed that the audience would notice this, and it would disrupt their suspension of disbelief, so we mentioned our concerns to the first assistant director. He politely and gently pointed out to us, “If the audience is watching the people in the background instead of the actors in the foreground, losing their suspension of disbelief is the least of your problems.” Gates and I quietly decided to stick to our jobs for the rest of the episode.

THE BOTTOM LINE

While it is interesting in retrospect to see just how much the actors and writers worked to develop the characters over the remainder of the season — the most notable change being in Picard, who really comes off as an unlikable, charmless hardass in this episode — “Encounter at Farpoint” displays all the strengths and weaknesses inherent to a pilot episode. It successfully introduces our main characters and it lets the audience see what it can expect from the first season, for better and for worse: a lot of exposition and technobabble in place of character development and drama, some really spiffy visual effects, and a bunch of unsubtle, droning commentaries on life in the 20th century.

We obviously have a long way to go, and because I know we eventually got there, I can enjoy watching these first few awkward steps. But at the time, Trekkies who were hoping to see the *Star Trek* that they were used to from the '60s must have been disappointed.

FINAL GRADE: C–

"ENCOUNTER AT FARPOINT"

(PART 2)

104

ORIGINAL AIR DATE: SEPTEMBER 28, 1987

WRITTEN BY: D.C. FONTANA AND GENE RODDENBERRY

DIRECTED BY: COREY ALLEN

STARDATE: 41174.2

12|24

07|11

18|11

SYNOPSIS

The *Enterprise* is in orbit around planet Deneb IV, as an *Excelsior*-class starship (in this case the USS *Hood*) pulls away, giving us a sense of just how goddamn big this spaceship is.

It's a cool shot — so cool, in fact, we reused it about 900 times over the duration of the series, with different planets (or no planet at all) behind it.

Picard bids farewell to the *Hood* and walks onto the bridge, just in time for Q to appear on the main viewscreen. Worf, full of Klingon piss and blood wine vinegar, leaps to his feet and draws his phaser. Picard whacks Worf on the nose with a newspaper and tells him to put his toys away, because blowing a hole in the viewer isn't going to get rid of Q any faster. (It is at this very moment that the Big Dumb Stupid Old Worf drinking game is born, one of the few *Star Trek* drinking games to span multiple series and movies, joining the infamous "Transporter Has Capabilities Never Seen Before Or Since" and "Scene With The Character The Writers Really Hate But The Goddamn Suits Made Us Include" shot fests.) Q tells Picard that he needs to solve the Mystery of Farpoint within 24 hours, or he will be summarily judged by Captain Q's Kangaroo Court, where he faces death beneath an avalanche of ping pong balls.

Picard spends 11 of the 24 hours dictating a log entry, but finally Riker and Picard beam down to meet Groppler Zorn, and have some of those tasty-but-mysterious apples Riker keeps talking about. Before they can

leave, Picard introduces Riker to the ship's counselor. As she walks toward them, she projects some of her thoughts into Riker's mind, and calls him "Imzadi," which is Betazoid for "Backstory red herring that never really goes anywhere for seven years but finally pays off (sort of) in the last movie when Riker gets Worf's sloppy seconds, but let's not go there because that's gross."

They all hop into the turbolift, and Picard says, "Hey, I think it's great that you guys know each other, because it's important for my key officers to be familiar with each other's abilities." Troi says, "We are, sir," and Riker and Picard subtly high-five each other as the doors close.

After arriving on the planet, Riker, Troi, and Picard have their meeting with Groppler Zorn, who is really unhappy that Troi is around, because Betazoids can read minds. She reassures him that she's only half Betazoid, and can only sense strong emotions. Zorn totally puts on his "It's a good thing that I'm not hiding anything that might project strong emotions" face, which fools everyone for about half a nanosecond.

Starfleet wants Zorn's people, the Bandi, to build some other bases on other planets, since they did such a great job with Farpoint Station on Deneb IV, but Zorn says that Bandi don't like to leave their homeworld, and if Starfleet doesn't just back the hell off, he'll get on the phone with the Ferengi, and set up an alliance with them.

Troi looks like she's either just felt a great disturbance in the Force, ate some bad fish that's trying to come back up on her, or has some foreknowledge of the Ferengi's first appearance on the series. When pressed to disclose exactly what her problem is, she tears up and says she feels, "pain... pain... loneliness... terrible loneliness... despair."

Before we get a chance to make a single joke about it, Groppler Zorn totally freaks out. It gets really awkward and uncomfortable, so Picard decides that it's time to go. Groppler Zorn again threatens to take his football and go play with the Ferengi, so Picard says, "Good. I hope they find you as tasty as they did their last associates." Oh! PWNED IN THE FACE! Dude, those Ferengi must be so bad ass!

Back on the Enterprise, Riker heads into the holodeck to meet up with Data, who we learn can't whistle like a human, wants to be human, and is consequently called "Pinocchio" by Riker. The whole bit really wants to be sweet and a little funny, but it ends up being kind of lame.

Hey, speaking of things that are lame, here comes Wesley Crusher, who is so busy talking about how awesome the holodeck is, he falls right into some of its totally awesome and entirely realistic water, soaking his awesome brown sweater in the process. Luckily for Wes, he has a closet that is filled with those horrible things, and in the very next scene, we see he's changed into a spiffy green number. (Which, if I must be honest here, was the sweater I hated wearing the least. Yes, it was ugly as hell, but it was much more comfortable than the other ones, and was nearly baggy and lame enough to pass for something you'd wear if you were 14 in 1987 and had a huge crush on Debbie Gibson. Not that I ever did. The posters were just up there for show, man. And I did the autographs myself with the same marker I used to draw tanks for Ogre. Uh... I've over-shared again, haven't I?) Since it's been about 41 seconds since Wesley did something annoying, he asks his mom if she can get him a look at the bridge. Trekkies everywhere gasp in horror at his temerity, then ponder taking it back when he points out that "Captain Picard is a pain, isn't he?" It is the first and last time Trekkies will agree with something Wesley says until the appearance of Robin Lefler.

Back on the planet, Troi tries to get Riker to take her with him to examine the very empty, very secluded, very-good-for-pounding-out-a-quickie tunnels beneath the station. Riker is apparently uninterested in a little Farpoint Tunnel Delight, and sends her off with Geordi and Tasha while he stays back and shows Data more about becoming a Real Boy. Um. That's okay, Riker, none of us were all that interested in identifying with or envying you, anyway.

Down in the tunnels, Geordi's VISOR can't see anything, Tasha fights off a rape gang flashback, and Troi opens up her mind to find pain. Lots and lots of pain. Boy, there sure is a lot of pain, and it is painful. For Troi and the audience. Wow, let me tell you about the pain. Riker

and Data beam into the tunnels, and she tells them that there's also unhappiness, and terrible despair, from some sort of lifeform that isn't anything like them. Geordi's magic banana clip springs to life, and he reveals that he sees some mysterious building material that he doesn't recognize. Hey, as long as you're not moving the story forward at all, why not have a pod race?

Back on the *Enterprise*, we find Picard harrumphing about on the bridge. He's well and truly pissed off when the turbolift doors open, revealing Wesley Crusher, who thinks it's pretty cool to be standing right there, inside the turbolift, looking out at the bridge. I know this, because *I* thought it was just about the coolest thing in the world to get into that turbolift, have the doors close in front of me, and pretend, just for a moment, that it was real. When those doors opened and Wesley looked out at the bridge like he was Mama Cass being served the world's biggest ham sandwich, it wasn't acting. I honestly thought it was that cool. In all the years that I worked on *Star Trek*, even when I was a stupid teenager who wanted to be at the beach with his friends, instead of wearing a spacesuit and spouting technobabble, I always had an undeniable affection for the bridge.

Dr. Crusher steps around Wesley, and tells Picard that she's reporting for duty, and Wesley is her son. The audience isn't quite sure what's going on with her and Picard, but there's clearly some history between them. Will anyone have the courage to write even one word of slash fiction about them? Oh, we can only hope. She tells Picard that he hasn't seen Wesley since Wesley was a baby, that one time Picard brought his dead father's body back. AWK-ward. Oh, and totally unrelated to that, maybe the fatherless Wesley could just walk out onto the bridge for a minute.

Picard tells Wesley, with some difficulty, that he knew Wesley's father and... okay, all snark and silliness aside, this is actually a wonderful moment, carried entirely by Patrick, because I was just too young and inexperienced as an actor to really know what to do with it. We can see him look at Wesley like he's trying to see (or maybe trying to not see) his father, and we can see Picard struggling with the memory of his

good friend Jack Crusher and his role in Jack's death. I guess it's okay that I didn't do much more than I did, because I (and Wesley) really didn't know how to react, but watching this scene for this recap, I really wish I'd done more than just stand there, looking at the pretty lights, while the grown-ups did some actual acting.

Picard then invites Wesley to have a walk around the bridge and take a seat in the Captain's chair. Hey, what could possibly go wrong? Picard shows Wesley how his chair does all sorts of neat-o things, like log entries, and LCARS stuff, while Wesley listens, quietly and respectfully.

Oh. Wait. No he doesn't. He keeps interrupting Picard to show off that he knows everything about the panels, like where the backup CONN and OPS controls are, and that it has a compass in the stock and this thing that tells time! Wesley then shows us *exactly* what could go wrong, when he pushes buttons he shouldn't push and tells Picard that there's a perimeter alert. This is where the scene falls apart: Wesley stammers an apology (as an actor, I stupidly telegraph everything that I'm going to do before I do it), and Picard orders both of them off the bridge. Worf tells him that there's a perimeter alert (hey, at least he didn't try to shoot Wesley with his phaser) and Dr. Crusher pours a nice big cup of gasoline on the Kill Wesley fire when she sasses Picard: "As my son tried to tell you! Nyahh! Nyahh!" Thanks for that, mom.

The perimeter alert, it turns out, is the result of a huge spaceship arriving and taking up orbit next to the *Enterprise*. It won't respond to any messages, so Picard orders the away team to return, and calls Groppler Zorn. While Picard talks with him, the UFO pulls right up next to the *Enterprise*. It's 12 times the size of the *Galaxy*-class starship, which in 20th-century measurement terms is reallyfuckinghuge. Zorn says he has no idea what the ship is, but whatever it is, it scans the *Enterprise* and starts blasting the Bandi city with the same pretty purple light.

Most of the away team beams back to the *Enterprise*, leaving Riker and Data down on the planet. As the UFO continues to blast away at the Bandi city, Picard tells them to grab Zorn and beam him up to the *Enterprise*, because that dude totally knows something about the

mystery of Farpoint Station. (He totally stole the file off the teacher's desk when Q wasn't looking.) Then he tells Tasha to lock phasers onto the UFO, just in case. You know, he's actually doing a good job handling these things, making logical and difficult decisions while under a not insignificant amount of pressure... and then Q shows up to pee all over everything.

Down on the planet, Riker and Data find a rather terrified Groppler Zorn, who is pretty clearly hiding some clues to the Mystery of Farpoint Station. (You know, it's too bad that this didn't happen like, five episodes from now, because Wesley would have totally solved the mystery before the second commercial and none of this would even be necessary.) Anyway, Groppler Zorn is whisked away by a familiar-looking purple transporter beam and Data and Riker return to the *Enterprise*.

On the bridge, Picard and Q have another argument, very similar to the one we've seen three times already, where Q is like a stupid Internet Troll; he makes some strawman accusation against Picard, Picard refutes his argument with logic and reason, and Q just changes the terms of the argument, all the while enjoying the attention he's getting. But does anyone create **alt.q.die.die.die**? No, of course not. Life is so fucking unfair.

Finally, Q leaves, and Picard leaps into action... by having a leisurely chat with Dr. Crusher. Wait. What? It's a good scene, and it does a lot for their relationship in just a few pages, but it's so awkwardly placed in the screenplay, it feels very jarring and out of place, like this was a scene that they wanted to have *somewhere* in the pilot, but no one could figure out quite where to put it.

Riker takes an away team to the mystery ship, and they land in a place that's very dark, where they could be eaten by a Grue. Actually, it looks just like the corridors underneath Farpoint Station, but nobody bothers to comment on that, except everyone watching the show at home. Troi senses that a very powerful being is very pissed off, and then senses that Groppler Zorn is nearby and in great... wait for it... pain. Zorn is floating in some sort of glowing cylinder, and when they

blast it to rescue him, the ship shimmies and shakes and glows. Picard tries to beam them home, but Q won't let him until Picard promises to do whatever Q wants. Picard agrees, and the away team appears on the bridge, accompanied by Groppler Zorn. Troi tells Picard that the ship is not just a ship, but is also a living creature, and Picard solves the Mystery of Farpoint Station, just like that.

As a reward, Picard gets a certificate that he can print out on his Applewriter and show to his friends. He also gets to watch the UFO transform into a really beautiful creature that looks like a cross between the mothership from *Close Encounters* and an intergalactic space jellyfish.

The *Enterprise* sends an energy beam down to the space station, which transforms into another intergalactic space jellyfish that flies up into orbit, and high-fives the other intergalactic space jellyfish. Troi senses a feeling of great joy and gratitude from both of them, which is a nice break from all the pain.

Picard then turns to Q, and totally smacks him down. Like the pathetic little Internet Troll he is, Q makes some blustery arguments, but leaves with his tail between his legs. Then, in a dramatic close up, Picard delivers one of my favorite lines of any pilot in the history of television, "*Let's see what's out there. Engage.*"

QUOTABLE DIALOGUE

Q

It is an unknown, Captain. Isn't that enough?

PICARD

If you'd earned that uniform you're wearing, you'd know that the unknown is what brings us out here.

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

“...which uses high-resolution multispectral imaging sensors!”
—Wesley, totally showing off for the Captain that he knows how the main viewer works. What a dork.

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

When I walked out of the turbolift and down the ramp on the bridge, taking it all in for the first time, looking around like it's the coolest thing in the world, it required a little bit of acting on my part. Even though I loved that set, when we filmed that scene, everything that I would have been looking at was pulled out to make way for lights, crew, equipment, and the camera dolly. I wasn't helped by a very well-meaning director who, in an effort to extract maximum wonder from me kept hollering, “Picard controls the sky, man! HE! CONTROLS! THE! SKY!”

“Yeah, I know he does, dude, but what I'm seeing right now is a grip scratching his ass, and I have to be honest with you: it's not all that impressive, and you're kind of distracting me. Also, can someone get me a real costume, not a collection of sweaters that Goodwill turned down?”

And here's something really cool, that was a practical necessity when we shot, but I think is an equally awesome visual bit that many audience members may have missed the first time around. When Riker and Data are walking in the Holodeck, talking about Data's service record, they walk behind a large moss-covered mound when Data says, “Understood sir, prejudice is very human.” After that line, the mound crossfades into another mound, the actors emerge, and the scene continues. We had to do this because on location that day (at a place called Ferndell, in Griffith Park) they ran out of space (I can't remember if it was the camera or the actors who ran out of physical space) and they had to reset the action. They cut, moved to a different part of the park, and covered the reset with the crossfade. In any other case I think it would distract the audience and break the suspension of disbelief, but in this case, I think it actually reinforces the reality of the show, because that's exactly what the holodeck would do if it was real.

THE BOTTOM LINE

I've talked with just about everyone from the cast about our first season, and they all told me that they didn't think the show would last more than a year. Knowing that, it's pretty remarkable to see how everyone does the very best they can with what they were given. With the benefit of hindsight, and the reassurance that we will eventually settle into our characters and deliver episodes like "The Big Goodbye" and "Heart of Glory" before the season is over, it's easier to forgive some of the obvious growing pains that plagued us throughout our first season, especially right here at the absolute beginning, when everyone involved was literally going where no one had gone before. I was lucky to be so young: I just got to enjoy how cool it was to be part of *Star Trek*, after a childhood spent pretending the schoolyard playground was a different planet each day, and the jungle gym was the *Enterprise*.

As I said in part one, this *is* a pilot episode, and though it doesn't really hold up very well (mostly because it wasn't all that great to begin with) it's still a lot of fun to watch it and see what we kept and what we changed as the show evolved. And I don't care how much you were annoyed by all of our shortcomings in this one; when Picard says, "Let's see what's out there," it's hard not to be excited for next week.

Final Grade: C+

"THE NAKED NOW"

10|19

19|04

05|14

16|14

ORIGINAL AIR DATE: OCTOBER 5, 1987

WRITTEN BY: JOHN D.F. BLACK AND J. MICHAEL BINGHAM

DIRECTED BY: PAUL LYNCH

STARDATE: 41209.2

SYNOPSIS

The *Enterprise* is on her way to rendezvous with a science vessel called *Tsiolkovsky*. *Tsiolkovsky* is collecting data from a supergiant star, which is about to collapse into a white dwarf.

When the *Enterprise* arrives, the crew discovers that something isn't right on board the *Tsiolkovsky*. A woman's voice broadcasts from the ship, "Well, hello, *Enterprise*, welcome. I hope you have a lot of pretty boys on board, because I'm willing and waiting. In fact, we're having a real blowout here."

A real blowout indeed! The crew hears that great big sucking sound Ross Perot will mention years later, during the NAFTA debate, but it takes the crew members out into space, instead of jobs out of America.

Geordi, Tasha, Riker, and Data make a quick trip to the *Tsiolkovsky*, where they confirm that the crew had a sexy party, ending with all of them in various stages of undress and death. As Geordi examines a sonic shower, a frozen woman falls into his arms. Geordi doesn't know it, but he's just been infected with the *Tsiolkovsky* disease. He also doesn't know it, but this is the closest he'll get to holding a woman until season three. Unfortunately, when he finally does, she'll be just as frigid.

When they return to the *Enterprise*, Geordi is clearly in Bat Country. While Doctor Crusher tries to figure out what's wrong with him, he begins to spread the infection around the ship.

One of Geordi's first stops is to visit his good pal Wesley Crusher, who shows off one of his science projects (a mini tractor beam) and one of his toys, a device that lets Wesley recreate speech from anyone on the ship. Any doubt that Wesley is a complete weenie is removed when we learn that he uses this device to have Captain Picard say things like, "Welcome to the bridge, Wesley," instead of having Counselor Troi say things like, "Smack my ass, Wesley, I'm a naughty, naughty bitch." To entirely erase any lingering questions, Wesley spends the rest of the scene whining that the captain won't let him on the bridge, even though Wesley is so obviously smart cool. (On a personal note, I'd like to thank the writers for making such a great first impression with my character. In addition to this spectacular scene, I also got to say lines like, "So you mean I'm drunk? I feel strange, but also good!")

Geordi eventually gets tired of Wesley harshing his mellow and takes off for a room where he heard there's a wicked rave happening, but not before he shares his infection with Wesley. This is not as gay as it sounds, not that there's anything wrong with that.

Tasha is the next to be infected and visits Troi's quarters, where she grabs some slutty clothes. Troi inexplicably doesn't sense that Tasha is drunk and horny, probably because her emotion-sensing-thingy is all out of whack from all the pain in Farpoint. Suitably attired, Tasha heads out into the ship to whore it up. Nice.

While Riker and Data try to figure out where they've heard of a disease like this before, Trekkies all across America scream "EPISODE NUMBER SEVEN *THE NAKED TIME*!" and Wesley uses his clever magic talking box to gain access to Engineering. He transforms his science project from a tractor beam into a repulsor beam and hooks it into the ship's power supply to lock out all those totally lame adults. Wesley then lives out his fantasies of, uh, being the supreme nerd on the ship by broadcasting a faked message from Picard through the ship's intercom. The message cleverly turns control of the *Enterprise* over to "acting captain Wesley Crusher." Wesley activates the comm and thanks him. It's possible that **alt.wesley.crusher.die.die.die** was created at this exact moment, but the historical record is in some dispute. Once inside

the room, Wesley assumes control of the engines and lets his buddy Assistant Engineer Jim Shimoda inside to party.

The next act showcases the drunken antics of the characters, including Data's seduction by Tasha, which remains one of the most memorable moments in *TNG's* history, and Troi's unsuccessful seduction of Riker, which results in infecting him, infecting Dr. Crusher, and eventually infecting the Captain, after a rather uncomfortable incident in his ready room, where Picard does a Butthead impression in the middle of a line. I'm not kidding, it's right there on the DVD.

But before he is infected, Captain Picard tries to reason with Wesley, who is as reasonable as, well, as a drunken fourteen-year-old nerd who is in control of a starship can be. Picard tells Wesley that he needs to chill and give him the keys, so he can lock a tractor beam onto the *Tsiolkovsky* and—

That's as far as he gets. Wesley excitedly tells him, "Tractor beams are my specialty, Skipper," and turns off the comm. "*Skipper?*" *Did Wesley really say "Skipper?"* thinks everyone watching the show, and every Trekkie in the world wants to kill Wesley, as dramatic music swells and the star (which I believe is designated "Plot Device Delta Sigma Eight" in the Encyclopedia Galactica) begins to collapse. Worf says that a big chunk of the star's core will hit the *Enterprise* in fourteen minutes. (Wait. Stars have cores? I always thought they were balls of gas undergoing constant nuclear reactions. Man, I wish I was as smart as Wesley, so I knew for sure! Luckily for us, I know someone who *is* as smart as Wesley, so I asked him. Ladies and gentlemen, my friend Phil Plait:

"Hey kids! Actual real-life astronomer Phil Plait here. Yeah, it turns out Worf didn't mishear his commlink to the Astrophysics Department on the Enterprise. At least, not *all* of it. First, stars do in fact have cores: it's the region deep in the heart of the star where nuclear wessels^h^h^h reactions take place. The energy generated by these reactions is what powers the star. That energy leaks out of the core and gets dumped into the outer layers of the star, and eventually leaves the surface as light that we can see.

“When a massive star goes supernova, oddly enough the core *collapses* and forms a neutron star or black hole. This generates a huge blast of energy [I’ve skipped a few steps, but what do you expect in a parenthetical?] which blows up the outer layers of the star, causing the explosion itself.

“So stars do have cores, but it’s the exploding *outer* parts of the star that would cause the crew of the Big-E such grief. Maybe Worf had too much W’ax in his ears and misheard the scientists. And Wil’s right, too: stars are made of gas, so why is there a glowing white-hot chunk of *solid* material headed for them? I’m guessing the explosion distorted subspace, compressing an already over-dense region in the star’s convective zone which in turn instigated a phase change to solid over the usual rarified plasma.

“But that’s just me.”

Thanks, Phil! Science is cool!)

This is bad, and the *Enterprise* really needs to get out of the way, but she isn’t going anywhere until someone can wrest control of the ship from Wesley. The chief engineer finally cuts the power to Wesley’s repulser beam, granting access to what is apparently the only console on the entire *Enterprise* that can control the engines. However, in a shocking display of intelligent starship design, the Utopia Planitia Fleet Yards have put a bunch of isolinear optical chips (which are apparently fundamental to the control of the ship’s engines) under a small bit of glass where they can be easily removed by drunken engineering assistants who have been granted access to the engineering controls by drunken teenage nerds with delusions of grandeur. (I can’t *believe* they never tested for that scenario in the *Enterprise* D closed Beta.) The ship won’t move until the isolinear optical chips can be put back into place, a job that the chief engineer says will take several hours. She’s no Scotty, so there’s no instant follow-up promise to cure the problem in just a few minutes. Everyone is in some real peril, and not the good Castle Anthrax kind, either. Luckily, there’s an annoying kid who is smarter

than everyone else — even while drunk — who points out that Data could do it, because he’s a robot and robots are, like, fast ’n’ shit.

Data comes down to Engineering, gives Wesley *Dick’s Picks Volume 28*, and begins replacing the chips. Sadly, Data informs Riker that it will take precisely one minute longer than they have before the core fragment hits the ship to return the chips to their slots. He earns an expository dialog merit badge when he says, “If we just had *one minute* more, sir!”

Back in Sickbay, Dr. Crusher and Captain Picard figure out how to cure the polywater intoxication from *Tsiolkovsky* seconds before they could get into some serious spacesuit dry humping. They test the antidote on Geordi, who thankfully comes down very quickly and calmly, and Picard races to Engineering after they hypospray each other, which is as thick with sexual tension and innuendo as a mutual hypospraying will ever be on prime-time television.

Once Picard arrives in Engineering, Riker earns a merit badge of his own when he tells him, “We’re not going to make it, Captain. If only we had *a minute or so more!*” Yes. If only. Do you think they’ll find some way to get that *one extra minute*?

Of course they do. Wesley, who continues to be smarter than everyone else, figures out that he can modify the ship’s tractor beam the same way he modified his model tractor beam to act as a repulser beam, launching the *Tsiolkovsky* into harm’s way, giving Data exactly the *one minute more* he needs, and saving the day in the process.

Everything returns to normal, and Riker suggests that Wesley be mentioned in a log entry. Picard reluctantly thanks the annoying nerd (and, pointedly, his science teacher) for helping save his ship, and returns to the bridge. In one of the final scenes, Tasha stalks over to Data and says, “It never happened!” Trekkies across America wish she was talking to them, so they could say the same thing about the last hour of their lives.

QUOTABLE DIALOG

TASHA

You are fully functional, aren't you?

DATA

Of course.

TASHA

How fully?

DATA

In every way, of course. I am programmed in... multiple techniques; a wide variety of pleasuring.

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

"Come off the main lead, split off at the force activator, then reversing power leads through the force activator, repulsor beam powers against *Tsiolkovsky*!" —Wesley, drunkenly explaining how he'll save the ship.

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

Paul Lynch, who directed this episode, directed several episodes of *TNG* over the years. He was an Englishman who was always extraordinarily wound up, red-faced, sweating profusely, and infamous for saying "Energy! Energy! Energy! And, and, and, and, action!" before takes. He did this before every take, regardless of whether the scene actually called for "Energy! Energy! Energy!" or not. During production of a later episode, in a scene when Brent had the first line, Paul did his "and, and!" thing. Instead of starting the scene, Brent looked at Paul, and said, very seriously, "Can I get another 'and' please?" to which Paul enthusiastically replied, Yes! AND AND AND! ACTION!"

THE BOTTOM LINE

There's just no gentle way to put this: it's a really awful episode, especially considering that we all knew that we were standing on the shoulders of giants.

Whether it was the worst episode ever or not, though, probably depended on the viewer's expectations. Trekkies who were looking for reasons to hate *The Next Generation* found plenty. The cinematography was very dark, and heavy use of wide angles didn't present a very favorable view of the actors. It's essentially a rehash of "The Naked Time," and not a very good one. (Jonathan Frakes once said that he felt "totally ashamed" by it, and that it was one of the worst things we ever did on *TNG*. That's really saying something, considering episodes like "The Last Outpost" and "Symbiosis" are in our very near future.) And then there's that whole "annoying smartypants kid who takes over and then helps save the ship" situation. Thank God they quit doing *that* in a hurry. Oh, wait...

Viewers who were more patient and forgiving, though, could see flashes of things they came to love watching (and we loved creating) over the years: Data's entertaining attempts to understand the human condition, the complex relationship between Picard and Beverly, and the frequent tributes to the original series. The show clearly has a long way to go, but Patrick Stewart is strong and capable, and the rest of the cast isn't too shabby, either.

I recently talked with Brent Spiner about "The Naked Now," and we agreed that it was a bad decision to air a show this early in the series where none of us are acting like ourselves; we barely know who we are, and the audience is even more uncertain. I don't know if airing it any later in the series would have made the episode any better, but even — I can't believe I'm going to say this — "Code of Honor" or "Justice" would have been a stronger choice.

FINAL GRADE: C—

"CODE OF HONOR"

19|15

24|22

20|23

01|11

ORIGINAL AIR DATE: OCTOBER 12, 1987

WRITTEN BY: KATHARYN POWERS AND MICHAEL BARON

DIRECTED BY: RUSS MAYBERRY

STARDATE: 41235.25

SYNOPSIS

The inhabitants of the Federation planet Styris IV had the fish for dinner, leading to an outbreak of deadly Anchilles fever. With Styris IV's fate in the hands of Acting President Ted Striker and his intern Elaine, the *Enterprise* pays a visit to the only planet in the entire galaxy that can provide a vaccine, Ligon II.

Picard meets with the Ligonian leader Lutan and his little buddy Hagon when they beam up into the ship's cargo bay. On the way to meet them, Troi and Riker tell Picard that the Ligonians are a proud people with a very structured society. Picard thanks them for *waiting until they're in the turbolift, going to the meeting* to tell him this important information, instead of bogging down the pre-meeting briefing with it. When they get to the cargo bay, we discover that the Ligonians are also descended directly from a 1940s pulp novel set in deepest, darkest Africa, and that they are amused to discover that the *Enterprise's* security chief is a woman.

Oh good! We're going to be racist *and* sexist in this one!

Lutan has brought a sample of the vaccine to give Picard, but when Hagon tries to hand it off, Tasha stops him. When Hagon tries to give her the business, she hands him his ass. When Tasha hands Picard the vaccine sample, Troi tells him that apologizing would be a sign of weakness, so Picard decides to really rub their noses in it with an invitation to the Observation Lounge for one of his patented seventeen-page scenes about nothing.

Nah, I'm just kidding. He actually gives Lutan an ancient Chinese horse statue as a gesture of friendship, because his culture is so similar to ancient, feudal China. (Man, the Sung dynasty really built their shit to last, didn't they?) Lutan tells Picard that, though they're not as technologically advanced as the Federation — well, except for the whole having-their-own-transporter thing, and having the same cool videophones as the *Enterprise*, and of course digital watches — they can still call the shots, because they have the vaccine and the most sparkly turbans in this part of the galaxy. He tells Picard that if he respects their customs, they'll totally be BFF, even after they all go home from Summer Camp. Picard starts a Slow Clap, a cheesy power ballad begins, and John Hughes cashes another check.

Everything is going so well, Lutan sends his homeboys back to the 'hood — whoops! Sorry. I mean, back to the planet — and asks to check out the holodeck, which he's heard is used for officer training.

Picard responds with what will be, until Wesley describes Worf's penis in "Justice," the most unintentionally dirty line of the season:

"It's also used for other things. Perhaps Commander Riker and Counselor Troi can demonstrate for you."

Lutan picks up on this and says, "Hey, that sounds great, but I'm not really interested in a sword fight. How about letting Tasha show it off?"

Tasha says, "I'd like to do it."

Lieutenant Butthead says, "Huh huh huh. Yeah, she said 'do it.'"

Ensign Beavis adds, "Yeah!" And they head out to the holodeck, where everyone is disappointed to learn that the program running isn't Debbie Does Deneb, but Enter the Ninja.

Tasha spars for a minute with a computer-generated stuntman, kicking its ass as soundly as she kicked Hagon's in the cargo bay. Hagon

demonstrates how unimpressed he is by attempting to spar with it himself. He is instantly thrown to the ground, and Worf files a union grievance.

(If you'll allow me to stop snarking on this for just a moment: this scene is really cool. The holodeck was one of the truly awesome concepts on *TNG*, and one of those things that nerds who like to write their own technical manuals — like me, for instance — really enjoyed. Tasha's basic description of the technology is simple and not nearly as expository as it could be, and Jessie Lawrence Ferguson's reaction to the whole thing is honest and connects with the audience nicely. Also, Tasha's martial arts look real because she and Jonathan spent one or two lunch breaks a week taking actual training, so their characters could use it in the show. And before you ask, no, I didn't take annoying nerd lessons on my lunch breaks. I was already a level 29 master of those particular skills, thank you very much, with substantial bonuses from the Awkward Teen feat. I spent my free time rehearsing lame dialogue until I could read it without wincing. With the writing in the first season, I didn't have time for much of anything else.)

Lutan is very impressed with Tasha's abilities. He's so impressed, in fact, that it gets a little creepy, and we wonder if she's going to be using a doll later to show the captain where Lutan gave her the Bad Touch.

They return to the cargo deck to say their tearful goodbyes. Lutan gives Picard a high five, but before Picard can catch him on the rebound, Lutan grabs Tasha and they beam away.

Picard sends the ship to red alert and goes back to the bridge, where he tries to contact Lutan, who is totally ignoring him. That shit don't fly with Picard, so he shoots a whole bunch of photon torpedoes at the planet to shock and awe the Ligonians. Lutan must be in a parking garage or something, because he still doesn't answer his cell. Picard asks Troi if she thinks they'll hurt Tasha, and Troi says they're probably just curious, but, in the case of Lutan, she felt "other needs."

Lieutenant Butthead says, "He wants to do it."

Ensign Beavis adds, “Yeah! Yeah!”

Troi tells Picard that the two animated characters are correct, but she also felt something extra-special from Lutan: something like avarice or ambition.

Picard says, “Again, allow me to thank you for not delivering this important information to me when it would have been useful. If you’re interested in a career change, I hear *Lost* needs writers who aren’t wedded to that whole ‘answers and explanations’ thing.”

Data adds that the Ligonians respect patience. Ensign Ed Gruberman says, “Yeah, yeah, patience; how long will that take?” But Picard decides to wait it out, because if there’s something *TNG* is really good at in the first season, it’s spending pages and pages boldly going nowhere. Unlike some later episodes, however, we skip over that part here.

A full day goes by, and they still haven’t heard anything from the planet. Picard is understandably concerned about the welfare of his chief of security, so it’s the perfect time for the doctor to pay him a visit and pester him to allow Wesley to come hang out on the bridge.

You know, because the last time Wesley was on the bridge everything went so well, and in the middle of a crisis is the perfect time to — OH SWEET JESUS FUCKING CHRIST WHAT THE HELL WAS WRONG WITH THE WRITERS?!

Sorry. Sorry. I got a little worked up there. Let me try again.

Doctor Crusher visits Picard and tells him that the plague can kill millions of people, and while the vaccine is awesome and everything, she can’t replicate it on the *Enterprise*. (In a devastating blow to technobabble enthusiasts everywhere, she never explains why, so we’re forced to assume that she just doesn’t want to infect her sickbay with ancient Sony DRM. Which, to be fair, is totally reasonable.) She’s annoyed that Picard isn’t as melodramatic as she is about the whole thing, so she changes the subject to her son, Wesley, because if there’s

one thing that can take Picard's mind off his problems, it's kids. Wesley has been ordered to stay off the bridge by the captain, but really really really wants to come hang out with the adults. Also, he's kinda sitting on the turbolift (holding the Door Open button for the last three minutes, I guess) and waiting, so maybe Picard could just let him, you know, come hang out.

Picard says, "Are you out of your fucking mind? My chief of security got kidnapped and taken down to the planet and we haven't heard from her in over a day, you idiot! Of all the times in the world to drag your annoying little wunderkind up here, you picked now? What are you smoking, and why didn't you bring me any? Get out of here, and take Mary Sue with you!"

Nah, I'm just kidding again. He invites Wesley to sit at ops. Next to Geordi. In the middle of a major crisis.

My god, a lot of the hate mail I used to get suddenly makes a whole lot of sense. I have never been more grateful that there wasn't liveblogging in 1987 than I am right now.

Wesley, decked out in a smashing green cable-knit sweater and smart grey stretch pants, takes a seat at ops. While he puts his hands in his lap to hide his boner, Data tells Picard that the Ligonians live by a strict code of honor, and what Lutan did is similar to an ancient Native American ritual known as counting coup. Lutan considers his kidnapping a brave and bold act — almost as brave and bold as portraying an offensive, 1940s pulp stereotype in 1987.

Lutan, having finally charged his cell phone battery, calls the *Enterprise* to see if Picard is impressed by his daring display of manliness. Picard tries to get up in his grill, but Riker and Data tell him to ask nicely for Lutan to give Tasha back.

Picard, certain that nothing can be as humiliating as letting Wesley hump the ops console, says, "Would you please, pretty, pretty please

with sugar on top, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, let Tasha come home? Please.”

Lutan, impressed by Picard’s eloquence, says they should come over to his house, where they’ll play some wicked Street Fighter II before he lets them take Tasha back home. Riker gets really excited, and says that he totally knows all of Dhalsim’s moves, so he should lead the away team. Troi and Data tell him that, even though he’s wicked good with Yoga Fire, they have to send Picard down this time because the Ligonians will respect his authoritah more than Riker’s. Riker agrees, but says that if Picard gets killed on the planet, he’s going to put him on report. Ah, what a wacky bit of gallows humor! Everyone has a good laugh, except Wesley, who asks if anyone has a towel he can borrow.

When they get to the planet, Lutan introduces his lovely wife Yareena, who is seriously rockin’ the Rick James hairdo and wants to party all the time.

Picard acknowledges that she is quite the Superfreak, but he really wants to see Tasha. Lutan relents, and we learn a little bit more about Ligonian culture, and the importance they place on honor and ritual. If you’ll allow me to stop snarking again for a moment, this is also a decent scene — grading, as always, on a steep curve — where we see Picard’s diplomacy and strength on full display. Oh! Snark back on: It’s too bad he can’t seem to access this particular skill when dealing with Doctor Crusher and Wesley. Maybe he constantly fails his save vs. hot redheads with boobies. Thank you. Snark off. The writing in this scene isn’t horrible, and the acting is quite good, so what could be painful exposition is instead a chance for the characters to develop while we all learn something together. Also, this is great misdirection. As we’ll see in a few minutes, Lutan isn’t interested in counting coup at all, and actually just wants all of Yareena’s money and power. (Hey, it’s just like John Kerry! Wait. McCain? Tell you what: apply your own politics, and have a good laugh at the other side.)

Tasha shows up, and though she is clearly unhappy with the whole “hey, I was just kidnapped by the 7*UP guy” thing, she’s obviously okay.

Which may explain why, even though she has her damn communicator on, she never once tried to contact the *Enterprise* so she could be safely beamed away.

After a few tense moments of delicate diplomacy, Picard and Lutan agree to chill out until they can have a little party, where he swears to Zombie Jesus he'll give up Tasha and the vaccine.

The party is a high class function. Food is served, and Picard's stone cold munchin'. Tasha walks in at the end of the show, and sits next to Lutan, who's sportin' a really sweet 'fro. She's dressed in yellow, she says "Hello, beam me the hell out of here you fine fellow." Picard does his best to incite the groove, but Lutan won't let him bust a move.

When the banquet is over, with great dignity and grace, Picard follows Ligonian custom, and asks — politely and with great humility — for Lutan to let him take Tasha back to the *Enterprise*.

The thing is, Lutan isn't all that interested in letting Tasha go, because he's got Jungle Fever.

Yareena thinks Mandingo is a little out of line, so she says, "Hey! I have a great idea! Since *TNG* is only three episodes old, and we've only rehashed one original series episode so far, let's do it again! A show of hands: who here has seen 'Amok Time'?"

Picard says that he is so not cool with a fight to the death, and Lutan delivers the most quotable line of the episode, and maybe the first half (at least) of the first season: "Then you shall have no treaty, no vaccine, and no Lieutenant Yar!"

A little while later, Tasha assures Picard that she's going to kick Yareena's ass from her head down to her toenails (down to her feet!). Picard isn't entirely comfortable with this freaky scene, so he has a friendly "God, women are soooooo lame" talk with Lutan and Hagon, where he discovers that Lutan's a deadbeat, totally leeching off of Yareena. Lutan is pretty proud of the little situation he's created for himself: If

Tasha wins the kal-if-fee, he inherits Yareena's money and her power; if Yareena wins, he still gets to keep it, and her, and everything will be crisp and clean, with no caffeine. Ha ha ha ha ha.

Back on the *Enterprise*, we find Geordi giving himself a shave. Data drops by to see if he can tell Geordi a joke. It's not funny, but the scene is actually quite charming and gives us a hint of the relationship that will eventually grow between the two of them. I don't think it's a coincidence that the real-life affinity that was already growing between Brent and LeVar was mirrored by their characters.

Riker orders them down to the planet, where they meet up with Picard. The Captain wants them to check out the Ligonian weapons, so they can figure out how Tasha would use them in combat against Yareena.

Data says, "Would it not be more appropriate for them to fight with pillows? Or perhaps a tickle fight?"

"Sorry, Mr. Data," Picard says, "we're not on cable."

Data says that the whole thing seems like a joke. We're not sure if he's talking about the fight, the script, or if he's looked into the future and watched me write this part of the recap. Whatever it is, Picard agrees with him, and then they have a talk about the Prime Directive that isn't nearly as annoying as it could be, mostly because Picard says, "I'm sorry, this is becoming a speech," about two seconds after the audience begins to wonder why he's making a speech. Sadly, the writers will completely forget this important insight and abandon its resulting self-restraint for the rest of the season.

Meanwhile, Tasha tries to talk Yareena out of the duel. She tells her that she doesn't care about Lutan, and is only fighting for the vaccine, but Yareena is really into her deadbeat husband, and tells Tasha that she is going to claw her fucking eyes out if she has to. Yeah, it's a little harsh, but Tasha's never had him, never will, and Yareena would like to keep it that way. She storms out of Tasha's quarters as the Temptations sing, "Woah oh oh oh oh oh oh."

Tasha meets up with Picard and the gang, and gives them the bad news as some Ligonians drop off her weapon: the unholy metallic marriage of a sea urchin and a pirate's hook, lovingly covered with a deadly poison. It's called a glavin, provided by our good friends at Frink Industries, who remind you that the glavin is perfect for the nice lady with the poisonous spines and the sharp hook and hey hey hey it hurts because it's deadly.

So, Tasha and Yareena are finally ready to fight, but the arena isn't ready, so they settle for some playground equipment surrounded by deadly beams of light (that, if my memory hasn't been too dulled by Arrogant Bastard Ale over the years, were created with fluorescent tubes, one of which exploded during filming and nearly caused some serious injuries). The two of them go at it with the ferocity of a Women in Prison movie, but before they can get to the sexy shower scene, Tasha kind of kills Yareena. Whoops.

But not really! She falls on Yareena's corpse, and the two of them are beamed up to the *Enterprise*, where Doctor Crusher gives her the old McCoy maneuver and brings her back to life with a hypospray.

Meanwhile, on the planet, Lutan is a little upset that Tasha isn't around to become his new wife, until Hagon reminds him that he now has all of Yareena's money and power, and probably doesn't need to be all tied down to just one lady, if you get my drift. He also agrees to give Starfleet all the vaccine they need, and Picard shows his gratitude by beaming them all back up to the *Enterprise*, where Lutan discovers that, contrary to what he saw on the planet, Yareena isn't quite ready to go on the cart.

This really unravels his turban, and he declares that there will be "no treaty, and NO VACCINE!"

Noticing that her husband is less than thrilled to see her still alive, Yareena stands up, and tells Lutan that because she technically died, they're not married any more. She's taking her money and her land, and giving it all to Hagon, who will be her number one. As a consolation prize, though, Lutan can be her number two.

Lieutenant Butthead says, “Huh huh huh, you said ‘number two.’”

Ensign Beavis replies, “Hey, let’s go check out the poop deck! Yeah! Yeah! I am Cornholio! AHHHHH!!!”

(I can’t believe I kept that joke going all the way until the end. Go me.)

QUOTABLE DIALOG:

“Then you shall have no treaty, no vaccine, and no Lieutenant Yar!”
—Lutan, layin’ it down.

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

“It reads similar to early Starfleet efforts but uses the Heglenian shift to convert energy and matter in different... which is actually not important at this time.” —Data, explaining how the Ligonian transporter works, which is really not important at this time, or any other.

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

The sad truth is that I don’t recall much of anything about this episode, other than how unhappy everyone was to be doing it. In fact, until I watched it for the first time in twenty-one years for this review, I’d completely forgotten that I was even in it.

I’ve read that the Ligonians were not explicitly described as entirely African American in the script, but were cast that way at the behest of director Russ Mayberry, who apparently went on to be so offensively racist and treated the actors so poorly that Gene fired him before the episode was completed and handed the directing responsibilities over to then-First AD Les Landau. [Citation Needed] (Ironically, Mayberry went on to direct quite a few episodes of *In the Heat of the Night*, which proves that he either learned something from this experience or that he’s really good at directing stories about racists.)

However, in place of my nonexistent personal memories, I'd like to share this, from Twitter:

wilw: Attempting to review Code of Honor for TV Squad.

Please send anti-nausea medication.

Etherlad: @wilw No! You will have no anti-nausea medication, no treaty, no Lt. Yar, and NO VACCINE.

Gudlyf: @wilw Guinness: the cure-all

Wordwill: @wilw Is that the episode with the primitive wannabe "Amok Time" battle with poisoned Mega Man gloves? Totally forgot that one existed.

Angiek42: @wilw Sweet Zombie Jesus! Good luck!

Matthancocknz: @wilw Garrett Wang tried to watch TNG several times when he worked on VOY. Somehow, the episode was always CoH and he always turned it off.

Wordwill: @wilw Please let me go back to forgetting it.

THE BOTTOM LINE

"Code of Honor" is not an especially good episode, but it's not as overtly racist as I recalled. I mean, it's certainly not as racist as "Angel One" is sexist, and if the Ligonians hadn't been arbitrarily entirely African American, it wouldn't even have been an issue. (Although someone definitely owes the Sung dynasty an apology.)

The premise isn't all that bad, really: the captain has to deal carefully with an alien civilization's complex and unique code of laws and personal conduct so he can save an important officer, as well as millions of people on Planet Get The Story Started. Lutan's duplicity is an interesting and unexpected plot twist, and the way they solve Yareena's death is clever.

The episode had promise, but it just couldn't overcome one of science fiction's most overused cliches, even though Patrick Stewart's and Jessie Lawrence Ferguson's commitments to Picard and Lutan make their scenes quite watchable. The rest of the episode? Not so much. (Don't even get me started about putting Wesley on the bridge in the middle of a goddamned crisis that — sorry. Sorry.)

To put it into context, though: This is only our third episode, and as I mockingly pointed out in the synopsis, it borrows way too heavily from “Amok Time,” immediately after an episode that was essentially a rewrite of another *TOS* classic. We were still proving that we deserved the right to carry the *Star Trek* mantle, and when I look back at “Code of Honor” and see that it came between “The Naked Now” and “The Last Outpost,” I’m astonished that we weren’t canceled by mid-season. In fact, if we hadn’t been first-run syndication, if Gene hadn’t extracted a promise from the studio that we would get one full season, and if the core audience of Trekkies hadn’t been as patient as the Ligonians — not to mention incredibly forgiving — we almost certainly would have been.

FINAL GRADE: C

"THE LAST OUTPOST"

26|23

03|09

02|16

12|23

ORIGINAL AIR DATE: OCTOBER 19, 1987

WRITTEN BY: HERBERT WRIGHT, FROM A STORY BY RICHARD KRZEMIEN

DIRECTED BY: RICHARD COLLA

STARDATE: 41386.4

SYNOPSIS

The *Enterprise* chases a Ferengi ship in an effort to retrieve a stolen T-9 Energy Convertor, which is essential in the processing of the rare MacGuffin element. This gives the Federation a chance to make their first contact with a species that they know almost nothing about.

The mood on the bridge is tense, as the *Enterprise* makes visual contact with the Ferengi ship just before it enters the unexplored Delphi Ardu system. Rumors about the Ferengi are numerous, and include some terrifying suggestions: they eat humans, they're big and scary, and they have really huge wangs.

Worf announces that the ship is in full visual range, and Picard orders maximum enlargement on the viewscreen. This reveals a ship that sort of looks like a croissant, which Picard says is an "impressive design," before ordering some marmalahd and clotted Devon cream. Ah, the joys of writing and filming reactions before the models are done.

There are a few power surges, and the Ferengi ship fires at the *Enterprise*! Luckily, the shields hold, and the blasts bounce off harmlessly. Everyone wants to return fire, except Picard, who gets cranky and says that the *Enterprise* should just chill out for a minute, because its close pursuit may have rubbed the Ferengi the wrong way. Sheesh, way to blame the victim, Captain.

The *Enterprise* begins to close on the Ferengi ship, which makes Picard extra super cranky. Geordi says that he isn't even touching the gas pedal, and that his foot is securely on the brakes. Since there is no Farmer's Market in sight and Geordi is in his 30s, it's reasonable to believe him.

When the ship begins to lose power, Picard trades his crankiness for concern. Riker says that they've clearly underestimated the Ferengi's technology, and it's pretty clear that the *Enterprise* is in for some serious shit as the credits roll.

When we return, Picard walks around the bridge and tries to get a SITREP. There's not enough power to fire the weapons, and Engineering isn't responding to his efforts to use the communication system. That's not the sort of thing you want going on when you're making first contact with something as terrifying and dangerous as the Ferengi, so he sends Geordi down there to check things out and report. Geordi says, "Captain? I've seen the dailies from the planet, and... well, sir, the Ferengi are—"

"Terrifying and dangerous and not at all comical. I know. We've been talking about them ever since the pilot, man!"

"Right. About that..."

"Hey, are you still here? Get your ass down to Engineering!"

"But they're kind of—"

"Who do you think you are? Wesley Crusher? MAKE IT SO, DAMMIT!"

Picard asks Troi if she's sensing anything from the Ferengi ship. That's good, since it's kind of her whole job and everything. She says she's sensing nothing, so maybe they can block their thoughts and emotions. That's bad.

Data says that we don't know that much about the Ferengi, which is bad, but we do know a few things about them that seem to be reliable, which is good. Data says the Frogurt is also cursed. (That's bad.)

Riker tells Data to just get on with it already, so Data says Ferengi are like Yankee traders from 18th-century America. This indicates that, in the 24th century, the traditional practice of using 600-year-old comparisons is still in vogue, like when you're stuck in traffic on the freeway, and say, "Man, this is just like Vasco de Gama trying to go around the Cape of Good Hope!"

Riker reveals his love of 18th-century American history, a love so deep and important to him that it will never ever come up again, and Data says "I doubt they wear red, white, and blue, or look anything like Uncle Sam." Picard, with a sigh of exasperation that perfectly matches the audience's, reminds them that the *Enterprise* is still in real danger from the Ferengi ship; without their warp drive, they're just a floating target. He calls Engineering, and when there is no response, he sends Riker to help. At this rate, the entire bridge crew will be in Engineering within the next ten pages. Somebody better order a pizza.

When he arrives, Riker and Geordi try to figure out how to break away from the Ferengi's tractor beam that is never called a tractor beam for some reason. It's a little difficult without the benefit of a certain not-yet-acting-ensign around to effortlessly solve their problems, but Riker comes up with a plan that Geordi likes, and describes thusly: "We shift down hard, kick back into warp 9 and come back fightin' woo-eee!"

Riker lets Geordi celebrate by himself, and heads up to the bridge to share his plan with Picard, while the Ferengi ship sits there and looks as scary as a space croissant can look.

Picard sends a message to the Ferengi ship, then tells Riker the underlying philosophy of his French ancestors: "Sometimes, Riker, the best way to fight is not to be there."

Riker replies, “Yes sir, he will triumph who knows when to fight, and when not to fight.”

Picard says, “Glad the academy still teaches the strategies of Sun-Tzu.” Well, *that* was weird and random and probably won’t end up coming back at the end of the show to wrap everything up.

The *Enterprise* gets ready to try Riker’s plan, and with a great shuddering and much dimming of lights, the *Enterprise* doesn’t go anywhere. Down in his quarters, Wesley Crusher quietly sits next to an *Enterprise*-saving science project, waiting for a call from the bridge that will never come.

After that anticlimactic failure, Data gets worried, because someone is scanning the entire *Enterprise* library. Troi points out that, with their focus on the Ferengi ship, they’ve ignored the planet. Oh, snap! Pretty lady knows what time it is! Picard calls for a meeting in the observation lounge, where he asks his officers to suggest ways to deal with the crisis. (Fun historical fake-fact: the dialogue in this scene has a definite realism about it, as it was lifted directly from the meeting where the writers tried to figure out how to get on with the story.)

Tasha and Worf suggest using the *Enterprise*’s power to launch a photon and phaser barrage, which Picard angrily shouts down as impractical. Worf frowns, takes a deep breath, and counts to ten in Klingon.

Troi suggests that they talk with the Ferengi, and Picard is all, “Uh, we just did, stupid! They ignored us.” And then Troi is all, “Hey, you’re stupid! You should go try again and suck up to them a little bit.” Then Picard is all “Hey, Geordi, what do you think?” And Geordi is all, “I’m just gonna shrug because I got all ‘woo-eee’ about that plan that didn’t work.” So then Picard is all, “Well, does anyone have any other ideas? Because right now going to suck up to them is about the best you guys have given me.” They’re all, like, *dude*, and they leave. So Riker comes up and is all, “Hey, what do you want to do, man?” And Picard goes, “I totally want to surrender, because I’m, like, scared. Will you hold me?” And Riker is all, “Ewww gross!” And then Picard is all, “No, seriously,

dude. If the shit gets too heavy, I want you to blow it up.” And Riker is all, “Damn, Gina. That is crazy!” And then Picard is all, “True dat, bizz-natch.”

(Okay, I don’t know why I just turned into a 9th grade girl imitating Snoop Dogg, explaining that scene, but it made me laugh. If you didn’t find it as amusing as I did, I’m going to be all, “oh yeah? Well... you are!” KTHX.)

Picard goes back onto the bridge and asks the Ferengi to present their terms to him so he can surrender. In an absolutely terrifying growl, a Ferengi speaks. Identifying himself as Daimon Taar, he demands unconditional surrender, but unwittingly reveals that his ship is locked in the same immobilization as the *Enterprise*. Well, that changes everything. Armed with this new information, Picard demands a face to face meeting, and we get our first look at this terrifying enemy!

Well, he’s not as terrifying as the voice lead us to expect. There’s a big wrinkly nose, the obligatory bumpy forehead, and really huge ears. He’s got shifty eyes, though, which is the universal symbol for “this guy can’t be trusted,” and he does have sharp pointy teeth, but still... something just isn’t quite right here. He offers to give back the T-9 device, and offers the lives of his second officers, as required by the Ferengi Code. Picard puts him on hold, and calls another meeting in the observation lounge, where two little kids are playing. Good to know that unsupervised children are allowed to run around the upper levels of the ship when it’s seconds away from a potential battle with an unknown enemy.

Picard asks Data and Geordi to figure out what’s immobilizing both ships. Data sits down and picks up Chinese handcuffs, which have as much logical reason to appear in this room as, say, a T-Rex, and explains that the planet they are orbiting is the center of the Tkon empire, “A once epic civilization of trillions that has been extinct for 600,000 of our years, and these planets were once outposts of that empire and —” before Data can finish he gets his fingers caught in the handcuffs! Oh, that wacky robot! He’s so silly and accidentally human! Meanwhile,

the other officers exchange glances that prove that Kevin Smith movies have *also* survived into the 24th century. Snoogans!

Picard is not amused, and tells Data to get himself unstuck, revealing a rather significant limitation in Data's construction: while he can lift a 14-year-old boy wonder over his head with one arm, he apparently is not able to generate enough force to tear through a few pieces of bamboo.

Picard frees Data, who says the fingercuffs are "intriguing," and that the Tkon empire was so advanced, they could even move stars.

A bit more research and some pretty nifty graphics reveal that the planet they are orbiting is an outpost of the Tkon empire, most of which was destroyed when their sun went supernova. Why the Tkons couldn't just move the sun or their planet with their advanced star-moving skills is not discussed, because the screen time was spent on that hilarious Chinese fingercuffs gag. (Hey, you can have expository technobabble, or you can have humor, but you can't have both. We have a budget, you know.)

Tasha sends some probe data into the room, revealing that a power beam is emanating from the planet's surface and holding both ships in its grasp. Picard decides that they're going to send an away team to see what's going on. After a bit of discussion, he also decides to invite the Ferengi — those evil, dangerous, deadly, scary, we-don't-know-anything-about-them-but-they-have-huge-wangs-and-eat-people creatures — to join them.

When Picard extends this invitation to the Ferengi, we learn that they are:

1. Not that tough.
2. Not that scary.
3. All about the Benjamins.
4. Probably the lamest, most incompetent enemy ever introduced in the history of television. Seriously. Even worse than the Army in *The A-Team*.

Picard suggests that they trade information about the planet and trust each other. You know, just like that, because it really is that simple and television without conflict is *exciting!* Also, he offers them Czechoslovakia. Daimon Taar agrees to send a science team of three Ferengi down to the planet, at coordinates of Picard's choosing.

Tasha, Worf, Geordi, Data, and Riker all head to the transporter room, where the writers try to make us believe they'll be in real danger on the planet, but we know it's pretty safe when they beam down, unaccompanied by even a single Red Shirt. (Yes, I know they're Yellow Shirts now, but c'mon.)

The planet looks really cool, and it's one of the first times we can see the difference in budgets and technologies available to the original series and the *Next Generation*. It's misty, and stormy, and other words that are not also stage names for strippers. We discover that energy in the atmosphere has messed up the transporter's coordinates, and Riker's alone. He quickly finds Data, who again uses the word "intriguing" to describe things. He keeps using that word. I do not think it means what he thinks it means.

Riker and Data scout around, and find Geordi suspended upside down when — uh oh! here come the Ferengi! Holy shit! The evil Ferengi! They're finally here, in person! We can see more than just their moderately scary faces, and they are... uh... short. And bouncy. And they wave their hands over their heads a lot. And they don't like loud noises. And they carry whips... and wear Ugg boots. Um. Wow. How... "intriguing."

Riker, apparently forgetting that he just saw one of them on the main viewscreen, asks them who they are, and the Ferengi respond with a traditional Ferengi greeting: they shoot energy blasts out of their whips and stun the entire away team.

Six hours pass, and we learn that the *Enterprise* is in big trouble. The force that's holding them is draining all the ship's power, and life support is quickly going the way of the audience's interest in this episode.

Back on the planet, we learn another astonishing fact about the Ferengi: they paint their nails a wonderful shade of blue. We also learn that they've delivered the traditional Ferengi greeting to the rest of the away team, as they drag Worf into the clearing, and add him to a growing pile of embarrassed actors. The writers make a valiant effort to portray the Ferengi as truly evil, when one of them instructs another to kill any captive who moves, but the bouncing and leering and tasting of a communicator to confirm that it's made of gold is so incredibly lame, it's impossible to take these guys seriously.

Just in case anyone *was* taking them seriously, a dramatic crash of thunder and flash of lightning accompany a now-awakened Worf and reactivated Data, who leap into action and attack the once-promising enemies, who we quickly learn are easier to defeat than Chinese handcuffs. Then, because the Ferengi aren't ridiculous enough caricatures already, the writers have them reveal that they don't work with or clothe females. Wow. We've really come a long way since the '60s, guys. *Classy.*

Back on the *Enterprise*, we discover that, like the script, things have gone from bad to worse. The lights are out, the ship's heating is nearly gone, and Picard has had the remaining power rerouted to the family decks, where he asks Doctor Crusher how Wesley is doing.

Now, listen, fan fiction writers: It's not because Picard is actually Wesley's father, as many of you will argue on Usenet over the coming seven years; it's because Picard knows that Wesley could easily figure a way out of this, and he's right. Off the top of my head, I can suggest that Wesley would generate some sort of *Enterprise*-enveloping control field with one of his science projects, using an electro plasma system energy converter, to reverse the polarity of the Navigational Deflector to emit an inverse tachyon pulse through a subspace beacon, while rerouting the power from the impulse engines through the Okuda conduits to the forward sensor array's antimatter pod, using the auxiliary fusion generator to turn the power back on and save the day, and that's just if he didn't feel like showing off.

Sadly, we learn that Dr. Crusher left Wesley in their quarters to stare death in the face alone, without even the benefit of a sedative. Picard reassures her that leaving Wesley alone and fully conscious was great parenting, because he has the right to “meet death awake.” Legions of Trekkies agree, then curse Picard for getting their hopes up.

Back on the planet, Tasha orders the intriguing Ferengi to stand still, but they bounce around and show their teeth and wave their hands over their heads instead, so the away team sets phasers on stun, and blasts them. Unfortunately for Trekkies and for the Away team, the phaser blasts do not hit their target, but fly around and zap into a crystalline tree-looking thing. The Ferengi try to retaliate with whips that totally don't look at all like the mutant offspring of a vibrator and a light saber, but the energy blasts also zap into the crystalline tree thing, which glows brightly and releases Poltergeist-esque wisps of energy that fly around before coalescing into a giant spectral face above a heretofore unnoticed bridge. The face speaks, the Away Team is confused, and the Ferengi cower and cover their ears as the face asks the “who dares disturb me” questions that all giant spectral faces are contractually required to ask in the *Star Trek* universe. Welcome to planet Plot Device, enjoy your stay.

The Ferengi bravely point at Riker and say, “He did it! It was totally him! Dude! We were so not doing anything, but this guy over here totally did that thing that pissed you off! Uh, look at how much we bounce around and wave our hands above our heads and cover our ears! We totally wouldn't lie to you about something like that! Seriously, dude!”

The face transforms into a humanoid man, clutching a staff, wearing a hooded cloak. He asks who wants permission to enter the Tkon Empire.

While simply saying, “We do,” or “that would be us,” would probably suffice, Riker and Data again explain the history of the Tkon Empire, in excruciating detail this time, because that's the way we do things in the first season. The Ferengi offer to blow up the *Enterprise*, because the

“Hew-mons” are really bad and stuff: they don’t bounce around or hold their ears or wave their hands in the air like they just don’t care, the way the scary, evil, dangerous Ferengi do. (We’re supposed to take them seriously, as some kind of real threat, but it simply doesn’t work. By this point, the Ferengi are just annoying, thanks to the most intriguing introduction of the most intriguing enemy ever. Seriously, guys, if I had been a producer on *Star Trek*, when I saw the dailies of this stuff, I would have put heads on pikes.)

The Portal gets as fed up as the audience, and challenges Riker, thusly: “I offer a thought: he will triumph who knows when to fight and when not to fight.” He holds his scary staff over his head and advances across the bridge. Holding the blade just over Riker’s shoulder, he says, “You are being tested, Riker. What is the answer?”

Riker says, “Red. No! Blue! AHHHH!!!!”

Heh. Just kidding. Riker says, “Fear is the true enemy. The only enemy.”

Now that weird exchange at the beginning of the show makes sense, as Riker and the Portal quote Sun-Tzu to each other, while the Ferengi continue to intriguingly cower, bounce around, and cover their ears.

The Portal releases his planet’s hold on the *Enterprise* and restores the ship’s power. Riker and the Portal walk and talk, and the Ferengi manage to make themselves even more intriguing than they already were. The Portal teases Trekkies everywhere and offers to destroy the Ferengi, but Riker says that they’re like humans once were centuries ago.

Wait. Did Riker just say that the Ferengi are like 20th century humans? I’m pretty sure we don’t bounce around and cower and jump and hold our hands above our heads nearly as much as they do. (Good call on the Uggs, though. Our bad.) Apparently the history of the 20th century is defined by cell phone concert videos uploaded to YouTube. Maybe he means that the Ferengi are like the ancient humanoid ancestors portrayed at the beginning of *2001*, before they touched the Monolith. Which, now that I think about it, is a fairly accurate description of a

lot of people who comment on YouTube videos. So maybe Riker is actually correct, in a sense. Okay, back to business.

The Portal and Riker shake hands, and the Portal vanishes into the mist. In a voiceover, Riker says, “Although I hadn’t seen him in more than ten years, I know I’ll miss him forever. I never had any friends later on like the ones I had in the first season. Jesus, does anyone?”

Back on the *Enterprise*, Picard commends Tasha and Worf for, uh, whatever they did, and Riker asks Picard for permission to beam a box of those hilarious Chinese handcuffs over to the Ferengi ship.

Picard smirks, and tells him to make it so. The camera pulls back to reveal that Riker and Geordi are wearing them, and Data has to send the *Enterprise* to warp speed himself, because Geordi’s fingers are hilariously trapped. It’s an intriguing ending to an intriguing episode.

QUOTABLE DIALOGUE

TASHA

Paws off, Ferengi!

MORDOC

No female — Human or Ferengi — can
order Mordoc around! Submit!

TASHA

Just try it, shorty.

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

“Most intriguing, sir. I assume a problem of inaccurately transmitted program coordinates due to the force field around the ship, sir.” —Data, explaining why the away team did not beam down together. Could also explain why the Ferengi, originally intended by Gene Roddenberry to be like the Reavers in *Firefly*, somehow became more like the flying monkeys in *The Wizard of Oz*.

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

I didn't work on this episode, but I was at Paramount for tutoring when they filmed it, and I clearly recall the cast being unhappy with several aspects of this script, from the lame Chinese handcuffs joke to the idiotic behavior of the Ferengi. Also, if you have this episode on DVD, you can pause it during Picard's walk across the back of the bridge (the "horseshoe" is what we called it) in the first act, and see several black cards stuck onto the science stations to block reflections of lights and C-stands. It always bothered me that they were so obviously there, and so easily seen, (and they are all over the place throughout the first season). I never said anything about it, because it wasn't my place, but it still bothers me to this day. It's one of those things that, once seen, can't be unseen. Sorry about that.

THE BOTTOM LINE

TNG's epic struggle to find its way continues! Obviously, it fails spectacularly with its introduction of the Ferengi, who were intended to replace the Klingons as a terrifying and worthy adversary to the Federation, but were a total joke until Armin Shimerman brought Quark to life on *DS9*, and repaired much — but not all — of the damage.

However, if you take away how outrageously lame the Ferengi are, this episode has some cool elements to it. The planet looks great, and the effects that lead to the revealing of the Portal, its point of view about itself, and its interaction with Riker are straight out of classic *Star Trek*. In fact, the entire story of the titular last outpost would have been a very strong one, had the Ferengi not been so weak and laughable. Imagine, for example, the relationship between Kirk and the Romulan Commander in "Balance of Terror," and put them into this situation, where they are forced to cooperate.

The scene in the Observation Lounge where Picard asks for counsel from his trusted advisors is cool, and represents a real departure from the spirit of the original series, where Kirk pretty much figured everything out himself, after he'd charged into the fight with his guns blazing while

he was still zipping up his trousers. But Picard, who will eventually be a warm, wise, complex character, appears weak and indecisive in the face of adversity, and his unwillingness to heed the advice he asks for, combined with his willingness to surrender so quickly and easily, rightfully earned the wrath of many fans who were used to Kirk kicking ass and taking names.

Fans who were hoping for an improvement on “The Naked Now” and “Code of Honor” couldn’t have been very happy with this episode, which spends its entire first two acts on exposition, and doesn’t even get going until the Away Team beams down to the planet in act four. I imagine that a lot of people who were on the fence about *TNG* simply tuned out after this one, which is a shame, because the next episode, “Where No One Has Gone Before,” is pretty good.

FINAL GRADE: C

"WHERE NO ONE HAS GONE BEFORE"

04|09

01|14

09|12

24|09

ORIGINAL AIR DATE: OCTOBER 26, 1987

WRITTEN BY: DIANE DUANE AND MICHAEL REAVES

DIRECTED BY: ROB BOWMAN

STARDATE: 41263.1

SYNOPSIS

The *Enterprise* meets up with the USS *Fearless*, an *Excelsior*-class starship that has just had its warp engines totally spiffed out by an engineer named Kosinski, who also drew some totally cool flames down the side of the warp nacelles when he was done putting baseball cards in the engine's spokes.

Starfleet wants Kosinski to hop onto the *Enterprise* and trick out the engines of the Federation's flagship, so the Federation can win the big drag race against the Romulans down in the Dry Riverbed Galaxy after school gets out. Picard is cool with this, but Riker isn't convinced that they need to stick a foxtail on the antenna. He tells Picard that Kosinski sent some specs over, but they're totally bullshit. Data backs him up with a surprisingly brief explanation. Picard gets really pissed that Riker is questioning his authority, but lets Riker take Counsellor Troi with him to the transporter room to check out Kosinski when he arrives.

When they get there, Troi and Riker join Chief Engineer Argyle in an 18mm "it's the end of the day and we have to get this before the producers pull the plug" three shot as Kosinski arrives, steps off the transporter pad, and reveals to everyone that he is an epic douche. We also meet Kosinski's assistant, who tells us that his name is unpronounceable by humans, an awesome *Star Trek* device that makes its first of many appearances on *The Next Generation*.

Kosinski whizzes on Riker's leg a little bit to mark his territory, sniffs at Argyle's butt, and goes to Engineering to work his totally awesome brand of warp drive magic. When he leaves, Troi tells us that he's loud and arrogant. (Riker must be so happy he brought her along for *that* deep insight.) But she then adds that she doesn't feel anything from the mysterious assistant, like he isn't even there. Argyle turns to Riker and says, "That's what she said!" Riker gives him a disapproving look, as eerie music swells up, so the slow kids in the audience know to be worried.

A few minutes later in Engineering, Kosinski whizzes on the engine and Riker and Argyle follow as he gets ready to do his thing. Trekkies who may have begun to dislike Kosinski immediately start a fan club for him when he stops mid-stream to ask "why is this child here?" in reference to Wesley Crusher, who is working on a school project and wearing a magnificent burnt sienna sweater, straight out of famed Klingon designer K'Talh Ba'akQoth's fall collection. (No joke: William Ware Theiss, the original costume designer, had me go to some dude's house to have my colors done. As a 14-year-old who was really into the sweet pastels and bright neon colors of the late '80s, I was horrified to discover I was an "autumn with a hint of winter, honey," who would get to wear oranges, browns, greens, and pukes until I finally got my official spacesuit, which honestly wasn't much better.)

After a few more moments of Kosinski being a condescending dick, Riker cockblocks him, and makes him explain exactly how his cute little spaceship speeding up thing works. While he explains, his assistant naturally ignores all the open engineering consoles, and takes the one where Wesley is working. Jesus! Didn't Argyle just tell them he was busy with a school project? What the hell, dude?

Wesley watches the assistant lay in some commands, but something bothers him, so the assistant lets Wesley tinker with the coordinates himself. Oh yeah, that's not going to cause any problems or piss off the audience at all. After Wesley is done, the assistant gives him a look that, in retrospect, is about an 8.6 on the Mark Foley scale of creepiness.

The experiment begins, as the *Enterprise* goes to warp 1.5, accompanied by the classic tune, “*TNG Theme (Enterprise Goes to Warp 1.5)*.” Everything is going normally, until the assistant turns away from his console to get a good look at Wesley’s awesome sweater and the engine totally freaks out. The assistant turns his attention back to the console and begins to phase in and out of existence. Up on the bridge, Geordi tells Picard that they’re passing warp 10. (Strangely enough, the music remains the same.) Then Data tells him the speed is off the scale, so Picard does the safest thing he can think of and orders Data to reverse the engines, something which has never been done before! Just when we think the *Enterprise* will be torn into a thousand horrible pieces as everyone is horribly sucked out into the cold vacuum of space, Picard’s reckless maneuver works like a charm, and the *Enterprise* comes to a full stop in the middle of the M33 galaxy, which is 2,700,000 light years away from where they started. It will take over 300 years to get home, which is a long road trip to take, man, especially with the Jerk Store’s best seller Kosinski along for the ride.

Down in Engineering, the assistant looks like he’s had a little too much Romulan Ale, and Wesley tells him that he can call his mother, who happens to be a doctor, for help. The assistant, saddened that Wesley didn’t suggest they play doctor, tells him that he just needs to rest, and that he means no harm to the *Enterprise* or all the adorable little boys running around on her.

Wesley asks if Kosinski is as big a douche as he seems, and the assistant tells him that Kosinski has sensed some part of what’s going on. Wesley says, “you mean that space, time, and thought aren’t the separate things they appear to be?” Deadheads everywhere put down their bongos and cough out, “Duh.”

The assistant totally freaks out, and tells Wesley that humans aren’t ready for such “dangerous nonsense,” but if he has any extra weed laying around, it would, like, totally help take the edge off that whole phasing out of reality thing.

Up on the bridge, Kosinski whizzes on everything and humps Picard's leg before Picard whacks him on the nose with a newspaper and sends him back to Engineering to get them back home. Things get crazygonuts in a hurry, and the assistant begins to phase out of reality again. The *Enterprise* heads to Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite, and ends up, according to Data, "Where none have gone before," a cloudy and gaseous-looking place where giant glowing dice fly around. Oh, and it's a billion light years from our galaxy, where thoughts become reality — kind of like a Phish concert. Worf sees a Klingon Targ, Tasha thinks she's running from a rape gang on her home colony, and Picard thinks he's going to step out of a turbolift and into some sort of giant black void. (Turns out it's just the Wesley Crusher Fan Club meeting.)

Not all the hallucinations are bad, though: one crew member is seen playing a violin with a classic string quartet, another is dancing a ballet, and Picard stops to have tea with his mother. Of course, the audience's suspension of disbelief is tested when Troi and Dr. Crusher walk past male crew members and remain entirely clothed. Picard figures out that what they think becomes reality, and he orders everyone to go to general quarters and concentrate on the 1976 Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders having a pillowfight.

Back in Engineering, everyone tries to accept responsibility for the crisis (well, everyone except Kosinski, who wishes he'd saved up some whizz for the occasion) and Riker ultimately tells Picard that Wesley knew something was going on, tried to warn them, and nobody would listen.

Yeah! Suck it, jerks! Wesley was right, bitches, and you wouldn't listen to him! Woo! Go Wesley! Go Wesley! It's your birthday! It's your birthday!

Ahem. Sorry.

It's pretty clear that the assistant is the only creature on the ship who can get them home (but if thoughts are reality, why not just think yourselves home, people? Come on, you goddamn hippies, get a job!) but Doctor Crusher tells them that the assistant is dying. Oh shit.

After a commercial, they move to sickbay to try and save the assistant, and this is where the episode, which was really moving along nicely, starts to drift a little bit, right around the time Wesley comes walking in and whines, “Mom, he’s my friend!”

Picard wants “the boy” to STFU and GBTW, but Riker tells him, “Dude, this alien was totally hot for the boy. I bet we could get the boy to shake his ass for the alien and —”

Wesley says, “Hey, first of all, I can hear you, and second of all, my name isn’t ‘the boy,’ it’s ‘Wesley,’ Mr. Crusher if you’re nasty.”

(On a personal note, I had a similar conversation with just about every director we ever had on the show. They all insisted on calling me “the boy” or “the kid,” and most of them favored grabbing me by the elbow and moving me around the set, rather than, you know, giving me direction like I was a person or a professional or anything like that. The worst offender was this guy Cliff Bole. For the record, Rob Bowman, who directed this episode, treated me really well.)

The assistant wakes up and tells Picard that he’s a Traveler, who has super magic powers, and he’s been letting Kosinski take credit for his abilities so he can ride on starships and collect postcards from tourist traps all over the universe. He tells Picard that “thought is the basis of all reality,” and offers to hook him up with some pants made out of hemp, man. He says that he acts as a lens to focus thoughts.

The Traveler says that he’ll do what he can to get them home, but first he needs to talk with the captain, alone. Everyone leaves, and the Traveler tells Picard that Wesley is special. “He, and a few like him, are the reason I travel” (okay, that’s creepy) and Picard has the unique ability to encourage Wesley — without his mother knowing, of course — (seriously, that’s *really* creepy) to be more like Mozart. (Wait. What?) Eventually, he wraps everything up: “Wesley is, like, totally a golden god, man, so don’t fuck it up.”

The Traveler heads back to Engineering, Picard goes back to the bridge, and everyone gets ready to go back home... they hope. Picard makes an announcement, and tells everyone that they should just chill out, dudes, because, like, everything is going to be really mellow and stuff, so focus on the Traveler and don't harsh his buzz, guys. To help everyone calm down, they turn on the Red Alert klaxons and lights.

The Traveler begins doing his thing, and the *Enterprise* goes to warp speed. The Traveler isn't strong enough, but Wesley totally holds his hand, and gives him the extra, uh, boost, that he needs to phase. The *Enterprise* speeds past Dave Bowman, the Traveler phases out of existence entirely, and the *Enterprise* returns to its own galaxy. Picard tells the ship that they did a good job, and they're all going to get laid. He then calls Wesley up to the bridge and makes him an acting ensign, "for outstanding performance in the best Starfleet tradition." Wesley and his shoulder pads take a seat on the bridge, the first acting ensign in the history of Starfleet to wear such an awesome burnt sienna sweater.

QUOTABLE DIALOGUE

TASHA

What is it?

WORF

A Klingon Targ! From home, but
from when I was a child.

TASHA

You mean a kitty cat?

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

"As the power grew, I applied the energy asymptotically. I anticipated some tilling, but it didn't occur. Now that was my error — using the Bessel functions at the beginning." — Kosinski, explaining to Picard how the *Enterprise* got to the M33 Galaxy, and explaining to the writers

what type of dialogue they should give Wesley for the entirety of the second and third seasons.

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

The Chief Engineer of the Week in this episode was Argyle, played by Biff Yeager. I recall everyone liking him, and I don't know if it's entirely true (and this is recalled over twenty years, through the memory of a 14-year-old) but I remember hearing that Biff was under consideration to become a permanent Chief Engineer, until the producers found out that he (or someone acting on his behalf) had encouraged Trekkies to write letters asking to have him on the ship full time. There's nothing wrong with a letter-writing campaign, but it helps if the letters come in *after* your episode has aired. Yeah, apparently the letters came in before this show went out, and some Trekkies complained that they were spammed via direct mail (this was well before e-mail was widely used) and those two factors sent Chief Engineer Argyle — and Biff — to the Cornfield.

When this review was originally posted online, writer Diane Duane left a comment, which provides a very different perspective on this episode. I thought it was so interesting, I've included it here:

(grin) A happy and irreverent take on a script which, while it wears Michael's name and mine, has almost nothing of ours left in it but one scene (Michael's: Picard with his mother) and one shot (mine: Picard almost going whoopsie out into open space via the turbolift: an obscure pun on the title of the last novel in a series I've been working on for a while). Michael and I spent almost our entire holiday in England driving our respective spouses crazy as we discussed the pseudonyms we would substitute for our own names on that script. Unfortunately, by the time we got back from the UK, the thing was already in the can, leaving us to spend the rest of our natural lives clutching our heads and moaning about Kosinski's bad behavior (he wasn't like that when we wrote him).

I've got to blog about this in detail some day. But you're not the only one that the (rewritten by Maurice Hurley) dialogue drove insane because

of its clunkiness. I really wish something like our first draft had made it through: that version, in my opinion, was a ton better. But there was so much politicking and struggling for power going on in the office at the writing end in those days... as you probably know.

(sigh) Never mind. The specials are beautiful.

Best!

—Diane

THE BOTTOM LINE

Every episode that preceded this one was a stinker, so “Where No One Has Gone Before” is the first time *The Next Generation* really starts to come together. This is a solid story, with good pacing and the first truly beautiful visual effects we’ve seen. Stanley Kamel, who played Kosinski, turned in a fantastic performance. Kosinski could have been an entirely one-dimensional character who the audience just hated, but Stanley gave him subtle layers of insecurity that were covered up by his arrogance. In the end, when Kosinski says to the Traveler, “You really need my help?” we don’t want to laugh at him, and instead feel some empathy for the man; this would not have happened if a lesser actor had played the role.

However, this show still has its flaws, and the growing pains are evident. Wesley is given some horrible dialogue, including after school special standbys like, “Mom, he’s my friend!” but he’s less annoying than he is in “The Naked Now” (not a high bar, I concede), and Rob Bowman directed me to be as mature as I was capable of being when I was just 14. If you hated Wesley already, it was unlikely that this episode would change your mind, but if you were looking for a glimmer of evidence that he wouldn’t be a total weenie for the whole series, there was just enough here to get your hopes up before we dashed them to hell just a few episodes from now.

Picard seems to vacillate between extremes in this show, snapping at people and barking orders, and then quickly changing his entire tone and attitude to one that's more soothing and warm. I'm not sure if that was a deliberate choice, so he would appear as a conflicted man, or if it was Patrick Stewart's natural warmth and kindness coming through the gruff demeanor Picard was written to have. Either way, it's confusing, and makes it difficult for the audience to really like and connect with him. Remember, we were still very much in the shadow of the original series at this time, and everyone loved Captain Kirk, so viewers looking for something to dislike in Picard could find it without too much effort. Luckily, Patrick's outstanding abilities as an actor gave Picard strong direction and the writers would begin tailoring Picard to reflect more of who Patrick was, so he ultimately grew into the character we all love.

FINAL GRADE: B+

"LONELY AMONG US"

17|15

05|25

16|20

10|01

ORIGINAL AIR DATE: NOVEMBER 2, 1987

WRITTEN BY: D.C. FONTANA

STORY BY: MICHAEL HALPERIN

DIRECTED BY: CLIFF BOLE

STARDATE: 41249.3

SYNOPSIS

Two alien races, the Antican and the Selay, are applying for admission to the Federation, so they can get the discount card and the cool bumper sticker that comes with the welcome packet. But before they can join the club, they have to learn to play nice with each other, because in the enlightened future of *Star Trek*, only people who get along with each other can be in the United Federation of Planets. In order to work out their differences, delegates from each species hitch a ride on the *Enterprise* to the Parliament planet, which is in the stone cold heart of the Funkadelic system.

On the way, Data's sensors pick up a giant energy cloud, which really shouldn't be there, because the *Enterprise* is traveling at warp speed. Picard decides to slow down and take a quick look.

Meanwhile, Geordi and Worf are doing some maintenance on the ship's sensor systems, which may be why, when the ship scans the cloud, big blue bolts of energy zap right out of the the wall and into Worf, knocking him to the ground almost as easily as every other adversary Worf will encounter for the rest of the series.

In sickbay, Dr. Crusher checks out Worf, and gets zapped by the same blue energy as a special thank you. Troi drops by for a visit, and Dr. Crusher begins acting really weird, but apparently not weird enough for the empath to notice, because Troi talks briefly with Worf before

walking right back out of the scene like nothing ever happened. (Okay, look, writers, is it really that hard to give our characters some meaningful motivation to enter and exit scenes? It's only the seventh episode of the series here, and we're still sort of on probation with the audience.)

Up on the bridge, Picard decides that they've spent enough time staring at the energy cloud, and it's time to tear the roof off the sucker, give up the funk, and get the delegates to their destination. Down in the Crusher quarters, Wesley — in his favorite pumpkin-colored sweater with sassy forearm-length sleeves — is working on some homework, when his mom walks in, acting like she just got off the shuttlecraft from the Burning Man Nebula. Wesley tells her that he's studying Dr. Channing's theory on dilithium crystals, but before he can finish his technobabble, she leaves, and heads up to the bridge.

Picard spots her wandering around in a purple haze and demands a status report on Lt. Worf. She tells him he had a "temporary mental aberration," but Picard wants more details, so she'll need to use the science station to do some medical cross-checks. Once there, Data totally busts her for actually checking out helm control instead, and she responds by zapping that blue energy back into the console. With the energy out of her, she comes down pretty hard, and heads back to her office where she can get some quiet time with a glass of orange juice while she listens to Starfleet's subspace chillout radio.

Right after she leaves, the science consoles fail. Before someone can say something like, "Hey, isn't it a little strange that the science station that just failed was being used by the weird-acting doctor?" reports come in from all over the ship that *their* systems are also failing, so Picard calls a meeting in the observation lounge, away from all those flashy consoles that might tell them what the hell is going on. He asks for some theories or answers, but everyone seems more interested in covering their asses than actually pointing out that these *electrical* failures, within these *electrical* systems, may somehow be related to the mysterious cloud filled with *electrical* energy that the *Enterprise* just passed through. Data, who was standing right next to Doctor Crusher and busted her for checking out helm control, doesn't think it's important

to bring up this possibly significant fact for the group to discuss. I swear to God, it's like a meeting of George W. Bush's National Security Council in 2005.

Up on the bridge, Worf reports that warp power is fading. The *Enterprise* drops to impulse speed as the subspace radio goes offline, too. Picard leaps into action... and calls another meeting, this time in his ready room with Data and Riker. They think there may be a saboteur on board, possibly among the Anticans or the Selay. In a futile effort to make us forget how lame the Ferengi are, they suggest that maybe the Ferengi hired one of the delegates to screw up the *Enterprise*. Uh, yeah. Nice try, guys, but no.

Everyone looks at Data, who we all hope will suggest that maybe these *energy* problems have something to do with the *energy* cloud, but he tries to figure out what a private eye is, instead. Picard mentions Sherlock Holmes and the scene ends with a close-up on Data's face. Call me crazy, but I think that some hilarity is about to ensue.

Back in Engineering, fashion icon Wesley Crusher saves the day. Oh, there's more to the scene, but that's all I ever heard from the damn Trekkies about this episode when it first aired, so that's all you're going to hear from me now, suckers.

Wesley gets booted from Engineering by Mr. Singh, and he mopes back to stately Crusher Manor, where he tells Dr. Crusher, "Mom, I've learned a lot more than they understand." This line on its own is totally lame, but it's just become my favorite of all seven episodes thus far, because I managed to deliver it with the same vocal inflection, facial expression, and dramatic gravitas as Pee Wee Herman when he said, "I'm a loner, Dottie, a rebel."

Down in Engineering, Mr. Singh is implementing Wesley's solution (and planning to take credit, no doubt) when he gets blasted by some now-familiar blue energy. He falls to the floor, just in time for Worf (who happens to be conveniently wandering around the engine room) to find him and tell the bridge that they're going to need a new chief

engineer for next week's show. The bridge tells him not to worry, they'll just thaw another one out.

In sickbay, Troi uses hypnosis on Dr. Crusher and Worf to help them recall what happened during their memory blackouts earlier in the day. They both say that they felt the presence of someone else in their minds, and they really wanted that person to get the funk out. Then Troi winks at the audience, tells Dr. Crusher that no matter how hard she tries, she can't find the itch on her nose, and makes Worf crow like a rooster whenever he hears the word "jackpot." (Counsellor Troi's Hypnohijinks are available on CD, and she performs at parties and bar mitzvahs. Traditional Betazoid party costume costs extra.)

Meanwhile, up in the observation lounge, there is yet another meeting, as Tasha, Riker, and Data discuss the results of their investigation. This scene is actually kind of important, because we see the first glimpses of Data's eventual fascination with Sherlock Holmes, as he chomps on a pipe and says "indubitably" a lot. He deduces that it's unlikely the delegates would harm the *Enterprise*, because they're too busy trying to kill each other.

Picard liked that meeting so much, he has another one, this time in his ready room. Troi tells him about the hypnosis and comments that she sensed duality in Dr. Crusher earlier. Picard asks why she didn't bother to mention it before, and Troi tells him that she senses duality in all humans, so Betazoids learn to tune it out. She doesn't mention anything about regularly turning out Wesley Crusher and his "little captain," which is good, because that could have caused me a lot of embarrassment.

Back on the bridge, everything falls apart again, and in the ensuing brouhaha, Picard touches the CONN, gets zapped with blue energy, and orders the *Enterprise's* course reversed, so they can have another look at... wait for it... the energy cloud. The bridge crew is so glad that the Pointy-Haired Captain hasn't called for another meeting that they just turn the ship around and head right back to where all their problems began.

Oh, but the senior officers decide to be all passive-aggressive and shit, and take a little meeting of their own behind Captain Crazypants' back. Dr. Crusher wants him to take some tests in sickbay, but Picard freaks out at her after-school-special-style and tells them that he's doing fine, *they* have a problem, it was just a little pot, and it's not like he makes himself throw up all the time, it's just like once a month or whatever. *Gosh!*

Picard dramatically runs to the bridge, where he tells everyone that he is going to elope into the energy cloud with his new life partner, the energy pattern entity. The crew is totally not cool with this forbidden love, and Dr. Crusher tries to invoke Starfleet Proposition 8, but Picard tells them, "You just don't want me to be happy! Well, the energy pattern entity and I are totally in love, because it understands me! It thinks I'm smart and pretty, and we're going to become a combined energy pattern of both our life forms! We're going to roam the universe together, and you'll be sorry!"

Then, in a scene straight out of *Return of the Jedi*, he grabs the CONN and OPS consoles and blasts the entire bridge crew with crazy blue lightning that totally immobilizes them... but strangely does not affect their ability to talk. Picard goes to the transporter room, where he beams himself and his energy entity lover out into space.

More than an hour passes. Riker decides that they can't find the captain, and even though they may not understand or agree with his choice, they should respect it, and head off to Parliament to paint the white house black, but before they can leave (and Riker can start measuring the captain's quarters for new drapes) Troi tells him that she's sensing the captain, and *only* the captain. It turns out that, once they were off the *Enterprise*, the relationship didn't work out, and now Picard is ready to come back home. Riker drives the ship into the energy cloud and hopes that Picard can sneak into the ship's circuitry the way his (now ex-) energy entity lover did. But will it work? Durr, we all know it will. Picard cleverly makes a letter "P" on the CONN panel to let them know he's back on the ship, and Data races down to the Transporter room with Riker and Troi. Once there, he beams Picard's

energy through a stored physical pattern of Picard in the transporter's memory to return the Captain to his corruptible, mortal state, where he can once again be threatened by hitchhiking ghosts.

Before they can break out the Romulan Ale and celebrate, Tasha bursts into the transporter room and tells them that one of the Antican delegates ate one of the Selay delegates. *Goddammit*, Tasha! We were finished with that stupid B story two acts ago! What the hell, man? Picard decides that this is the perfect time to head up to his quarters and take a nap, so he leaves Riker in charge to deal with the problem, as the episode just... sort of... ends.

QUOTABLE DIALOGUE

TASHA

We still don't know where they went.

DATA

On the contrary, my dear colleague. On their return, they drew medical supplies appropriate to the treatment of minor wounds and abrasions on these life-forms.

RIKER

Which leaves us with only one conclusion.

DATA

Exactly! That they were too engaged in their own affairs to have disabled the ship and murdered the engineer. Given the choice, they would rather kill each other than any of us. It's elementary, my dear Riker. [Awkward pause.] Sir.

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

“Dr. Channing thinks it’s possible to force Dilithium into even more useful crystals if, as shown here, matter and antimatter could be aligned even more efficiently...” —Wesley Crusher, explaining Dr. Channing’s theory on dilithium crystals, also known as the Hello Dolly Theorem.

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

I don’t recall much about working on this particular episode other than standing in the makeup room and admiring the cool creatures Mike Westmore had created to be the Anticans and Selay, but I can clearly and painfully recall something that happened right around the time we filmed it: D.C. Fontana, who wrote this episode and is presumably responsible for much of the lame dialogue I had to deliver in it, was part of a panel at a convention in 1987 called “Solving the Wesley Problem.” Maybe it started out as a serious discussion about solving what was obviously becoming a problem, namely the way Wesley Crusher was being written (sounds like a good idea, and something I wish they’d talked about at the studio, instead of just at a convention) but Patrick Stewart phoned me from the con and told me that he’d heard some of the panel, and it was mostly personal attacks on me, broken up by occasional lamenting of the fact that there was a damn kid on the *Enterprise* in the first place. Patrick encouraged me to come to the convention, (which was just a few miles from my home in Pasadena) and speak on my own behalf, which I did with some success. That panel and the audience’s comments really hurt me when I was a 15-year-old kid, but while I watched this episode as a 34-year-old man, I had this crazy idea: Maybe instead of sitting on this panel and trashing me personally, D.C. Fontana could have written better dialogue and helped solve the “Wesley problem” herself. I don’t know, maybe she tried to do that, and didn’t get a lot of support from the rest of the producers and writing staff, but even I know Dr. Channing’s theory of not writing cliched dialogue for kids in science fiction and then blaming the actor who is forced to deliver it.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Well, the important thing is, you tried (and laid the foundation for Data's fascination with Sherlock Holmes, which eventually developed into some of the most entertaining episodes we ever did). But after starting to work our way up to respectability with "Where No One Has Gone Before," we dive back into the depths of "The Naked Now." This episode feels like it was written long before the actors were cast, and it's clear that, though we were all beginning to get comfortable with our characters and each other, we had to force ourselves into some very stiff dialogue, in a script that strains the suspension of disbelief at just about every turn, and pretty much fails in every attempt at masonry.

At one point in the story, Geordi tells Wesley that how the engines came back on line isn't important; it's only the result that matters, and that seems to be the fundamental philosophy that drives this script. Much of the dialogue, pacing, and blocking in this episode feels arbitrary to me. Characters enter and exit scenes without any good reason, and instead of action, we have meeting after meeting after meeting, and it makes the whole thing feel confused and directionless. In fact, I had to watch this episode twice just so I could follow the whole thing. It also drove me crazy that nobody bothered to ask, even once, if maybe all these *energy* problems were somehow related to the *energy* cloud. The audience figures it out before the second commercial break, and as a result, every scene where we're supposed to be solving the mystery is just annoying, and it makes the characters look stupid. As I wrote above, we were still on probation at this time, and this script and director did nothing to help us plead our case.

FINAL GRADE: D+

"JUSTICE"

05|11

16|23

03|10

08|17

ORIGINAL AIR DATE: NOVEMBER 9, 1987

WRITTEN BY: WORLEY THORNE

STORY BY: RALPH WILLS AND WORLEY THORNE

DIRECTED BY: JAMES L. CONWAY

STARDATE: 41255.6

SYNOPSIS

After dropping some human colonists off in the Strnad solar system, the *Enterprise* notices a rather nice Class M planet in the nearby Rubicun system, called Rubicun III. Picard sends an away team down to the surface to find out if it's a good place for some shore leave, and they return with some very good news: it's clean, it's beautiful, it's populated with friendly humanoids... and they really like to do the nasty.

"At the drop of a hat," according to Geordi.

"*Any* hat," Tasha says, knowingly.

Picard sends a second, larger team down to the planet to see exactly how many hats they're going to need. Because every responsible Starfleet parent would want to send their children down to the galaxy's longest-running planetary orgy, he orders Wesley Crusher to see if the planet is a good place for kids to hang out.

After beaming down to the planet, the away team quickly learns three important facts:

1. The planet's inhabitants, called the Edo, like to jog everywhere.

2. They are all beautiful blond models, possibly descended from some sort of Maxim/FHM breeding program in the late 22nd century.

3. The entire planet is clothed in about 6 yards of fabric.

The Edo's leaders jog up and meet the away team, greeting them in the traditional Edo manner: lingering glances and inappropriately long hugs. Troi says, "I'm sensing a lot of boners, Commander."

Before the Edo leaders will tell Riker how many people they can bring down from the *Enterprise*, they suggest that they "play at love." Rivan, the woman, suggests that Worf play at love with her, while Liator looks at Riker, jams his true desires deep into the closet, and asks Troi if she'll play with him. Just before Sexual Harassment Panda shows up, Wesley Crusher says, "Dude, this is bullshit. Either hook me up with some fine Edo ass, or let me get away from you creepy middle-aged swingers and find it on my own."

Okay, maybe that's not what he says, but it's certainly what a certain actor who played Wesley Crusher was thinking at the time. What he actually says is, "Uh, erm, uh, I'm a weenie and I can't be too close to this crazy hot woman who wants to go all Mrs. Robinson on me. Can you please take me to some kids my own age, so I can get as far away from the boobies as possible? It would be great if there was some sort of science project I could work on, and some technobabble I could deliver, too. I really need to be in my comfort zone, or at least change into some loose-fitting pants."

Rivan and Liator think they should run to the council chamber, where they can get rid of the kid and head inside for a sexy party. When they arrive, Rivan gives Riker the traditional Edo "Hey, you totally ran a thousand meters" sensual hug and reacharound.

Three teenagers show up, two guys and a girl. Liator points to Wesley and tells them that he's brought them a new friend to play with. One of the guys is so excited to play with Wesley, he literally bursts into flames before they can skip off together. Wesley and his new pals jog away, and the away team goes inside the council chamber, where the Edo dance, perform sensual massage, and show off exceptionally bad late-'80s hairstyles.

Back on the *Enterprise*, the bridge crew is busy dealing with a mysterious thing they can't see that is sitting off the starboard bow. Unfamiliar with The Firm's *Star Trekkin'*, the crew doesn't know that whenever anything is off the starboard bow, it's bad and should be taken seriously, so they just assume it's some sort of sensor malfunction. (They'd better be careful, though. Starfleet fines you 325,000 bars of gold-pressed latinum per malfunction, after a regrettable incident on Superbowlulon XLI.)

After Data addresses the mysterious object, though, it reveals itself: a deadly floating Erector set! (Yeah, I went there.)

Picard orders Geordi to stick his head out the window and tell him what his VISOR picks up, leading to my favorite moment in the entire episode. The backup tactical officer, who has been overacting in the background of just about every bridge shot since the episode began, channels Kevin Pollak's impression of Captain James T. Kirk and says, "Sir, my sensors read it ... as well ... half! There! And it ... does look as ... if it were ... partly! Transparent." (Super happy funtime trivia challenge: that character was played by Josh Clark, who went on to play Joe Carey in *Voyager*. Some Trekkies have decided that the unnamed character actually *was* young Joe Carey. I'm Wil, and that's one to grow on.)

Data doesn't know what it is, but Geordi reports that, after complete spectral analysis, it's as if it's not really there. Ah! We get it! It's the script for "The Last Outpost" that's floating out there!

Whatever it is, it's serious about messing with the *Enterprise*, because it

sends out the universal symbol of “I’m serious about messing with you”: a ball of white light, which penetrates the *Enterprise*, cuts off all contact with the away team, and demands (in a voice which is deliciously similar to the “ghost host” in the Haunted Mansion at Disneyland) that Picard explain why the *Enterprise* is orbiting Rubicun III. Of course, Picard then spends ten pages explaining why humans are trying to colonize the galaxy, why it’s important, and how easy it is to take up some time in the script by talking in a big circle about nothing. This irritates the ball of light as much as it irritates the audience, and it shows its displeasure by whacking Data in the head and pinning him, unconscious, to the ground. (This is a theme in *TNG* episodes: Picard’s speeches invariably get someone *else* tossed around like an Edo salad. I don’t know, but if I were a pissed-off alien trying to get Baldy to shut up, I might aim at *him*.)

Down on the planet, Wesley is jogging around with his new friends. Unlike the adults, who are busy getting their freak on in Plato’s Retreat, the kids are busy showing off their gymnastic skills. One of the Edo boys walks on his hands! Oh! Wesley got served! But wait! Wesley serves back with some cartwheels and a roundoff, and IT’S ON!

In fact, it’s so on, the girl (played by a really sweet girl named Judith Jones, who played my girlfriend on an after-school special called *My Dad Can’t Be Crazy, Can He?*) gets so hot for Wesley that she asks him if he’ll “teach her” how to “play ball.”

Oh, you bet, baby. Uncle Wesley will teach you how to play ball. Why don’t you just slip into this latex bodysuit and put on this wig first, and then we’ll play all sorts of ball, you dirty little thing.

Uh. What just happened? Sorry about that.

Wesley tells them to get a bat. When they don’t know what it is, he describes Worf’s penis. It’s not awkward at all.

While the kids run off to “play ball,” Riker wanders around the council chambers, past a lot of Edo who are dropping a lot of hats. And seriously, the Edo? We can smell the Astroglide all the way from here, guys. If

they keep this up, we're relocating them to the Cinemax Nebula. After a conversation with Worf about Klingon sex (that unfortunately forced a lot of fan fiction to be taken out of canon), Riker tries to check in with the *Enterprise* and finds that his communicator isn't working. He gets the away team all together in one place, just in case something hinky is going on. When Worf goes to get Tasha, he learns that the Edo spend all their time running around and fucking because they have some rather interesting laws on their planet: if someone breaks a rule in a randomly assigned "punishment zone," they're put to death. It kind of sucks, but hey, free sex!

Meanwhile, in a development nobody saw coming, Wesley unintentionally breaks the law. Oh, crap, it's a punishment zone! What are the odds? He doesn't help his case when one of the Edo's police (called "Mediators") asks Wesley if he freely admits to the heinous crime of falling on new plants.

Wesley stands up straight, deepens his voice (a little), and declares, "I'm with Starfleet. We don't lie."

Ah, Wesley. You may be able to save the ship, but you sure can't save bad dialog.

Riker apologizes for the mess, Wesley apologizes for playing ball (hey, she said she was eighteen, dude), and before any of the writers can apologize for the dialog, Tasha shows up to warn them about the Edo's laws just a little ... bit ... too ... late. (For you *Star Trek* trivia buffs out there, this would indicate that Tasha attended The Bishop school of arrival times.)

After a quick kangaroo court, the Mediators get ready to deliver some mad justice, Edo style. Celebratory riots spontaneously break out all across America, but before too many cars can be set on fire, the away team totally cockblocks them and saves Wesley from certain death.

Up on the bridge, the glowing ball of light hops off Data, and communication with the away team is restored. Riker tells Picard that

there's a bit of a problem down on the planet. Picard beams down, meets the away team, finds out that Wesley has been left in the Edo's custody, and has a long talk with the Edo about law, justice, the death penalty, and other hot-button topics that would probably be very inspiring and thought-provoking ... if they weren't delivered to a group of half-naked sex fiends who get really, really petulant when they don't get their way. Apparently, having to talk about tough issues instead of banging the person closest to them really grinds their gears.

Then, because tackling the issue of capital punishment in two pages of preachy dialog wasn't enough, Picard asks about the mysterious orbiting object, which Rivan immediately identifies as... wait for it... "God." Oh boy. (So God is an Erector Set, and the Edo are made in its image... this is starting to make a lot more sense.)

Rivan seems to think it's sort of a New Testament, likes-to-hug-you god, while Liator clearly thinks it's more of an Old Testament, raining-fire-down-on-your-head kind of god. Luckily, before things can get too preachy, Doctor Crusher calls down from the *Enterprise*. Data has woken up from his ball-of-light nap and wants to talk with the captain. After extracting a promise that the Edo won't kill Wesley before sundown, Picard takes Rivan with him back to the *Enterprise*. Once there, he shows her the Edo "god." (This is, quite honestly, a nice little homage to the original series. Whenever Captain Kirk took a hot babe back to the space ship, he showed her god, too. Sometimes, he showed her an entire pantheon of gods. And he never called her back, baby, because that's just how he rolled, leaving broken hearts all over the galaxy. Awww yeah.) The problem is, "god" is pissed, and shakes the ship until Picard beams Rivan back down to the planet. Poor Picard, he brought her all the way home, and he didn't get to drop a single hat.

Picard and Beverly go to Sickbay so they can talk with Data, and on the way, we see that Wesley gets all his whining from his mother's side of the family. Once in Sickbay, Data spews a whole bunch of stuff about the Edo's god thing, which turns out to be more like Liator's version than Rivan's, and has put Picard in quite a bind: while he can totally handle one of those Christopher Pike show trials back at Starfleet HQ

if he beams Wesley to safety, that god-thing isn't going to take any "one beep for yes, two beeps for no" bullshit if he interferes. After Picard has a long talk with Data (see The Bottom Line, below), Dr. Crusher comes back, and Picard promises her that he'll save her son, accompanied by the obligatory soundtrack, heavy on the melancholy strings.

Down on the planet, the sun is about to set, and Trekkies are crossing their fingers ... but Picard gives the order to beam up, and they'll have to go back to listing all the different ways Wesley could get killed on Usenet. But wait! What's going on? Oh shit! The Edo god has blocked the transporter! The clock is running down, but Picard throws a Hail Mary with an impassioned speech to the sky about truth, justice, the American way, puppies, ribbons, warm apple cider on a frosty New England morning, and makin' out at the drive-in with your best girl. The band is on the field, but the Edo god is always a sucker for a John Cougar Mellencamp song, and he lets them beam away into the end zone.

When they arrive back on the *Enterprise*, everything returns to normal ... almost. There are cargo bays full of hats, and nobody knows what to do with them.

QUOTABLE DIALOG

RIVAN:

And I welcome this huge one.

[She gives him a long, sensual hug.]

WORF:

Nice planet.

...also...

EDO GIRL:

I want to do something too... with you.

WESLEY:

Uh... what?

EDO GIRL:

It's something you can teach me. Will you?

WESLEY:

Uh... well, actually, there are some... games... I don't quite know yet.

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

"Don't babble, sir? I am not aware that I ever babble, sir. It may be that from time to time I have considerable information to communicate and you may question the way in which I organize it..." —Data, explaining to Picard that he does not, in fact, babble.

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

Our exteriors were shot at two primary locations. The scenes where we first beam down were shot at a water treatment facility in the San Fernando Valley, right under the flight path for the Van Nuys municipal airport. There were so many planes flying over us, we just shot straight through the day, rather than wait for the sound to be clear before we rolled, and re-recorded all the dialog in ADR sessions a few weeks later. I have this involuntary habit as an actor of not talking when there are loud off-camera noises, so the sound is clean during editing; this was a really hard place for me to film (not only because I was surrounded by gorgeous nearly-nude models, with the boobies and the hineys and the I'm in Spandex muh-hay, ga-hay) because we just kept filming, no matter what. It was surprising to me then, as it is now, how tenuous an actor's concentration really is. However, the powers that be liked that location so much, we went back there several times. It even became the standard location for Starfleet Academy. You *Alias* fans may also recognize it as the building Sydney blew up with all the special forces inside in season one.

Our second location, where Wesley recklessly plows through the white barrier, was at the Huntington Library in San Marino. In addition to all the flora and fauna, the Huntington also has a very impressive art collection, which includes *The Blue Boy*. My teacher really wanted me to see that painting, and, being 15, I was entirely unimpressed. However, by bizarre coincidence, in the third season holodeck spectacular “Hollow Pursuits,” Wesley was dressed up as The Blue Boy in Barclay’s holodeck fantasy. I impressed exactly zero people with my knowledge of the costume’s inspiration, proving that 18th-century British art trivia is not the best way to get laid, guys. This location was also very popular with the powers that be; they liked it so much, they used it again just three episodes later in “Haven.”

Because we used them so frequently, these two locations were internally compared to Vasquez Rocks, where a lot of the original series episodes were filmed, including “Shore Leave” and “Arena.”

THE BOTTOM LINE

Once you get past the wigs on the ladies and the camel toes on everyone, there’s some very good *Star Trek* in this episode, especially when Data and Picard talk in Sickbay. Even though it has the obligatory Data babbling (they even talk about him babbling) there is some very good — and important — character development between them. This is the eighth episode of the series, and in all the pointless meetings and long-winded scenes where we just talk and talk about nothing, there hasn’t been a scene like this, where Picard truly seeks information from one of his officers and truly looks for ways to solve a difficult problem. In fact, this is the first time Picard really listens to someone when he asks for advice, instead of chiding them for not giving him the answer he was looking for. The entire scene is given a bit of emotional weight (I say “a bit,” because we know that Wesley is going to somehow escape execution before the end of the show) by the presence of Wesley’s mother, who is forced to sit there and listen to Picard and Data talk in an academic way about her son’s life, knowing that saving him is as simple (and as complicated) as Picard giving the order to beam him up.

When they move to Picard's quarters, the discussion the two of them have about playing god (har) isn't much more complicated than a first-year ethics class, but it's still cool, because it's a very *Star Trek* scene. This is the sort of thing that set the original series apart from other sci-fi shows during its first run, and it's the sort of thing that made Ron Moore's *Battlestar Galactica* so extraordinarily watchable.

Ultimately, there are only two obviously weak points: Picard takes a member of a developing civilization (who has had no prior Federation contact) onto the *Enterprise* for a quick peek at her god, which would appear to be a clear violation of the Prime Directive, and Wesley's whole "check out how mature I am" thing, which is more bad direction and weak acting than anything else. (Sorry about that. I recall doing what they wanted me to do, but if I could make different choices now, I would. Someone fire up the DeLorean and meet me at the clock tower.) But it totally does not suck, and believe it or not, we were really pushing things in 1987 with all the skin, making out, obvious sensuality, and other things that I find pretty creepy and kind of gross when I watch it today. It's never easy to tackle things like capital punishment and religion, because you're bound to offend someone, but we did it pretty fearlessly in this episode. But most importantly, it's an entertaining hour of television, all of our "bridge regulars" act intelligently and logically, and there's great character growth for Picard, which the show desperately needed.

FINAL GRADE: B+

"THE BATTLE"

26|25

16|23

18|11

08|09

ORIGINAL AIR DATE: NOVEMBER 16, 1987

TELEPLAY BY: HERBERT J. WRIGHT

STORY BY: LARRY FORRESTER

DIRECTED BY: ROB BOWMAN

STARDATE: 41723.9

SYNOPSIS

On an order from Starfleet (official directive #9: Justify the Plot of the Show), the *Enterprise* has rendezvoused with a Ferengi ship in the Xendi Sabu system, famous across the entire galaxy for its delicious paper-thin slices of Targ, cooked at your table in boiling water and served with tasty noodles.

However, it's been three days since the *Enterprise* arrived, and the only message they've picked up from the Ferengi ship is, "Stand by, *Enterprise*." That's an awfully long time to be listening to the best soft hits of the '70s and '80s on hold, but Picard knows that his starship will be hailed in the order it arrived, and jumping to warp speed and coming back will only lead to further delays, so he waits.

This is where we come in, and we discover Picard in his quarters with Dr. Crusher. He is extra cranky and has a mysterious headache. It's so mysterious that even Dr. Crusher doesn't know why he has it, and she wants to give Picard a special examination. However, before the porn music can begin, Riker calls Picard to the bridge; the Ferengi are ready to talk.

Picard arrives on the bridge and talks with the Ferengi Daimon Bok, who seems to know Picard. Picard doesn't remember him but wants to know why he requested a meeting and kept the *Enterprise* waiting for three days, and why in the world they chose *Chicago X* as their hold

music, because “If You Leave Me Now” is cool once, but every 38 minutes for three days is a little much.

Bok tells Picard that Chicago is a righteous band, citing “25 or 6 to 4,” but if he wants to know anything more, he’ll only talk to him face to face. He asks if they should talk on the *Enterprise* or on the Ferengi ship. Troi tells Picard that she senses great deception and danger from the Ferengi (she appears to have forgotten all about “The Last Outpost” ... if only *we* could), so Picard decides they should meet up on the *Enterprise*. This really pisses off Worf, who can’t believe the Ferengi are so willing to come to the ship. However, he controls his anger; instead of blasting a hole in the viewer, he just breaks a crewman in half and eats his bones.

With an hour to spare before the Ferengi show up, Dr. Crusher takes Picard to Sickbay to, uh, investigate his headache a little bit more. Audiences expecting a little wakka chikka wakka chikka are instead given a 24th-century future history lesson: we don’t have headaches anymore. However, we still have painkillers, which is good, because “Angel One” is on the horizon.

The scene cuts to the bridge, and Trekkies reach for their own painkillers and anti-nausea medication when newly minted acting ensign Wesley Crusher, in his brand new gay pride spacesuit, storms into the bridge, walks right up to Geordi’s console, and tells Riker, “Commander, you’ll soon be getting an intruder alert.” Riker’s irritation with Wesley is slightly less than the audience’s, and he says, “Uh, listen, kid, if you have a report —” but before he can finish, Wesley interrupts him, ignores him, and tells Geordi to use the sensors to scan heading something or other. (See Behind the Scenes Memories, below, for more on this scene and its significance in *TNG* history.)

While the audience picks themselves up off the floor, and the official scribes of fan fiction spontaneously devise seven thousand different ways to shove things up Wesley’s ass and kill him, Picard arrives. He gives Wesley a mild dressing down about Starfleet procedure as a *Constellation*-class starship (which hasn’t identified itself) approaches

the *Enterprise* under impulse power. By pure coincidence, the Ferengi are about to beam over to the *Enterprise*, but nobody — not even Mary Sue himself Wesley Crusher — bothers to contemplate the possibility that these events are in any way connected to each other.

Daimon Bok and two Ferengi beam directly to the *Enterprise's* Bridge (heeding Ferengi Official Directive #16: skip the Transporter Room to save a day's worth of lighting and set dressing). Bok introduces his first officer, Kazago, who appears to have had a stroke, and his second officer, Rata, who is obviously related to the bouncing, leering, cowering Ferengi we all know and laugh at from "The Last Outpost." Daimon Bok tells Picard to sit back and chill out, because the approaching starship is under his control. It's a gift, to honor "the hero of Maxia."

The thing is, Picard doesn't know who the hero of Maxia is, and is surprised to learn that it's him. (It's like when my friends told me I was the hero of Tijuana when we were in college.)

During the battle of Maxia, Picard destroyed a ship which would not identify itself, but was eventually discovered to be of Ferengi origin. Daimon Bok is a little pissed about this whole thing, but is willing to let it go as a "mistake." (This is like the time my roommate drank the last beer in our fridge, and eventually discovered it belonged to me... though, lacking a free starship, I had to drop his toothbrush into our toilet. Tough love. Tough love.)

The starship arrives, and Picard succumbs to one of those Brain Clouds that Tom Hanks had in *Joe Versus the Volcano*. Troi leaps up and tells Picard that she feels something from his past. A closer look at the starship explains why: it's Picard's old command, the *Stargazer*. Daimon Bok says he found it drifting around this star system, and he wants Picard to have it as a gift.

After a commercial break, Picard tells his bridge officers about the Battle of Maxia, and how he used what's become known as "The Picard Maneuver" to defeat his enemy. During the retelling, Picard has a bit of a flashback but stops just short of pooping himself, so everyone just sort of acts like nothing weird happened.

All kidding aside, it's actually a cool scene. Patrick really gets into retelling how the maneuver worked, and it's clear that all the other actors enjoy listening to his performance, and the whole thing comes alive. Patrick the actor can clearly see the whole thing in his mind's eye, which gives real life to Picard the character reliving it, and it's a very good example of how a great actor can take something as simple as thirty seconds of otherwise expository dialog and turn it into something special and memorable.

Picard then beams onto the *Stargazer's* bridge — a fairly obvious redress of the *Enterprise* bridge from the original series movies (that's not a bad thing) — looks around, and says, "Hello, old friend." It's a genuinely moving and emotional moment, which a lesser actor (like the fifteen-year-old version of me, for example) would have ruined by overplaying. As a result, when Data reads Picard's last *Stargazer* log entry — "We are forced to abandon our starship. May she find her way without us" — and adds, "Apparently she did, sir," it's not maudlin or schmaltzy at all; it's touching.

Picard goes to his old quarters for a ride on the Nostalgia Bus, where we discover the source of his mysterious headaches: a glowing red ball (a *Star Trek* tradition, dating all the way back to the 1960s) partnered to a matching red ball that's controlled by Daimon Bok aboard the Ferengi ship. Anyone who is surprised to discover that the headaches, the mysterious arrival of the *Stargazer*, and Bok's mention of the Battle of Maxia are all connected ... was probably sitting in the writer's room three months before this episode was shot, congratulating themselves on how clever they were.

Back on the bridge, Riker takes possession of the *Stargazer* from the Ferengi, and Picard continues to complain about his headache. He gives control of the bridge to Riker and leaves. Riker looks at Troi and very seriously asks what's wrong with his captain. Oh! Cool! We're finally going to get to see Troi use her Betazoid abilities to tell us something more interesting than "Pain! Pain!" This will be the moment when Troi transitions from useless one-dimensional plot device into a real character! What's she going to say?!

The camera dramatically pushes in on her, as she looks at Riker and quietly says ... “I wish I could say.”

(Man, if I were Marina, I would have been furious about this; this is a scene which unquestionably should have played out with her, deepening the character of Troi, and strengthening her relationship with her captain, but instead she got “I wish I could say.”)

WHAT?! ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME?! Why doesn't she just say “Be sure to drink your Ovaltine!” Can someone please tell me why the creators would give Troi the power to divine emotions and help guide people through situations exactly like this one, only to have her do nothing when the situation arises? Honestly. This is like signing a .380 pinch hitter, putting him into game 5 of the playoffs with the bases loaded, down by two, and refusing to let him swing the bat. (If you're keeping score in this episode, the Writers are 0-2, and the Actors are 3-3. I'd also like to point to this moment as an example of why Trekkies should have trained their phasers on the writers and producers, not on us actors.)

In his quarters, Picard grabs a little sack time and climbs Jacob's Ladder as he remembers the Battle of Maxia. Meanwhile, in the ready room, Data tells Riker that Picard's personal account of the battle differs greatly from the official version, and it doesn't look too good for Picard: according to his personal logs, the ship he destroyed was flying a flag of truce, the fire on the *Stargazer* was an accident, there were no WMDs, new Coke was his idea, it was a load-bearing flask, Soylent Green is people, and they're going to need a bigger boat.

Riker plays the confession for Picard, and though he suspects that it's a fake, he has to report it to Starfleet HQ. Before he does, though, Riker calls Kazago on the Ferengi ship, and asks him, first officer to first officer, if he thinks his captain might just be full of shit. Kazago honors the first officer's code of direct honesty, and tells Riker to go fuck himself. Then he turns around and shoots his hunting buddy in the face.

In his quarters, a very grouchy Picard bitches at Dr. Crusher, while Daimon Bok cranks up the glowing red Super Headache Master 8000 (available on flex pay, with the bonus car wax and miracle chamois if you call in the next twenty minutes!). Dr. Crusher suggests that maybe the emotional pressure of seeing the *Stargazer* again and reliving the Battle of Maxia may be contributing to Picard's headaches. She encourages him to talk about it, which he does, revealing that he's reliving the battle in his nightmares and that he's haunted by the memory of destroying another ship. He's not sure if he was in his right mind then, and he's scared that he may be losing his mind now. Dr. Crusher listens to this raw outpouring of emotion and naked, vulnerable honesty, and responds ... by drugging Picard with a sedative.

Picard falls asleep and Daimon Bok cranks the Super Headache Master 8000 up to 11, which sends Picard onto the bridge of the *Stargazer* as it sets a course for the Dark Side of the Moon.

Meanwhile, in the ready room, Data tells Riker and Geordi that one of the logs is a forgery. Geordi helpfully declares that the new log is a fake, just in time for Picard to show up, skipping and jumping and waving around his glowsticks. He kicks everyone but Riker out and orders him to release the *Stargazer* from the tractor beam, which Riker dutifully does. Hey, what's the worst that could happen? Well, other than *that*, of course.

In Sickbay, Dr. Crusher and Counselor Troi check out Picard's brain scan, which looks really weird. Before Troi can get too crazy with the technobabble, Wesley shows up (boy, he really likes barging into scenes, doesn't he?) and shows her what real technobabble sounds like. Oh, and he also tells them that he "glanced" at the scans while Dr. Crusher was researching them and, in that brief moment, magically divined exactly what the rest of the professionally trained crew — including the hypersmart robot — hadn't noticed: the patterns in Picard's scan are identical to the low-intensity transmissions picked up from the Ferengi ship. Wesley cements his relationship with Trekkies by muttering, "You're welcome, ladies ... heh. Adults." after they leave the room. Oh, that's pure fucking genius writing there,

guys; that's not going to alienate a single fan. Bravo. Here, have a nice slow clap from me to you.

Dr. Crusher and Counselor Troi race up to the bridge and share Wesley's brilliant insights with Riker, just in time to find out that Picard has beamed himself off the *Enterprise* and onto the *Stargazer*, where Daimon Bok and his glowing red ball of terror are waiting. It turns out that Daimon Bok's son was the commander of the Ferengi ship that Picard destroyed in the Battle of Maxia, and Bok's spent the last nine years scheming and developing a proper "blood revenge" against Picard, spending his entire life's wealth on the two glowing red balls of hallucinatory headaches. Dude, let it go. Live in the *now*, man.

Riker contacts the Ferengi ship, and has another first officer to first officer talk with Kazago, who reveals that the writers sought to balance out the technobabble in the rest of the episode with their official description of the happy fun ball: "It is a forbidden device... a... 'thought maker.'" Whoa, whoa, whoa, slooooooow down there, egghead. What's this about Gabbo?

Picard is now, as they say, tripping his balls off, and turns the *Stargazer* around to pull the Picard Maneuver on the *Enterprise*. Data counters with the First Season *TNG* Writer's Maneuver: If you're in trouble with less than five minutes remaining in the show, use a stunning display of expository technobabble and some spiffy visual effects to wrap things up.

Picard's safety assured, Riker has a final first officer to first officer chat with Kazago, who tells him that Daimon Bok has been relieved of his command for being a dick. There's a nice long look between the two of them, and "Eye of the Tiger" begins to play as the episode ends.

QUOTABLE DIALOG

RIKER

How was it, Captain?

PICARD

Very strange, Number One. Like going back to the house you grew up in, but no one's home except phantoms of the past.

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

"I don't know much about brain scans, but I glanced at these when you were studying them and I noticed that these patterns are the same as those picked up from the low-intensity transmissions from the Ferengi ship. I went back and checked, and they're exactly the same." —Wesley Crusher, who doesn't know very much about brain scans, solving the big problem, saving the day, and earning a spot in every fan's personal airlock.

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

I haven't watched this episode in over a decade, but it's probably one of the most important for me to see, because it clearly illustrates exactly why Wesley Crusher went from mildly annoying to vehemently hated character so quickly: First of all, acting ensign or not, having Wesley rush into the middle of the bridge and effectively tell Riker, "Hey, I figured this out before you all did because I'm so fucking smart" is quite possibly the worst way to help the audience accept that this kid is going to be part of the main crew. Having Wesley interrupt the ship's first officer and then ignore the chain of command to tell *another* senior officer what to do is equally brilliant. Then the writers go for the win and have Wesley spout off some technobabble about being in Engineering and "playing around with boosting sensor output," because everyone knows that "playing around" with something as important as the long-range sensors is always a good idea.

Look, introducing Wesley — a teenager — as part of the main crew is like introducing a new product that consumers may not like. How the new product is framed and presented is incredibly important, because they must be convinced that the new product doesn't threaten the things they are used to and love. I don't think it is possible for the writers to have failed more spectacularly on any of those points than they did in this episode. We only get one chance to make a first impression, and what's the first impression of Wesley as Acting Ensign Crusher aboard the *Enterprise*? He "plays around" with things that are vital to the safety and operation of the ship, which implies a lack of respect for them. He barges onto the bridge, where Picard has made it very clear until the previous episode that he's unwelcome, which implies a lack of respect for Picard. He interrupts and then ignores Riker, and breaks the chain of command to tell Geordi what to do.

Because that's not bad enough, Wesley comes in at a crucial point in the third act, points out that he "glanced" at some brain scans which he doesn't "really know anything about," and magically deduced exactly what their origin is. To complete Wesley's perfectly brilliant introduction to the audience, they actually have him make a snarky comment to himself after Troi and Dr. Crusher have left the scene. When they get back to the bridge, Troi — who is supposed to be an intelligent, qualified Starfleet officer — doesn't even know what Wesley was talking about! (This is a theme that crops up again and again during the series; as late as the sixth season, the writers turned to Troi when they needed a character to act like a bimbo so they could dump some exposition in a scene.) Gosh, writers, what's not to like?

The damage is done and it's irreparable; we've made our first impression on an already skeptical audience (who, don't forget, have had to endure some truly atrocious episodes) and we can't ever take it back. After watching this episode, I finally understand — no, I *grok* — exactly why so many people hated Wesley so much. Hell, I played him for seven years and probably have more invested in him than anyone else in the world, and even I hated him while I watched this episode.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Hey, remember when this was in theaters, and it was called *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*? Once we get past that, if you can overlook or somehow forgive the Wesley garbage, it's actually not that bad of an episode, owing almost exclusively to Patrick Stewart's acting.

First, the bad: The writing is very weak. The audience is once again way ahead of the characters, who seem to swap their credulity and incredulity at exactly the wrong times, appearing stupid and naive. There's a ton of exposition and technobabble that's made even more annoying than usual by having characters finish each other's thoughts like they're in a '60s beach movie, making the plan to save the malt shop from the evil developer.

However, there are some good things: Audiences would have been entirely justified in rolling their eyes, or tuning out entirely upon learning that this was another Ferengi episode, but Rob Bowman directed Frank Corsentino (who played Daimon Bok) to be much more subtle, menacing, and quietly evil than the clownishly hyper Ferengi we saw before. Other than the appearance on the bridge of the *Enterprise*, Doug Warhit (who played Kazago) is also more subdued, and his "first officer to first officer" scenes with Riker make us believe that the Ferengi could actually be an adversary that we should take seriously.

It's too bad the Ferengi were initially portrayed in "The Last Outpost" as such complete idiots. Had their introduction not been such a laughable disaster, they could have been a formidable enemy, similar to what the Cardassians eventually became on *Deep Space Nine*. However, they suffer from the same first-impression issues that plague Wesley Crusher.

Finally, I believe this episode is the first time we saw what Patrick Stewart could really do once they took the training wheels off, and it was real and spectacular.

FINAL GRADE: C+

"HIDE AND Q"

16|16

19|07

23|08

21|01

ORIGINAL AIR DATE: NOVEMBER 23, 1987

TELEPLAY BY: C.J. HOLLAND AND GENE RODDENBERRY

STORY BY: C.J. HOLLAND

DIRECTED BY: CLIFF BOLE

STARDATE: 41590.5

SYNOPSIS

The *Enterprise* receives a distress call from a colony on Quadra Sigma III, which is just a few planets closer to its sun than eMac Sigma III. There's been an accident, and they need urgent medical attention. The colonists are in luck (as are Trekkies who have had their fill of "Pain! So much pain!") because the *Enterprise* has just dropped off Counselor Troi at Starbase G-6, putting them close enough to Sigma III to speed on over and save the 500 or so trapped miners. (Ah, trapped miners on a far-off colony... it's one of the truly great Sci-Fi cliches.)

The *Enterprise* kicks it up to Warp 9.1, but quickly runs into a familiar and no-longer-mysterious giant CGI net that the ship can't pass. Faster than you can say, "Hey, it's that thing from ILM that Q used in Encounter at Farpoint!" Data says, "Captain! It's that thing from ILM that Q used in Encounter at Farpoint!" They slam on the brakes, and Q appears on the bridge. He tells Picard that he's been thinking about it, and concluded that humans are not just a bunch of shitcocks; as a reward, he's giving them a really swell gift.

Picard tells Q that it's very sweet of him to offer, but they're on their way to save those trapped miners on Quadra Sigma III, where there are also radioactive mutants, a sentient brain in a jar, a computer that's become self-aware and turned on its creator, beings of pure energy, and

a call that's coming from inside the house, so maybe they could just talk about this some other time.

Q is really not cool with that, and while he amuses the audience with some great zingers (see Quotable Dialogue, below) he manages to piss off Worf, who growls at him and bares his teeth. Then Picard recaps the entire pilot in a pedantic and self-righteous speech that makes the audience growl and bare *their* teeth. Riker tries to get things back on track, and tells Q that they've spent so much time recapping the first five minutes of the episode, they don't have time for games. This makes Q positively giddy, and he transports the crew to the surface of a mysterious planetoid, leaving Picard alone on the bridge to review the next 20 pages of sententious dialog.

While the involuntary Away Team tries to figure out where they are, Picard discovers that nothing works on his ship. It's the first time in the episode that a real sense of doom emerges, and it's pretty cool. But this is the first season, and that doom is quickly erased when we return to the planetoid and discover Q, dressed in a Napoleonic costume. He invites Riker to have a seat and drink some old-timey lemonade while he sets up the rules of the game that Riker said they didn't have time to play. Riker displays great caution and skepticism by grabbing the glass and taking a nice big drink. When he doesn't die, the rest of the crew chug their own drinks... except for Worf. Worf looks at his glass and dumps it straight out on the ground for all his fallen *Io'dnI*. Hardcore, man.

Q says he's going to play a game with the crew. Before Riker has a chance to pull out his totally pimped-out Chaos army, Q tells Riker that if he wins the game, he'll win "the greatest possible future that you can imagine." (Really? A future without reality TV? Awesome! Riker FTW!) Q tells them that they have to stay alive, which will be slightly more difficult than usual, because the game is inherently unfair. Tasha freaks out, but Q says "Bitch be cool!" and whisks her off to a penalty box until someone gives him back his wallet, which says Bad Motherfucker on it. While they all try to figure out what a wallet is,

Q reveals that if anyone else breaks the rules, they will also go to the penalty box, which unfortunately only holds one person. If someone else is sent there, Tasha will be sent off to a fate worse than death: Friday night on ABC.

(This scene goes on long after the audience has figured out what's happening. However, I've just watched it five times in a row, and I have to admire and praise John de Lancie. The only real nuance in the scene comes from him, with sly and subtle glances, carefully measured non-obvious double entendres, and a certainty and specificity without which the Q character would be a disaster. I can not overstate how lucky we are that John brought Q to life; it was brilliant casting and masterful acting.)

Back on the bridge, Picard tries to record a log entry, but the computer has walked off the set until the rewrites arrive. Tasha appears and starts to cry, because she's so frustrated at being controlled by Q. Picard calms her down, and tells her that it's okay to cry while you're in the penalty box. Crying in baseball, however, is still forbidden. The scene tries very hard to humanize both characters by having them play against type, and it almost succeeds, but it's overwhelmed by saccharine strings on the soundtrack, and a bit of dialogue from Tasha at the end where she implies that she wants to know if Picard is as fully functional as Data. The moment is made even more creepy with the benefit of hindsight: she gets wasted by the Skin of Evil in just a few episodes, and tells Picard that he was always like a father to her. Gross!

Don Koharski — I mean, Q — reappears, ends Tasha's penalty, and reveals that he's testing Riker. Picard tells Q that Riker will totally kick his ass, and they make a bet: if Picard wins, Q stays out of humanity's path, and if Q wins, Picard gives up his starship command. (Okay, this is just silly. The show is ten episodes old. Does anyone seriously believe that Picard will lose his command? I wish they'd have made the stakes more realistic, like Picard has to wear a Clippers jersey or something humiliating like that.) Q agrees, and tells Picard that he's

already lost because Riker will be offered something that is impossible to refuse: a low-calorie India pale ale that doesn't let you down in the flavor department.

On the planetoid, Worf has gone off on a recon mission where he finds some alien soldiers, dressed in appropriate French historical costumes, marching around with muskets in some kind of encampment. Hey, that's kind of interesting and cool, so why don't we head back up to the *Enterprise* and listen to Q and Picard talk some more?

I kid. Oh, they talk, but this time it's a very good scene, performed by two superb actors who make the most of some mediocre dialogue. Picard wants to know why Q won't just talk about what he wants with humanity, and insists on forcing them to play games. (Because even more talking about stuff would be a welcome change from the constant talking about stuff.) Q tells him that it's just how he rolls... but they do the whole thing by reciting Shakespeare at each other, which is a lot cooler than I've made it sound.

Back on the planet, Riker tests out his phaser by shooting it at a rock about ten feet away from Worf, who responds to the violent explosion with a self-described warrior's reaction: a lot of snarling. (And you know what? I have to give up respect to Michael Dorn. I can't imagine what it must have been like to play Worf in the first season, when he was one-dimensional and so incredibly stupid. He didn't do much more than Denise did in these early episodes, and where she decided to quit the series out of frustration, Michael stuck it out, eventually developed a complex and beloved character, became a regular on *DS9*, and was in all the *TNG* movies. Advantage: Dorn.)

Worf tells Riker that though the enemy is wearing human uniforms, they're more like vicious animal creatures. Before the "four legs good, two legs *better!*" chant can start, Riker asks Data if he has a theory about what's going on, and just as the audience braces itself for another long-winded recap of the entire episode, Data turns around... except he's Q!

The animal creatures take aim and fire their phaser muskets in true *Star Trek* fashion: right at the guys who are wearing red shirts. Riker and Geordi leap safely out of the way, and Riker blasts them both. More creatures appear, almost as if they're spewing out of a monster generator in Gauntlet, and Q tells Riker that the only way he can save his crew is to send them back to the ship, using the powers of the Q, which, incidentally, Riker now has.

Way to bury the lede there, Q.

Riker doesn't have a lot of time to decide what to do, as thousands of creatures begin to surround them and — okay, wait. I lied. It's not thousands, it's more like six, but we didn't have a big budget then, so would it kill you to suspend your disbelief a little bit? Do you really expect Helm's Deep on television in 1987? At least we're giving you some action instead of a lot of talking. You want the talking? How about that? Would that be better? Huh? Or how about we get the kid to come in and whip up some *deus ex machina* to save the day? Yeah, that's what I thought, tough guy.

Riker sends them back to the ship, in a daring maneuver that saves his crew from the onslaught of ferocious animal creatures, who had them outnumbered by at least two.

Meanwhile, back on the bridge, the power has just been restored. According to Engineering and the ship's computer, as far as everyone except the bridge crew is concerned, no time has passed at all, and nothing has changed in their apparent absence. It's almost like Q is some sort of omnipotent being who sent them off into a parallel universe, where six ferocious animal creatures could easily overwhelm and kill four Starfleet officers, one of whom is a mighty Klingon warrior!

Data, Geordi, and Worf appear on the bridge, but Riker is still on the planet, sitting on a rock and laughing his ass off at Q, who Riker says is a big fat joke. Well, it's not the nicest thing in the world to say, but at least he's not preaching at him, right? Don't worry, it's coming.

In the ensuing scene, Q metaphorically humps Riker's leg, while Riker metaphorically kicks him off. The Q, it turns out, were impressed with something in humans after their encounter at Farpoint, and are worried that humans will soon be racing around the galaxy with their malfunctioning holodecks, waking up the Borg, converting boy geniuses to Travelers, living entire lifetimes in the blink of an eye, and hiring Whoopi Goldberg to be the bartender. Q wants to know exactly why humanity is going to do all these things, and if he can get Riker to come bat for the other team, he'll have a better chance at figuring it all out.

Riker tells Q that he doesn't go for these backdoor shenanigans, and Q disappears, just in time for Picard, Tasha, Geordi, and Worf to take his place. Wesley Crusher has also arrived, apparently being whisked right out of school. Wesley reveals that he's the first teenager in the history of the universe to be unhappy that he was taken out of class.

Tasha and Worf have lost their phasers, which is bad news because there are now *seven* creatures, and they've brought a bugler. Without a viewscreen to shoot at, Worf's warrior instincts take over, and with a fearsome growl, he attacks. He manages to knock two of them to the ground before he gets hit in the face with a rifle and bayoneted to death. Wesley has a completely natural and believable response as he runs toward danger to be at Worf's side, just in time to get bayoneted right in the back himself. Trekkies across the galaxy spontaneously erupt into celebratory riots, but the party is short-lived as Riker uses his Q powers to launch everyone back onto the *Enterprise*.

With just 12 minutes left before they arrive to save the trapped miners (remember that? It turns out they're digging for MacGuffins in the Sigma III system), Riker tells Picard that he's not going to accept Q's offer to become godlike, and that he promises not to use his powers again. Well, that was easy.

They arrive at the planet, and find about 8 of the 500 trapped miners (I swear to Riker, don't say a thing, or so help me we'll talk about the

Prime Directive) including a trapped, dead child. Riker, honoring the promise he made Picard, doesn't use his powers to bring her back to life. When he gets back to the bridge, though, he's pretty pissed about it, and wants a meeting with the entire bridge staff. (I'd just like to point out that it's nice — to me, anyway — to see a character on first-season *TNG* other than Wesley acting like an arrogant prick.)

Dr. Crusher arrives for the meeting, accompanied by a very smug and snotty Wesley — whoops, I guess I spoke too soon — and Riker explains that, even though he's pretty much a golden god, he's still the same old lovable Riker they've known for ten episodes, and to show them how totally awesome he is, he's going to give some gifts to the crew.

He starts with Wesley (who he claims to know best of all, because of their friendship and long talks, and that one time Wesley brought his friend Dudley into Riker's bike shop). Riker gives Wesley his greatest wish: the gift of being ten years older, turning him into a barrel-chested, blond-haired, blue-eyed dreamboat. (Coincidentally, having a barrel-chested, blond-haired, blue-eyed dreamboat to play with was the costume designer's greatest wish, as well.) Riker then turns to Data, but before he can turn Data into a real boy (a barrel-chested, blond-haired, blue-eyed dreamboat, no doubt), Data tells him that it would just be an illusion, and declines. Undeterred, Riker gives Geordi his sight, takes the banana clip off his face, and tells him that he doesn't have to answer to "Toby" any more ... but after a compliment to Tasha that leads to a visit by Lt. Commander Sexual Harassment Panda later this season, Geordi also declines, so Riker turns his attention to Worf, giving him a Klingon whore who snarls and bares her teeth, which is apparently sexy by Klingon standards. Worf doesn't want the K'lap, so he gives his gift back too, followed by Wesley, the Tin Man, Scarecrow, and Cowardly Lion.

Throughout all of this, Q sits on the edge of the bridge, competing for Riker's loyalty like a weekend dad at a custody hearing, while Picard calmly urges Riker to see the real consequences of his choices.

Ultimately, just like an after-school special or first-season episode of *TNG*, Riker does the right thing, and rejects Q's power.

Picard turns to Q and says, "HA! Pay up, bitch!"

Q tries to back out of the bet, but he's zapped off the bridge by what we can assume is the rest of the Q Continuum, who must be a little annoyed that this is the guy they chose to interact with humans. Hey, screw you, Q. Coffee is for closers.

Everything returns to normal, and the episode closes with a nice exchange between Picard and Data:

"Sir, how is it that Q can handle time and space so well, and us so badly?" Data says.

Picard replies, "Perhaps one day we will discover that space and time are simpler than the human equation."

QUOTABLE DIALOGUE

Q

You seem to find all this amusing.

RIKER

I might, if we weren't on our way to help some suffering and dying humans—

Q

Oh your species is *always* suffering and dying.

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

“Captain, I have a schematic from the explosion site. It suggests the cause may be a methane-like gas.” —Riker, setting up the MacGuffin. (Yes, I realize that this isn’t true technobabble, but it’s the closest we came in this episode, believe it or not.)

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

At the very beginning of the show, Riker comes walking out of the upstage turbolift and delivers the obligatory technobabble I mentioned above. I wasn’t in that scene, but I was on the stage getting something to eat while they shot it. During one of the early takes, they rolled the cameras, Patrick started his dialogue, and then there was this really loud crash, followed by Jonathan’s muffled voice saying, “Oh, shit.” It was one of the first times that I can recall one of us walking full speed into the turbolift doors before the FX guy could open them.

I didn’t know at the time that there was a deep and burning hatred for my character developing in fandom (I hadn’t been to any conventions, yet, and didn’t know what Usenet was at the time) so I didn’t think twice about being stabbed on the planetoid; actually, I thought it was kind of cool. However, that image was endlessly reprinted over the next year or so, and more than one Trekkie presented it to me at a con for an autograph, incorrectly thinking the joke was on me. It ultimately ended up as a card called “Wesley gets the point” in the Star Trek CCG, and I’ll totally trade you a signed one for a Black Lotus and a Legendary Land to be named later.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Though it suffers from the typical ailments that afflict most of the first-season episodes, this still has some good moments, and they managed to sneak some character development in there as well. Visually, it’s a pleasing show that looks very much like the original series, especially the planetoid with a green sky and dual moons, but it still has way too much exposition. Like the Robot Devil told Fry, “You can’t just have your characters announce how they feel! That makes me feel angry!” It

is well-paced, though, and while the action sequences are kind of silly, they do a fine job breaking up the talking.

About the talking: I'm very reluctant to criticize my friend Gene Roddenberry, but it seems like a typical Aaron Sorkin criticism can be leveled at him in these early episodes: he puts his words into his characters' mouths and lectures the audience. There are moments of engaging character interaction between Riker and Q, Riker and Picard, and Picard and Q, but there's a ton of expository, preachy, I-am-going-to-make-my-point-and-you-can't-stop-me dialogue in those scenes that's emotionally disconnected and tiresome. If a writer or producer wants to get points across to his audience, I think it's better to do it less obviously, with more allegory and fewer PowerPoint presentations.

However, this episode does a fairly decent job examining the human condition and the absolute corruption that comes with absolute power, and if we're going to have a recurring villain, we could do much worse than John de Lancie's Q. If we're grading on a curve, based upon what we've already seen in the first season, this is certainly an above-average episode.

FINAL GRADE: B-

"HAVEN"

23|04

16|03

01|23

22|23

ORIGINAL AIR DATE: NOVEMBER 30, 1987

TELEPLAY BY: TRACY TORME

STORY BY: TRACY TORME AND LAN OKUN

DIRECTED BY: RICHARD COMPTON

STARDATE: 41294.5

SYNOPSIS

The *Enterprise* is in orbit around a planet known as Haven, a planet so beautiful, Picard tells us, legends say it has mystical healing powers.

Tasha calls Riker out of his quarters, where he's been watching two holographic young women play harps together. (Worst. Sexual. Metaphor. Ever.) Riker walks in the transporter room and wants to know what was so goddamn important that Yar had to call him away from his harp-watching thing. It turns out that there's an object from Haven waiting to be beamed aboard the ship. Riker says, "Seriously? There's not a single other crew member on the ship who could have handled this? Beam the damn thing over, already. I've got harp-playing to watch."

The transporter chief complies and beams over ... a mysterious box. While everyone wonders what's inside the box, a face on its front (played by Armin Shimerman, in a cool non-Ferengi role) says it's there to deliver a message to Troi: Lwaxana Troi and the Miller family announce the joyous joining of Wyatt Miller and ... someone. The box then takes a big jewel shit all over the transporter. While Tasha rubs the box's nose in it and tells it to go on the rewrite pages next time, Troi tells Riker that the "someone" getting married is her.

Oh boy. Is it going to be one of *those* episodes? (Spoiler alert!: Yes.)

Cut to the Ready Room, where Troi tearfully explains to Riker and Picard that arranged marriages are an old Betazoid tradition, and it's her turn. Picard wants to know if she and her new hubby will be staying with the ship, and Troi tearfully tells him she won't. Picard congratulates her, and gets out of there before he has to listen to Riker let everyone know that he's not going to be the most sympathetic character in the world this week. (*Harpus Interruptus* can make a guy cranky, after all.) While Troi tearfully watches him leave, Data tells her that the Miller wedding party is about to beam aboard.

Troi tearfully goes to the transporter room to greet her future in-laws: Gordon Jump and Lovey Howell. Gordon Jump is really excited about the big nifty starship, and Lovey is really excited about her nifty hat. Troi's future husband, Wyatt, who she hasn't seen since they were stem cells, gives her a chameleon rose, a cool bit of botany that changes color to fit the mood of its holder. The rose is clearly broken, though, as it changes to white instead of tearful.

Shortly after the Millers leave, Troi's mother Lwaxana arrives, accompanied by Lurch. Depending on your point of view, Lwaxana is either brassy and outspoken, or just plain obnoxious. (Personally, I find her delightfully entertaining and a much-needed breath of fresh air in these early episodes, but I know that my opinions are colored very much by my affection for Majel Roddenberry, who I just adored in real life.)

For the next few pages, Lwaxana treats Picard like a bellhop in a hotel, embarrasses and frustrates Troi, and never once stops talking, vocally and telepathically. What started out as a routine "shotgun wedding" storyline now shows a lot of promise, if only because there's clearly going to be fireworks between Troi and her mother, and maybe even Picard.

Back on the bridge, Haven's leader contacts the *Enterprise*. There's a mystery ship on its way to Haven, and as the planet has no defenses, they expect the *Enterprise* to protect them if the mystery ship causes

any trouble. If you're playing *Star Trek* bingo, fill in the "hamfisted foreshadowing" square now.

Down in the guest quarters, Troi and her future husband finally get to meet each other. It's a beautiful little scene that's very well-written and performed. Rather than having Troi and Wyatt spout exposition *at* each other, screenwriter Tracy Torme reveals their discomfort with each other in a touching scene that makes these two adults appear like teenagers, which is how they'd probably feel if this were happening in real life. We learn that Troi has very strong feelings for Riker, and that Wyatt is a doctor who really wants to help people. Wyatt has been seeing a woman's face in his mind since he was a little kid, and he was surprised to learn that it wasn't Troi, who he figured was using her Betazoid abilities to project herself into his thoughts. Also, he's been drawing pictures of her that look suspiciously like charcoal and pastel impressions of theatrical head shots circa 1987, but that's not nearly as creepy and weird as it sounds; it's actually sort of charming. Troi is sorry that she isn't his dream girl, and he's sorry that she's sorry. In fact, we're all sorry, and a little tearful.

Back on the bridge, Picard gets his first glimpse of the mystery ship: it's Tarellian, which is a little weird since the entire Tarellian civilization has been presumed dead for quite some time. Picard and the senior staff retire to the observation lounge, where it turns out that everyone there — except Picard, who is a Starfleet captain — has heard the story of the Tarellians, and knows it in great detail. Picard only saw the movie, which had the entire *Tales of the Black Starship* subplot removed for time.

Data, Dr. Crusher, and Tasha tell a story so filled with sci-fi cliches, the ensuing drinking game would put Ulysses S. Grant into a coma: Tarella was an Earthlike planet (drink!) with technology equivalent to late 20-century Earth (drink!). The Tarellians were very similar to humans (drink!) and ended up in a big old nasty war, just like World War II (drink!). One faction developed a biological weapon (drink!) and unleashed it on the other half, eventually infecting them all (drink!) in a planet-wide plague (drink!) that was so virulent, even when the

survivors fled the planet, they infected and killed the entire populations of the other planets they attempted to settle (drink!). A few of the more noble survivors tried to stay away from inhabited planets, but they were hunted down and killed anyway. (If you've been playing, and you're not passed out by now, I'd like to say how cool I think it is that Keith Richards is reading my book.)

Picard decides that now will be the moment he remembers that he already knows this entire story, and tells Geordi that the last Tarellian ship was believed destroyed by the Alcyones eight years ago. The ship will arrive shortly, though, which poses a unique problem for the *Enterprise*: their treaty with Haven says they have to protect the planet, but their Starfleet duty says they have to help people in need, even the Tarellians. While they figure out what to do about that little problem, everyone heads down to a party to celebrate the pre-joining of Troi and Wyatt Miller ... well, everyone except Riker, who totally storms out of the room when Picard announces the party.

At the party, we learn that Lwaxana wants a traditional Betazoid wedding, while Lovey and Gordon Jump want an Earth-style ceremony (you know, because on Earth there's only one culture and we all do weddings the same way — drink!). Things get a little heated before Picard invokes a little-used Starfleet rule that prohibits disagreements at parties, also known as the “Paramount says this scene needs to be three pages shorter or we have to cut it entirely” directive.

Cue Ted Knight: “Later, at the dinner portion of the party, emo Riker is emo. And what's this? Mr. Homn gets shitfaced! Meanwhile, Batman and Robin join Scooby and Shaggy for a trip to the haunted amusement park.”

Over dinner, Wyatt reveals that he, too, is a student of the Tarellian war and biological disaster, which is a *remarkable* coincidence! (“Perhaps not! Could there be more to this mystery? Wendy, Marvin and Wonder Dog head into the forest to investigate!” Okay, Ted Knight. Go back into the box. You'll get nothing and like it.) Dr. Crusher is happy to have another medical colleague on board and is happy to give him

all the access to sickbay he wants, in the event that he can treat any survivors on the ship. Now that the plot has been duly advanced, we get to spend the rest of the scene enjoying (or tolerating, again, depending on your point of view) Lwaxana's antics, including her pet fake vine wrapping itself around Lovey's arm, and the revelation that the traditional Betazoid wedding includes all the guests getting naked. This is too much for Troi, who blows up and storms out of the room and into the holodeck, where she runs into a sulking Riker.

We don't need the goddamn strings on the soundtrack to tell us what's coming: get your hankies and barf bags ready, everyone. For the next two pages, Riker is a petulant jerk, as Troi tries her best to spare his feelings and explain that she's bound by tradition to marry Wyatt. They never really connect in this scene, an awkwardness made even more pointed by the arrival of Wyatt, who, as played by Rob Knepper, is immensely likable and has very real chemistry with Marina Sirtis' Troi. Riker sulks away, leaving the two nearlyweds alone. When it's just Wyatt and Troi in the scene, they decide that they're going to go through with the wedding, and celebrate with some PG makin' out. *Wakka Chikka.*

Back on the bridge, Picard takes a call from Haven. The Tarellian plague ship is dangerously close to the planet, and Haven's leader, Valeda Innis, wants the *Enterprise* to blow the ship to something resembling smithereens, or at least put it behind the wall of sleep, so that it's only a memory.

Picard, true to form, wants to talk to the presumed survivors instead, so he grabs the ship with a tractor beam. The main viewer flickers to life, revealing that — HOLY SHIT IT'S THE WOMAN WYATT'S BEEN SEEING IN HIS DREAMS! (Drink!)

The *Enterprise* hails them, and we see just how far we've come since 1969 when a dude, identifying himself as Wrenn, pushes her out of the way so he can address Picard. You know, man to man.

"Hey, nice uniform," Wrenn says, "do they sell men's clothes where you

got that?” Then he dances in an abandoned warehouse while holding out for a hero.

It turns out that there’s a psychic link between Wyatt and Ariana, the mystery woman (who is totally hot in a 1987 Van Halen music video model sort of way), and Wrenn is her father. Picard tells them the legend of Haven is bullshit, so they’re not going to be cured of anything, and should probably just aim for the nearest star and die already. Wrenn tells him to chillax; they just want to settle down on some unpopulated area of Haven, where they can die in peace and luxury. Yeah, we’ll run that past the leaders on Haven, dude. I’m sure they’ll be totally into it.

Meanwhile, Wyatt meets up with Lwaxana, who tells him exactly why he and Ariana found each other’s thoughts across the great expanse of the universe (see below). Also, she wants to know what headdress would look best on her naked. Yeah, let that image roll around in your imagination for a minute. I’ll wait.

Wyatt then heads over to sickbay, where, in a sweater that’s totally stolen from the Wesley Crusher Collection (exclusively at Sears this Fall!) he gathers up some medical supplies. After a quick stop to tell his parents to take good care of each other and to steal a kiss from a tearful Troi, he goes to the transporter room and slips the transporter chief a mickey before beaming over to the Tarellian ship himself.

Once he gets there, no one seems surprised to see him, because Ariana’s been doing drawings of him her whole life, as well. Does that mean they get to skip right to the third date? Maybe in the unrated BluRay edition.

Lovey and Gordon Jump come to the bridge to talk with Wyatt on the viewscreen. He tells them that he came to Haven to fulfill his destiny, which he thought was marrying Troi, but was actually banging the hot model, and ... something else, what was it? oh yeah, trying to cure the plague.

Everyone wishes him well, and the Tarellian ship leaves Haven, on a course for the Never Shows Up Again On Star Trek quadrant.

QUOTABLE DIALOGUE

“It’s something they all know instinctively, yet go to great effort to reject or build complicated superstitions about. All life, Wyatt, all consciousness, is indissolubly bound together. Indeed, it’s all part of the same thing.” —Lwaxana, explaining to Wyatt how he and Ariana found each other across the great expanse of the universe, in a line that reflects Gene Roddenberry’s secular humanism, and a bit of Buddhism, as well.

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

“Thank you for the drinks.” —Mr Homn. (Okay, okay, it’s not that technobabblish, but it’s one of my favorite lines in the entire first season, and there really wasn’t any true technobabble in this episode, so it goes here.)

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

I was never aware of the budgetary limitations we had during the first season, but there’s an undeniable example in this show: the bit with the chameleon rose is a cute bit of writing, and I imagine that if we had a bigger budget (or visual effects were as cheap and plentiful in 1987 as they are today) the rose would have changed into all sorts of different colors over the next several scenes. In fact, I’d be very surprised if it wasn’t written that way originally, because the rapid changing of the rose’s color while Lwaxana embarrasses and frustrates Troi for several pages could be a very funny and clever visual gag. However, as it turns out, it just stays white the whole time, and it’s pretty hard to ignore the bright white rose in the middle of the frame, especially against Troi’s dark uniform. I think we all take unrealistic digital visual effects for granted in this era of *Heroes*, *Lost*, *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Desperate Housewives*, but even though *TNG* had a

budget of around a million dollars per show back then (a very big deal at the time), the technology to animate something as simple as a color-changing rose wasn't within our grasp.

Before I get to *The Bottom Line*, I want to talk a little bit about how much we all liked Tracy Torme, who wrote "Haven." There were a few above-the-line people everyone in the cast really liked, including director Rob Bowman (who had already directed "Where No One Has Gone Before" and "The Battle") and writer Tracy Torme (who gives me a Mel Torme number of 2). When you work in television, you quickly get used to directors who don't interact with the actors at all, because they focus on getting the show done on time so they'll be asked back for future episodes. You also get used to writers who don't seem to have unique voices for each character, or are unwilling to listen to input from the actors who play those characters. Tracy Torme was one of my favorite writers for *TNG* (right up there with Ron Moore) because he wrote character-driven stories with real dialogue and real character interaction. He didn't just hit a bunch of beats and push a story along from point to point; he used his words deliberately, letting the characters tell a story that evolved over 42 minutes. As I mentioned in the synopsis, this could have been an absolutely dreadful "shotgun wedding" episode that was as predictable as it was tedious, but Tracy's script, aided by very good guest star casting and great acting from everyone involved, made it one of the better episodes in season one.

THE BOTTOM LINE

As we near the halfway point of the first season, the GPA to this point is a pretty dismal 2.05. There's still time to pull up our average, though, and if we can keep doing shows like "Haven," and avoid shows like "Code of Honor," we can probably stay out of summer school. As I've said before, we're grading on the first season curve, but even if we weren't, "Haven" would have gotten at least a check plus and a smiley face. It comes along after two (relatively) good episodes, and right before the only episode of *TNG* to win a prestigious Peabody award. If this isn't acing our midterms, I don't know what is.

There's still some painful exposition, though, and whoever directed Riker to be such a petulant whinebag needs to go sit in the corner for a year or so, but overall, it's a good episode that introduces future fan favorite Lwaxana Troi in a story that balances humor, message, and mystery. It's always risky to cast the boss's wife in anything, but with a character as gregarious as Lwaxana, in the middle of a season that has been, to put it mildly, uneven, it could have been an absolute disaster. Majel, however, is pitch-perfect and gives us a character that is as nuanced and ultimately enjoyable as John de Lancie did with Q. Audiences loved her on the screen, but we loved her even more on the set.

FINAL GRADE: B

"THE BIG GOODBYE"

26|10

ORIGINAL AIR DATE: JANUARY 11, 1988

WRITTEN BY: TRACY TORME

DIRECTED BY: JOSEPH L. SCANLAN

STARDATE: 41997.7

17|16

SYNOPSIS

05|10

The *Enterprise* is on a diplomatic mission to Alderaan, and the imperial senate will not stand for — oh. Wait. Sorry. Wrong *Star*. Let's start over, shall we?

17|16

The *Enterprise* is on a diplomatic mission to meet the Jarada, an alien species with a peculiar affinity for protocol: if Picard doesn't speak a particular greeting in exactly the right way at exactly the right time, the Jarada won't join the Federation, and they'll take all their mythical Jaradan weed with them. You can imagine, the success of this mission is especially important to everyone on Starbase 420.

Picard and Counselor Troi have been practicing his speech for hours, because it is just about the most important thing Picard has done since convincing Q that humanity isn't a bunch of shitcocks. Because he is so aware of the significance of the meeting, he naturally closes up his books and heads down to the holodeck to goof off.

Picard tells his personal log that he's looking forward to trying out something new called a holodeck program: rather than simply recreating a time or a place (or both) it recreates an entire fictional universe inside the *Enterprise* with characters and a story, sort of like LARPing, if LARPing was cool. (Please include a clever and clear subject line in your hate e-mail, Vampyres.)

This particular program will recreate the fictional world of Dixon Hill, a Chandler-esque private eye from 1940s San Francisco, who is one of Picard's personal heroes. Picard will be playing the title role, and after a few minutes inside the program, he has already retained his first client: a dame with a couple of big ... problems. Seems some lout is trying to put her on ice, and the only man who can help her is Dixon Hill ... who really needs to change out of his funky pajamas and into a proper suit. Picard takes the case, and then he takes a powder. He saves the program for later and heads back to the *Enterprise* for a change of clothes.

On his way to that room on the *Enterprise* where they keep all the 1940s costumes, he calls a meeting of the entire senior staff (and Wesley Crusher, of course) in the observation lounge, where, with a conviction normally reserved for timeshare salesmen, he describes how great this new holodeck program thing is. Then he recaps for the audience just how important it is that nobody screws up the contact with the Jarada. Data really wants everyone to know precisely how serious it is, within a tolerance of one micron, but Picard adjourns the meeting before he can break out the puppets, music, and multimedia presentations.

Geordi and Data walk and talk, and Data tries to understand why Picard and the rest of the crew wouldn't want to relive, in the most graphic detail possible, the last (failed) contact between the Jarada and the Federation. Geordi tells Data that it's the sort of thing that one doesn't need to experience twice, and Data mercifully (and uncharacteristically) lets it go, actually changing the subject to the "puzzling character" of Dixon Hill. Geordi tells Data that he has a great idea: Data should go study all about Dixon Hill and stuff and just get off his back because he's got shit to *do*, man, and they part ways: Data heads up to the bridge to learn about Dixon Hill, and Geordi whistles the theme to *Reading Rainbow* while he walks on down the hall.

(Nitpicker's note: If you look over Geordi's shoulder about five seconds into this scene, you can catch a glimpse of some doors behind them which aren't closed all the way, revealing some nice, white, incandescent 20th-century light. If you're interested in the geography of the stage,

the room where that door sits is part of Engineering, with the pool table removed for this particular scene. You may also notice that there are a *ton* of extras walking around the corridors in this episode, which was intended to convey to the audience just how many people were on the *Enterprise D*, but I think makes the place seem cluttered.)

With eleven hours to go before the Jaradan rendezvous, Picard contacts the ship's 20th-century literature expert, Mr. Whalen (you'll find one in every ship, you see) and invites him to come along on another trip into Dixon Hill's world, appropriately dressed this time. Data meets them both, and the three of them walk back into *The Big Goodbye*.

After a brief encounter with a newspaper salesman, played perfectly by Dick Miller — one of the most instantly recognizable character actors of the last thirty years, an inspired bit of casting — we learn that Dixon Hill's newest client, Jessica Bradley, has been found dead. That'll teach Picard to change his clothes. A couple of cops show up and take Picard downtown, citing the rock-solid evidence of a Dixon Hill business card in her purse. A guy named Max Factor and a Mister Kleenex are also suspects.

Back in the real world, the *Enterprise* is scanned by a long-range Jaradan probe, which makes the whole ship shimmy and shake with a bump and a grind that it just can't fake, because it's on top, it's on top. Yeah, it's a pretty killer probe, that's for sure.

After the probe does its thing, the Jarada make contact: they want to talk to the Captain, and are offended that they can't immediately speak to the person in charge, which would explain why the Jarada destroyed every planet in the Dell Technical Support system. Riker manages to mollify the Jarada temporarily, but nobody gives him a cookie for what is presumably a pretty impressive feat. Oh well. He sends Geordi down to the holodeck to pick up the Captain.

Meanwhile, Dr. Crusher dons some swanky '40s garb and heads into the holodeck, which helpfully puts her right into the police station where Picard, er, I mean, Dixon Hill, is being interrogated. A quick glimpse

into the interrogation room reveals that Picard is really enjoying the “Bad Cop” half of the routine.

Geordi arrives at the holodeck, but is unable to communicate with the people inside, access the program, or open the doors. (Though none of us were aware of it at the time, this was a historic event: it was the first of 514,229 confirmed holodeck malfunctions on the *Enterprise*.)

Riker decides he’ll head down to see if he can help out (because, as the First Officer, he’s clearly more qualified than the dude who will soon be the Chief Engineer), but is stopped by Wesley Crusher on the way. Wesley informs Riker that he’s studied all of the holodeck manuals and could probably be of some help down there. Riker, who clearly has no idea who the go-to guy is whenever there’s anything wrong with the ship, tells Wesley to stay on the bridge. He’s about to leave when Troi reminds Riker that Wesley’s mother is also missing. Oh, and the kid’s a freakin’ genius who will one day transcend space and time after saving the *Enterprise* from 514,229 confirmed holodeck malfunctions, so maybe he could, you know, tag along.

Before Riker can argue, Troi distracts him with some Imzadi cleavage. Riker succumbs to the Betazoid Mind Trick and invites Wesley to join him. Wesley tries to catch a glimpse of Troi’s goodies on his way to the turbolift, but he’s too late. Dammit, foiled again.

Back in the holodeck program, Dr. Crusher tries to put on makeup, while a desk sergeant tries to put the moves on her. It’s a pretty cute scene, especially when he gives her a stick of gum, which she chews and swallows. Inside the interrogation room, Picard convinces the “good cop,” his pal Lt. McNary, to spring him from the clink, and they celebrate with a cigarette, which Picard handles about as well as Beverly handled the gum. McNary invites him to dinner, but Picard tells him he has “other duties.”

“Blonde or brunette?” he asks.

“Oh, she’s a lady all right,” Picard replies. “And her name is *Enterprise*.”

It's truly awesome moment, and even though we see it coming a light-year away, we don't mind a bit. When he comes out into the lobby and meets up with Dr. Crusher, who plays the part of the moll to perfection, only half of us mind, and even then it's because it reminds us of a slightly weird BBS chatting incident that we'd like to forget.

Back on the lady called *Enterprise*, Riker arrives with Wesley, who springs into action and starts investigating some blinking lights and Okudagrams. Geordi, who knows when to step back and let the fourteen-year-old master do his thing, watches with, um, quiet awe. Yeah, that's it.

Inside, Picard decides that playtime is over, and it's time to get back to work, but Dr. Crusher wants to check out his office. Any chance of that being a euphemism is made less likely, or at least less enticing, when Data and Whalen tag along. When they get to his office, the euphemism possibility is eliminated completely: Felix Leech, a Peter Lorre-esque hired goon, is waiting for them. With a gun. And he's pissed.

There's another great moment here where the gun comes out, and Picard and company all look at each other with this wide-eyed grin, like it's the coolest thing they've ever seen. It's one of the rare times on *TNG* when we in the audience feel genuine suspense, too, because we know that gun's going to go off and someone is going to get hurt. Those of us who are longtime fans also know that, for the purposes of this holodeck program, the part of Ensign Ricky Redshirt will be played by the ship's 20th-century literature expert Mr. Whalen, who dutifully takes a bullet in the gut from Leech. This leads to another great moment, when everyone realizes that, holy shit, Leech just shot Whalen. Like, for reals.

Dr. Crusher tells them that they have to get Whalen to Sickbay, Picard smacks Leech around, and they can't get the computer to give them an exit. This is sort of a problem because Whalen is dying, and back in the real world the Jarada will be expecting the Captain to speak to them pretty soon. Just to make things a little more tense, tough guy

Cyrus Redblock shows up. It turns out that Redblock hired Hill to find an “item,” which Hill hasn’t produced. Redblock and his goons intend to help Hill find it, using their guns. After Leech pistol-whips Picard, McNary arrives, and we’ve got ourselves what you could call “a situation.”

Picard tries to talk them out of the situation, using the old “Hey, man, we’re from another world” routine, but Redblock and company ain’t buying. Data tries the well-known, “Hey, man, these characters aren’t even *real*” line, which all of us actors perfected during years of *Star Trek* convention appearances. Unfortunately, Data’s effort meets with similar results.

Outside the holodeck, Wesley has figured out the problem, but before he can launch into some glorious technobabble, Riker cuts him off. Will it work or not? Wesley isn’t sure; if he does it wrong, the program could terminate and take everything inside — including the humans — into the Cornfield Nebula. (Nitpicker alert: Uhh, how, exactly, could the imaginary holodeck program terminate and make the real flesh and blood people inside vanish? Wouldn’t they just be left inside a black room with yellow reflective tape on the walls?)

Riker tells him to quit talking about it, and do it.

Meanwhile, back in the holodeck, Picard makes one last effort to save Whalen and resolve the situation, using the pretty much foolproof “Hey, man, if you help us save this dude here, by getting him into our sickbay, we can, like, totally use the computer to give you shit, and stuff” routine. Data launches into seventeen pages of Dataspeak about computers, and Leech wants to kill him ... temporarily making Leech a sort of sympathetic character.

But before Redblock can give the order to start greasing these feebs, Wesley zaps the holodeck controls with his patented holodeck zapping tool. The world of Dixon Hill’s 1940s San Francisco is briefly replaced with the world of Yukon Cornelius’s scary, snowy, Blizzardofrak VII, before just as quickly flipping back to Hill’s office.

While everyone enjoys a collective WTF moment, the exit suddenly appears. Picard tries to leave, but Redblock and Leech head out into the corridor, as excited as Lindsay Lohan at an all-you-can-eat Vicodin-and-Red Bull party.

“A whole new world to plunder!” Redblock says gleefully ... and the two of them vanish into thin air. Oops.

Back in the holodeck, Data and Dr. Crusher take Whalen back to Sickbay, leaving Picard, as Dixon Hill, to have the titular *Big Goodbye* with McNary, who wants to know if the world will still be there when Picard leaves. Picard tells him he doesn't know, but they'll always have Paris. Oh, wait. That's a different totally reliable tech malfunction episode. Sorry, my bad. They share a bit of existential reflection, and Picard heads out to the bridge.

Once he gets there, he delivers the required greeting to the Jarada, which sounds remarkably like someone throwing up after a Southern Comfort bender. However, he does it perfectly, and the Jaradan Weed will soon be available all throughout the Federation, man.

QUOTABLE DIALOG

DESK SERGEANT

You're a pretty hep-looking broad.

DR. CRUSHER

(uncertain)

Is that good?

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

“For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. A Newtonian truism which you have obviously neglected.” —Cyrus Redblock explaining to Dixon Hill why he let Leech pistol-whip him. (I bet you were expecting some Wesley Crusher holodeck repairing line, weren't you? It's a long series, folks. We'll get around to it eventually.)

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

Lawrence Tierney, who played Cyrus Redblock, was infamous around Hollywood for having much in common with the tough guys he played in the movies. I had an encounter of my own with him just outside Stage 16 (affectionately known to all who worked there as Planet Hell) while we filmed this episode.

“Hey,” he said to me one afternoon between scenes, “do you play football?”

I was 15 at the time, and weighed 95 pounds ... if I was soaking wet and carrying a ten-pound weight.

“Uh, no,” I said.

He leaned into me, menacingly.

“Why the hell not? What are you, some kind of sissy faggot?”

I panicked, certain that he was going to beat the shit out of me because I was more comfortable throwing 3d6 than a pigskin.

“I’m not strong enough to play football!” I said.

“Well, maybe you wouldn’t be so weak if you played football!” he growled.

An assistant director arrived just in time to call us to the set and save me from certain death.

THE BOTTOM LINE

While a lot of fans love this episode because it introduces the holodeck program, *TNG*’s first completely original contribution to the *Trek* universe, I love it for entirely different reasons. Twelve episodes into the series, this one was our favorite to shoot at the time.

There isn't an actor in the world who doesn't love playing a period piece, and I think our real joy in filming "The Big Goodbye" cascaded into our performances. As actors, we're clearly enjoying ourselves, so our characters feel relaxed and un-self-conscious (except for me, of course, but I was *supposed* to be nervous and self-conscious in this one, so it actually worked out). It's a subtle change from some of the earlier episodes, but this is one of the very first times where the audience could really feel the actors — and therefore their characters — coming together and settling in.

Of course, there are lots of things for nitpickers to go nuts over in this show, like when Data tells Picard that he knows everything about the 1940s, but two minutes later doesn't understand when a holodeck character uses period slang. The incongruity is compounded when Data suddenly has a full grasp of hard-boiled noir lingo in the very next scene. I suppose it's forgivable, though, because Brent commits so brilliantly and hilariously to it. (He told me that he made a choice to play Data like James Cagney, because he knew it would be so much *fun*, and it obviously was.) There's also that whole thing with Wesley fixing the holodeck with one zap of a magic holodeck-fixing-thing, but since that's not really what this episode is about, it's also more forgivable than it would otherwise be.

There are some truly charming moments, as well. Everything that takes place in the holodeck program feels like it's ripped from the pages of a classic Raymond Chandler novel, which I understand Tracy Torme did deliberately. (Submitted into evidence: The title he chose is a mashup of Chandler's *The Big Sleep* and *The Long Goodbye*) The dialog between the holodeck-created Dixon Hill characters and the Starfleet characters always works, whether it needs to be funny or thoughtful. Watching Dr. Crusher figure out how to use makeup, Picard's unrestrained joy at discovering how cool the holodeck program is, and how the characters commit to their fictional literary counterparts is awesome. But we're still inside the *Star Trek* universe, so at the very end, we get to explore the classic science fiction theme of perception vs. reality, if only briefly.

It is a fantastic collaborative effort, from Tracy Torme's script, to Joseph Scanlan's direction, to Ed Brown's cinematography, to every actor's performance. There's a reason "The Big Goodbye" is the only *Star Trek* episode to win a Peabody.

FINAL GRADE: A

"DATALORE"

03

ORIGINAL AIR DATE: JANUARY 18, 1988

TELEPLAY BY: ROBERT LEWIN AND GENE RODDENBERRY

STORY BY: ROBERT LEWIN AND MAURICE HURLEY

DIRECTED BY: ROB BOWMAN

STARDATE: 41242.4

01

24

24|24.

SYNOPSIS

After dropping off a bunch of Human Horn for Lurr in the Omicron Persei system, the *Enterprise* cruises into the nearby Omicron Theta system, to pay a visit to Data's home planet.

Omicron Theta was once a farming colony, but the colonists — and everything they once grew — were all gone when Data was discovered there. Oh! A mystery! Riker leads an away team to the planet's surface in an effort to solve it. (In a scene that was cut from the final episode, the USS *Mystery Machine* showed up and captain Fred said "Dang" before it flew away to the Scary Old Amusement Park galaxy.)

They make their way to the exact spot where Data was discovered: it's sort of a hollowed-out area beneath a bunch of rocks, where Data tells them he was found wearing nothing more than a layer of dust. Before anyone can make a saucy reference about "The Naked Now" to Tasha, Geordi's VISOR reveals that the rocks aren't naturally hollow, and the "wall" opens up, revealing a twisty maze of passages, all alike.

After a bit of exploring, they find themselves in the lab of Data's creator, Dr. Noonian Soong. Riker, Geordi, and Tasha all join forces to be sort of an Exposition Voltron:

Riker: Noonian Soong was Earth's foremost neuroscientist, until he tried to build Asimov's positronic brain...

Tasha: Everyone thought he did the walk of shame off the planet, but it turns out he just moved to Omicron Theta to continue his work until he got it right.

Geordi: And I'll form the head!

Riker sends Tasha and Worf out to scout around, while Geordi and Data stay with him to search the lab. They find some of the things used to build Data, including several pieces of an identical, unassembled android. Data wants to put it together and activate it, so he can love it and keep it and pet it and call it George — and Riker agrees to let him do it. Hey, what could possibly go wrong? It's not like it's going to be his evil twin brother who eventually ends up selling out Starfleet and humanity to the Borg, right? *Damn* right! They take the various android bits back to the ship and get to work assembling them while Data watches. It's very, very creepy.

Picard calls one of his trademark meetings in the observation lounge for a debriefing. When Data gets there, Geordi wonders if they'll know how to turn this new robot on. It's a fair question, but before Picard can send Riker to get Tasha to answer it, he reminds everyone that, though Data is a machine, so too are humans — biological machines. Slim Goodbody drops in for a little song and dance, and everyone has fun while learning.

Riker shows Picard a child's drawing of several sadfaced little kids running away from this big scary crystalline ... well, let's just call it an "entity." Major buzzkill, Number One. Riker says that there were a whole bunch of these pictures in the lab, all drawn by different children. Hmm ... a bunch of different children drew essentially the same picture of something big and scary that made them all sad. Gosh, do you think it has anything to do with the disappearance of the colonists?

Before they can examine the mystery of the children's drawings, Dr. Crusher calls the observation lounge to ask for Data's assistance. Grateful to be leaving the scene where nobody asks the really obvious questions or connects the really obvious dots, Data flees to Sickbay where he meets up with Dr. Crusher and shows her his on/off switch — or, as he describes it, “an android alarm clock.”

Then he smirks, and asks hopefully, “Is that amusing?”

Dr. Crusher slowly shakes her head “no.” It's the first genuinely laugh-out-loud moment of the episode, and the last time we'll be laughing *with* “Datalore” instead of *at* it.

After a brief encounter with soon-to-be-ex-Chief Engineer Argyle, Dr. Crusher promises Data that she'll keep the existence of his mysterious off switch to herself. Data asks her if she would want people to know about *her* off switch, if she had one. She laughs nervously, and we get a quick look at a bottle of Jägermeister in her office.

A little while later, the mystery android has been fully assembled, and is such a good match for Data, Picard wonders aloud which one of them was made first. The mystery android springs to life and says that Data was, “but they found him to be imperfect, and I was made to replace him.” Oh, snap! He says his name is Lore, and we get a commercial break to think about that.

When we come back, Data and Picard are in the ready room, talking about Lore. Picard keeps referring to Lore as “it,” which totally rubs Data's fur the wrong way. Data tells Picard that by calling Lore “it” instead of “him,” Picard suggests that Data could fit into the same category. Picard apologizes, and extracts a loyalty oath from Data, just to be sure that he's not going to grow a goatee and get all Mirror Universe on us later. (If I may be sincere for a moment — and only a moment — it's actually a wonderful scene, and though this issue will be exhaustively examined in “The Measure of a Man” next season, it's great to see Patrick and Brent bring this scene to life. I now return you to your regularly scheduled snark.)

Back on the bridge, Lore is getting a tour of the ship's controls and really sucking up to everyone, including Wesley, who is in full-on spacenerd mode. When Data comments on Lore's obsequiousness, Lore says, "Because I was designed to be so human, my brother, I enjoy pleasing humans." Data fails to point out that this is something they have in common, while Tasha studiously avoids making eye contact.

Over the next few scenes, Data and Lore get to know each other. Data tells Lore a little bit about the ship and her crew, including this totally not gay observation about Wesley: "He has a child's body, but we have found him to be much more." Lore pretty quickly reveals that he's a complete dickwad.

He also gives Data a Scientology recruitment speech, and reveals that he lied when he said Data was built first. The truth is, Lore is the big brother, which doesn't make sense; Lore's such a dick, he seems more like a middle child, but maybe that's because I'm a big brother and — hey! Stop hitting yourself! Why won't you stop hitting yourself?! Er, sorry. Maybe it does make sense after all.

Lore gives Data a whole bunch of shit about the way he talks, his efforts to be human, and even sings a little song that's centuries old. Data thinks nothing of this and leaves Lore alone in his quarters to enjoy unrestricted access to the *Enterprise* computer, as long as Lore thinks about what he did and writes a five-paragraph essay explaining himself to the captain. Yeah, that's not going to lead to any shenanigans.

A few minutes later, Picard catches up to the audience and says that those drawings they found on the planet probably depict whatever horrible thing killed everyone who lived there. I'll spare you the two pages of exposition that follows and share this dismaying observation: This chamber has no windows, and no doors! Also, Tasha's security console was designed by Dick Cheney and can track the movements of every single being on the *Enterprise*, including Lore, but instead of using it, Data leaves the bridge to go check up on Lore, personally. Tasha, speaking strictly as chief of security, wonders how much Picard can trust Data, now that he has an identical twin running around.

Everyone on the bridge looks at her like she farted, and Picard tells her that he trusts Data implicitly. (Jesus Christ. The crew gets bent out of shape when she does her job, but doesn't care that the *Enterprise* has a surveillance system that makes 1984 look like Freenet?)

Data catches up with Lore, and Lore shows Data how human he's become by deactivating Data, not with the on/off switch placed on the mantel in Act One, but by slipping him a mickey in a glass of champagne. While Data struggles to stay awake, Lore reveals his devilish plot to give the lifeforms on the *Enterprise* to the crystalline entity ... just like he did with the colonists on Omicron Theta! (Anyone who was surprised by this loses a million geekpoints.)

Back on the bridge, ECHELON tells Worf that Data is transmitting something unidentifiable on a subspace channel (apparently Starfleet can develop the most intrusive surveillance system in the universe, but they can't make it any more accurate than Homeland Security's no-fly list). Riker looks around the bridge, sees all the commissioned officers he has available to him, does a quick scan of the ship's manifest to see who's on duty ... and decides to send Wesley Freakin' Crusher to "discreetly" sneak a peek at Data. Worf says, "Uh, excuse me, Commander, but since I'm kind of in the security department and all, and I'm a big old Klingon, shouldn't maybe I go check this out?"

Riker replies, "I'm not going to lie to you, Worf: We all know that if there's anything funky going on down there, you're just going to get your ass kicked. So I'm sending the Boy Wonder and his giant brain instead."

Wesley jumps up from his console and shouts, "Wheee! I'm in Starfleet!" as he skips like a little pixie to the turbolift.

Worf growls, but inside he's secretly grateful that he's staying safely on the bridge.

Lore, disguised as Data, is contacting the crystalline entity when Wesley shows up and discreetly checks up on him, thusly:

Wesley: Hi Data! Look at how totally in Starfleet I am!

Lore: Hello, Wesley! I am not Lore, I am Data! Look at Lore who is on the floor while I, Data, am standing here doing nothing suspicious!

Wesley: Wow, that sure does look like Lore! Neat! I'd better not call security or anything since nothing suspicious is going on here. Oh, before I leave, here are all the reasons I and everyone else on the ship would suspect that you were actually Lore, disguised as Data, contacting the crystalline entity so it could come and eat our brains.

Lore: Hey, it is not unreasonable, I mean, it is not going to eat your eyes.

Wesley: Hey, did you know that I'm in Starfleet? I talk to the captain! I think I'll go talk to him now! Wheeee!

Lore: Thanks for dropping in and observing that there is nothing suspicious going on here. Run along now, you little scamp!

Wesley: Wheeee!

Lore: Making a note here: HUGE SUCCESS!

A few minutes later, Lore, having traded facial tics and uniforms with Data, arrives on the bridge just in time for the crystalline entity to show up. This is where the episode, which had been flirting with a left turn at Albuquerque for the last fifteen minutes, sets a course for planet Shark and warps right over it.

Wesley, who was sent to check up on Data, does what any smart Starfleet officer would do: He reports to his captain that something

fishy is going on with the robot and suggests that maybe they shouldn't be so quick to trust him.

Picard, the captain who recognized Wesley's intellect and promoted him to acting ensign, and Riker, who chose Wesley over everyone else on the ship to check up on Data and report back on what he found, not only ignore Wesley's concerns, they actually tell him that he's out of line for expressing them! Oh, sure, Picard sends Riker and Wesley with "Data" to check on "Lore," but it's not enough to overcome their confirmation bias. Even when "Data" starts acting entirely out of character, they still leave "Lore" — who they believe has attacked Data and is a danger to the ship — just lying on the floor in Data's quarters. What the hell? Did all the Redshirts have the day off or something?

A few moments later, when the crystalline entity that killed an entire planet starts attacking the ship, their first response isn't to blow the goddamn thing up, but to let Data *talk* to it! Look, we all know that Picard likes to talk for pages at a time when the ship is in danger, but this is just insulting to the audience. It gets even worse when Data suggests what is quite possibly the stupidest thing ever in the history of *Star Trek*: use a cargo transporter to beam a large living thing, like a tree or something, out into space, and then destroy it with the ship's phasers. Because, you know, the *Enterprise* has decks just filled with large trees. (This is the best the writers could come up with? Did someone have to catch a bus or something? Maybe it was "Writers Drink Free" night at the bar.)

"Data" leaves the bridge — after making it clear that he doesn't know what "make it so" means and arousing absolutely no suspicions from Picard — and Wesley decides he's had enough of this bullshit.

"Sir," he says, "I know this may finish me, but —"

And Picard, the captain who recognized Wesley's intellect and promoted him to acting ensign, and the closest thing to a father figure Wesley has ever known, responds with three words that follow and haunt me to this day: "Shut up, Wesley!"

Trekkies around the country gasp in delight as an episode that was veering dangerously close to the Tkon empire suddenly has redeeming value. Printing presses, silk screens, and button-makers go into overdrive as entrepreneurial fans do what they do best: skirt the borders of IP infringement to make a quick buck. Children are still attending college today from the sales.

Finally, Wesley points out that everything he said would have been listened to if it came from an adult, or a competent writer. Picard considers this retort momentarily, and then sends him to his room to organize his sweaters. Then, for good measure, he sends Dr. Crusher to keep an eye on him.

Meanwhile, Worf accompanies “Data” to the cargo bay. Somewhere between the bridge and the turbolift, he gets hip to what’s going on, but when he tries to stop Lore, Lore kicks his Klingon warrior ass with one punch. (See, Worf? You should have listened to Riker and stayed on the bridge!)

In a scene the writers were way too hungover to write, Wesley convinces Dr. Crusher to go with him to Data’s quarters to show her that “Lore” is actually Data, because the next time we do see them, that’s where they are. At Wesley’s urging, Dr. Crusher turns Data on (bow chikka bow wow) and the three of them head out to stop Lore. Alone. Without calling security. Or telling the captain about what they’ve discovered, or doing anything that makes any sense at all. Well, that’s okay. Surely the ship’s incredibly advanced security tracking system, which we’ve seen in action several times this episode, will alert everyone on the bridge, right?

cricket* *cricket* *cricket

Once in the cargo bay, they catch Lore in an intimate moment with the crystalline entity: it turns out his totally unsuspecting plan to beam a big old tree out into space was just a ruse to lower the shields and allow the entity to swoop in and eat everyone on board. (Uh, Lore? It’s probably going to eat you, too, stupid.) Before they can consummate

their Craigslist hook up, though, Data cockblocks him, Lore shoots Dr. Crusher with her own phaser, and there's some WWE-style wrestling between Data and Lore before Data launches Lore onto the transporter and Wesley beams him out into the giant plot hole that's opened up when the crystalline entity doesn't leap through the lowered shields to eat everyone on the ship. Instead, it just ... leaves. Yeah, that's right, it leaves. The giant fucking crystalline entity, the one that destroyed all the life on an entire planet, just takes its football and goes home because Lore isn't there. Maybe it smelled the plot once the shields came down.

There are some hugs, some pithy dialog from Picard, and this once-promising episode comes to a merciful end. But not before Data, who we now know is incapable of speaking in contractions, tells Picard, "I'm fine." (Fun fact: Brent Spiner and director Rob Bowman deliberately chose to use the contraction when this scene was filmed — and didn't print a single take where it wasn't — because they thought it would be cool and mysterious. I couldn't get anyone to tell me if they incurred the wrath of the producers, but I think it's pretty cool they took such a huge risk. It's kind of a bummer the obvious questions it raised were never answered.)

QUOTABLE DIALOG

"How sad, dear brother. You make me wish I were an only child."
—Data, ensuring he won't get any more Christmas cards from Lore.

"Lore's gone, sir. Permanently." —Wesley, trying real hard to be an action hero. And failing.

"Shut up, Wesley!" —Picard, giving voice to Trekkies everywhere.

OBLIGATORY TECHNOBABBLE

GEORDI

And Helm control are here,
with the ship's heading given
in measurements — we call them
“degrees” — with three hundred
sixty of them in a full circle
this way.

LORE

Then you say “mark...”

GEORDI

On the nose!

WESLEY

Which separates it from another
three hundred sixty degree full
circle like this, on a right angle
to that one.

LORE

So by ordering a heading so many
degrees this way, and so many this
way, the ship can travel in any
direction. All three dimensions.

BEHIND THE SCENES MEMORY

I have two, both related to Brent Spiner. First, I remember shooting on the bridge early in this episode, and the writers still hadn't worked out if Data was going to use contractions or not. My memory on the actual discussion is very hazy, but I recall a bunch of producers, writers, and Gene himself coming to the set and all standing around the Conn and Ops consoles to discuss it while the entire crew tried to look busy. Data had already used contractions in previous episodes, and it seemed like

such a flimsy plot device to separate him from Lore. I thought it was silly, but I was only 15 and knew enough to keep my big mouth shut. Brent, however, didn't. He refused to shoot the scene until they made a decision and stuck with it. I can't say that I blame him.

This episode was a ton of work for Brent. Whenever he switched roles, he also had to switch costumes, which I recall being time-consuming and tedious. However, that was nothing compared to dealing with the guy they got to double Brent when both characters needed to be on screen at the same time.

I don't remember the guy's name (it wasn't Guy Vardaman, a dear friend of mine who was my stand-in and Brent's photo double for the entire series after this episode), but he was someone's friend, or a relative, or maybe even worked in production in some capacity. He seemed nice enough to me, but he drove Brent crazy. Whenever he was playing Data or Lore, he moved like a break dancer doing the Robot (you can see this when Data and Lore walk together down the corridor after we first see Lore on the bridge), and what started out as comical quickly became annoying. I think the guy was really into playing an android, but his enthusiasm got the better of him. By the end of the week, pretty much everyone wanted to deactivate him and sell him to the nearest Jawa.

This reminds me of something Jonathan told me about casting for Lal when he directed "The Offspring": "You don't realize how brilliant and subtle Brent's performance is until you watch a bunch of other actors try to pull it off... badly."

THE BOTTOM LINE

Not all first seasons can be as compelling as *Lost* or as satisfying as *Heroes*, and at the halfway point of our first season, we're inconsistent enough to irritate loyal fans and alienate new viewers. Our last episode, "The Big Goodbye," had great crossover appeal, and it was the fourth relatively good episode in a row we'd done — like I said, we aced our midterms. "Datalore," though it tried really hard, was a pretty unfortunate step backward. (Maybe we partied too hard on Spring Break.)

The pitch was awesome: “We find Data’s evil twin brother, who he never knew he had, and hilarity ensues.” Sure, there’s nothing original about the evil twin story, but that doesn’t mean that it can’t be told again in an interesting way, especially with a cool character like Data, played by a great character actor like Brent Spiner supported by a brilliant dramatic actor like Patrick Stewart. How could they screw up this story so badly?

I think it comes down to lazy writing that has things happen because they’re supposed to happen, rather than having them happen organically. The characters are credulous when they should be skeptical, the audience isn’t surprised by anything after the second act, and there are story problems that should have never gotten past the first draft.

Personally, I hated the way they handled Wesley in this episode. He’s already on his way to becoming a hated character, and the writers cranked it up to Warp 11. It was stupid of them to have Picard give him an adult responsibility and then dismissively treat him like a child when he carried it out. It undermines both of the characters — how is the audience supposed to take either of them seriously? Maybe the idea was that Wesley would prove Picard wrong, with a big payoff at the end when Picard apologizes or something and their relationship grows as a result. But all we get is one line in the cargo bay when Picard says, “Can you return to duty?”

It’s not all bad, of course. The art direction in this episode is some of the best we’ve seen so far. When Dr. Crusher works with Argyle to put Lore together, it’s one of the first times we got to see some really awesome technology on the *Enterprise*. Sure, we’d seen some spiffy visual effects in other episodes, but this was the first time we got to see just how advanced the *Enterprise-D* was.

I loved “Datalore” when I was a kid, and I was looking forward to watching and reviewing it as an adult, but it does not hold up. All the actors did the best they could with terrible dialog and writing, and Brent does a fantastic job creating distinctly different characters in Data and Lore, but it’s not enough to save the episode from blatantly stupid plot holes and character motivations out of the Left Field Nebula. Maybe next week will be bett—

Oh, it’s “Angel One.” Never mind.

FINAL GRADE: D

Next time, on *Memories of the Future*:

- Riker wears a sassy outfit!
- Tasha goes to live on a farm!
- Humans are revealed to be ugly bags of mostly water!
- John Tesh wields a Klingon Painstik!
- Wesley learns that drugs are bad, mmmkay?

All that, plus the Manheim Effect, and an alien slug conspiracy
that has to be seen to be believed!

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